

# PD

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch  
Sunday Magazine  
October 4, 1987



## WINGS OF HOPE

St. Louis-Based  
Airborne Mercy  
Mission



Wings of Hope planes fly where goat trails serve as highways and rivers are thoroughfares. They land on 1,000-foot-long strips in the middle of cow

pastures, while a volunteer drives off the cows to make way for the 'silver bird.' A pilot must be able to make emergency repairs miles from civilization.

## HELP ARRIVES ON WINGS OF HOPE

By Florence Shinkle  
OF THE POST-DISPATCH STAFF

**A** PERUVIAN CHILD dying of an infectious disease is flown by a Wings of Hope plane to a hospital across the mountains. On the return trip, the pilot brings vaccine to halt a spreading epidemic.

In the upper Amazon basin, a Wings of Hope floatplane lands on a twisting jungle river with a 15-mile-an-hour current. The cargo of educators deplanes gratefully. They make their way to a cluster of huts that serves as classrooms and call their classes to order.

Wings of Hope has performed services

**ON THE COVER:** In Honduras, Wings of Hope pilot Guy Gervais flies a critically ill woman to a hospital. (Photos by John Zierten of *Our Sunday Visitor*)

like those over and over again in the 15 years of its existence. The St. Louis-based charity was incorporated in 1967 to provide air transportation and radio communication to the most remote outposts on earth, settlements that take days to reach by foot or boat, where an airplane can mean the difference between life and death. To date, the organization has donated 40 planes (plus the necessary communications equipment) to medical and field personnel operating in Guatemala, New Guinea, Canada, Brazil, Honduras, Peru, Bolivia, Alaska, Paraguay, Mexico and Kenya. In addition, it has 10 planes of its own flying in North America, Latin America and Africa.

The charity serves as aviation consultant and wholesale purchasing agent for any established humanitarian organization that seeks the service. Whether the group wants to buy a plane, hire a bush pilot, overhaul an engine, construct a jungle refueling base or find affordable insurance, Wings of Hope

will help. In addition, it acts as distributing agent for United States-based donor companies with used dental and medical equipment, surplus foodstuffs or medicines to give and no knowledge of where or how to give them. The organization's administrative and entrepreneurial skills have been lauded in publications as diverse as *Flight* magazine, *Our Sunday Visitor* and the *Congressional Record*.

All its services are free. The organization is funded entirely by private contributions. Donors range from the Lilly Endowment to the Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas to students at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, who held a fund drive. In the last decade, the charity has collected more than \$1.4 million in donations of cash and equipment. Since the organization's home office has few expenses, no less than 90 percent of its annual income goes directly to field operations.

(Continued)

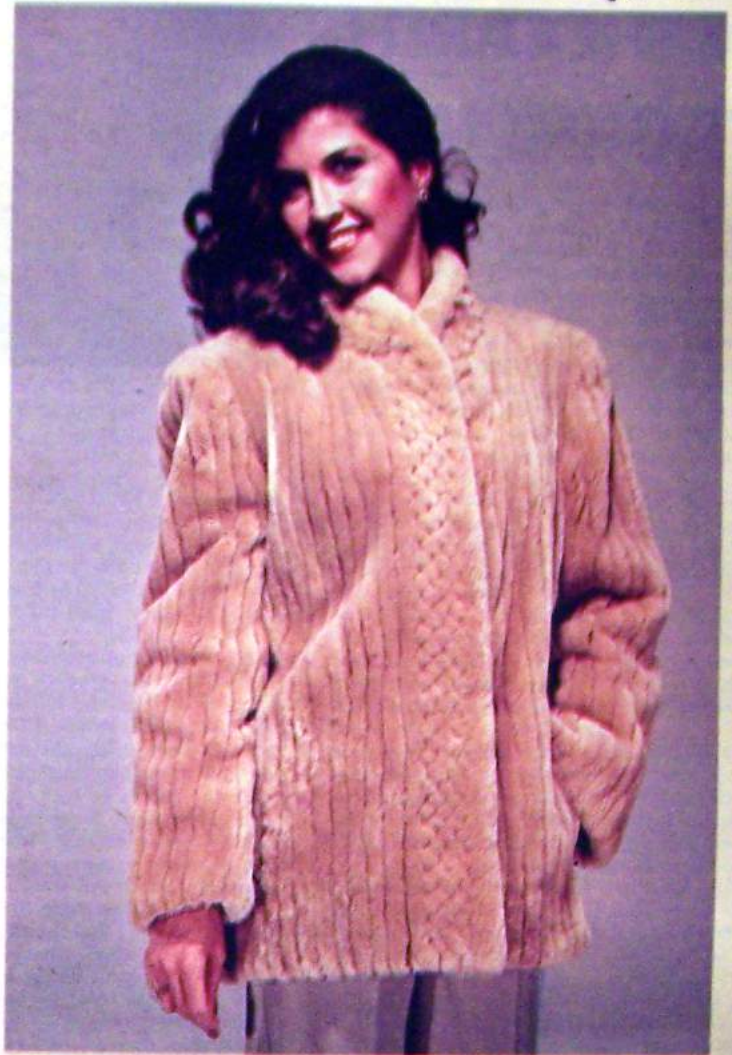


The first grain harvest at Patuca, an experimental settlement in the Honduran interior, is loaded on a Wings of Hope plane for transport to market. The pilot told the home office: "Yesterday I flew 16 flights and moved 10,000 pounds of rice, in addition to 22 people and their goods."



"It is our policy to set our regular prices below the usual retail. The largest selection of smartly-styled new furs is at Hopper...for less."

*Edward Hopper*



**Autumn glow in sheared beaver!**

Sensually-soft Canadian beaver jackets in hushed to honeyed tones feature basketweaves, corduroy stripping and mellow solids.

**\$1899**

Hopper's Regular Price

Comparative value \$2400

Fur products labeled to show country of origin

*Comfortable deferred payments may be arranged  
Shop 9:30 'til 5:30 Tuesday-Saturday, Monday 'til 8:30*

**HOPPER FURS**

295 N. LINDBERGH      CRESTVIEW CENTER      PADDOCK HILLS PLAZA  
Creve Coeur • 991-3600      Crestwood • 849-0333      Florissant • 837-2333

*Generous trade-in allowances • Storage without charge • Major credit cards accepted*

## WINGS OF HOPE

# CHARITY FLIES TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

**T**HE ARTICLES about Wings of Hope rarely mention Bill Edwards except in the last paragraph, the one that reads: "Send donations to William Edwards, Wings of Hope, St. Louis, Mo."

Bill Edwards is a founder and the executive vice president of the aviation-oriented charity, the round-faced, office-bound administrator of an organization that provides air transportation to the most remote areas on earth. Himself, he is strictly ground crew. The idea of his substantial, business-suited form in the cockpit of a little bush plane generates the half-smile reserved for incongruities: the Allstate man as an astronaut. He fusses over expenditures, scavenges spare airplane parts. The Wings of Hope pilots relay accounts to him of their life and death missions in the South American jungles or the North African deserts, and Edwards incorporates their stories into his fundraising ads:

"In Peru, a woman with childbirth complications is flown by a Wings of Hope airplane to a clinic where a Caesarean saves her life and her son's. The trip took one-half hour by plane; by mule and boat, the only other way of reaching the clinic, it would have taken three days.

"In Guatemala, a Wings of Hope pilot taxis down a machete-cleared dirt strip to deliver a critically injured farmer across the mountains to a hospital. It is the dead of night, but one of the injured man's friends obligingly stands at the end of the strip with a flashlight.

"And in Central America, a vital shipment of seeds and tools is flown over impassable jungle to a newly established agricultural settlement."

The ad was for an aviation magazine. Edwards finished with a flaps-up, full-power plea for used equipment: "HOPE COULD BE IN YOUR HANGAR! Lives are at stake in remote areas of the world. If you care about people ... care whether they live or die ... you'll forget the trade-in allowance on that old engine, take your tax deduction and send what you can. If you give a damn ..."

If you catch a curious mixture of business savvy and moralism in that ad, it reflects the character of the author, a former manufacturer's representative, shrewd about write-offs and trade-outs on the one hand and rigidly principled on the other. For some reason, Edwards has always had this overweening sense of obligation to give a damn. In 1962, he got a call from one Father Joseph Houlihan, a missionary priest from Kenya's Turkhana Desert who was in the United States to raise money for famine victims. It wasn't even a pitch from a close friend. Edwards had never met Father Houlihan before; the priest had gotten



Robert LaRouche/Post-Dispatch

Bill Edwards, a founder and executive vice president of Wings of Hope.

his name off a list of possibly sympathetic souls here, the right name. Edwards made the mistake of asking the missionary if he needed anything besides money. Father Houlihan said, good heavens, what he really needed was a plane to ferry medicine and food to the Turkhana nomads.

The food was available, the priest said, donated by the United States government, delivered as far as Kitale where the last traversable roads stopped. There it sat, with the jeeps meant to transport it the 175 miles into the famine area axle-deep in mud. A plane could make the hop in an hour. A plane could bring vaccines to fight the plagues that inevitably erupted among famine victims. It could haul seed grains to begin again. It could transport the critically injured to hospitals. It could ...

Edwards didn't have the vaguest notion himself where to find a plane or the money to buy one, but he was a native St. Louisan with connections that in an old town can be worth more than cash. And he understood how the business community operated here, how various executives accomplished their pet charity projects — by a corporate buddy system that could be invoked by certain powerful men. Edwards called up his ol' buddy Joe Fabick, head of Fabick Tractor Co. and a private pilot.

Fabick was interested; more, he was moved. Knowing the perennial shortage of cash in most businesses, he suggested that, rather than attempting to raise dollar donations, it might be easier soliciting used pieces of equipment, for which the donors could take a tax write-off. Fabick Tractor would repair the machinery, sell it, and the money generated would be used to purchase the plane. As a matter of fact, he happened to know Paul Rogers, the senior vice president of Ozark Airlines, pretty well; he'd call Rogers and see if he had any ideas to get this project off the ground. Rogers introduced them to George Haddaway, publisher of Flight

magazine, who let them have unsold advertising space for their solicitations. And so on.

In April 1965, globe-navigating pilot Max Conrad, a friend of somebody's friend, landed a Cessna 206 in the Turkhana and delivered it to Father Houlihan. Considering how slow the mails were in that area, it was amazing how fast word got out about the gift. Requests to duplicate it began pouring in from humanitarian organizations in Paraguay, Brazil, Alaska. Shows you what happens to nice guys.

Wings of Hope Inc. was formally incorporated in 1967 with Fabick as its president, George Haddaway as chairman of the board and Edwards as its salaried executive secretary. The appointments were politic, at least in part. The buddy system is most effective if implemented at a certain level of the corporate hierarchy: the top. So the rest of the board were men of equal clout in aviation-related businesses: Dave Kratz, the president of Aviation Underwriters; John T. Tucker, the head of Midcoast Aviation Services; D. Robert Werner, a principal stockholder in Remmert-Werner. "Just a little group of men who happened to hit it off together," Edwards would say later. Through them, the charity had access to the technical expertise, personnel, used equipment, etc. of a nationwide network of related industries.

The only big business not solicited was the federal government. The first of the charity's policies was: no federal support accepted. It cost too much in the long run.

Other guidelines:

Recipients of gifts must be responsible humanitarian and medical organizations whose presence and programs were approved by the government of the country in which they served.

Gifts would go only to peoples having no

(Continued)

## WINGS OF HOPE

(Continued)

other motorized means of access to the outside world — no roads, no railroads — regions where the plane was literally an instrument of salvation.

Simple enough except for one drawback. A good many of the missionaries operating in the remote areas where planes were desperately needed knew nothing about planes, or equipping them, or maintaining them at mountain altitudes or in the corrosive jungle humidity. So the charity, which was run as a business from the start, ended up as a conglomerate, acting as purchasing agent for the various humanitarian organizations, providing them with engineering consultation for the construction of airstrips and refueling bases and serving as a clearinghouse for spare parts.

"Anyone got a used tire for a Cessna Skywagon?" one ad read. "No? Then how about a brand new check for \$10?"

Donations ranged from cash to a very used Camaro to great Aunt Tilly's diamond ring. The organization accepted anything of value, and anyone: mechanics, engineers, fund-raisers, artists. Ultimately, it began operating its own planes in areas where there was no one else to. The pilot roster was (and is) composed largely of commercial airline pilots cajoled into taking a six-month leave of absence from armchair aviation for a good cause and a great adventure.

"You ask a pilot around here what are the two most important navigational aids in the cockpit, you'll get all sorts of different answers," Roy Johnsen said. "You ask a pilot who flies where our pilots do, he'll tell you: clock and compass. That computerized equipment isn't worth the rust on it in the jungle."

"So we sell it." Bill Edwards' eyes lighted. "Most planes that are donated to us second-hand are over-equipped for our purposes. Whatever we don't need, we sell. The money helps to defray operating expenses." He looked so pleased by the economy I stifled a grin.

We were having lunch — Edwards, Roy Johnsen, the new director of operations for Wings of Hope, and Joe Desloge, a new board member.

Desloge was picking up the tab for lunch. He was exacting psychological payment for it from Edwards though, expounding on how the most effective form of preventive medicine

for the poorest peoples would be some sort of birth control. He told a story about a villager he'd met on a visit to a Wings of Hope operation base in Honduras. "The man had 17 children, and when I commented on the size of his family, he flung out his hands and said, 'But what is a man to do?' All I'm saying, Bill, is that we ought to provide the campesino women with a choice."

Edwards' face settled into a bulldog expression. "We're not in this to promote anyone's pet project, Joe," he said with thin politeness. "We don't take any stand that might be in conflict with the existing government's. We're there to help people in need as we find them, and if we start taking controversial stands, we might not be allowed to do that. All we do is provide air transportation and radio communication. That allows for medical, educational and nutritional programs. But all we do is deliver to the distributing agency. We..."

IN A MORE personal way than the others, Johnsen was aware of the inevitable political dimensions of charity work in countries with repressive governments, how the most basic aid can seem politically subversive. Two years ago, Johnsen took a year's leave of absence from his job as a government aviation operations inspector in New York to fly for Wings of Hope in Honduras. Along with his lifesaving missions, he provided the only viable transportation in and out of an agricultural settlement the government had established in the middle of the jungle. All peasants who wished to attempt farming there were allotted 10 acres of land. If they could homestead it for five years, it would be theirs, their own land. They would be kings.

Previous such experimental communities had floundered, but Johnsen flew 12 missions a day in and out of this one, carrying men, tools, seed grain, medicine, agronomists. With Johnsen's help, a co-op was organized to handle the community's grain sales. Delegates were appointed to approach the government for roads, farming equipment, schools...

"And a government official comes to me announcing, 'You are illegal, illegal, illegal.'" Johnsen's voice took on the insistency of a government  
(Continued)

## The Wood Works Unpainted Furniture

Prepare Now  
FOR  
The Holidays

ALL JOHN BOOS BUTCHER BLOCKS FOR THE GOURMET BUFF OR DISCRIMINATING DINER NOW ON SALE AT 20% OFF REGULAR PRICES.

TRESTLE TABLES

DESIGNER TABLES

ROUND TABLES

RECTANGULAR TABLES



BUTCHER CUTTING BLOCKS  
10" OR 6" THICK  
8 STYLES AVAILABLE

JOHN BOOS & CO. NORTHERN HARD ROCK MAPLE BUTCHER BLOCK ITEMS ARE NOW AVAILABLE ON A SPECIAL ORDER BASIS.

GOURMET CENTER  
30" Lx24" Dx36" H  
5" THICK  
POT RACK  
&  
WINE RACK  
ARE OPTIONAL



KITCHEN COUNTER TOPS

TEA CART

POT RACKS

CHEF'S TABLE

YOU WAIT FOR DELIVERY — BUT YOU SAVE A FULL 20% ON THIS FULL LINE OF FINE CRAFTED BUTCHER BLOCK FURNITURE

UNFINISHED  
OILED  
OR  
LACQUERED  
FINISH  
ON MOST  
ITEMS



APPLIANCE CENTER WITH ELECTRICAL OUTLET STRIP  
30" Lx24" Dx36" H

ALL THESE AND MANY MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE IN BUTCHER BLOCK.

NOW IS THE TIME TO ACQUIRE THAT LONG DESIRED TABLE, CHOPPING BLOCK, WORK TABLE, MICRO-WAVE OVEN TABLE, GOURMET CENTER AND MUCH, MUCH MORE AT SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS. — AND JUST IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS. DEPOSIT REQUIRED ON ALL ORDERS. SALE ENDS OCT. 10TH, 1981

Specializing in quality Unpainted Furniture for the home decorator.



LADUE  
8865 Ladue Rd.  
(Ladue at Interstate)  
727-1145

MANCHESTER  
141 & Manchester  
(In National Shopping Center)  
227-4320

MEHLVILLE  
4429 Lemay Ferry  
(Central City Shopping Center)  
487-4870

FLORISSANT  
750 New Florissant Rd.  
(1 Mile North of I-270)  
837-2071



Hours: Mon., Thurs., Fri.: 10-9; Tues., Wed., 10-5; Sat. 9 to 5

## WINGS OF HOPE

(Continued)

bureaucrat's. "So I ask, 'If we are illegal, how come you wrote out all these certifications before? Has the law changed?'"

"Ah, we were generous then."

"You are not generous now?"

"Please do not ask that question, señor."

Johnsen shook his head, somewhere between anger and exasperation. "They just can't believe that someone would do what we're doing purely out of compassion. You tell them why you're there — to help, just to help. You answer every question with facts. You give them all the proof they could possibly want. And at the end, someone always comes up to you, slaps your arm and says, 'OK, you can tell me — what are you really doing this for?'"

So here was Johnsen, lunching at the Old Warson Country Club — a tanned man with very blue eyes and the definitive, hunched posture of an ex-fighter pilot, landlocked now. He was in charge of equipping the bush planes properly for wherever they were headed, checking out the pilots in short-field landing techniques, getting the planes in the air and keeping them there. It was essential work, and he seemed happy enough, except his talk kept coming back to the Honduran community he'd helped establish and to the still moot question of whether Wings of Hope would operate in Honduras.

"They want us to use Honduran pilots." A wry smile. "And Honduran maintenance." A snort. "Manana, señor. Manana," he lisped.

Edwards coughed. "It would be too expensive," he said with heavy diplomacy. "We'd lose the free services of airlines pilots taking a leave of absence. We'd lose the gifts from companies that won't donate equipment to an aircraft registered in a foreign country because they can't get the tax write-off. It would be a shame to leave, but on a cost basis, we may have to."

There, he was at it again, calculating the cost of compassion, the efficient, scrupulous, faintly comical steward. The organization operated on

four continents now because of his ableness, translating humanitarian impulses into affordable policies.

In Kenya, a doctor is persuaded to spend three and a half hours en route to a bush settlement, then four days in surgery on countless patients, provided he has the plane available, provided he has the medical team and the surgical supplies in place.

In Peru, a missionary team reports the effectiveness of its volunteer unit has been increased 30 times by following guidelines Wings of Hope provided for constructing a primitive power unit, organizing medical supply channels, etc.

"I have this picture," Johnsen offered. It showed a toddler squatting under the wing of the plane Johnsen had flown in Honduras. "If we hadn't flown his mom to the hospital that kid wouldn't be alive today." He put the photo back in his wallet very carefully.

Edwards watched him, looking as happy as if he'd just turned up a forgotten check. Even in Honduras, the charity's balance statement ended in the black.

"There's a great story in the pilots who fly those life and death missions," he cued. "And in the donors, who give just because they want to help."

(Continued)

## R: A Flotation System

The medical benefits of flotation mattresses have long been recognized, yet only recently have physicians prescribed them in the treatment of specific ailments. One of the primary medical advantages of the flotation mattress is its ability to conform to and support the shape of the body. This is important to sufferers of muscular or skeletal pain. Back pain,

neckaches, headaches, muscular pain, rheumatic pain, fibrositis and arthritis are all problems that may be aided by flotation.

*Geriatrics* magazine reported as well that in a hospital study, waterbeds proved to be "significantly superior to other types of mattresses in reducing surface pressure, especially over bony prominences in patients that are immobilized."

In addition to the benefits for the ill and disabled, water mattresses help provide good sleep, an important preventative medical treatment. An adequate amount of sleep is essential for a feeling of general well-being and the lack of sleep is blamed for many problems, including learning and educational difficulties, emotional distress and possibly serious health problems.

## Sweet Dreams WATERBEDS

"Star Pine"  
Regular: \$499.88  
Sale: **\$359.88**  
(NOT PICTURED)

"Econo"—complete outfit unfinished as low as  
**\$169.88**  
(super single price)  
Regular \$250.00  
**\$199.88** for queen & king size  
(NOT PICTURED)

"The Largest Selection of Quality Waterbeds At The Lowest Discount Prices"



- Standard extended frame
- Sculptured bookcase
- Hutch mirror
- Mattress
- Liner
- Pedestal

Reg. \$549.00  
only **\$399.88**

## "The Chaparral"



- Chesterfield Mall
- S. Kingshighway at Chippewa
- Manchester at Big Bend
- S. County Centerway
- Jamestown Mall
- Granite City
- N. Lindbergh at McDonnell

SOME DAY YOU WILL SLEEP ON A WATERBED

*Vurric's Ltd.*



**CLOTHIER  
SAVE 1/2  
ON  
NAME BRAND SUITS**

**TAILORING**  
Custom made suits,  
shirts, pants, and  
sportcoats

**ALTERATIONS**

for men & women  
(narrow lapels, recut trousers)

A Master Craftsman

7603 Forsyth 725-5727

## Timely Savings!

OAK CABINET  
80" TALL  
CABLE WIND  
LARGE LYRE  
PENDULUM  
BEVELED GLASS  
BURL WOOD TRIM  
by Colonial  
Reg. \$1685.00  
SPECIAL OFFER

**\$1199<sup>00</sup>**  
While Quantities Last

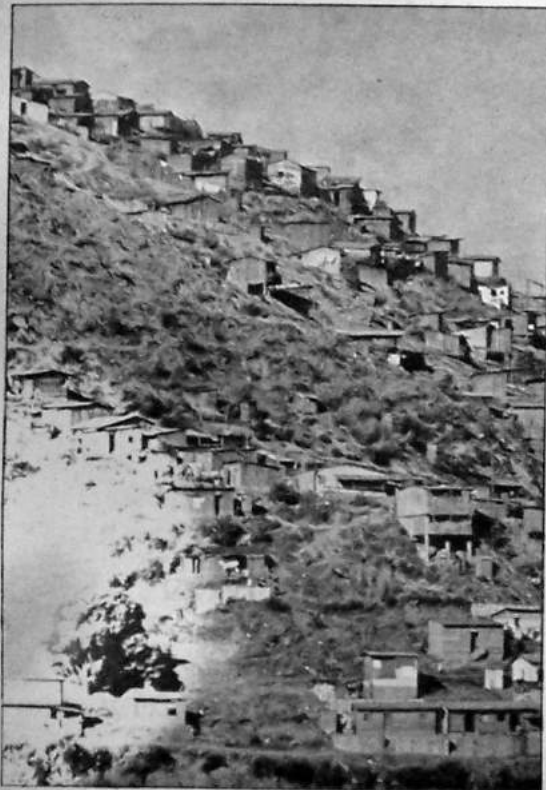


**Dohack Clock Shop**

3187 Lemay Ferry  
894-8808

Open Mon. & Thurs. Evenings

Below, a view of Santa Maria del Real, Honduras. The Wings of Hope pilot formerly based there averaged five round-trips a day to Patuca. Right: two of Patuca's homesteaders. At bottom, at "the washing machine" in Patuca. In America, where it's "turn on the washing machine, drive to the supermarket, phew, what a day!" we forget the unyielding labor that is still necessary in some parts of the world just to survive.



## WINGS OF HOPE

*(Continued)*

"How about you?"

"I'm just the librarian, the accountant," he said. And having said it, he sat for a moment, reviewing. Then this beacon-like smile creased his plump face. "It has been so exciting," he said. He sounded just like some fly-boy swooping down from the clouds. "It has been — exhilarating."

That is Bill Edwards, as in "Send donations to William Edwards, Wings of Hope, St. Louis, Mo."