

Outreach to the 'Next Generation'

By LuAnne Cadd
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Description for Bynder: On his second outreach trip in the western Sepik region of Papua New Guinea, MAF pilot Paul Woodington shows the 'Jesus' film in partnership with Christian Brethren Church and missionary Graham Erb.

Relevant reports	Papua New Guinea plane report: Airvan P2-MFM
Date of flight	21-23 October 2016
Departure point, destination	Wewak-Anguganak-Magleri-Vanimo-Sibalanga-Anguganak (21 Oct) Wewak – Samban (Medevac) – Wewak (23 Oct)
Pilot name/s	Paul Woodington
Aircraft registration details	Airvan G8, P2-MFM
Organisation flown	MAF Outreach Trip
Organisation contact	MAF's Paul Woodington: pwoodington@maf.org
Bynder Shared Folder	PNG – MAF Outreach Ministry Weekend in Western Sepik.

In the village of Wulukum, the movie theater is a small portable screen standing on the dirt outside two primary school buildings, one made from bush material. The projector is portable, sitting on a small school desk, attached to a laptop, connected to a generator for power. The seating is wet ground.

It's a popular place on this chilly night in late October with a crowd gathering long before dark despite the downpour that ended only an hour or so earlier. Entertainment of any kind is a rare thing in this remote village of Papua New Guinea and movies are non-existent. This theater will last one Saturday night, and the two-hour movie is about Jesus.



A New Generation

It had been a particularly busy two weeks of flying for MAF pilot Paul Woodington in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea. In just two weeks, he had flown 14 medevacs and a multitude of other flights that filled his daily schedule. As the only pilot at the Wewak base, Paul had been averaging eleven flight legs per day and maxing out his hours every month.

Now he would spend his 'free' weekend on an outreach ministry trip to the villages of Anguganak, a former MAF base southwest of Wewak, and nearby Wulukum, a village of 780 people. The flights of the previous few weeks were, of course, important to Paul and the people MAF serves, but it is outreach work that Paul is most passionate about.

“This is the first time the ‘Jesus’ film is being shown for probably 30 or 40 years,” Paul explains. “There’s a whole generation who haven’t seen it. The last time we showed the film, the next day a man came up to me, probably about 30 years old, and said, ‘My father told me about Jesus, but now I understand.’ I thought that was absolutely fantastic. That’s why we’re going out with this ‘Jesus’ film now so that a new generation can see it, thirty years later.”

A New Outreach

When Paul flew for MAF’s Arnhem Land program, he began an outreach to a group of young men recently released from prison to be exiled on an island. It was a powerful experience to be part of a ministry that saw ten troubled men come to Christ over a period of one year, and this led to a permanent MAF outreach program in Arnhem Land.

Paul wanted to continue with outreach ministries when he moved to the PNG program. His chance came in 2016 when he partnered with the Christian Brethren Church (CBC) and Australian missionary Graham Erb who has been running a Bible school in Anguganak for 28 years.

“There’s no point in us doing this on our own. We need people to follow it up,” Paul explains. “So we partner with everyone from our base staff to the local people on the ground, to the Bible school in Anguganak and the church there.”

The team for this trip included MAF’s Wewak Base Supervisor, Ludmer Meiko, Pastor Alex Walmaien, a loyal MAF agent at Anguganak who helped arrange the logistics and the ‘Jesus’ film showing at his village of Wulukum, and Pastor Lawrence Yawini, a Bible School graduate who introduced the film each night, and led the singing, prayers, and closing invitation to accept Christ as personal savior.



“The idea is to get everyone to see the ‘Jesus’ film in the Sepik region,” Paul says, “and make that connection with the CBC church so they can follow up and continue the ministry.”

From Hearing to Seeing

On the second afternoon, Paul decided to walk to the nearby village of Wulukum for the second showing of the ‘Jesus’ film. This required wading across a shallow river then walking for approximately 45 minutes to the small primary school. An entourage of children joined Paul and Pastor Alex every step of the way, including a few delighted boys who held Paul’s hands as he crossed the river barefoot, feigning difficulty. Adults came out to greet Paul with a handshake as he passed and the small crowd of followers swelled as they made their way to the movie site. As Paul and Ludmer set up the screen, projector, generator and computer, children and adults sat on the ground to watch the pre-show and waited for the movie to begin.



Pastor Lawrence is excited about the impact the movie can have on this new generation of people.

“Many people here now don’t go to church,” Lawrence says, “but they will be challenged when they see this. So it’s good that we don’t take it to a church. We just put it in a center place where everyone can come. Then, if what they see challenges them and they make a decision to accept the Lord Jesus, that’s when they decide to go to church and the elders or pastor can counsel them and help them grow up in the Christian life.”

Papua New Guineans are traditional storytellers. Pastor Lawrence, Ludmer and Alex all believe that when people hear the stories of Jesus for most of their lives and then see those stories played out on the screen, it will have a new and powerful impact on them.

“When we teach at Bible school,” Lawrence explains, “it’s only speaking to them, telling them, explaining the Bible, but with pictures it’s more powerful. People really want to see with their eyes. One man came to Bible school and mentioned to me



that he was challenged by the film, gave his life to the Lord and came to Bible school. So God uses such things. I pray that God will speak through film and many will come to know Jesus.”

Perseverance

In spite of Paul’s passion for outreach, the demands of his flying can be exhausting.

“This weekend I’m quite tired,” Paul said during the outreach trip. “I love it, but if you said on Wednesday could I have an option of not coming out here when I was really backed up with medevacs and flying and I didn’t know if I could do all the work and still get here on Friday, the easy option would have been to say no. The hard option was continuing. It’s that perseverance that I get from my father – he will not give up. And I won’t give up either.”

This perseverance is meaningful to those on the receiving end, such as Pastor Alex, a small, unassuming man who has demonstrated his own perseverance in the daily treks to the airstrip for MAF to report on weather and airstrip conditions for the last nine years. Part of the outreach for Paul includes personal one-on-one time with Alex over breakfast, going through scripture he may find difficult to understand. On Saturday morning, it was a passage at the end of I John on false prophets, a relevant topic in Papua New Guinea.

“MAF is doing important work in the area,” Alex says in his broken English. “The most important part is helping ministries of God. The way I see this is like carrying the pastors out to the other areas to preach God’s word, and teachers making the ministries, and nurses and doctors. Also bringing the gospel out to the other areas. Paul likes to come to the bush and stay with me here on the weekends. I love him very much.”



On the first outreach trip in April of 2016, Paul and the team showed the ‘Jesus’ film two nights with 500 to 600 people attending. Requests for more showings in different villages have come in since that time, and more outreach trips are planned quarterly in the coming year.

Additional Notes and Quotes:

On the final Sunday, Paul planned to attend the local church and read some scripture, but a call came through for an urgent medevac in the East Sepik at a place called Samban where missionaries Jesse and Karie Pryor work. A woman who had given birth had a retained placenta, and another woman had hypertension. Both were flown to Wewak and taken to the local hospital.

MEDEVACS

Paul Woodington:

“Medevacs are rewarding but can be stressful. If it’s a pleasant day it’s fine, but where you may think the weather is too bad for normal operations, you might make an exception for emergencies and that can be quite stressful because if it’s bad weather, no other aircraft is flying usually. And you’re out there on your own. We are safe, but nonetheless more stressful.”

“We do a lot of medevacs. I did 14 in the last two weeks. Flat out. Every day. A snake bite by a Death Adder from Samban. It immobilizes your body until death. By the time I picked him up he had lost his speech and some ability. Praise Jesus he lived. A retained placenta patient – a common thing for pregnant women. From Telefomin I medevaced a quite serious woman in birth that was probably having a heart attack as well. She was having birth complications. She had a cesarean. Despite everything, praise Jesus she lived. There was one guy with a terrible back problem and couldn’t move. He was also involved in a bit of unrest in that area, so I couldn’t take him to the first hospital at Kompiam. Had to take him to Hagen. Had another guy, an expat missionary in Ambunti, who was having a heart attack. Those are just a few examples.”



BIBLE BOX

Paul Woodington:

“The plane itself is a delivery mechanism. It delivers into the bush. One of the things it can deliver really well is Bibles. English, Tok Pisin Bibles, Bible commentaries, Bible dictionaries – all supplied by CRMF. We also have a relationship with Christian Bookshops Melanesia and they’ve given us what they call their Bush Library box. That has ten books that help you read the Bible. We break it up into K10 each. So everything we sell is K10, including eyeglasses. I’ve never kept record, but we’re shipping about 200 a week – that’s how many people buy off the plane. That’s just in the Wewak area. I can fill that box up every day, and I come home and it will be empty. I will not advertise that I’m selling bibles. They will ask me for Bibles, because they know I have them, and they think about it and have saved up for it.”



ROADS

Paul Woodington:

"This time there is a road, but this is not usual. The road is not tarmacked or anything. It's a torturous day trip. People get quite ill by the end of it. So this is about a 35-minute flight, yet on the road you would have to get up at 4:00 and you'd probably arrive at 6 or 7 o'clock at night, or maybe even next day. The other thing is you'll be taking your life in your hands as well. These people drive very fast on the roads."

JESUS FILM

Ludmer Meiko:

"It's good for them because they just have a pastor read from a Bible and they tell them a story. But from a movie they have heard the story but now they are seeing a real thing on a movie, what Jesus did, what the Bible tells them and they heard from the pastor. Now they see from a movie and see that this is a real thing what Jesus did. It makes it more a reality to them. Sometimes they feel a real grip about this, it's a real thing that happened. One that he has a gift of spirit, the Holy Spirit helps him. The Holy Spirit convicts him, and he's going to feel really something. That's a real thing how Jesus came and die on the cross, how he was persecuted, and how he did all these things for us. He's innocent. He's not doing anything against the law, but just because of what we did, he took all our wrongs and he died on the cross. Something like that. PNG has a very strong story-telling tradition. But with technology now people can see movies. If you say now we're going to watch a movie, any movie, they want to see it."



Thanks to LuAnne Cadd for writing this heartwarming story – Paul

