

Woodington: 'Tragedy in a Tragedy', October 2011

call to go back · a welcome break · flipped on a jet ski · crocodile slide · back to East Timor · a Dirty little War · chance meeting in Same · gun shots · house move · wedding on the beach · flight with the ambassador · drums on farms · back home · another house move · another Joey · Aaron starts boarding school

Within 12 hours of departing East Timor and arriving in Gove, MAF called me to return for another two months; unexpected problems had occurred with the arrival of the new family. I was so excited to be back in Gove with my family and the forthcoming two-week break that I could not think about returning. Clare's family were in town on holiday and I was looking forward to two weeks fishing, despite the rough seas and the need to return to East Timor.

My Brother-in-law, Hugh wanted to catch Spanish mackerel. For this, we needed to get out to sea. However, the local fishing boat charters

cancelled due to

the rough seas. A

Jet Ski answered the problem. A Jet Ski can manage the heavy sea-swells easily. It worked; within the first cast, Hugh hooked into a Spanish mackerel riding shotgun on the back. Soon after, a Queen Fish took the lure. We were fishing off Miles Island with the sharks and turtles, the water boiling with mackerel. It was a fantastic scene until an enormous wave side-swept the ski, rolling all happy anglers off. One hand grabbing onto the back of the ski, one hand on Hugh, we re-boarded the boat. All was lost, except Hugh held onto the rod! Extreme fishing is the phrase that comes to mind.



During a camping expedition in to the bush, we became bogged in the 4x4 Patrol, unexpectedly found our cat on the roof rack and found this fantastic crocodile slide.

During my first weekend back in East Timor, Clare came with me. It was a brief visit for her, but I felt she got a good feel for the place and became more comfortable knowing where I was to live and work for the next two months.





I had been reading the book, 'Dirty Little War' by John Martinkus – a journalist who tells an eyewitness story of Indonesia's sustained campaign of terror from 1997 to 1999. Per Capita, the atrocities carried out far exceeded that of the Jewish Holocaust, some 25% of the population died. During the twenty-five year Indonesian occupation people had three choices, 1) resist and fight the occupation forces, 2) assume the occupation was going to last forever and join the occupation, or 3) do nothing and live in hope of things getting better. People who joined the occupation forces became a militia against their own people and a 'Dirty Little War' broke out, a Tragedy in a Tragedy.

After the liberating UN forces arrived at the end of 1999,

the Indonesian forces departed destroying houses, water supplies, electricity and other infrastructure as they went. Two camps remained; those who previously joined forces with the occupying forces and those that did not. Today, these two factions exist with resulting conflicts and political turmoil threatening.

I had a chance meeting with a Timorese man in a coffee shop in the mountain village of Same. He told me that as a teenager during the 'crisis' he was repeatedly tortured for information about his uncle, a suspected partisan messenger. Just before the 'crisis' ended his uncle was captured and buried alive for his efforts, but not before every bone in his body was broken and a gag stuck in his mouth. He told me after the 'crisis' he wanted to kill every Indonesian. He went so far as to round up a few to shoot. The police however stopped his car releasing the hostages. That was eight years ago. I was awestruck by the repentance I now witnessed by him and many other



Timorese. This young man has met God, is now an interpreter and an Indonesian go between. He holds no anger or hatred. He has forgiven those who tortured him and his family and especially his uncle. He has moved on. This young man was in a better place than I was. I was still getting over the horror of the whole episode and trying to deal with the fact East Timor trades heavily with Indonesia, Indonesian food is their favourite, Indonesian cars and buses are everywhere, Indonesian education is top of the bill as is learning the Indonesian language, and Indonesia is their favourite holiday destination. Can you believe this? God has worked His thing here on a large scale.



My last MEDEVAC (medical evacuation) was from Suai. Two young men had been protesting and shot, one in the chest, one in the arm. Protestors had burnt over fifty homes nearby. The protests are in advance of next year's elections after which the UN plans to pull out and leave the security of the country to the people. The people I spoke to prefer a gradual withdrawal not the expected mass exit.



During my last two months, several boys from the local church helped me move house. The new MAF family arriving have five children, too many for the small home MAF had been using.

I also received an invite to one of our local staff's wedding. I find this very honouring to be an outsider on the inside.

The Australian Ambassador to East Timor with his entourage drove through the mountains to the town of Suai for the experience. This took an entire day, an experience he did not want to repeat, so he called MAF to fly him back.

He attended a festival to celebrate the opening of a new



water supply to five villages in the area sponsored by AUSAID. He asked me to join him. At one point, I thought he indicated I ought to speak, but thankfully, I escaped the opportunity, especially as everyone spoke in Tetum.



We had a lunch of Buffalo. Not a veggie in sight; every part of the Buffalo cooked to the full in peculiar sauces. I dared not to ask which part I ate; some was definitely rawhide and some seemed like the unmentionables.

MAF import aviation fuel in 200 litre barrels. Shipping empty barrels back to Australia is expensive. Instead, we donate these surplus empty barrels to a local project 'drums on farms'. This project cleans and transports the drums to farmers in the hill country so they can store grain.

It has been four months since landing in East Timor for the first time. I have flown over 100 flights and met hundreds of people, provided many MEDEVAC flights and dealt with the issues of TB and Malaria. I have hand pumped almost 4,000 litres of aviation fuel and kept MTX the GA8 Airvan flying, moved house from one part of town to another, visited numerous villages by air and motorcycle, spoke at several house group meetings and attended a wedding and had lunch



with the Bangladesh Peace Keeping Force and another day with the Australian Ambassador. I enjoyed flying the mountains even in terrible weather. Most of all I enjoyed working with Lito our local operations manager who seemed to be by my side most of the time. In saying goodbye for the second time, I am grateful for the engineering staff in Mareeba who helped me enormously in keeping the aircraft serviced, and to Kevin Kraak who came over twice armed for MTX's major maintenance, and to Clint Smith for always being on the end of the phone and for his expertise in training me to fly in the mountains. I also appreciated the daily Skype sessions with Gary Toews in Cairns, often the only person I spoke to that day, other than Lito.



Our prayers are with the Lowe family who have arrived safely. I am thankful to be back with my family in Gove.

During my absence, Clare had the unenviable task of packing up the house in preparation for our move. My first weekend back in Gove, we moved to the nearby town of Nhulunbuy, 19km away. Our house is slightly more modern than our previous house with a tiled floor – luxury!

On this first weekend in our house, a visiting couple found a Joey in the Latram River. She was just a couple of eyes looking out of the reeds. We took her in, warmed her up from her freezing experience, named her Lucky and now she has become Clare's fourth Joey.



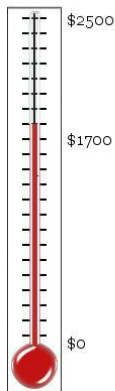
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In October, Aaron started boarding school at Peach Lutheran College in Cairns. Immi is finishing her final year at school, so both will overlap for one term. In December, we reunite again when we take a trip back to the UK for furlough. Kiri finishes her second year at Monash University and Tristan remains our only child at home.



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We are actively seeking more support for our work here in the Asia Pacific so that we can continue to serve for another four years. If you would like to support us in our ministry with MAF, to make a donation or simply to pray for us, please contact us.



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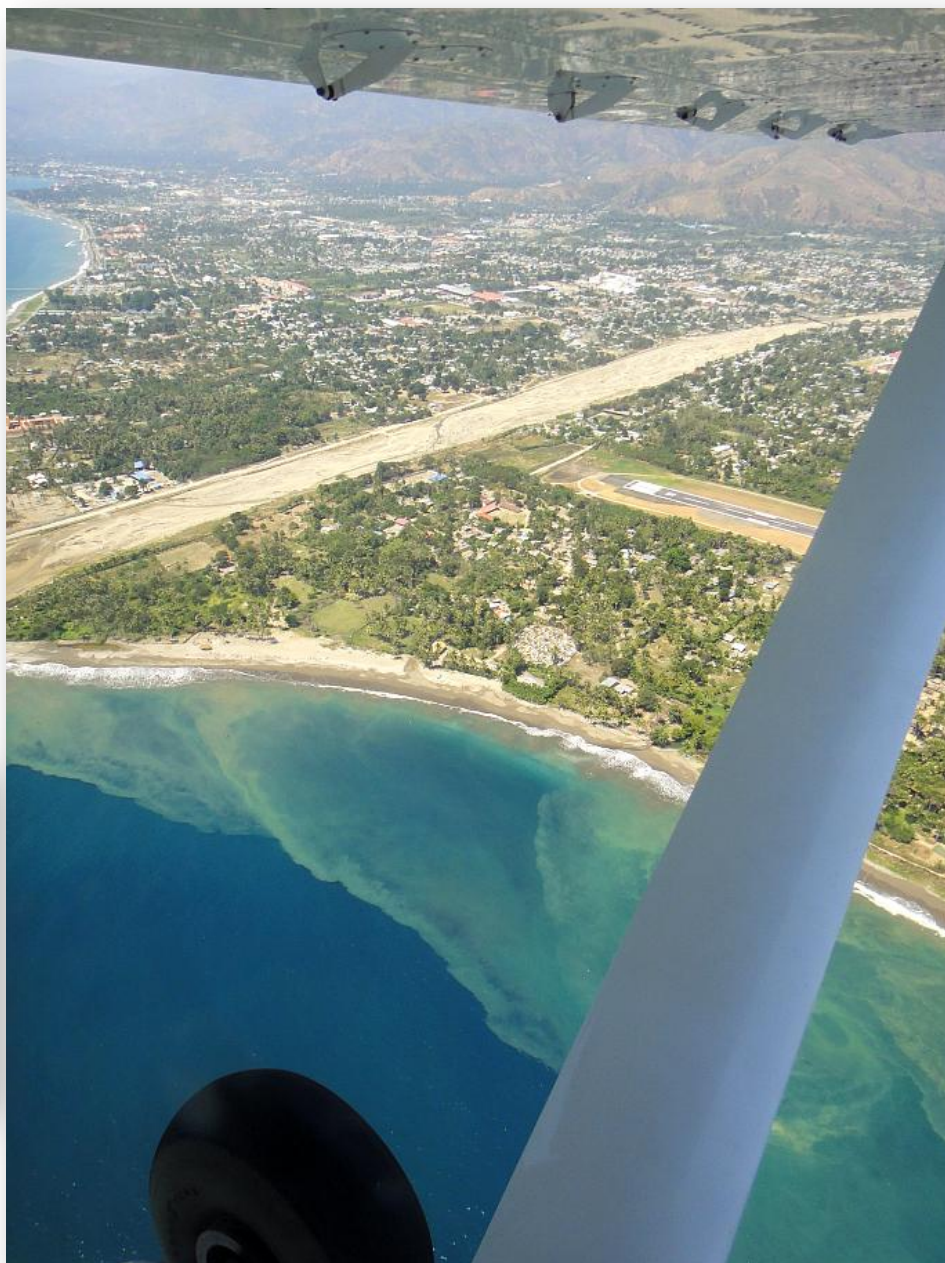
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