

News from

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serving with

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The Airmen and the Headhunters

Near the end of World War II, a US B-24 *Liberator* bomber was shot down over Japanese-occupied Borneo in what is now called Kalimantan, Indonesia. The surviving crew feared they would fall prey to either the merciless Japanese or to the head-hunting **Dayaks**, who are native to the island. To their great surprise, the airmen were rescued—not eaten—by the tribesmen, who then hid and protected them from the Japanese. What followed is an extraordinary tale involving an eccentric British major, the

Japanese army running from raids by blowpipe-toting headhunters, and Australian special forces using a bamboo runway and a tiny *Auster* airplane to get the airmen home. (For the rest of the story, see the book, *The Airmen and the*



Headhunters, by Judith M. Heimann, or the PBS special by the same name.)

So why did the Dayak tribesman protect the Americans? Partly it was their hatred for the Japanese occupiers, but it was also the memory of the Christian missionaries who had lived and worked among them prior to the war. It was the Gospel of Grace which still changes hearts that was working in them. And, this brings us to a tale of another airman. In 1929 missionaries **George and Anna Fisk** traveled to Borneo to work among the “wild men.” There George found the natural barriers of jungle and mountains hugely discouraging until God gave him a vision of using airplanes to penetrate the heart of the world’s second largest island. It took time, but George learned to fly, and a Beech *Staggerwing* on floats was procured and put into service. Sadly the airplane was lost when the war started. However, in 1944, two Christian military airmen heard George’s story and, inspired by it, went on to start MAF after the war.

So, what of Borneo, or Kalimantan, today? God continues to build His church among the Dayaks. With western missionaries still serving there, God is also calling tribesman like **Pastor Nasion** to serve as indigenous missionaries. Nasion works among the Punan people who are considered among the poorest in Borneo. The child mortality rate is 35%. Half of the men and 70% of the women are illiterate. And in Nasion’s village, some children don’t wear shoes to school because they don’t have any. As for himself, Nasion and his family live on the small stipend supplied by his denomination along with gifts of rice and wild pork from his congregation. Some months ago, in order to take the opportunity to pastor, Nasion left the good job he had as an MAF strip agent—someone who lives near one of the remote airstrips serviced by MAF, who prepares passengers and loads of goods, and helps the pilot service the airplane when he arrives. But, as a pastor, Nasion has also seen God’s great blessing: a paralyzed man healed; an insane man changed completely through prayer, and people who didn’t know and didn’t believe, now trusting our living Savior.



While the jungles of Borneo are still as dense and unyielding as they were for George Fisk, the airplane has become a valuable tool, not only in supporting the growth of the church, but also in being a community resource for people living far from Home Depot and the hospital. Among those serving with MAF there today are **Brian and Holly Underhill**. I (Gene) had the privilege of working with Brian a few years ago as he trained at Moody Aviation in Spokane. **And this is the part where you come in: because you pray for us, because you support our ministry with MAF, pilot/mechanics like Brian are being trained and the church in Borneo is growing.** Thank you for being part of the chain from airmen to headhunters in sharing the love of Jesus!



The Big Gage

So, again, a hearty **thank you** to all you faithful partners who have stood with us in our ministry with MAF. You have made this work possible. We understand what it takes to dig a little deeper and give a little more because we are helping support a couple of missionary families ourselves. We know the last few years have been difficult for many of you, and we appreciate those of you who have been able to step up and fill the gap even while some others of you have had to tighten the purse strings. But, here's the difficult truth: the cost of living just keeps going up. It's been increasing about 3% per year, while medical is pushing 6%. As a result, MAF had to raise the minimum ministry support levels they ask of each of us missionaries. They needed to do this to maintain the financial health of the organization, and to make sure that their missionary families around the world are adequately cared for so they can keep ministering.

As a result, our ministry support level is running about 83% of where it should be. Now, I'm a visual sort of person, and used to looking at airplane instruments, so I thought it would be helpful for you to see what all this looks like on a **gage**. Airplane gages are designed to be easy to read—and it's not because pilot's aren't that smart—it's because we have to be able to gather the information quickly. We know your time is precious, so here's how to read the gage at a glance. Color codes are used to identify ranges. **GREEN**, obviously, is **good**. This is the "normal operating range" where we want to

keep needle at all times. The **BLACK**, or unmarked, range is **ok** for operation, but is not normal. If we are operating there, we want to be moving toward the green.

YELLOW is for **caution**—we can't operate in this range very long before bad things start to happen. And **RED** means things are **starting to come apart**. Well, we hope you can see by the gage that it's time to sit up and pay attention. These next few months we're going to make it a matter of concerted prayer and effort to get the needle back up into the green, normal, range. **Will you help us with this? Will you pray with us?** If you've been following our letters for a while but haven't participated recently, would you be willing to make a gift every month, or perhaps a lump sum once a year? If you've been with us for a while, would you consider making a bump in your giving to keep up with that 3% rise every year?



Wow, we hope you know that the work of MAF is a ministry and a blessing around the world, and invite you to take part in the joy that comes from participation. So, if you're wondering how to get started, or how to make a change, drop us an **email** at garnold@maf.org, or give MAF a **call**, or you can even go to www.maf.org/arnold to **give online**. Thanks so much. You are an appreciated and vital part of this ministry.

Rejoicing in Christ,

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