



*Pratts' Pilgrimage
August 2009*

We've come a long way...



MAF veteran "Charlie Brown" as a wheelplane in West Kalimantan, circa 1970!



Attaching the hoist and lifting "Mike Charlie Delta."



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"It's a matter of perspective."

The kids' eyes were wide with excitement and wonder as they stared all around the great city. They saw nice cars, people in fancy clothes, a shopping mall, and marvelous streets. As we drove along, they kept talking about how great the city was and how they never wanted to leave such a wonderful place; if only their town was 1/2 as glamorous as this great city! So what is this great city, is it Chicago, London, Paris; no, it is Palangkaraya. As we adjusted to life in Palangkaraya, at times we thought about how lacking and far behind the times it is. No real recreation areas, frequent power shortages, fuel shortages, no nice restaurants or shopping. PLR may be named "kota cantik" (the beautiful city), but in my more cynical moments I named it "kota kurang" (the city that's lacking). However, from these boys' perspective, compared to their village in the interior, PLR was a place of wonder and excitement. And from their perspective, it makes sense. Their village doesn't have air-conditioned buildings, the gasoline and electricity are in even shorter supply, and their village certainly doesn't have a shopping mall with a video arcade! It was fun to watch our friends from the interior experience life in "the big city" for a weekend. It was an eye-opening time and a reminder that our worldview shapes our expectations.

The next stage...

Things have been complicated here in Palangkaraya ever since we moved here. Between staff shortages and a major construction project lasting 2 years, there's been a lot on our plates other than just flying. But thankfully the new base is on-line (there are still many smaller projects though), and we are fully staffed (3 pilot/mechanic families)! With the new resources that have become available we're looking for new ways to increase MAF's impact in Central Kalimantan. We're finally at a point where we can begin to expand our ministry to take on more flying and ministry trips to the interior. With the completion on the maintenance hangar, things have just gotten easier. Gone are the days of carrying our tools down to the airplane in small hand-boxes, waiting for the rain to pass, or having to run up to the office every 2 minutes because we needed another washer or screw to replace the one we just dropped in the river. Increased maintenance efficiency allows us to take on more flight requests because the airplanes are down less time per inspection. With the increased staff we now have more people to do the same amount of work. We joke that with going from 2 to 3 pilot/mechanics we increased our work force by 33%!

It's raining ash!

The need for water is something in the States most of us really don't understand. We turn on our taps and have instant drinking water. We have water for our lawns, to wash our cars, and irrigate our crops. We're realizing just how much we took that all for granted. It's dry season here now, and it's been a super dry one (it hasn't rained in 2 months, which is unheard of here). This creates several problems for MAF and for living here. First of all it makes flying difficult as our "runways" literally begin to disappear. What was a long, wide section of river now becomes narrow and littered with underwater obstacles. Sandbars, rocks, and sunken trees all appear at low water, changing what was once a nice place to land into a minefield ready to do major damage to our airplane. And in some cases the river becomes too shallow for the airplane, thus isolating an already isolated people.

The second big flying and health challenge is "smoke season." As the rains slow (this year totally stopped), the local farmers clear sections of jungle for planting rice. The trees are cut down and all the scrub grass and brush is burned off. However, when the scrub is burned off, peat moss a few inches below ground begins to smolder, putting off a thick, acrid, choking smoke. The smoke can become so thick that we cannot fly because the visibility decreases to less than 1 mile. At that point even the commercial jets can't land in Palangkaraya, and the city is cut off. Obviously breathing smoke from smoldering peat moss creates many health problems as well. We're already waking up with burning eyes and headaches, and some mornings breathing can be somewhat labored. Robyn recently came home from taking Samantha on a walk, claiming it was raining ash. I thought she was overreacting, but you can see the ash raining down through the grey sky and the rising sun looked only like a faint glowing light bulb. The scary thing is the smoke hasn't gotten bad yet! One of our Indonesian workers explained that a few years ago the smoke was so bad you couldn't see more than 10 feet! If it doesn't start raining soon, we'll have to leave our home and wait out the smoke in East Kalimantan.



Ninety minutes after sunrise. It looks like a scene from an apocalyptic thriller.



The following morning was even worse. You can just see the roof of our neighbor's house across the street, 70 feet away!



First flight with dad!

Prayer and Praise

Praise the Lord for the completion of the new base, and that we are fully staffed again!

Praise the Lord for our many faithful supporters who continue to support our ministry in spite of the economy.

Please pray for rain.

Please pray for safe flight operations and good decision making as we operate in more challenging conditions.

Please let us know how we can be praying for you!

**Serving Christ in Palangkaraya, through you,
Jason, Robyn, and Samantha**