

# Pederson's Progress



Fall 2009

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***“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”***  
**Proverbs 19:21**

Sometimes crazy, unexpected things happen. On a recent Friday afternoon I received a call from a friend of mine, missionary doctor Bill Clemmer, telling me there was a situation where a young missionary volunteer might be in need of a medical evacuation flight. Missionary pilots obviously relish that kind of flight, so I was interested to hear more.

Dr. Bill explained that at lunch that day Caleb, the 19-year-old missionary volunteer in question, had swallowed a piece of meat that had become lodged in his esophagus. While he could still breathe OK, the tube down to his stomach had become totally blocked so that he couldn’t drink and couldn’t even swallow his own saliva. So it was likely that if things didn’t change he would need expert medical help within 24-36 hours to avoid a life threatening situation. I immediately felt empathy for Caleb as I have had the experience of being out in the bush, trying to be polite by eating the mystery meat before me. Sometimes after chewing a tough piece of meat for a few minutes without successfully reducing its size you wonder if you should just go ahead and try to swallow it. Caleb proved that’s probably not a good idea.

Caleb was with Dan, another veteran missionary friend of mine. They had driven three days to get out to this site, Dibaya Lubwe along the Kasai River. Preliminary work was being done for the construction of a pastor training school at this remote location. Dan had previously told us about the plans to establish the school, and we had even marked the village location in our aircraft GPS navigation unit. I knew there were the remains of an old airstrip there, but it was surrounded by the village, and no airplane that we knew of had ever landed there. Dan’s plan had been to construct a new airstrip on land outside of the village purchased by the mission for the site of the new school.

Dr. Bill gave them a few suggestions for this predicament and encouraged them to at least find a clinic where an IV could be obtained to administer some fluids to avoid dehydration. Dan asked if they might try hanging Caleb upside down and shaking him, but Dr. Bill advised against that method! We all prayed for an easier solution than evacuation, but I also set the wheels in motion to have an airplane fueled and ready for an early Saturday morning departure if necessary. I had contact with Dan by phone in the evening and asked him to drive on the airstrip, measure the length and width, and look for any obstacles or holes. My biggest concern was crowd control, so Dan said he would enlist the local police to provide security if needed.

At 5:30 AM Saturday morning, I was awakened by the phone. Dan said they needed the flight and that Caleb had spent a miserable, sleepless night. Dr. Bill offered to come along, and we picked up

another Congolese pastor on the way to the airport. After verifying that the weather was OK, we took off for the 275-mile flight to Dibaya Lubwe.

Arriving overhead, we saw hundreds of people lining the airstrip. After landing we were surrounded by people, with the police being the first in line to have their pictures taken with the airplane. Dan helped restore order; we loaded Caleb in the airplane and took off for Kinshasa. Soon after landing Caleb was seen by a surgeon who used an endoscope to successfully resolve the blockage. The doctor confirmed that Caleb was just inside the window of time to avoid serious life-threatening damage.



*Caleb, returning to the interior*

After a week of recovery, Caleb was included on one of my flights back to the interior to resume his work. He expressed his perplexity about God's purpose in the whole episode, but was grateful for the flights and the help he received. I don't know how God will use Caleb in the future, but I'm glad he does have a future. If nothing else, it's another story of God's faithfulness to His servant, even in the midst of unexpected problems. Thanks for enabling us to be here to demonstrate God's love.

**Thanks for your continued prayers:** In our last letter we wrote about the threat of huge tax increases from the local aviation authorities. Unfortunately, the situation is still not resolved. One good development is that the aviation operators have banded together to provide a united voice to respond to the tax increases and the dysfunction of the aviation authorities. During several meetings with other aviation operators, MAF's safety culture and experience in Congo have been positively recognized. We appreciate your prayers as we seek a just resolution to these challenges. Pray especially for our Program Manager, Greg Heller, as he deals with these difficult situations.

We greatly appreciate your prayers and financial partnership. Thanks for your support of our ministry with MAF in Congo.

In His Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Garth + Jody".

Garth & Jody Pederson  
Sam, Anna, and Nicholas

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