

YET THOSE WHO WAIT FOR THE LORD WILL GAIN NEW STRENGTH

THEY WILL
MOUNT UP WITH
WINGS LIKE
EAGLES
ISAIAH 40:3IA

How do you buy an expensive two-engine cargo airplane to use for the Lord's work in the jungles when you don't have a dime to pay for it?

FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS

Jamie Buckingham

THE BIG DC-3, engines stopped, had been sitting at the end of the abandoned grass runway at the village of Puerto Limon for almost five hours, waiting for the rain to stop. Pilot Roy Minor and co-pilot George Fletcher were pacing up and

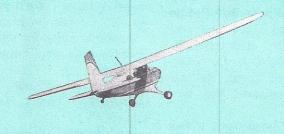
down the steeply slanted aisle, obviously as restless about the weather as I. We were headed to Bogota. From there the DC-3 would go on to its base at the Summer Institute of Linguistics Center at Limoncocha, Ecuador, and I would catch the air lines for Peru—that is, if we ever got off the ground in this miserable weather.

Unable to land on the short strip at Lomalinda the night before, Roy had landed the big plane on the longer commercial strip at nearby Puerto Lleras. A former Air Force bomber pilot with graying hair, Roy now held the position once held by Bernie May who had since moved to North Carolina as the Executive Director for the Jungle Air and Radio Service of the Wycliffe Bible Translators—JAARS. George Fletcher was on loan to JAARS in Ecuador—to learn to fly the DC-3—from his

regular assignment as a pilot in the Philippines.

At seven o'clock that morning the three of us had been driven out to the airstrip in a jeep from Lomalinda, ten miles away, and left there. By the time we finished the preflight check, which for some odd reason included George Fletcher kicking the tires on the monstrous old plane-I used to kick the tires on my old Luscombe but never did know why-the weather had closed in and the rain started. We stood under the wing for a while until the rain got too hard, and then dashed for the back door, pulling the steps up behind us. Now it was almost noon and the rain was still drumming on the top of the old metal plane in a low, steady roar.

The DC-3 was a unique kind of airship. No other flying machine had been a part of the international



scene and action so many years, cruised every sky known to mankind, been so ubiquitous, admired, cherished, glamorized, known the touch of so many different national pilots, and sparked as many maudlin tributes as this one plane. It was without question the most successful aircraft ever built.

The first-blush era of the DC-3 (and it's forerunner, the DC-2) went all the way back to 1936. At that time Hitler had reoccupied the Rhineland in defiance of the Locarno Pact. There was a bloody civil war going on in Spain and the League of Nations had fallen apart, abandoning Ethiopia to be raped by the Italians. Who would have dreamed that in the midst of this world-wide carnage a great silver bird would be born which would outlast the empires of Hitler and Mussolini—the queen of the world skies.

Fund Raising: One of the secrets of fund-raising in JAARS has been to talk about God's provision, rather than man's need. So one morning in Pittsburgh at the First Presbyterian Church, Bernie refrained from talking about the lack of equipment in South America (including their need for a DC-3), and spent the hour sharing stories of the miraculous way God had already provided. It was a principle which never failed to reap dividends.

Immediately after his talk Bernie was approached by Paul Duke, a member of the Christian couples class at First Presbyterian.

"I'm chief pilot for the Blaw-Knox Steel Corporation," Paul Duke said in introduction. "I don't know anything about your needs in South America, but my company has a DC-3 which it is getting ready to dispose of. Are you interested?" It was a direct answer to prayer. Bernie had a three o'clock TWA flight back to Philadelphia, but Paul took him out to the airport and around to the big hangar where Blaw-Knox kept its planes. In the gloom inside the hangar Bernie saw a fully equipped DC-3.

"Do you think we could get it for JAARS?" Bernie asked, his heart beating wildly for he sensed God was answering his prayer right before his eyes.

"I'll talk to the people in charge," Paul said. "But you've got to remember, if you get it, it will be because God intends for you to have it—not because Blaw-Knox wants to give it to you. Therefore, it will come to you in God's way."

Safely strapped in the seat for his flight to Philadelphia, Bernie reached in his briefcase and pulled

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out his Bible. It just fell open to Psalm 37:4; "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

"Wow!" Bernie said out loud, causing those around him to stop their talking and look. But Bernie was too excited to know God was speaking—through circumstances and through his Word. It was something to be excited about. He just knew God had promised him that DC-3.

A week later Bernie got a call from Paul. "Bad news, Bernie. I've discovered the chairman of our board had already promised the plane to Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania as a donation."

"But I was so sure," Bernie told his wife, Nancy, when he hung up. "I still believe God is going to provide that plane for JAARS. I'm going back up to Pittsburgh and talk to Paul Duke."

Ask The Lord: Like Bernie May, Paul Duke was a man of prayer. When Bernie arrived Paul said, "Let's just commit this entire matter to the Lord." Without saying any more he dropped to his knees in his living room and Bernie hit the floor beside him.

"Lord," Paul prayed, "I don't believe you ever take anything away after you've promised it unless you intend to give us something better. I don't know what could be better than this DC-3. But whatever it is, we'll thank you and praise you for it."

Rising from his knees Paul said, "Bernie, why don't you talk to the vice-president of Bethlehem Steel Corporation? He's on the Board of Trustees at Lehigh University. I understand Lehigh is going to sell the plane and Bethlehem Steel is handling the negotiations for them."

The matter was becoming more complicated by the minute.

"We'll be glad to sell the plane to JAARS," the vice-president said. "Since all the money goes back to the university we're trying to get as much as possible. Our price is \$64,000."

"That's too much," Bernie said, knowing that not only did he have

no authorization to contract a purchase for JAARS, but even if he did, JAARS didn't have any money set apart for such an expensive item.

"Well, make us an offer," the executive said. "We'd really like to see JAARS get the plane."

Bernie fumbled for words, hoping the executive would offer to donate the plane.

"How about \$60,000?" the executive asked. "That's really a good bargain."

But Bernie, of course, had no money at all. The more he thought about being there in the office of

The Jungle Aviation and Radio Service is the famed supply and service arm of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, which is passionately active throughout the world in bringing the Holy Bible into the language of every nation, land, and tribe. This story is excerpted from Jamie Buckingham's blockbuster new book about JAARS, "Into the Glory," which was more than two years in research and preparation, and which has just been published by Logos. The cover art for this Journal issue was especially painted by the outstanding artist, Peter Skirka, for the book jacket of "Into the Glory." The book is available in hard cover in most Christian bookstores at \$5.95.

this industrial executive trying to buy a plane for nothing, the more embarrassed he felt.

"I'm sorry, Mr. May," the man said, standing up behind his desk and walking toward the door. "We've got an offer from a Canadian outfit who says they will buy the plane at our price. We'd probably be willing to turn it over to you for \$55,000. But if that's too much, you'll just have to lose it."

Bernie returned home, disheartened and confused. He was so sure God had spoken to him saying the plane would belong to JAARS.

A week later he received a call

from the assistant to the vice-president at Bethlehem Steel. "Would you believe we haven't been able to sell that airplane," the fellow chuckled. "God must be on your side. We've had three bona fide offers, all of which fell through at the last minute. Come on up and see us. We're open for any reasonable offer."

Bernie contacted Lawrence W. Routh, North Carolina businessman who was chairman of the board of directors for JAARS. Routh agreed to go with Bernie to talk to the Bethlehem Steel people one more time

"What will you give us for the plane?" the vice president asked after Bernie and Routh were settled in his office.

"We'll give you \$32,000," Bernie

Lawrence Routh cleared his throat and looked at Bernie out of the side of his eyes. JAARS didn't have that kind of money. In fact, the JAARS board wasn't even sure they should have a DC-3, and here Bernie May, a pilot from Peru, was obligating them for a small fortune. Mr. Routh started to speak up. He needed to let the executive know that Bernie was not authorized to transact business, but the vice-president was on his feet.

"You've got to be kidding, Mr. May."

"Nope, that's my top dollar," the confident pilot said. "God has promised us the plane and that's all God is willing to pay."

"Well, since it's God who's going to buy this plane from us, I guess we'd better accept His offer," the executive smiled. "The plane is yours."

Mr. Routh, who had been half standing, collapsed heavily in his chair.

"Could we pay off the debt over a period of two years?" Bernie asked. He had never transacted any business before, but now, assured God was in control, he was speaking with boldness.

Taken aback, the executive said, "Why, I guess that will be all right—although I hoped you'd be able to come up with the cash."

"How about \$8,000 down and \$8,000 every six months until the debt is paid?" Bernie asked.

"Yes, that will be all right, too," the executive said, making hasty notes as Bernie outlined God's deal.

"Great!" Bernie said. "Now how much time will you give us to raise the first \$8,000?"

"What!" the executive said, leaping to his feet. "You mean you don't have any money at all?"

"Not a penny," Bernie grinned. "It's all in God's bank account. It will take us a while to transfer the funds, that's all."

"I see," the vice-president said, settling gingerly in his chair. From the other chair Bernie heard Lawrence Routh utter a low moan.

"Well, we usually don't handle business this way," the steel magnate said. "However, we have to hold on to the plane until the first of the year so it can be taken as a tax deduction from the donor. Therefore, if you can come up with the eight thousand by December 31, we'll let you have the plane."

As they walked out of the Bethlehem Steel offices Lawrence Routh asked, "Where did you come up with that figure of \$32,000?"

"Gee, I don't know," Bernie said, still amazed by all that had taken place. "It was half of \$64,000 and it seemed to be the figure God wanted me to give."

Mr. Routh shook his head. "The JAARS board meets next month. I trust you'll be present and let them know what you've done."

Faith in Action: The Board of Directors was divided. Some of them saw the vision and were for it. Others were cautious. After all, they'd never done anything like that before. They told Bernie if he could raise twice the amount needed for the first payment, \$16,000, by December 31 they would consider God intended JAARS to have the plane. Otherwise, it was no deal.

But Bernie had heard a word from God. Now all he had to do was trust God to supply the funds. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas he pulled out all the stops, speaking to

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everyone he knew about God's promise to provide the plane.

The little Marcus Hook Baptist Church, where the Mays had their membership, joined them in prayer. A group of businessmen in Philadelphia formed a sponsoring committee. Dr. Lamont, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh called and invited Bernie to speak to a group of businessmen. On a sudden impulse Dr. Lamont asked the men to make contributions through a freewill offering. Seven thousand dollars came in that morning. Churches, Bible classes, individuals, housewives-all caught the vision of that big plane flying the jungles of South America on a mission for God. And at the watch night service, December 31, at the Marcus Hook Baptist Church, Bernie stood to his feet and, in a voice choked with emotion, announced that the Lord had sent in \$22,000 toward the purchase of the DC-3. By the end of the first six months the entire \$32,000 had been raised and the plane belonged to JAARS, debt free.

Paul Duke, in reflecting on God's method, reminded Bernie that the Lord had indeed had a better way than JAARS receiving the plane as an outright donation. Had it been given to them, all these people would not have become involved as interested prayer partners. Not only that, but additional money to condition the plane to send it to South America had been provided through the drive. And besides, the JAARS Board of Directors had seen the result of faith in action. Because the JAARS team in Peru had claimed something from God, and because Bernie and Paul Duke had delighted themselves in the Lord, the desires of their heart had come to pass.

A special dedication for the plane was held at the Philadelphia International Airport on February 20th of that year. Between seven hundred and eight hundred people—most of whom had made some kind of contribution toward its purchase—showed up to see the plane dedicated for its ministry in South America.

The ceremony finally over, Bernie and Captain Lynn Washburn from Ozark Airlines, climbed into the cockpit and requested taxi instructions from the tower. They were on their way.

"Philadelphia ground control, this is DC-3 two thousand Lima, request taxi instructions for take off."

"Say, DC-3," the voice came back over the radio, "what was all that celebration going on around your plane?"

Bernie gave the ground control people the full story, how this was a mission airplane on its way to South America to fly Bible translators into the jungle.

"Roger, two thousand Lima. Cleared to runway two seven. Wind: two seven zero degrees at seven knots. Altimeter: three zero zero eight. Have a safe flight."

Taxiing away from the ramp Bernie heard his radio come to life again. This time a rough bass voice said, "Ah, two thousand Lima, this is Eastern Air Lines three two seven. We know where you're going and want to wish you the very best."

Moments later another voice came through the speaker. "Two thousand Lima, this is the United 737 right behind you in the line up. We want to say our prayers go with you, sir."

One by one the departing airplanes at the Philadelphia Airport came on the air, all wishing them the best—some promising their prayers.

Finally, as the DC-3 was sitting at the end of the runway, the Philadelphia tower came on the air. "DC-3 two thousand Lima, cleared for take off and may the Lord bless you, sir."

No airplane ever got a finer send off.

Excerpted from the book, "Into the Glory" by Jamie Buckingham. Copyright 1974 Logos International.

Jamie Buckingham is pastor of the Tabernacle Church, Melbourne, Fla., and a writer for many publications, secular and religious. He has a number of books to his credit, including "Run Baby Run," "Ben Israel," "Shout it From the Housetops" and "A Tramp for the Lord."