

Collins' Commission

Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. – Isaiah 40:31

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings from Yap, Micronesia. We have a lot of news to share with you, since it has been such a long time since we sent out a newsletter. I hope this letter is informative and will bring you up to speed about what we have been up to and how we are doing. It was a very "FULL ON" year, and at times, the amount of work we had on our plates was overwhelming. But as of three weeks ago, we crossed some major hurdles, had a short vacation, and also have some new help in our ministry! So, we are in a much better place now.

AVIATION:

From the last time we wrote, I would say that our year had started out well. We got a visit from Virgil Gottfried, who is the man Franklin Graham put in charge of helping Pacific Mission Aviation transition into the King Airs. Virgil was a pleasure to have with us and his wealth of aviation knowledge helped us make some important steps towards becoming more professional. Virgil also brought with him Jay Hibbard, who is a craftsman with sheet metal, and was able to help both our Palau and Yap bases with many projects.

Virgil was also here for our celebration of the new Palau Hangar opening. We flew down to Palau with our whole aviation crew and attended a ceremony that was attended by many dignitaries, including the President of Palau. The ceremony was to give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness in making that project possible. It was a wonderful time where we had our whole aviation team and all our planes in one place for the first time ever.



PMA Yap crew in Palau

Unfortunately, the Guam airspace was super busy, and we could not do as much training as we had hoped for. Also, the environment was totally different from where we normally fly in the islands, so it was really tough, and we did very poorly. This was a wake-up call for me, that we really needed to step up our game.



King Air landing in Woleai

The demand for flying in the islands has increased tremendously since we received the King Air aircraft. We tripled the number of hours that we used to fly with the old Queen Airs. More hours means more maintenance, and on the side, there was a lot of paperwork to keep up to date with the FAA. In February of 2023, our pilot Dave Kendrick and I went to Guam to renew Amos' Check Airman and for Dave to renew his 6-month IFR Proficiency Check.

Even though it was not our usual environment, the test is the same test for professional pilots worldwide and we needed to rise up to the standard. Our usual mission flights are flying people, cargo, animals, medical patients, air drops, and landing on short, narrow, grass and muddy runways, but the test standards require us to be able to fly in the clouds at a control towered airport like Guam with a squadron of F-16's on an approach right behind us. So, we came away from that flight check with a lot of improvement to make.



Virgil Gottfried enjoying coconut in Woleai

In May we had a new pilot join our team. Paul Ciaramitaro, a Moody Aviation graduate who had been an intern with us in Palau back in 2018, finally gave in to my unceasing attempts to recruit him and came to Yap after having flown with Dynamic Aviation for about 4 years. I was training him to take a check ride in Guam and we were almost ready to go at the end of June, when the FAA told us they had to cancel their trip due to an injury. So, Paul stayed in Yap, and was able to do only “non-commercial” flights, such as medical evacuations, or church ministry flights while our family went to the U.S.

When we were on our furlough, I went to North Carolina to do my annual flight check in the King Air Simulator. It was an intense training period, but I came away with much learned and a satisfactory outcome. When returning through Guam, I had our pilot Paul bring the aircraft up to Guam from Yap. We did 3 days of training before the FAA came. The FAA observed me giving Paul his annual flight check and renewed my Check Airman. I was so relieved to have all those check rides behind me. It was like a big burden fell off my shoulders.

MINISTRY:

Heidi continues to lead the Ladies’ Bible study group with our pastor’s wife Queentina, and they have been encouraged by new members



Our Church Youth group

joining. Right now, they are going through the book of Mark. Heidi also leads Youth Group and always has a great time with the teens. This past summer, our church held a VBS



Summer VBS

program in Yap, and 150 kids attended! PMA also flew a team to Fais Island to hold a VBS there, and 90 kids came. We praise God for the parents and kids being so open to the gospel. In the coming months, we hope to partner again with Samaritan’s purse and do outreach in the schools in Yap and the outer islands.



Tommy's 8th Grade Graduation

HOMESCHOOL:

Homeschool has been a very challenging yet rewarding ministry that Heidi feels very fulfilled in doing each year. This last year she taught 11 kids, ages 8 through 14. Cecilia, who is like family to us, is an invaluable help by keeping 3-year-old Owen safe and out of trouble during school hours. At the end of the school year, we had a special graduation ceremony for the 8th graders in her class. The whole homeschool put on a delightful program and shared what they had learned over the year for their parents. Our co-missionaries from Palau, the Welge family, also have an eighth grader, and they came up to Yap and celebrated with us. Micronesian graduations are a big deal, with scores of candy leis presented to the graduates in congratulations.

FURLOUGH:

This summer, we were planning to go on furlough for 3-4 months. Not only were we due for a furlough after being on the field for 4 years, but Amos’ father had recently been diagnosed with a rare blood cancer called Amyloidosis. Unfortunately, two rounds of chemo had not diminished the cancer. We wanted to go spend some time with him, and Owen also needed to meet his grandparents. Amos also scheduled his annual flight check in North Carolina with the King Air Simulator. Due to Amos being the only pilot, and therefore unable to leave the flight operation for very long, our furlough was condensed into just 6 weeks. We made the most of that short trip, however. Some highlights of our furlough were seeing our family, friends, our home church, and visiting a couple of national parks. We tried to do as many things as possible that we don’t normally get to do while living in Yap. It was a very special time for the kids as they got to ride horses, 4 wheelers, and even got to ride in a friend’s Tesla!



4-Wheeling with Cousin Ezra



Amos enjoyed spending time with his dad and doing some projects around the house to help out. Amos's dad, while battling fatigue, was still driving, mowing the lawn, and in the last couple days that we were there had enough energy to go for a three-mile walk. We are praying that the Lord will deliver him from this cancer.

We were sad not to be able to do a road trip to visit all of you this year. We hope that it will not be so long before we can do another furlough that is long enough

to be able to come around and visit all of you.



Raina riding a mule on her uncles ranch.



Our family, minus James Hoek, Anna and Daisie Collins and my younger brother Micah and his wife Emily

HEIDI'S MOM:

Heidi's mom had also been battling Amyloidosis for several years, and last fall her health finally was deteriorating to the point that she told Heidi that she would not make it till Christmas. Heidi was able to fly to Tasmania with our youngest, Owen, and spend a week with her. On December 17, Gail went to be with the Lord. Heidi was so grateful to have been able to spend those precious moments with her mom.



SOME FUN ON THE SIDE:

Heidi continues to be very passionate about gardening and growing food in the tropics. Between the local people and YouTube, she has learned a lot about how to work with the challenging conditions here. Last year, I had a flight across the country to Pohnpei 1200 miles away, where someone had some goats for sale. We purchased two goats and brought them back in the plane (in kennels) and they have stayed healthy for almost a year now. Then just last week, I brought two more. So now, we have a total of 4 goats and are hoping to breed them and grow our little farm. Now Heidi wants pigs, which just goes to show that women are never satisfied (joke).



Heidi also enjoys learning the handicrafts of the islands and was able to finish weaving her own lava-lava with Cecilia's help. She hopes to improve her weaving skills, as this is an important part of island culture here.





The kids love to swim and go water skiing with the boat. We have a small skiff with a 20 hp motor and it is strong enough to pull the kids and they just have a blast. That is often our Saturday favorite thing to do. The kids are growing up fast. Tommy is 14, Raina is 12, Honora is 10, Theo is 9, and Owen is 3.



GOD'S PROVISION: You have all heard stories before of people who receive financial help right at the exact time of need and it is nothing short of a miracle. Well, we have a story like this I would like to share. Just a few days before our family left for our 6-week trip to the U.S. a man stopped by our house. He runs a non-profit in the islands called Habele, and they provide funding to promote education in the islands. He told me he heard we needed to make a trip to the U.S., and he insisted on helping us financially. He gave us a check to help with our trip and we were shocked by the amount. Essentially it covered our entire trip and more. All our travel, hotels, rental car, and even some fun things we did with the kids were all covered by that very generous gift. I am amazed at how our Lord could whisper in this man's ear that we had a need, and he responded so generously. We were truly blessed by this miracle.



Homeschool kids have a big bash at the end of the year.

We also are very blessed by all of you who partner with us in this ministry. Not only financially, but also with your constant prayers. The Lord has carried us through a rough year, but we are in a good place now, refreshed from our short trip and having additional help in the ministry. We thank you all for your continued support. Going into our 19th year in Yap, this has become our home. We have settled into serving a community that needs the physical support we have the skills to provide. We are also part of a Church whose mission is to Love all People, Build the Body of Christ, and Disciple the Faithful. I cannot imagine any other work that would make us feel more fulfilled in life. We praise God for placing us here and for the support we have from you all. We could not be here without you.

Blessings to you all,

Amos & Heidi Collins

Tommy, Raina, Honora, Theo, & Owen

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