

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 469

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about a missionary pilot named Paul Dye. Wise king Solomon said that there was a time to be born and a time to die (Eccl. 3:2). Our story today will confirm that even though we may face a danger, we will not die until God calls us home!

It happened October 5, 1985. Paul Dye and Steve Estelle were pilots with New Tribes Missions in Colombia, South America. Paul was the veteran with years of experience teaching Steve the ropes of being a jungle pilot. Missionary Tim Cain evangelized in a remote village and was so sick that he called for an airplane to fly him to a medical facility. Paul and Steve answered that call and were flying a single engine Cessna 185. As they approached the village an approaching thunderstorm forced them to land immediately which was down wind. In the excitement of Tim's illness and the bad weather they didn't make a low approach as they usually did to see if it was safe to land.

It was not safe! Tim and his wife were being held hostage by a left wing political group known as FARC. Soon Paul and Steve were also prisoners. When the weather cleared three hostages were left behind and Paul was forced at gunpoint to fly some of the guerrillas to one of their secret camps. Paul was held prisoner there for four days before his miraculous escape.

Fortunately, Paul had an extra key hidden in his shoe. Also important, he also had his Bible. This was a tremendous aid in fortifying his faith and helping him stay close to God. Paul took courage from such passages as I Peter 4:19 **"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."** Paul remained optimistic about escaping even though he was under constant supervision. Even while sleeping a light was shined in his face periodically to make sure he had not escaped. On the fourth night Paul felt that God was telling him to go. Immediately, after the guard shined the light in his face, Paul quietly slipped out from under his mosquito net and spread his blanket over a bunch of clothes hoping it would look like he was still in bed.

There was a heavy fog that night blocking out the light of the moon. Paul crawled in total darkness toward the airplane on his hands and knees. Fighting the tangle of jungle weeds he finally found the plane. It was, however, covered with black plastic, palm leaves and limbs, so it could not be seen from the air. After clearing the plane Paul discovered that it was stuck in the mud and the tail wheel was against a stump. The Cessna 185 is a six seat airplane with an empty weight of almost 2,000 lbs. As Paul wrestled with the plane he took off his shoes hoping to get better traction in the mud. Carefully put his hidden key deep in his pocket. Finally, with the help of God, he was able to turn the plane around. Before starting the engine, however, he felt prompted to make sure the path before him was clear. Thank God he did so, for there was a 55 gallon drum directly in his way.

The heavy fog caused the planes windows to be steamed up, and the landing light didn't work. He did have a taxi light, however, and holding his head out of the window trying to see he pushed the throttle forward. Pilots call this a "zero zero take off". Zero visibility and zero ceiling. Fortunately, the fog saved his life as it kept the guerrillas from shooting him down. At 1,000 meters he looked at the clock in the airplane. It was 1:58 a.m. and he had only an hour and 20 minutes of fuel. He couldn't make it to his home base with this amount of gas and realized he would have to land somewhere at night in total darkness. At 3,000 meters he broke out of the overcast and the stars were brilliant. Paul headed for home painfully aware that he couldn't make it. Once beyond the fog he cautiously

descended, realizing his chances were better to land safely before he ran out of gas. After dodging trees on several occasions he finally landed safely. Miraculously, he did not receive a scratch or damage the plane. He was surrounded by cattle and a swamp. By the grace of God he had landed safely in the dark in the only place in that area where it was safe for him to land. The clock on the instrument panel read 3:23 a.m.

A rancher on horseback took him to a phone and at 6:30 a.m. help was on the way. The plane was gassed up and flown back to the mission. The kidnapers demanded \$130,000 ransom for their three remaining captives, but Paul flew over their camp and dropped leaflets explaining that the mission never paid ransom as it would only encourage more kidnapping. On October 29<sup>th</sup> a newspaper in Bogota reported: *“BOGOTA, Colombia --Left-wing guerrillas have agreed to free three U.S. missionaries kidnapped 24 days ago in Colombia's eastern jungles and turn them over to a government peace commission, a commission source said today.”*

Someone has said that the child of God is indestructible until his life's work is complete. I believe this is true. The Apostle James was imprisoned and beheaded by wicked king Herod. Peter was arrested and placed in the same prison, but was set free by an angel (Acts 12:1-19). This does not mean that Peter was more spiritual than James, it only confirms that God has different plans for each of his children.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did the right thing in deciding to obey God regardless of the consequences. They said: **“King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16-18)**

May we also do the right thing in service God regardless of the consequences.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce