



Missionaries leaving Bolivia to Missionary Congress in Mexico. Seven of us departed to Mexico, six of us were on the return flight leaving Christina (girl in red T-shirt) in Mexico. The man in front the pilot is our good friend who takes care of our planes.

Crash Landing

To all our friends and family

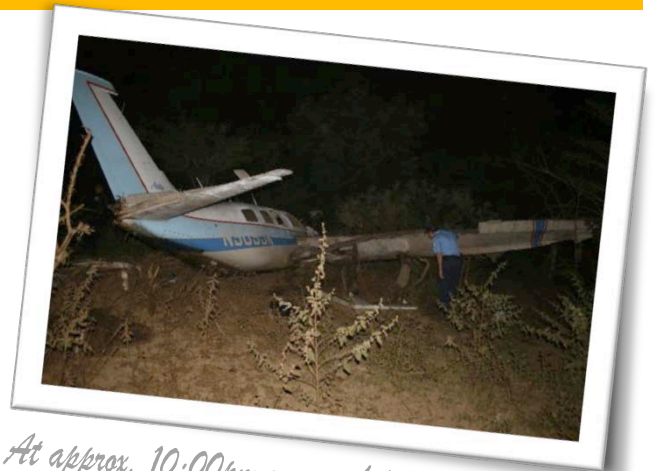
20 December 2008

God's Protecting Hand Over His Children

An experience we will never forget. A test of true faith. All survived the accident.

I Just want to share my personal testimony of how God miraculously spared our lives in the plane accident. I also want to thank God that I can close off the year with my wonderful wife and my two kids. For those of you who have been praying for us, we want to thank you for the many prayers you offered on our behalf. God has been good to us and took us through those difficult times.

After we were finished with the Missionary Congress (Extreme Faith) at the Montemorelos University in Mexico, we left for Guatemala to drop off one of our missionaries and filled the plan with gas. We boarded the small aircraft again and ascended to 21,000 feet in the air. We were all very quiet, some were reading while others were having a good sleep.



At approx. 10:00pm we crash landed in Nicaragua



Our next stop was scheduled to be in Columbia where we would fill up with gas again. We were two hours into the flight just over Nicaragua, when I heard the pilot (Jeff Sutton) talking to the control tower. He then turned around and said “Guys pray, we are losing oil pressure in the engine.”

I knew Jeff was serious, so we immediately offered up a pray for God’s protection. The pilot handed me a black book 4 inches thick and asked me to find the specs on how to glide without the motor. I took the book in disbelief and started going through the pages praying that God would help me find the information quickly. I reached the end of the book without finding the information. I started again and I am saying to myself “Lord I can’t believe this is happening for real.” Finally I found the page and handed the book back to the pilot. By then we started losing cabin pressure and I was given an oxygen bottle to open, which I never figured out how to open. The plane was losing altitude at a rate of 500 ft. per minute, this brought us to normal atmospheric pressure where we did not need the oxygen bottle any more.



On our way to Mexico



Two volcanoes towering in the sky
Guatemala



Youth and families sharing their testimonies

Missionary Congress (Extreme Faith)

The Missionary Congress (Extreme Faith) was held at the University of Morelos in Mexico. It was certainly a success and many young people were motivated to become missionaries over seas. Young people from different walks of life and different educational backgrounds, coming together. Committed to serve in the frontlines and give up the comforts of life to save souls. It was a wonderful experience for us to work in this congress along with Pastor David Gates and to see young people share their testimonies of how great and real God is to them.

I was praying and praying and thinking about my wife and two kids. I looked around and everyone eyes were closed. I am sure they too were praying. The pilot continued communication with the control tower, informing them about the condition of the motor and seeking directions where to land the plane as soon as possible before the motor dies. The order was given to land at the international airport in Managua but it was too far and the motor might have failed going that distance. So the pilot asked for the nearest airstrip in the city we were flying over. Sure enough there was a little landing strip close to where we were. We started looking for the airstrip and circling the area. Meanwhile the clock was ticking, time was running out on us and we had to act quickly before the motor failed on us. Unfortunately, the airstrip was not lit, which made it difficult for us to see where to land.

I saw that we were very low over the houses by then and we still did not find the airstrip. I knew if we were to lose the motor and fall on one of these houses, it would be catastrophic. I asked the Lord to please help us not to kill other people in this crash landing. To make it more scary, I heard a loud beeping sound coming from the cock pit and normally that sound comes on when the plane is about to touch down. Finally the pilot gave the sputtering motor more power and the plane just lifted into the air again moving away from the housing area. Then in dead blackness, away from the city lights, I felt the plane gently going down. We held on to our seat and just waited. Suddenly there was a bang. The left wing ripped off when we struck the top of one of the trees. The aircraft slammed to the ground at a 30 degree angle, nose first and slid across a short field. The landing was short and violent and I felt instant pain to my body.

When the plane came to a halt I opened my eyes and thanked God for sparing my life and the other five missionaries. The first people came to my mind were my wife and two children. This was the shortest prayer of gratitude I had every offered. I immediately opened the door and got out to make way for the others to leave quickly in case of a fire. We had no time to think about pain. Two missionaries were hurt so badly that they were unable to move from their seats. We tried taking them out but were not successful. Thank God the plane did not go up in flames because there was still gas in the right wing. Finally after 4-5 minutes we saw people running towards the plane with their torchlights. With all the help, the villagers got the two missionaries out of the cabin and got them onto a truck immediately and headed to the hospital.



While we were waiting for the police to arrive, I realized the gritty stuff I was spitting out was bits and pieces of two of my broken teeth. I was in a lot of pain because of cuts to my lower lip and a broken jaw. The other missionary (Jerry) broke his collarbone. The young lady (Lily) sitting in front of me fractured her spine and suffered internal damage to one of her organs. She was immediately taken into surgery. The missionary who sat in the co-pilot seat (Juan Carlos) suffered injuries to the head and lost his short-term memory. The pilot had injuries to his chin, right eye and his two legs.

Injured in the accident



The villagers who came out to help us formed a circle at the site and started praying for us and thanking God for his protection over us. They were all evangelicals and it just touched my heart how people can come together and forget doctrinal differences in moments like these. Before the plane touched down, the President of Nicaragua had already given the order for the soldiers and police to guard the plane all night to protect the equipment and baggage. God had been so good to us. The Seventh-day Adventist brothers took care of us at the hospital and brought food and clothing for us. We had absolutely nothing because all our bags were taken to the police station from the crash site. The evangelicals even came looking for us at the hospital just to sing and prayer with us. Although the hospital conditions were very poor, we certainly felt the love of the Nicaragua people.

This would be an experience we will never forget. We are all grateful to God for his miraculous hand once again. Looking at this photo, you can see how God provided this little spot for us in the blackness of the night. God kept the motor running for twenty minutes longer. Took us from 21,000 ft. in the sky to this empty spot safely and kept the plane from bursting into flames. What a wonderful God we serve.



Although most of us are out of the hospital recuperating, the young lady (Lily) is still in the hospital receiving treatment. Please keep Lily in your prayers that she would recuperate and get back to her normal life. I asked Lily if she is coming back to the mission field and she said “Richard, Bolivia is my home, and those kids are my kids.” Lily is one of the bright missionary leaders at the Guayaramerin Industrial School in Bolivia. My mouth is still wired shot giving my jaw time to heal. For now I have to drink my food. On the fifth of January the doctor will take the wire straps out from my mouth. Juan Carlos’s mouth is wired shot also for the next six weeks until his mouth is healed. Just to let you know, the pilot (Jeff Sutton) is back in the air flying his little Mooney airplane. There is certainly not time to lose.

Thank you once again for keeping us in your prayers and for my family and church friends, we hope to see you some time in the near future. It is not quite over for us yet so pray that God will supply the money for us to cover the rest of the medical expenses that the insurance would not cover. God is a great God and we know he is in control. God knows why he permitted this accident and he has a plan for each of us. May God bless you all richly and we hope you enjoy the Christmas season and have a wonderful new year.

Yours in Christ,

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**The Carrera family
loves you all**