



GROUND CREW

AUGUST 2025



Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and establish the work of our hands upon us;
yes, establish the work of our hands!

Psalm 90:17

EARLY DAYS

“Keepin’ Em Flying for the Lord!”

At the end of the second World War in 1945, many military aviators applied their newly acquired skills using aircraft to take the Gospel of Jesus to “the uttermost part of the earth.” Their war service had exposed them to the great need for Christ in places where there were no roads.

By the early 1970’s those aviators neared retirement with few people to replace them. One man, Jim Miller, envisioned a hands-on training ministry where apprentices could develop the skills to maintain small missionary airplanes from tip to tail, as well as the personal and spiritual qualities to thrive on the mission field. Jim shared his idea with Dwight Jarboe as they worked in the JAARS hangar in Waxhaw, NC, and the two men developed the vision of a ministry which would prepare both people and airplanes for worldwide missionary service.



Jim Miller, left, with some of the earliest apprentices at MMS Aviation



The first location at a farm in Coshocton County

Construction begins at the airport in Coshocton, Ohio!



Dwight and his wife, Rena, left Waxhaw to serve with JAARS DC-3 program in Bolivia. Jim moved his family to East Central Ohio and founded MMS Aviation in 1975. From humble beginnings in the garage of a farmhouse, MMS struggled through the lean and trying years of being a new ministry in a difficult economy. In 1978, MMS moved to the Richard Downing Airport and began construction on the first hangar.

In 1982, Dwight and his family came to serve at MMS. Dwight was soon asked to lead MMS through the next phase of growth. Under his 33 years of leadership, MMS increased its physical footprint with two new hangars and expanded the ministry impact by adding engine overhaul and repairs for missionary operators and improving the technical expertise of the staff.



The skeleton of what we now call 'Hangar A'



Dwight explains landing gear systems to an early apprentice.

Decades of Growth 1980s thru 2000s



By the mid-1990's, MMS was well-established in the missionary aviation community. The first international apprentices began to arrive for training as MMS had been approved for student visas by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service. MMS became an FAA Certificated Repair Station, which streamlined exporting completed aircraft and components to ministries around the globe. After nearly 33 years serving as the CEO, Dwight retired in 2016 and the MMS Board of Directors called Phil Maddux to become MMS Aviation's third President & CEO.

Today MMS serves much as it has since the very beginning. Missionary operators still pay only for the parts used on their aircraft, and MMS missionaries are financially supported by generous donors. Over 130 mechanics have been trained for missionary service and airplanes prepared by MMS are flying in every corner of the globe, carrying the name of Jesus to those who have never heard.

Top Left: A very full hangar in 1985

Top Right: The addition of Hangar B

Above: An extensive repair from the early 2000s

Left: Global response trip to MFI

***Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes,
and see that the fields are white
for harvest.***

John 4:35



A Mercy Air helicopter, prepared at MMS, responds to a crisis following a devastating cyclone in southern Malawi.

ACROSS THE GLOBE



IT WAS TOO MUCH TO DO ALONE.

Josh Snader, serving in Papua New Guinea, was maintaining three (soon to be four) Cessna floatplanes, and needed mechanical help. With the rough conditions of the environment on the Pacific island, the maintenance of the airplanes was more than even a good mechanic like Josh could do by himself. So Josh called MMS.

Since the very early years of MMS, the ministry has sent teams of mechanics and apprentices around the world to help mission organizations with aircraft projects and inspections on short-term trips. Global Response Trips are often requested by ministries when they either need specialized help or extra hands. Not only are the planes receiving help, but often the missionaries are receiving the strengthening encouragement they need to keep going. For our apprentices, these Global Response trips have opened their eyes to a particular ministry or location and helped clarify their own mission calling.

As our mechanics get to witness the work of the planes on the field, they gain a deeper understanding and purpose for the work they do every day in the States. Maintaining aircraft in cross-cultural settings equips MMS to train and better prepare apprentices for the ministry ahead of them. With the help of the team MMS sent in March, Josh said “the airplanes are safer and better equipped to fly into the jungle and pick up villagers who need life-saving assistance.”



Top: One of the float planes serving the remote villages in Papua New Guinea

Right: Mike Burch and Dennis Satterthwaite on a Global Response trip to MFI in the 90s

130 STORIES

130 unique stories could be told of how God takes a person's experience and desires and creates opportunities for them to be used for His glory. Some see "missionary calling" as a matter-of-fact assignment for all Christians, while some have heard the call in a personal and specific way. Perhaps both are correct, because men and women from all walks of life have come to rural Ohio for training as missionary aviators. They come undergirded by prayers and financial support of faithful sending saints and leave with deep experience in repairs and maintenance of missionary aircraft.

Of those 130, most have been true apprentices who started with no aviation experience and finished as A&P (Airframe and Powerplant) mechanics. Others came to gain deeper experience or refresh skills that had not been used for years. It has also been our privilege to offer training to international apprentices who will use their aviation skills to serve in their home countries.



Above: Chris Jutte guides apprentices Phil Sperling and Ben Plitt
Bottom Left: Chuck Egbert and Chris Jutte team rivet as apprentices in the late 90s. Both are now MMS staff.
Right: Chris Jutte makes repairs to a wing

"As an apprentice, I was given hands-on opportunities to learn and grow in aircraft maintenance. I worked on live missionary aircraft that are now serving all over the world, and I gained experience in sheet metal work, engine overhauls, inspections and much more.

But beyond the technical skills, I learned what it means to serve the Lord with a firm purpose."
-Chris Jutte

Former apprentice, 18-year veteran missionary with JAARS in Indonesia, currently training staff at MMS



LOOKING *FORWARD*

That small red dot means something. A map in our lobby is spread with thousands of them, and each represents a group of people which remains unreached by the Gospel. Scripture calls them “nations” or “ta ethne” in Greek, meaning ethnic groups. The distinction has nothing to do with geopolitical borders but rather with linguistic, cultural, and historical elements that have kept that nation isolated and distinct from the rest of the world. Over 40% of the world’s population are members of an **unreached** people group meaning there are not enough Christians to sustain a growing, discipling church. And nearly half of those unreached nations are also **unengaged**, with NO knowledge of Christ and NO known effort to reach them.

Where the unengaged are isolated by geography, aircraft are effective tools to bring workers who will make disciples, baptize, and teach the nations to obey what Christ has commanded. We don’t know what the next 50 years will look like at MMS, or if we will even be here in 50 years. But we are sure of this: As long as there are red dots on that map, where people desperately need to hear the name of Jesus and know salvation that comes only through him, and as long as the Lord continues in provision for MMS, we’ll be faithful in service, offering our hearts and hands for Him to use to “Keepin ‘Em Flying For The Lord!”

