

Woods to be missionary pilot

By TOUMONAVA MULLINS
Battalion Staff

This summer while most people are playing tennis, camping and visiting the tourist spots, Dr. Calvin Woods will spend his vacation serving as a missionary pilot in the troubled nation of Zaire.

Woods, 47, is professor of civil engineering at Texas A&M University. He said his home base, Kananga, Zaire, is a shantytown of 40,000 people.

Peering over his silver-rimmed reading glasses, he sketched a map of Africa.

Kananga is located 450 miles southeast of Kinshasa, the capital, and is approximately 300 miles north of the war zone," Woods said.

In the surrounding river valley area 50 to 60 miles wide and 200 miles long, are scattered clinics, schools, hospitals and missionaries.

Sometimes, one or two couples may live in a remote area. There are no roads and the only way to get supplies or to leave in an emergency is by air.

My job is to transport patients, ministers, fuel, food, medical supplies, gasoline, oil—everything they get," Woods said.

His sponsor, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., usually sends missionaries on three- to five-year assignments, he said.

"But this was an emergency," he explained. "The pilot there now is leaving for another assignment and his replacement won't arrive until August."

"I had inquired a year ago about short-term assignments so they asked me if I would go. I thought it would be interesting and kind of fun."

Neither Woods' wife, Jeannette, nor their sons, Bruce and Douglas, will accompany him to Zaire.

There is no salary for the job, Woods said.

"I'll get a round trip airline ticket and room and board while there—and they wish me luck," he said with a hearty laugh.

Woods will live three miles from



Battalion photo by Toumonava Mullins
Dr. Calvin Woods

the Kananga airport in a furnished stucco house.

"The house has a water heater, shower, stove—and running water, which most houses don't have," he said.

"But you have to carry the water to the house by truck and pump it into a tank on the roof to have the running water."

He said he will also have a van for transporting supplies to the airplane.

Woods will fly a Cessna 185 six-place conventional gear aircraft, with no copilot.

"The minimum requirement is that I be a commercial pilot with instrument rating—which means I can fly through clouds by reference to instruments only," Woods explained.

"And they need someone who can fly in and out of short, rough fields. Some runways are 1,100 feet—just long enough for the aircraft," he said, adding that runways are approximately 5,000 feet at Easterwood Airport in College Station.

"The aircraft not only provides transportation, but also is a vital link in the communications network," Woods said. "The missionaries have their own radio network to conduct business and, to a certain extent, for their protection. With the threat of a possible war, they wouldn't want to be without aircraft."

As a professional engineer, Dr. Woods will also help design and build a hydroelectric plant to supply electricity for a hospital. He said he will also design the foundation and

structure for a public health center and assist with plans for public water supplies.

"What about the language barrier?"

"French is the spoken language, and normally, this is taught during the training for missionaries who stay three to five years," Woods explained.

"I've had no French, but I bought a verb wheel, French book and dictionary and am studying," he said. "Fortunately, the international language for aviation for flight controllers and pilots is English."

Woods said he has been told that in Kananga the pace is slow.

"And there's a good, friendly relationship between missionaries and those who live there," he said. "However, the town has quite a bit of crime."

They also claim I should lose weight and I'm counting on it," said the tall 200-pounder. "Every three or four months they get food by rail from South Africa. I imagine I'll get some American food supplemented with African food."

"They do eat a lot of manioc—like tapioca—and I love tapioca!" he added.

Engineers seeking fuel replacement

Gas turbines affect almost everyone's life everyday. They are used by the utility and petrochemical industries to drive pipelines and ships, for powering drilling platforms, and almost any job where a lot of power is required from a small package.

But the natural gas — to power those turbines is fast becoming scarce and expensive. Engineers from Texas A&M University's Gas Turbine Laboratories are working in conjunction with Allied Chemical Corporation to produce fuel to replace natural gas.

Dr. M. P. Boyce, director of the laboratories, explained that "the present natural gas shortage is forcing many users of gas turbines to switch to liquid distillates. This includes conversions from gas to oil that require up to two years. The present conversion systems also decrease the overall life of the turbine, which would further hinder industry."

"To bridge these problems, we have successfully tested a new fuel that was developed by Allied Chemical," he explained. "The new fuel is a vaporized oil which is mixed with high pressure, high temperature steam and then injected into the fuel nozzle at high temperatures."

After more than 200 hours of testing on a 400-horsepower turbine (designed for highway operation), we found no adverse effects due to the vaporized fuel oil. Tests were also conducted on a large industrial gas turbine combustor to test the effect

"I plan to keep a diary while there, and maybe write an article when I return," Woods said enthusiastically. "It should be an interesting experience. I will be looking and observing."

He leaned back in his chair thoughtfully and crossed his hands over his stomach, his tiny glasses resting on the end of his nose.

"It's a unique opportunity to see an entire operation from top to bottom—a new culture I've never seen before. I'm sure I'll learn a lot and I'll be a member of a team contributing," he said earnestly.

Woods said he will also do a series of photographs for recruiting purposes for the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

And what will he take with him? "My maps for flying, compass, some engineering books, toothbrush, razor and casual clothes," he said.

"When Zaire became an independent nation they passed a law that no African would wear a necktie—to indicate they would roll up their sleeves and build their country," he related.

Woods said he will arrive in

Kananga during the dry season.

"It should be hot like El Paso, but more humid like College Station," he said, adding that Kananga lies just below the equator.

Woods said he has already had shots for cholera, yellow fever, tetanus and smallpox, and has passed his flight physical.

Has he any fears at all? "None," he said emphatically. "If they can live there, I can."

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A&M scientists study island's environment

Texas A&M University's airborne scientists of the Remote Sensing Center will spend this year and part of next on an environmental study of Galveston Island.

Local government officials must soon devise a usable and coherent use plan which reconciles conflicting pressures from developers, commercial fishermen and environmentalists.

The purpose of Texas A&M's project is to provide them with the environmental documentation needed to guide the future development of Galveston Island," Dr. A. R. Benton, project head, said.

He explained how a barrier island such as Galveston works.

"Dunes on the ocean side give a natural protection to the land from storms while on the opposite side of such an island are marshes that provide a prime fisheries production habitat," Dr. Benton said.

The city is currently in an awkward position. Commercial developers are anxious to build on the marsh and dune areas in the southwestern half of the island. Strong opposition comes from environmentalists and shrimpers who view this prospect as conducive to further degradation of that environmentally sensitive area.

The Texas A&M study will provide:

✓ A detailed illustrated study of urban expansion on Galveston Island from the mid-1800's through the present day

✓ Documentation of the impact of construction activities on the dune and marsh ecology, including the nature and apparent extent of man-induced changes

✓ A series of maps based on seasonal aerial photography acquired during 1977. The maps show the species makeup and extent of the vegetation communities on and near the island, and the differences between natural and developed areas.

The project is currently funded by the City of Galveston and the Texas A&M Sea Grant Program.

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