



# Every Day. For 30 Years. And Counting



He could have done a lot of other things for the last 30 years. But Gifsen Mambo chose the best road to him: serving the Lord at Ethnos360 Aviation's hangar in Goroka, Papua New Guinea (PNG).

"Every day. For 30 years," commented Imie Mark, Aircraft Maintenance Controller in PNG. It's not something that many people can say. In fact, Ethnos360 Aviation in PNG has no one else who can make that boast. Gifsen Mambo has outlasted them all in his humble service. Faithful. Learning new things. On the job training all the time. Keeping things running no matter how many or how few were working in the hangar. Through thick and thin.

"In his 30 years serving with us," wrote Imie, "Gifsen has continued his faithful service through a multitude of changes in personnel, aircraft types,

***Gifsen Mambo in front of the Kodiak aircraft in the Goroka hangar***

equipment, and operational philosophies." He's worked on seven different aircraft types: Robinson R66, Daher Kodiak 100, Cessna 206, Bell Long Ranger, Bell Jet Ranger, Piper Chieftain and Beech King Air. He had been involved in – and been responsible for, to varying degrees – tool calibration, ground support equipment maintenance, aircraft maintenance, fuel stores management, as well as general facility and vehicle maintenance. In addition, he has served as a certified load master for helicopter external load operations.

Gifsen grew up in a PNG village on the border of the Western and Southern Highlands regions. Though Imbongo is his native language, he speaks English, too, as he did five years ago when he told his story. His parents were "just village people," though his father was respected as a leader, and "most people listened to him." Gifsen and his siblings were privileged to go to a government school up to grade six. But space was limited for high school, and Gifsen missed the cut. "When they said, 'You must drop out,' I was affected. I wasn't good enough to do something," he recalled. "But my father told me, 'You can be a somebody. This is not your end.'"



So Gifsen went to work at a mission station, feeding dogs and pigs, cleaning, and helping around the house. Before the missionaries left for furlough, they recommended Gifsen for the high school and opened an account for him, including some funds. His schooling included Bible classes that shaped his desire to study rather than get involved in all the "big things like the other guys do" – ancestral traditions "that are not related to the Christian way of living. "So that's why I wasn't really involved. I just studied."

Seeking a job after high school, he offered to work again at the mission station. This time, he helped with classes and taught physical education. But aviation was calling. The dad of some of his students acquired an airplane, planning to open an aviation business. Gifsen started helping him on holidays – and the guy saw his potential, hiring him full time.

***Refueling in the bush.***

As the man landed a contract with the government to work on airplanes, he gave more and more responsibility to Gifsen. Often Gifsen worked on his own, poring over manuals to figure out how to work on the airplanes brought in for repair. But learn he did!

However, the boss's furlough was approaching. Gifsen did not want to stay there, working alone without someone to teach him. So he decided to look for a job where he could get more aviation experience, even if he had to work for free. One day, a providential glance at a return address in his boss's office pointed him in the direction of "Tribal Air/Communications" or TA/C, an early name of the aviation department of New Tribes Mission (NTM), now Ethnos360 Aviation. Gifsen remembered meeting one of their mechanics, Tim Hughes, so he decided to call TA/C to see if he could volunteer, with no expectation of payment, to gain some aviation experience.

Tim himself answered the phone – and said he'd call back Friday. But Gifsen was already sure Tim would say 'yes.' Sure enough, he was offered a job with just a little pay and no housing.



When Gifsen's boss returned to the hangar, he confronted him: "Did you make a phone call today?" Turns out that the boss had been to the TA/C hangar in Goroka and found out that he had called for a job. That thwarted his plan of hiring only Gifsen to watch over things while he was on furlough. He saw no need for him to seek another job. But Gifsen explained that he did not have the experience to work on his own, and he needed to learn more.

If Gifsen were going to work for anyone else, the boss would have said no. But since it was New Tribes, he consented – and he even took Gifsen to Goroka and set him up to live with some families he knew. He made sure, though, that the New Tribes' staff knew the deal: "This is my guy. When I come back from furlough, he will be back to work for me."

After a year and six months, Gifsen was ready to return to his boss. After all, the boss had promised a trip to the states, flight training and schooling. But when he didn't return, Gifsen thought, "He's not coming, so maybe this is the way that the Lord works." The boss never did come back from furlough. And Gifsen never left New Tribes.

At first, work at the NTM hangar was just a job. Gifsen's idea was to get experience, get a better job and move to the big city of Port Moresby, the capital. It was not a ministry to him: "Presenting the gospel was something for the missionaries. They are the ones involved. I'm just doing my own job here." The message of the gospel wasn't really his either: "I thought, I'm OK because I can pray, I've been with the mission long. I know some of how to follow the Bible, and I am good."

But in 2014, his perspective changed: He attended the Creation to Christ lessons two hours a day for two weeks as part of his work. "At that time ... it really struck me what God did through Christ on the cross on behalf of me." Now he felt a part of the work. "I use all my talent, I use all my strength and all my wisdom that I have – or, rather, He gives me – on this job. ... I am part of the team that transports ... the Word of God right into the very, very remote, rugged places in PNG. As I've flown on the helicopter to do a job in a village, it really strikes me: all these machines that we worked on are taking the [church planting] teams right to the people."

Despite offers from various aviation companies that would have yielded higher pay, despite family who thought he was wasting his time, Gifsen stuck with NTM.

"Making a lot more money," said Imie, "isn't only something that would be desirable for him but, culturally, almost expected by his extended family. Their focus is



**Working on a Kodiak engine.**



often on doing as much as you can to support and raise the standard of living for your family and community." But Gifsen and his wife, Carol, have continued to serve, "seeing it as more than just a job or a paycheck, but a privilege to be part of the team God is using to take His Word to the yet unreached peoples of their country."

Carol herself has worked for many years running one of the mission guest houses and is now trained and certified in doing administrative work. She and Gifsen have raised their three daughters to trust God as they do, living counterculturally in many ways and facing the implications for their future. But the girls know how to have confidence in God. When they saw Him answer their prayer for their dad to visit the USA, they danced for joy for 15 minutes!!

That was five years ago, when Imie brought Gifsen to the USA to celebrate his 25 years of work. "I am happy," remarked Gifsen. "I am so proud of what I am doing, when I put in this 25 years. I wish I could put in another 25 years! I'm gonna stay with it until I cannot move!"

As Gifsen met the team at Ethnos360 Aviation in Arizona, he was impressed: "Now I know I have a big team back here. You guys are behind us, behind me, so I can do the job in Papua New Guinea that I am doing." May Gifsen's example of faithfulness spur us all to keep serving! And now, as of May 10, 2024, he can say he's served 31 years -- and counting!



**Mambo family**