

Summer 2023

# JEYSON & STEPHANIE BRAUN

*Giving Wings to The Good News*

Missionaries with  
**Commission**  
TO EVERY NATION

Serving at  
**JAARS**

## A Nearly Forgotten Legacy.

This month Jeyson and the rest of the JAARS maintenance team finished a complete overhaul on a Helio Courier. This unique, 6-seater plane has been used by JAARS for missions, including in Ecuador and Indonesia, since 1972. Now after countless operational flights for missions, it was time to strip down this plane, give it a makeover, and renew it for use in training here at the headquarters. At first glance, this airplane may not seem remarkable, but as part of the restoration process, it was discovered that the plane has a fascinating, but nearly forgotten history.

It turns out that in the 1970's this plane used to have the name "Toña" lovingly painted in cursive across its nose. The word had long since been painted over, but naturally the team was now curious to know what "Toña" meant. After doing some digging, it was discovered that Toña was a young indigenous man from Ecuador who lived in the upriver Waorani village, where Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, and the three others were killed in 1956. Toña was originally born in a different, downriver Waorani village. But, he was taken to the upriver village as a child during fighting between the two warring villages.

And so Toña grew up until adulthood in the upriver Waorani village and was a teenager at the time of the famous deaths of the five missionaries. He heard the killers tell of it. He could never stop thinking that though the foreigners had guns they didn't use them to protect themselves, but rather willingly gave up their lives for Jesus' sake. Toña was led to the Lord by Rachel Saint (Nate Saint's sister). As Toña grew in his faith, he was known for his kindness and friendliness. He became a teacher in the village school and was loved by all.



Photos: 1. Jeyson and Paul working on the Courier, 2. Plane with name on nose the 1970's, 3. Toña reading Mark in his language, 4. Toña with wife and daughter

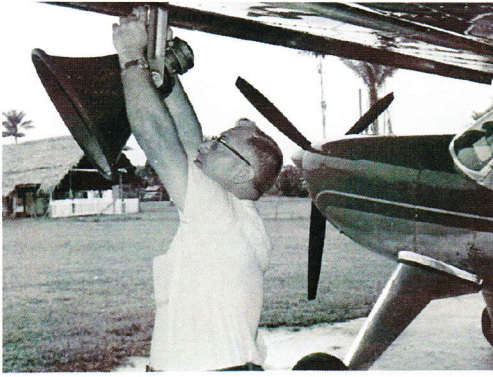
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By 1970 Toña became passionate about reaching his childhood, downriver village with the Gospel. He knew it was risky to return to the village, especially now as a believer, but he felt he must go. The village was situated along a difficult-to-reach mountain ridge, so the JAARS team in Ecuador at the time played a big role by helping Toña with the necessary flight logistics. The JAARS pilots flew Toña over the village several times in a Helio Courier so he could scout it out, make contact, and drop gifts by air. A megaphone was attached to the airplane for these initial contacts. Eventually, Toña entered the village by being dropped 5 or 6 feet to the ground from a helicopter with a minimum of equipment including a radio.

At first Toña was welcomed back by his people. However two months later, his radio became silent. Toña had been tragically martyred for his faith by his own people. Toña's death was very difficult news for the whole mission team and all those who loved Toña. In 1972 it was decided that the new Helio Courier that had just arrived in country would be named in Toña's honor to remember him and his legacy. Toña's name was painted across the nose, and Rachel Saint was part of the dedication ceremony for the plane, as well as Toña's wife and child.

In a beautiful parallel to the Jim Elliot story, several upriver native believers shared Toña's passion for reaching his village. Even after Toña was killed, they did not give up their attempts to reach the village. Eventually they did so, and knowledge and transformation through God's love finally reached Tona's village.

The current JAARS team was moved by Toña's story. It was decided that the team would finish the Helio Courier's overhaul by repainting it, not in JAARS' modern look, but instead by restoring the exterior exactly as it had been back in the 1970's, complete with the name "Toña" once again written on its nose. In this way we can remember Toña's legacy from the past even as we use the plane to train new pilots for the future of missionary aviation.



## Brazil Countdown

We are T-minus 3 weeks until our summer-long trip to Brazil. We will be serving in Anapolis, Brazil, the city we lived in when we were newly married. But one new twist is that we were also just asked to travel to Boa Vista (where we later lived in Brazil) for a special maintenance project for two of the weeks this summer.

Since it is a unique need that Jeyson is experienced to meet, we felt we should accept this request rather than the medical trip I had hoped to go on. We know this "trip within a trip" will be a lot of logistics for the kids but we are all looking forward to serving in both Anapolis and Boa Vista, two places and ministries close to our hearts.

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