

John P. Livingstone, *Same Drum, Different Beat: The Story of Dale T. Tingey and American Indian Services* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2003).

## **Chapter 8: A Wing and a Prayer**

*John P. Livingstone*

Dale's ability to fly an airplane continued to play a very important role in his being able to accomplish so much for so many. His constant flying to projects brought many anxious moments, too. Jeanette worried about him when the weather was bad, and she always seemed nervous when flying with him. Although Dale was usually careful and tried to pay attention to the weather and the condition of the equipment on the airplane he was flying, sometimes things beyond his control would make flights dramatic for those with him in the airplane as well as those on the ground.

On 22 February 1983 Dale was hurrying through his day. He had led a staff meeting at 7 A.M. followed by a quick trip to Salt Lake City to meet at 10 A.M. with Elder Boyd K. Packer and Pat Keyes, a woman Dale was hoping would be appointed as Ronald Reagan's new Indian Commissioner. She was an active Latter-day Saint, and he felt she would be a great asset in Washington, D.C., on behalf of Native Americans. He also squeezed in a visit with several General Authorities of the Church. He briefly visited with Elders Howard W. Hunter, Paul H. Dunn, and Ted E. Brewerton before heading back to Provo to fly south to get to the Hualapai Reservation. Tiny Hanna, from the nearby Havasupai Reservation in the Grand Canyon, was flying back with Dale.

We got to the airport and got on the plane and it was a relief from the hectic rush to just get on the plane and start flying south. We just crossed over Bryce Canyon when there was a bang and the plane started to shake and vibrate and oil started to come out of the engine up over the front of the windshield. There was no place to land; we were over very rough country.

We knew the plane's engine had been seriously damaged, but it still continued to generate partial power. We reduced the power to reduce the stress on the engine. Tiny was very frightened, and when the oil covered the windshield and over the plane, he said to me, "I think I'm going to have a heart attack."

I was trying to joke with him and told him that it wouldn't matter anyway when we hit the ground. He didn't think that that was very funny. You're always looking for a halfway decent place to land, but there [was] still very rough country below us and heavily wooded. I tried to ease the plane slowly to the west to get me a road to land and maintain as much altitude as I could. We were at 10,000 feet and started to come down slow. After approximately 10 minutes, we had to come out to the road leading into Kanab and the plane had only lost a little oil pressure, although now the oil was all over the plane and we were only losing a little altitude. I decided to try and go for Kanab airport approximately seven minutes away.

They followed the road until it became very narrow and winding. Increased traffic took away the possibility of landing on the road, if necessary. Dale wanted to maintain enough altitude to cross over the city in case the power went out. He continued:

I had to come down the left side of the runway because I could only see out of my left window and would come in sideways to the runway and swing into a landing position just before contact. As we came down the runway, Tiny informed me that we had lost all oil pressure and you could smell the engine getting very hot. I cut off the power and glided in and around down to the end of the runway and made a sharp turn in and slipped down almost to the ground looking out the side window before turning it straight to land. I made an excellent landing in spite of no vision and the plane having totally lost power. We were both very grateful to be on the ground and at least know that we didn't have to crash land and ruin the airplane.

Dale called Ken Hulet, a plane mechanic in Richfield, and asked him if he might borrow his plane. He flew down immediately and took a look at the plane's engine and saw a large hole, approximately 6 inches across, where the engine had thrown a rod through the top. He was amazed that they had flown so far. He said, "The Lord is certainly with you, I cannot believe the plane would fly more than one or two minutes with such a big hole in the engine, and that the

parts had not fallen down into the crankshaft and seized up the engine.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Tiny said he would never fly again and wanted to hitchhike home, but they all flew in Ken’s airplane to Peach Springs near the Havasupai rim of the Grand Canyon in northern Arizona to meet with the Native Americans. Ken used Marian’s car to get back to Richfield, Utah, and the workshops went off without a hitch.

On another occasion, in September 1990, Dale had another close call at the Kaibab Reservation in northern Arizona at Pipe Springs (where there is an old Mormon fort).<sup>[2]</sup> Landing on roadways rather than runways on reservations was nothing new to Dale. He had landed on the road there many times previously, and on this occasion he had filmmaker Robert Hatch with him. Robert was actually filming as they landed. Suddenly, they felt as if they were being pulled backwards by the tail. Robert was a pilot too (one of Dale’s many flying recruits). Robert said:

We loaded up in Provo with things he [Dale] could give away. There were sapling trees, apples, etc. I think we were going to Window Rock to video the leaders. He didn’t file a flight plan because he wanted to be changeable. Dale wanted me to fly, so I was in the left seat and he was in right. We got up to altitude and in reviewing aeronautical charts, I saw the reservation on the map, but there was no landing strip. Dale said, “We’ll just land on the highway.” I protested. After all, insurance doesn’t cover you landing on roadways. So Dale said he’d fly. I really didn’t want to be in the left seat. Dale was a much more seasoned pilot and said, “We can trade places before we land.” So I flew most of the way down. When we were nearing Kaibab he asked, “Do you want to switch?” So I trimmed it up and we traded places. Then I pulled out my camera. I thought, “If we have an accident, they’d be able to see who was flying and what happened. I was only half-serious because he’s an excellent pilot. We flew over and he pointed out the school and the road. We flew low and slow over it to take a look. Dale said, “Tell me if you see power lines or obstructions.” You really can’t see lines from the air very well. They are much easier to see against the sky from below. I didn’t see anything. He set up for landing and we were almost at tree-top level.

I purposely pointed the camera to show him at the controls in the left seat. Then I panned past the control panel to the front windscreen for maybe 10 seconds. Then I saw something flat and straight and hollered, “There’s a line” and we hit it immediately. It was right at eye level. There was a “whap” and the plane shuddered, fishtailing right and left. The stall warning sounded, so we must have been somewhere around 55 knots. Then he turned, as calm as can be—it reminded me of the story of John Glenn in his orbiter when an indicator light lit up which said his heat shield may be disintegrating. The telemetry on his heart only went up ½ a beat—Dale turned to me and said, “Do you think we should put it down or go around.” We were coming down, now below treetop level. I said, “I think we should flare and put it down.” So he flared and put it down. He was so calm.

He landed it perfectly. I don’t remember a jolt or a bang. As our speed reduced, he put his foot on the left brake and pivoted the plane around. We taxied back to school and at the intersection where we had hit the wire, I saw a frayed half-inch steel cable. There was another one about five feet away from the first. Both were on right side of plane. Dale said, “Let’s park in the parking lot and see what happened.” I ran around and looked at the spinner [the center of the propeller shaft). There was a crimp about three to four inches deep and the width of your thumb. I pointed it out to Dale. I felt the leading edge of the left wing and could tell that it had striations. It seemed like the cable must have hit it two or three times. We found the same thing with the tail.

In retrospect, I think the prop must have twisted the lines, to make a single mark on the spinner—and so missed the nose landing gear. Probably less than one rotation of the propeller wound both lines together. (I remembered that Dale adds an extra item on his take-off checklist—a prayer for safety—and it is always said by the copilot.)

There were two new wires between poles that had not been there before. Dale said, “We went and met with tribal leaders for a little while. They indicated the accident turned off their power. They said, ‘You’d better get out of here before the power fellows show up!’ One Indian guy cut part of a wire for a souvenir and mailed it to me, but the mishap took two power lines out. They were brand new poles that had not been there before, but I vowed I would never forget about them again!”<sup>[3]</sup>

After they had visited with the leaders, Dale did a full run-up and it sounded smooth. About a year later, he had

the plane repainted and then he sold it. There were really no essential repairs needed.

Dale often helped others to get interested in flying. American Indian Services supporters Paul Ream, Robert Hatch, and Steve Howcroft learned to love flying by accompanying Dale down to the reservation from time to time. Paul wrote, “If someone had said when I was cutting meat in Los Angeles, ‘Paul you are someday going to fly a spiffy two-engine Canadian-made amphibious plane and land it on a lake as an experienced, fully licensed, qualified pilot,’ I would have laughed in that person’s face. But as it turned out, I did fly that plane, and loved [the] experience.”<sup>[4]</sup>

By the late 1980s, Dale could feel that American Indian Services was not fitting in well with the vision of BYU’s mission as reflected by the university administration. He began to be concerned about the possible demise of American Indian Services at BYU. Sure enough, it became apparent over time that leaders were having a hard time rationalizing the existence of American Indian Services in BYU Continuing Education. As early as March 1987 the dean of Continuing Education and the vice president responsible for the school were up front with him about the future. In his journal Dale is careful to not criticize leaders regarding their stance: “They are trying to phase out American Indian Services from BYU, which is a sad day after we spent so much time building and developing the opportunities we now have to teach and to assist the Indian people. . . . [They] seemed sympathetic but I know their minds are set. We’ve got to figure out a way to preserve the program either in the Division of Continuing Education or the Commissioners Office of the Church, or in a private foundation. It is kind of discouraging to have to fight administration along with raising the money to try and carry on the programs.”<sup>[5]</sup>

He began to turn to his friends as the pressure mounted for the winding down of American Indian Services at BYU. On 10 March 1987 he met with his old friend Elder Boyd K. Packer and went over the alternatives as he saw them.

Formal drafts of the alternatives were left with Elder Packer, Elder George P. Lee, and Elder Paul H. Dunn.<sup>[6]</sup> Dale knew that Elder Packer was no longer on the executive committee for the Church Educational System and that only a hearing before the full board (Elder Packer’s position as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve included his being a member of the full Church Board of Education) would allow his influence. He also visited with Elder James Paramore and CES administrator Stanley A. Petersen, the former dean of Continuing Education at BYU, who had always been supportive.

When it came to his work with Native Americans, Dale was prepared to go to great lengths to maintain the help and resources available at BYU. This also may have worked against him at times when his appeals to his General Authority friends must have appeared to be maverick “end runs” around his immediate superiors. They knew only too well the policies regarding contacting Church leaders through officially established channels of communication. But these General Authorities were Dale’s friends—he had known most of them for years—and he was simply unafraid to call upon them when he thought they could help with programs, donor events, or troubled people.

Dale had never been against using any connection he could think of to help individuals who were struggling. His style was to always turn to the Lord first in prayer, then to those whom he regarded as servants of the Lord in helping with what he felt were acute problems. Matching needs with resources was his business, and many can testify that he has helped with important issues in their lives. Others can likewise attest to his fervid calls for help on behalf of those who were suffering or in want of something that he felt others could supply. Sometimes it was a delicate balancing act to encourage contributors to deliver the help, but Dale Tingey was able to leave people feeling good about their contributions. And the receivers felt good about the help they had received.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Tingey, *Dictated Journal*, 22 February 1983.

<sup>[2]</sup> Anthony W. Ivins, “Traveling Over Forgotten Trails,” *Improvement Era*, February 1916. After the killing of James M. Whitmore and Robert McInryre, in 1866, a strong stone building was erected there by order of Brigham Young, which was called “Windsor Castle” (no doubt after the premier royal castle of England).

<sup>[3]</sup> Dale T. Tingey interview, 1 June 2001, interviewed by author.

<sup>[4]</sup> Ream, *Real Live Action*, 329.

<sup>[5]</sup> Tingey interview, 5 March 1987.

<sup>[6]</sup> *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:985: “In 1975, George P. Lee, a full-blooded Navajo and an early ISPS participant, was appointed as a General Authority. He was the first Indian

to achieve this status and served faithfully for more than ten years. Elder Lee became convinced that the Church was neglecting its mission to the Lamanites, and when he voiced strong disapproval of Church leaders, he was excommunicated in 1989.”