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## THE WILDLING (*Felis concolor*)

Men called him cougar, mountain lion, puma,  
catamount. Sometimes panther or painter.  
Tribal elders proclaimed him "Spirit  
of the Canyons," secret as a Shoshone shaman,  
going and coming like a dust devil. He watched  
his world through smoky topaz: arcane fire  
embered in his jewels studding quiet gold.

Down from the rimrocks he came, a warm shadow,  
moving the same way lava once flowed,  
remembering shiny obsidian cutting his footpad  
when he caught his first vole-- barely a chink  
for the huge hunger hole he carried constantly  
after his mother drove him from the cliff-hollow  
creviced by juniper roots, screened  
with fallen limbs and acacia shoots. There where  
he cut teeth, signed the bark with budding claws,  
lost his round dark spots somewhere  
in twisted shade. Where, in sight of his tree,  
he watched a sego lily grow tall as his eye  
till his compulsion to taste it. He made toys  
of pill bugs, learned how porcupine grass  
tests an inquiring nose, learned the noise  
of a diamondback, saw it strike his sibling.

He missed his mother's tail tip signals.  
Now he was more fur-sheathed power than she,  
but new, unpracticed in the ways of jackrabbits  
and solitude. Surrounded by drought, his gauntlet  
was scorched arroyo, sanded playa,  
a rancher's buckshot. Shimmering brightness  
closed down his eyes, hummed along his nerves.  
Harried by emptiness, he wandered past cholla  
and yucca, hurried by scent-claims of his kind  
telling him to move on.

The chaparral rustled with deadness, no safe bed.  
His nostrils began stinging, his mouth tainted  
with something unknown. His topaz burned  
from an outside source. Ahead, scrub oak  
and manzanita seethed and whistled in flames.  
He zigzagged flaring brush and blowing ash.  
A stone exploded, pelting his rump with shrapnel.  
The swirling black ceiling broke, a sudden sieve  
of more water than he had ever seen.  
A smoke-blinded quail darted toward him. Hunger  
overcame fear. Rain washed feathers off his face.

Four more days a migrant, prodded by noon-baked smells,  
moonflash of alien eyes. He paused to take in  
the sweetness of sage, the lowered stars, scurrying skinks  
patterning the transient surface.  
He caught a white-footed rat. It wasn't enough.

He entered piney half-light,  
became a half-tone crouch crossing over  
straw carpets and centipedes, past mariposa yellow  
and jabbering jays that couldn't keep a secret.  
A coyote tucked behind buckbrush  
saw the ancient rite of passage,  
understood another role was being filled,  
knew something would be spilled but never wasted.

All the hungry muscle meshed in ritual rhythm,  
arched, elongated, aimed by his mother's tracings  
on his brain. The mule deer felt nothing; shock  
was Swifter than fangs, a design long perfected.

He was whole at last, auditions over,  
the part his. He stretched, considered his stage:  
strangled shapes of wood, outcropped agate  
streaked with russet, citron, mauve.  
He sat like cast bronze on a carved plinth,  
watching twilight rise from the low waiting places,  
content to know his niche. High desert held  
his triumphant scream. Ocotillo, beetle,  
the stream struggling to continue  
beyond the sand and straggling trees,  
everything that curved around his sound,  
was his.

## VILLANELLE FOR A CHEETAH

Felinity dark-spotted, built for speed,  
The cheetah ambles past her watching prey,  
Designed to chase, a disappearing breed.

Blonde head aloof, she seems to pay no heed  
As nervous hooves paw dust. She looks away,  
Felinity dark-spotted, built for speed.

The healthy bucks set off the herd's stampede;  
The cat ignores them, looking for a stray  
Designed to chase. A disappearing breed,

She lacks new bloodlines, has two young to feed.  
High shoulders, undulating spine convey  
Felinity, dark-spotted, built for speed.

Her choice is made. Intentions freed,  
She starts her sprint, the rolling muscle-play  
Designed to chase, a disappearing breed.

She kills the lame buck for her gnawing need.  
She hunts by sight, she always hunts by day,  
Felinity dark-spotted, built for speed,  
Designed to chase. A disappearing breed.

## GOD'S ROCKER

I'm no Handel composing hallelujahs  
for ringing around the world, bouncing  
off satellites, steeples and pious statues.  
I write and sing a different song. I thump  
and pick and twang, loud and electric,  
sometimes slack-string. Low-down or up-tempo  
or whiney blue. I may flat my fifths  
but I don't drink 'em. Christ is my rock.

You Say my music is not fitting--  
maybe sacrilegious. Sure, I know--  
some gospel bangers you can't always tell  
if they're singin' about their lovers  
or the Lord. And secular rock is revved  
with sex, drugs, violence and cult stuff.  
But listen up--my words come from The Word.  
Maybe they're not your style  
but my lyrics've got no double meaning  
and my beat is honest. Out of ghetto  
and jail, despair and deliverance it came.

A Bach chorale won't reach that stud  
on the corner, that mama at the bar.  
No Latin chant or Anglican anthem,  
not even Onward Christian Soldiers will move  
that dude on the Harley. When Jesus was here  
he mixed with the riffraff, pimps and hookers  
and roughnecks. Me, I sing for 'em, tell 'em  
the story the only way they'll hear. If I did it  
stately and prettified, it'd be Pharisee sound  
comin' from me. It would make my witness a lie.  
When people hear my music and give their lives  
to God it means He's using me for His glory.  
These drums are my hosannas!

## MAJOR RHAPSODY IN F SHARP MINOR

You didn't expect him here  
with silk hangings and life-size classic sculpture.  
He made no entrance, he suddenly was  
onstage, easy as moonlight, fitting with fountains  
and topiary as if here had always been his backdrop.  
But when he moved and smiled-- you knew--  
you knew he was a trumpet man.

Son of a thin ragged line inhaling used smoke  
mixed with applause to blow from rubber cheeks.  
Son of the hard-molded case-followers,  
those rolled-up bus riders  
down the stretched streaking nights,  
closing their painted eyes and seeing brass  
hanging over them-- begging to be snatched  
and hidden for a night or two of peace, watching it  
turn to an armored snake in their jealous hands,

hearing it tongue out tarnished laughter  
on three ribs, belling out morning and a hangover  
in some town they mispronounced.

You didn't see this loose-angled one pick it up.  
The instrument came like quick cell division  
from his lip. And the sound began--  
uncoiling slow, coming for you, crawling  
into your head, changing the texture  
of your bare arms. You know that sound, mama?  
Nothing as simple as ever-popular heartbreak  
or phantom train whistles-- nothing  
as definite as a tenor sobbing Eili, Eili  
or wild animals moaning up the moon. His eyes  
ignite and lightning arcs from his hair,  
striking the conductor zapping it  
into your gravity center. The sound, mama,  
leaching tones out of the marble statues,  
out of your wine glass, rearranging molecules,  
making them glow like neon fog, fulminating  
red and purple, alive like magnified ocean drops.

How much is music, key lowered now, half a step,  
gone minor again, flowing that little groove  
where pain runs convex to the surface? How much  
is the glint of crystal hung from mirrored arches,  
moving faintly with audience breath,  
striking flints in his pale eyes?

He is a prophet-- forecasting ruin, forecasting  
rain, predicting your heartbeat, willing it,  
playing your spine like a keyboard, electrifying  
your long red guitar strings. He compresses  
a grain of hot salt in every pore, starts  
small internal combustions, all pistons at odds,  
then one enormous turbine synched with him,  
generating enough current to throb down  
the marble columns, revving the riderless carriage  
outside the fourth dimension, holding a séance  
with Gabriel and Gershwin, Debussy and Berrigan.

His grin is sudden, mocking. He flats his fifths  
and goes south on a short bridge, tootles  
to the carved unicorn, blows out the chafing dishes  
along with the illusions-- so for a jigger of time  
you can stand it, fill your lungs on the afterbeat,  
see that he's nothing but a live trumpet man,  
not a sorcerer, not a fakir  
pulling the cobra out of your basket.

He is a child-- blowing bubbles of light,  
expanding the spectrum,  
merging with bobbing sixteenth notes. He is  
imperial Rome-- an announcement of gladiators,  
Caesar chariots, a boast of soldiers,  
an ancient fury. He is Africa-- black hunter cry,  
leopard stalking, impala bleeding, eyes looking  
out of water, eyes burning, curling edges of night,  
smoke rising, winding winged scales,  
sucking back into the bell, recycling.

He slams a fist into your throat, turns you  
on a spit and hamstrings you with blades of ice.  
He hustles the horn, wrestles it, shares it,  
his mistress and mentor,  
a panpipe saved by his kiss.

Feel the sound, mama? He's concentrating  
on all your edges now, honing sharp sharper,  
quivering on a sill to somewhere, retiring  
to a glistening waver pulsing between turquoise  
and green, hanging on like dying gills.  
A trumpet man, mama, more lives than a cat,  
more wind than a Texas twister.

It's all the magic horn, mama, that golden fetish,  
possessed and possessing, that haloed concubine,  
caressed and polished, surrounded with plush.  
And you-- chapped, smacked,  
earning your master's degree in martyrdom,  
sewing clothes out of mill ends,  
that eternal alloy suspended between you  
even in bed, that icon he hocked once  
to buy you an emergency doctor in Dayton.  
And you sold your mother's ring to get it back.

And the man, mama, with the hard harsh mouth,  
dead weight in the bus seat, little slivers  
of life telescoped in battered cases  
and collapsible stands. Trumpet man.  
Pitched all shades and angles like shadows,  
worse for women than drifters. Gone too high  
too often, a pile of singed feathers  
dripping wax on the downers, always patching  
to fly one more set too near the sun.

Was there a man at all?  
Or just a flared gold phallus that seduced you  
and crammed you in the gears of a music box  
on wheels, hurled you across the bad-weather map  
into broken-john motels with lint bedspreads  
and the boozy corners of never-quite-level halls  
full of lurching bodies and bad acoustics?  
Trumpet man. Composite of flesh and reed--  
and if you separated the instrument,  
cold spite to your touch,  
hot pipe to all we know of paradise to his.

Tears emptied, he mounts the god syndrome  
like mercury, Surpassing sound, no longer  
protoplasm and metal but some new alchemy  
entering the last panging tunnel you sealed  
and secured. Driving deeper, blowing down  
your barricades like Joshua, playing  
what no mortal ever played. Peeling off new notes  
like bright blisters, exorcising the orchestra,  
resolving each chord with light, nebulizing fire.  
White consumes you, turns you immaculate,  
unhurting anymore.

The trumpet fluoresces with his phosphorous eyes,  
confetti light orbits his head.  
His image blazes beyond seeing.

You open your eyes as the waiter pours champagne,  
hear something shut like a latch, focus absently  
on an alabaster herald you hadn't noticed before.



## TORERO

Incarnadine dawn came before Santos slept.  
Day of the corrida!  
A dark mountain sprouting stiff red and yellow flowers  
and reverberating thunder waited behind his lids.  
He must strike lightning into a certain crater  
between the damp ridges before thunder passed him through.

Early to the rites of preparation, steeping  
in the vow to avenge his brother Miguel.  
Long prayer before the Virgin. Hot laughter  
with his comrades, fear encased in brocade,  
superstition covered with colors of scorn.  
He had even looked at his bulls and learned  
one was twin to the hooking horn-wise engine  
that routed Miguel's soul with a splintered thrust.

Last notes of La Virgen de la Macarena flared from trumpets,  
edded through the heat in his head. Shrill corkscrews  
pulled the cuadrillas into the circle of ferret eyes.  
A thousand prisms paving his shoulders ignited in dusty sun.  
The circle hailed his name, caressed it, intimate  
as a lover with the sound of it. Something else--  
treble breeze perhaps, pitched to the trumpets--  
hissed his name, paced his march step, clung  
to the afterbeat. The two flashing semaphores beside him  
were Silent, fierce-smiling their aficionado faces.  
His name wound back in the bell of a horn or the wind's mouth.  
The musicians played with too much pathos today.  
It was better when they blasted, pompous and bawdy,  
like ponderous heralds of Caesar.

"Dios, we have a gale," growled an assistant.  
"We will have to drown the capes!" The wind  
examined the folded colors, the hair of men and horses.  
"Don't work so close, Santos," his banderillero pleaded.  
"You don't have to get the bull's blood on your belly.  
You're here. It is enough."  
Layers of eyes probed Santos's pores;  
the wind stuttered his name. He made no reply.

Santos did not hear hoofs pulverizing sand,  
sounds of the watered cape, the olés. His first bull  
was a mountain, an armed freight train, bold and honest  
blood-mate to Miguel's damaged and devious one.  
Santos heard only wind instruments deciding his dance,  
humming his mind like wires, then the racking force  
of his will arcing the ring, entering the pic,  
bracing it against the picador's old sin  
of twisting and stealing the best of his bull.

A trilling time jam, a man unhorsed,  
and finally the God-lonely bugle  
retiring the picadors, trailing the man/animal cry  
of all who live awhile in the center of the centrifuge.

Santos placed his own banderillas, planted them close,  
claimed only shallow blood and hide enough to hold.  
He watched the adorned idol carved from legend,  
raised from a Minoan frieze, watched him size the arena,  
yellow bouquets bobbing against his blackness.  
Saw his talent without latent flaws,  
already certain this bull would not covet the quarter  
where he quenched his horn in a picador's horse.  
Saw him suddenly a handsome pander, parading,  
saw himself the same, the two of them  
in irresistible collusion, peddlers  
of a nebulous puzzle, together a dark matching piece  
for the niche behind the ferret eyes.

Santos took the sword and muleta for the last act,  
the faena. Wind snatched aside the cardinal cloth.  
But this toro chose greatness. Waited. Shared.  
Santos designed a new pass:  
Slow ballet of cerise wing and silver pivot,  
a celebration-- black mass of muscle, turning, winding wide  
to spare his partner's spine. The pimping wind bared him  
again, boring into a brief shimmering hate for Miguel  
and his curving tricks to crimp his bulls' backs.  
The pase de la muerte fed the rising circle of fever,  
flared the ferret eyes. The wind gasped,  
held its breath, puffed away thought, gusted  
between passes, reeled across the circle gone hoarse.

Let no ears or tail be taken from this bull.  
If the other ubiquitous beast wished to bestow trophies,  
nothing less than a trident of horns  
and the point of his maleness would do. Once more  
Santos heard his name as the bull smeared by,  
redding his spangles, honing his senses on horn,  
the memory of it stored in his scars.  
Certain as stench and bone-rattling sideswipe,  
he heard it--the voice of another avenger.

Through his years of bulls only Santos spoke,  
his fluent muleta commanding the charges, punishing  
the-pale-hearted, persuading the worthy ones  
of their chances to plunge their eagerness,  
telling them at length to bow their heads  
for the offering, the ritual communion.  
Veronicas ago Santos would have laughed  
or called it a prank of weariness or wind.  
Did Miguel's bull announce his name aloud?

Santos spat dust from his mouth. He must not succumb to overawe. This was el toro de bandera every true bullfighter hoped for-- measuring the man, rationing his rage, keeping his courage and form to the end. The matador could do no less. Nostrils and eyes streaming grit, he sculpted the short cape, made it vault, caress, made it flow. Ads and signs tore off the walls; Santos defied the blowing, moved to the brass song in his brain. Perfect parones, spinning, people thunder, levitating. Pase de pecho. Perfect. Bull dancer and minotaur. Time reverted then raced back. Stumbled. Coiled. Santos sighted down his sword.

A bull to take *recibiendo*-- the ultimate tribute and risk-- waiting like a figurine, committed to that stand, waiting for the dint of the deified charge to sink the *espada*. Holding down the triangle head with serge on a stick, leading it past his sledging chest, trying to remember the kill would be for Miguel.

The cloth swung forward, beckoned. The bull came. Santos leaned over the horn with a name cry, rescued his lungs by a sequin, feet still as stones. A flawless execution except steel and bone collided; the blade bowed and sprang out of its hot sheath, out of crazed thunder. The withered flower patch bloomed with new crimson; the bull mastered desperate legs, flailing his tongue on the taint in his mouth. Santos refused to heed his wrist, the wind, the shrieked advice. He retrieved his sword, cursing. The centrifuge screamed and silenced unheard. He calmed himself in his bowl of sweat and whiplash chill: "We will have total perfection, *si*, *Diablo*?" A bugle played in his head, an *aviso*.

The bull summoned him, poised like his bronze kind on the parapet, posing his invitation low and ready. Sun flashed along the sword edge, rolling images, icons of the Virgin, faces of his brother, *el toro*, his brother. Santos moved to the blossoming spot, light with new speed. A bright swatch of last Sunday's poster of Miguel spiraled toward the matador's eyes. Triumphant horn lifted as steel drove down, a compound arch. Santos heard the wind inside him, heard them fall together.

## OBLIQUE RHYME FOR THE GARDEN WE CAN'T FORGET

Having found it by being lost  
I don't know if we can ever go back.  
A gardener yourself, this won't bore you, at least.  
Actually, we were following an antler-shedding buck.  
By the time we picked up the left side of his regal rack  
we'd wandered to an unknown spot +  
overgrown with corruption and the stinging reek  
of grotesque excrescence with the breath of spite  
and rot. We fled that oozing nightmare  
but just as in a terror dream, each step  
was hobbled by conspiracies of roots and mire.  
Hulking forms of fungus made us stoop  
as they reached to slime our hair.  
Scratched and gasping, we came to a clearing;  
fog isolated us, but we could hear  
frantic groans and thrashes declaring  
some animal (likely the buck) was trapped  
in that hideous bog. The mist began to disappear.  
Our feet stopped sinking. Then we tripped  
on stones fallen from an old wall in disrepair.  
When we stood and raised our eyes  
lilacs surrounded us. A heart-shaped leaf  
brushed my face. Our lungs filled with ease;  
sweetness cleansed our tainted mouths. Allness of life  
combined iris purpling together with asters. Sky-shine  
laced petals and panicles, stippled the moss-napped floor  
with sueded negatives of sun. Iridescent sheen  
on shades of cinnabar and carnelian in a flower  
never seen before drew us ahead. Wherever  
we turned was beauty: Rhododendrons of maroon and coral,  
thornless roses, a night-blooming cereus by day. Over  
and under florescence we moved, accompanied by a chorale  
of posing birds. There were no paths, just solid bloom,  
yet our feet walked unimpeded. Nothing was random or wild  
but there was no pattern or restriction-- only sublime  
existence, glory of being, natural but willed.  
The master gardener left no trace of rake, pruning shears,  
no shriveled calyx, mulch or stakes to mar perfection.  
Maybe we'll find it again-- hidden behind old shores--  
But of this much we're sure, he and I-- Eden wasn't fiction.

## THE LIBERATED SONNET

Old Shakespeare was a chauvinistic wimp  
Who played most foul with done-wrong maids and wives.  
Deliberate and crass, he slipped a crimp  
In all his biased roles of female lives.  
His churlish answers to their puckered throes  
Like "Get thee to a nunnery," mocked truth  
And worthiness; he reveled in their woes.  
His ghost be plagued and plagiarized forsooth!

He bowdlerized, victimized girls with verve,  
Made 'em losers and gofers, goofers, all.  
The few he permitted a bit of nerve  
Found themselves spondeed on masculine gall.

I refuse to confirm the final bane  
Of his namesake form; I will not contain  
My righteous rant in gilded gelded couplet.  
I'm out to reform his metric quintuplet.

My wrath will not be bound, my spleen is full  
Of sand, and furry-- trocheed by a male.  
Julie skips Act IV in the latest tale.

No more sexist machinations and chicane.  
No more will I endure a macho Moor or Dane.  
No more inversions or half-rhymed aspersions.  
Poetic justice has to come--  
Observe my liberated thumb!

## THE MAKING OF AN ANGEL

Watching the lush green canopy of the Peruvian rain forest beneath his wings, Carl Mortenson used to imagine the tall vertical spikes it concealed. "Telephone pole jungle," bush pilots called it. A plane could plunge out of sight and never reach the ground. If the only engine failed, there was no alternative. "Even if a pilot lived through the crash, he'd probably never get out of the jungle alive, in spite of all the survival training," says Carl.

During the 50s and 60s as a missionary pilot with Jungle Aviation and Radio Service (JAARS), the air arm of Wycliffe Bible Translators, Carl was also well-acquainted with other problems: Heavily loaded take-offs and landings on short, uneven, sometimes rocky and muddy airstrips. And trying to decide whom or what to leave behind when the cramped cargo space was full. "Light single-engine aircraft are used because that's about all that can get into those primitive places. There's never been a plane that was really right for the job," he says. "I believe God meant for me to change that. I believe that's why He spared my life. Twice, in fact. The first time I was just a kid. My appendix ruptured and there weren't any wonder drugs back then. I had peritonitis and a long bout with other infections besides. A couple of times the doctors told my parents I wouldn't live through the night. When I made it-- after nine months and five operations-- I was sure the Lord had a reason. But at the time I figured, well, maybe He wants me to preach. Later I realized I wasn't cut out for the pulpit."

The second time was shortly after his arrival in Peru with JAARS. He was stricken with bulbar polio. He knew if he lived he would likely be paralyzed and confined to an iron lung. One was wheeled into his hospital room. He stared at it. "I told the Lord I'd rather die than live that way but if He still had some use for me, I'd accept His will. I knew He'd led me there, but I thought He might've changed His mind. Whatever His answer, I was sure He wouldn't abandon me." Six months later, Carl Mortenson passed his flight physical.

But all the while he was in the hospital, he was designing an airplane in his head: A twin engine job that would be the answer to a missionary's prayers: STOL (short take-off and landing) capabilities. Easy repair and maintenance in the field. More cargo-passenger space. And that life-saving second engine.

In 1965, with no engineering experience, he put his design on paper and named his plane the Evangel. Eventually, eight of them were built by a small corporation. All but one are still in service. But the company dissolved, and production ended with three orders unfilled. In spite of disappointment and discouragement, Carl began to understand that the Evangel was just a forerunner. There was much about it that he knew he could improve. "The truth is, God wouldn't let me quit. Newer aerodynamic technology had come along-- like full-span flaps for maximum lift, spoilers instead of ailerons to control roll. Besides, a more attractive appearance was needed. The Evangel was a boxy workhorse. Streamlining also boosts efficiency."

Wycliffe eventually granted Carl and his wife an extended leave of absence and in 1972 the successor began to take shape on his drawing board. Over 950 drawings and 11,500 hours of engineering went into this first and most tedious step. It was completed Christmas night, 1976, and presented by the whole family-- Carl, his wife, Alice, sons, Edward, Evan, and Daniel, and daughters, Evangeline and Betsy-- as a gift to God for His use. "Without their help, devotion and sacrifices-- all the things they did and did without-- I couldn't have done any of this," Carl says humbly.

What he has done-- mostly in his basement, garage and laundry room-- is to proceed from piles of paper to ribs, dies, moulds, angles, jigs and a fuselage of aluminum and fiberglass which have materialized into an airplane called the Angel. "Angels are God's messengers to mankind," says Carl. "This plane is being developed specifically to spread God's Good News to those 'uttermost parts of the earth.' Cheaper, faster and more safely than ever before. Mission outposts are often hundreds of miles from the supply base. In Peru, the nearest is 90, the farthest is 600. The average range of a single-engine light plane is 350 miles. The Angel can fly 1600 miles without refueling. It cruises at 200 mph. It can carry over a ton of cargo, eight people or four 55 gallon drums. It can land and take off in 600 feet. The missionary's air isn't any rougher than other pilots but his landings sure are. So the Angel's landing gear is designed to handle soft ground conditions, keep the wheel from caking with mud, and to deflect rocks. No other light multi-engine plane being produced has all these features."

Carl's youngest son, Dan, who has taken over correspondence and public relations says passionately, "The Angel's first priority is safety. When a missionary pilot is killed, even if he's alone, it's not just one life and a plane and Bibles or supplies that are lost. It's all the training and time that went into his being there-- and worse, all the people who may be lost forever before he can be replaced to deliver the means for saving them. Also there are still Many areas that have never been reached because they're so remote. The Angel can get there. That's why this project is so important."

Funding comes from donations to the King's Engineering Fellowship in Orange City, Iowa where the Mortensons live and work on the Angel, and the "Back To The Bible Broadcast" in Lincoln, Nebraska. The largest donors have been missionary pilots themselves. Some have given many hours of labor as well.

Lack of manpower was a constant problem from the beginning. Periodic reports had to be made to the Federal Aviation Authority for certification. And always the need for money. "Airplanes are like pelicans," Carl often says, "they come with big bills." His sons were good help but they had education to complete and also had to work at paying jobs. "But each time things reached the impossible stage, the Lord provided-- more money, and sometimes special people for short periods-- a retired aeronautical engineer from American Rockwell, an interested Pan Am pilot, another pilot-mechanic from

JAARS between assignments, a retired electrical engineer, college kids, even a highschooler-- they all put in much appreciated work. Whatever we needed most, always arrived."

Illinoisian Douglas Muir, one of the early volunteer hands says, "It was a pleasure working with Carl. He was so patient with me-- teaching me what I had to know before I could be of help. I admire his stick-to-itiveness. Most people couldn't have continued with anything so demanding."

On Good Friday, 1979, the Angel's 40 foot, 600 pound wingspan was hauled outside for a photograph. It was a joyful occasion because the most difficult part of the plane had been built along with the tooling for future production.

At last a local builder, a financial co-op, plumbing and electrical tradesmen, the use of equipment, all came together as a team for constructing a hangar-shop at the airport for completion of the

Angel and its descendants when certification is complete. Carl turned from aeronautics to carpentry. In snow and below zero weather, the long awaited workplace became reality. In 1982, Merle Brown, a retired pilot-mechanic from New Tribes Mission joined the team as a regular. "Brownie's our maintenance crew chief and walking mechanical reference system," Dan announces proudly.

In January 1984, the FAA cleared Angel for flight testing. All experimental aircraft are full of bugs. Even big manufacturers with large engineering staffs sometimes lose their planes and crews during flight testing. The Mortensons asked for special prayers for safety, skill and good judgment. They also prayed for (and received) good runway conditions-- no icing, no deep snowbanks on either side. Many short, low take-offs and landings were necessary for checking stability and controllability. Carl says First Chronicles 4:10 (Living Bible) summed up their feelings: "Oh, that you would wonderfully bless me and help me in my work; please be with me in all that I do, and keep me from all evil and disaster!"

The Angel flew. Of course there were problems, but it flew. With Carl's oldest son, Ed, in his final year at Iowa State University, they were able to use ISU's wind tunnel to select a better design for the nacelle, the fiberglass skin enclosing each engine. The new shape increased speed. "Every improvement will benefit missionary Angels in the future through many years of service. This is what drives us," says Carl.

When Ed graduated from Iowa State, his professors voted him the most likely to succeed as a design engineer. In spite of the highly paid opportunities available, he elected to invest his talents in the Angel. "So instead of making the most money, I'll make the least," he smiles. "But this is the job and these are the people I love. I don't feel I'm making any sacrifice at all."



"None of us is in it for the bucks," says Carl. "This is God's project. The plane should have commercial appeal in Alaska and the developing countries. All such sales will subsidize more missionary Angels. We'll be able to provide a free missionary plane for each four or five planes sold on the general market. That's why we're keeping it a simple do-it-yourself fellowship. No stockholders, no corporate structure. Any profits will be passed on to fly more Angels to more people who don't know Christ."

Carl's middle son, Evan, has been his most continuous right hand, and is now the test co-pilot. His future ministry will be as instructor to missionary users of the plane. "I've learned persistence from Dad and have grown in faith through his example. God's direction in this has been reinforced now and again but those in-between times can seem blurred. Still, Dad's vision is always clear."

Last November as Carl and Evan put Angel through some of its paces, a severe rudder flutter caught them by surprise: "We were shaking violently," Carl recalls. "I had chopped the throttles but the nose pitched up about 80 degrees in half a second, shot up 1,000 feet in 4 seconds, and the left engine quit! The accelerometer registered 6.5 Gs. Then the shaking stopped and we were amazed to see the wings were still with us. We couldn't see the tail and didn't know what we had to work with or what would stay with us. For a few long seconds we fully expected to roll over and dive straight into the ground. You can imagine how blessed we felt as we gently recovered and found the plane was actually flying quite well. Maybe the Lord sent real angels to support us during that violent maneuver! We made a routine single-engine landing. When we inspected the plane we discovered the top of the rudder had broken above the hinge and folded over, letting its heavy balance weight flutter. Nothing was wrong with the left engine. I had inadvertently hit the feathering control when I grabbed the throttles during the shaking. We had no damage except for a few easily repaired skin wrinkles--the plane's," Carl grins. "again we think God was saying He had more for us and the Angel to do. So that's what we're doing. At that point we re-designed the rudder."

Carl Mortenson is 53, a low key man with blue eyes, a warm smile and an incurable fondness for puns, spoonerisms and tongue twisters. He's also single-minded, or as his family says, stubborn. Does he ever wonder if he's crazy? Get disgusted? Make wrong decisions? "Sure, but like the psalm says, the Lord preserves the simple," he chuckles. "And yes, I do get frustrated when we run out of money and everything grinds to a halt. Cash flow is a wearer-downer. But God's clock is different. Sooner or later He always moves His people to respond."

"Dad's work motto is: Do it. Do it right. Do it right now!" says Dan. "But he also loves music, softball, humor and making funny noises. The humor is never far away. He and Mom are just two ordinary people who have given themselves completely to God's service. And because of that they have a very fulfilling life."

Carl's wife, Alice, says, "People are always asking me what it's like to live with an airplane. But we've done it so long it seems perfectly normal to us. Oh, I get impatient to get things repaired around the house. Here's all this mechanical know-how and I can't get a lamp fixed! But planes have always been part of the picture. Carl was rebuilding old planes when we married. He donated a rebuilt Stinson to JAARS in Ecuador and we delivered it on our way to Lima."

Does she worry when her husband and sons are flying an experimental aircraft? "No," she answers softly. "I trust God. He's demonstrated His presence and His will in this many times."

The Mortensons believe one of the things that keeps them unified is their suppertime devotional. Every family member takes a turn at leading it. Carl also established a tradition of daily devotions in the shop.

The prototype Angel is now ready for structural testing, the last requirement. A duplicate airframe must be built and tested to destruction in the shop for final FAA certification for production. It will be a cost-intensive phase. "Recently an executive from Cessna told me that no company would consider designing and building a new aircraft for less than \$15 million on hand, not including production tooling which TKEF already has. To date, The King's Engineering Fellowship has spent only half a million. To us that seems like a lot." Carl sighs and poses a question that's more of a statement. "How dare we expect to finish a task like this? But we do, you know. There's only one way. With God's help. Look how far we've come! But it's not what we've done-- we're just instruments in His hands. We've had hundreds of people praying for us all these years. And hundreds of people making donations large and small. We've never been alone. Prayer is so vital. One of our supporters once mentioned that she'd been especially burdened to pray for us on a certain day. Turned out it was the day Evan and I almost crashed with the rudder glitch,"

The target date for going into production is Christmas of 1988. Some say it's impossible. He's heard that word before. But Carl Mortenson's faith has passed all its flight tests and there's still a twinkle in his eye.