

Through Gates of Splendor

By Elisabeth Elliot

Part 2

The airstrip needed only a little grass-cutting, and was ready for Nate's plane to land. Nate recorded the subsequent events on magnetic tape: "We flew in Barb and the two children, and they set up housekeeping, started language study and literacy work among the local Jivaros as well as evangelism. While Roj was down there, as any missionary does, he carried on medical ministry. One of the sicknesses that plagues the Jivaro is leishmaniasis. It affects nasal cavity, nose and the back of the throat, the roof of the mouth. It's a hideous disease that is long and drawn out, eventually kills them and, of course, is very shameful-it disfigures the face terribly and the Indians dread it with a passionate dread. Several years ago missionary doctors ran down a cure, a drug called 'Repodral.' Roj had some with him and he scored a couple of notable cures among the local Jivaros. Despite the continual running feuds that go on between the Jivaros and Atshuaras, as well as within both groups, there is some liaison on the trail and word of the cures got across the line to the Atshuaras. One of the chiefs over there in the Atshuara country was called Santiaku (a chief in this case as in most jungle situations is just a Number One man in a given small area; Jivaros and Atshuaras don't group up; they're scattered all over Timbuktu and the fellow that's the strongest or the most feared in a small area is a chief). The chief, Santiaku, had come down with this dread disease, and despite fear and happenings of the past, he finally showed up at Wambimi. And, of course, it

was a milestone and a cause for great rejoicing because it was an answer to prayer. Roj did help him; the Repodral helped his nose condition and he showed up again later and invited Roj to go back to his house. Of course, this is what everybody had been waiting for, but as in the case of the spider and the fly, Roj wasn't going to accept this offer carelessly. So he said to Santiaku, 'Okay, I'll come over to visit you at your house if you come and take me over there.' And so, good enough, the escort did come and escorted Roj Youderian, Frank Drown, and another missionary into Atshuara country.

"Somewhere along the way Frank coughed and the Atshuaras stopped right there; that was as far as they were going to go because they are deathly afraid of catching cold. Apparently it's a cold or grippe-what we call flu-that kills them off because they haven't much resistance to it, the disease never having touched their group while the generation was younger. It was with great difficulty that Frank convinced them that he was just clearing his throat. Frank says that that night when they were camping along the trail somewhere he felt a tickle in his throat again and he just didn't know what in the world to do, so he feigned that he had business off in the bush and got away from them and cleared his throat, fearing, of course, that he might break up the whole expedition by coughing and being heard by the Atshuaras.

"When they got to Santiaku's place it turned out to be a great big house, about three times the size of the long Jivaro houses. Roj says it was just big enough to put a basketball floor inside. The Atshuaras speak a somewhat different dialect but understand Jivaro, their facial features are different, and the women have narrow hips, instead of wide hips like Jivaro

women. When they got there, Frank started to give them the Gospel in Jivaro, telling them of the love of Christ and how he had died for us. It was a question of giving these Indians a story from scratch that they had never before heard any suggestion of. Frank talked until he was hoarse and exhausted. They had a little wind-up phonograph with them and they played Gospel recordings made in the Jivaro language and they would play these until Frank got his voice back and then the Atshuaras would say: All right now, Panchu (an affectionate Spanish nickname for Frank), tell us more.' And for three days, the Atshuaras went on like that just sitting around, listening to the story of Christ, a most amazing opportunity and Santiaku showed real interest.

"Because of the isolation of the Atshuaras and the tense situation with the neighboring Jivaros, it seemed as though the key to getting in there and actually doing some good was air communication. Frank suggested right off the bat that they build themselves an airstrip. It seems to me that it was a really bold stroke of genius and I'm sure I wouldn't have had the faith to suggest it the very first time. The idea took hold-the Lord blessed the suggestion and brought it to fruition, because they started cleaning an airstrip; the missionaries, while they were there, showed them where they could cut down the trees in line with their manioc patches, so that they would have some natural approaches to take advantage of the forest they had already cleared. Then the missionaries retired.

"After several months, we thought it time to encourage the Atshuaras, so we flew down over there to see how they were coming along and found that they had cleared about 100 yards of the jungle floor for an airstrip. But 300 feet with trees

standing all around it, trees that grow to 100, maybe 120 or 150 feet, is hardly an airstrip. So we dropped them a couple of pieces of cloth to encourage them, and then we went away again and a few more months went by.

"The other day we went down and had a look again. And to our disappointment we found that the direction of the strip in the forest was such that it was lining right up with the great big house, and, of course, it's not ideal to have a house sitting right on one end of a strip in the approach. And the work didn't seem to have gone very far looked like they needed help at this point. So we went back and had a short council of war and Roj said: 'Well, it sounds to me like they need help and I think I should go.' He had a little hand-crank radio, but he didn't have enough provisions. He really hadn't contemplated such a trip at all. Well, I guess he had a machete. But the need was there, the opportunity was there, and he could be there within two days' walk. He decided to try to get some Jivaro to help him carry the radio and guide him over the trail from Wambimi to the Atshuara country.

"We left Roj at Wambimi on a Wednesday and on Thursday we listened on the radio for him. We thought it might just be that he would have set it up along the trail somewhere or maybe he was still in Wambimi. We didn't hear from him on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday. By Monday we thought we'd surely hear from him - that he'd be with the Atshuaras and surely be on the air. We still didn't hear a word from him and there he was with no other missionary, but with those unconverted Jivaros who were known to be rascals. And, I guess many of them out there have killed-they're killers and some have survived killings-not the choicest group to have for company on a dangerous trail. At any

rate, we decided on Monday when we didn't hear from him that we ought to go in and check on him and make sure he was all right. So we assembled provisions, notes to drop him, food, and medicine. And we took out the air-to-ground telephone. Frank and I went together in the airplane. We flew with the door off, of course, so we could operate the telephone if necessary. We got down there and when I first saw the strip my heart sank. In the first place, because I couldn't see right off the bat that anything at all had happened to it-and I knew that if Roj had gotten there, something would have happened to that strip, because Roj just doesn't have anything in hand very long before something happens to it, especially if it needs something to happen to it. Then I started looking around for a white shirt. We looked for several anxious minutes before we finally distinguished him down there on the airstrip. I'll tell you for sure, I hadn't realized how anxious I was about his safety until that moment when I looked for him and the thing was in the balance-either yes or no. Then I realized how concerned we had been about him on the trail, with just a Jivaro guide and a few provisions. There are snakes out there. But we saw him and our hearts were very rejoiced by seeing him.

"We made a couple of low passes over the field. First we flew low over and throttled back the engine to quiet it down and I shouted down to Roj to ask him to get the Indians off the strip, that we had some stuff to drop to him. He heard us perfectly and cleared the Indians out of the way. We made about four runs, dropping the food and some axe heads and cloth to the Indians as gifts for them. We needed to know what the situation was down there, so we pulled up and put out the telephone on a double wire cable, using the spiraling-line technique. We reeled out about 1,500 feet of telephone cable and then started to

circle. The telephone on that long line duplicated our circling, then slowly slid toward the center and began to drop. Finally it hovered, drifting around in a slightly unruly way, its horizontal velocity perhaps six or eight miles an hour, while we above were circling at sixty miles an hour. With a little trial and error and compensating for the drift, we were able to finally get the phone down close to Roger. I heard Frank's voice saying: `Hello, Roj; hello Roj,' and I knew that we had contact with him down there.

"Frank talked with Roj for about ten minutes there on the phone, getting data from him. And then he apparently had all the information he needed and we started to pull up to put tension on the line. Meanwhile, Roj had tied his mailsack on to the cable-his outgoing mail and a note to his wife-and turned the phone loose. It went soaring up just about vertically, cleared all trees and we had it trailing behind us on the end of 1,500 feet of wire that we then had to reel in. We waved good-bye to Roj and shoved off for Wambimi."

When Nate landed again in Wambimi, Frank informed him that Roger had asked for a landing on the following Friday. "It's impossible!" said Nate. "The strip won't be ready. But then," he added, "I guess that's not my department. I'd better get in there as requested and then decide whether or not the strip is suitable for landing."

Roger had also explained over the ground-to-air telephone that he needed medicine. The Atshuaras had contracted the flu from a group of soldiers who had passed through. This accounted for Roger's not having a radio. The Jivaro who had promised to carry it in had gotten wind of the sickness among

the Atshuaras, and knowing how deadly flu can be, refused to go near the place.

"Friday came along and I was getting kind of keyed up about this business of inaugurating a new field," Nate continued on the tape recorder. "It isn't child's play; it isn't a Sunday school picnic, as they say; it is a very serious business, where you have to do your best possible calculating and double checking on everything and then trusting the Lordgo in and do your duty.

"Friday morning woke up, as they say in Spanish, raining. By noontime we knew that it was out of the question for the day; the field would be wet anyway, and we can't add mud to the other unavoidable hazards of such an operation, so we canceled out for that day. We took it that it was God's indication that it was not the day to go and we left it pending for the next day. The next morning, we made the preparations and Frank and I flew down to Wambimi after lunch. Frank got out and we unloaded the extra cans of gasoline and I took off alone with a very limited supply of gas. The airplane was completely stripped, with even the right seat taken out, so that it was as light as you could possibly get and have enough gasoline to be safe. I had a safe reserve-perhaps an hour and a half of gasoline aboard, and the round trip over to Santiaku's place and back would have been about forty minutes; so I had a hundred percent reserve."

Taking off, Nate headed for a little river halfway between the Macuma River and the Pastaza, which was the only landmark for Santiaku's place. When he found it, figuring he must be south of the spot, he turned north, scanning the horizon near and far in search of the little island in the sea of green. Nothing. Suddenly, just below him, he saw a little house-of the square

stockade style, but without a chacra [an agricultural clearing in the forest].

"That's strange," thought Nate. "Maybe it belongs to some Indian who's just killed somebody and is lying low here for a while. Probably his chacra is off somewhere else, to confuse the enemy."

Mystified, he kept on. Ah-there it was! He called in to Marj on the radio:

"56 Henry-I'll be over Jimmy's place in two minutes. 56 Henry-I'll be over Jimmy's place in two minutes. Over." Since Santiaku is a form of the Spanish name for James, they had nicknamed the spot for secrecy.

"Lo and behold," Nate's record continued, "when I got over it two minutes later, there was no airstrip there! Looked just like his place, but no strip. That was a little disconcerting, because I didn't have a great deal of gas along, so I flew a little farther north and climbed on up, gaining altitude, trying to decide what I should do. I decided I'd better beat a track for Wambimi. Landed there around four-thirty. I hadn't been in a hurry before, because I wanted to get to Jimmy's place late in the afternoon when the air is cool and buoyant. It's steadier for this type of operation. Frank was a little surprised to see me back so soon. I described the house I'd seen and he recognized it as one they'd passed on the trail to Santiaku's. He passed me about five gallons of gas, and I took off, heading due east, picked up the little river and turned south."

Nate's blue eyes squinted through the plexiglass. Visibility that day was about a hundred miles, and "you can almost imagine you see steamship smoke on the horizon," but in all that expanse there was not a sign of life.

"I went south," he continued. "I went farther south. I was really beginning to make bets that I had never seen anything before, and goodness, I thought, there's no percentage in this! About that time I stumbled onto a house that was on a river bank, well stockaded, and the way that house was situated you just wouldn't see it unless you flew directly over it, that's all. Tucked down there in the forest, it was made differently from the other houses that I'd seen, Quichua or Jivaro. I didn't feel that I was exactly in a friendly neighborhood. I decided that the Lord's hand must be in this somehow (I was farther south than I had ever flown on survey)."

Even though Nate by this time was greatly concerned about finding Roger, he looked this new house over carefully and made a mental note about its location, "because they would need to hear the Gospel, too, way out there in their isolated places. You feel convinced that it is the will of the Lord that we do everything possible, that each Indian have an opportunity to know of the grace of God, and to hear that Name that is above all other names.

"So I went on. I felt buoyed up by the challenge of the very isolation of these people and the challenge to help other missionaries to get the Gospel to them, so the risk involved seemed to be offset and justified by the spiritual challenge of the situation."

Nate kept on flying till he figured the gas load was getting down. Then he switched on his transmitter:

"56 Henry to Shell Mera. I've looked up and down the river. Can't find Jimmy's place. I'm turning around now, heading upstream, gaining altitude. Do you read, Shell Mera? Over."

"Okay, Okay," came Marj's answer, and Nate started looking for smoke on the horizon, for surely he must be in Atshuara country, and if Roj had heard he'd get a smudge going.

Presently he saw it-there, apparently to the southwest, was a column of smoke. But it seemed to be in the wrong direction. Was his compass off? Or was it that he was not as well oriented as he had thought he was? The situation seemed incongruous, but, Nate thought, "once in a while you get in a situation like that, and the answer, when it comes, is a kind of surprise. So with that in mind, and with the fact also that where there's smoke there's fire, and where there's fire there are people, I decided to trust the Lord and head out across the stuff and see what in the world was producing that smoke. When I got there, I was well rewarded, but not in the way I'd expected.

"Down a steep bank that had been cleared, in a little hidden river, set in the trees, there was a little flat place. And down in the flat place, sunken way down deep, was a big house, with rounded ends, and Indians all over the clearing." Again Nate made a mental record for future use. After a quick look, with gas getting low, "I rolled out of the turn and started climbing and looked to the left, and, I'll be switched, there was a great big house, bigger than the one on the bank of the river, tucked down in there just off to one side. I just don't know how in the

world it is that you can't see something until you're right on it. It's like hunting needles in a haystack."

Nate then started climbing, still circling. "I thought it just possible that if I got up really high, where I could look down into those little barrels of isolated pockets of mankind," he said, "I just might see some more interesting things. I was all eyes and quite excited over these finds and thrilled to find myself completely thrust into the arms of the Almighty, because down there there's no question at all about that. If that old engine had quit up there, God alone could have saved me. I might just as well admit it frankly right here; I don't like to fly over stuff like that and I have to have a pretty good reason to be over it without a good position-check and a good river to identify my position by. But these are people for whom Christ died, and you have to find them before you can take the Gospel to them, so I was happy to have stumbled on them.

"I had one last look around before turning over to Wambimi and on that inspection I noticed a little blemish, off to the east, and I thought I could afford to fly a minute or two and see what it turned into. And so I did. And within two minutes I could distinguish a house and then a few seconds later I could see a clearing; some solid earth behind some trees, some tall trees that indicated that it was Jimmy's place, and there, completely hidden behind those tall trees, was the runway. I finally realized I'd had all this trouble finding the place because the late afternoon sun was hitting the low ridges at a different angle than I had been used to on previous trips over the area. Anyway, when I saw that clearing I got on the radio, but quick, and started down. That old airplane really let down in a hurry and when I looked over at the vertical speed indicator I was clocking

about 1,500 feet a minute. I was spiraling down at a good clip, reporting in to Shell, getting confirmation of the position, circling over the clearing and having a look-a heart-saddening look-at the strip. It just wasn't what you would describe as an airstrip at all. My heart sank. I knew Roj needed to get out of there, because I know the way he works; he never spares himself. He'd been in there a couple of weeks almost and I knew he would be a wreck and needing badly to get clear of the place. So I was anxious to do my best, consistent with safety and our responsibility to MAF and the other folks that MAF serves.

"While I circled back I shook my head and said to myself, audibly: 'No, that just is no good; it's just impossible.' Nevertheless, I figured I owed Roj a better look, so I came by low a time or two, and one time I was about to cut the engine and yell down to Roj and tell him: 'I'm sorry; it's no soap.' But I went on by and took another look at it. He had it nicely marked with bandage material. He had 50 yards on the lead end toward the big house marked off, and then he had a line with the words 'WHEELS' on it. I knew I could touch down from where the 'WHEELS' sign was. Down at the far end he had marked off 250 yards. Then I got to thinking that I can't just say 'no' on a hunch; but I can, too. Sometimes a hunch saves a fellow's life, when a slide-rule says 'yes' and a hunch says 'no.' So I thought: 'Well, the airplane is light; about 250 yards more or less of strip; maybe I should try one approach.' The air certainly was quite steady and I thought that if I could get down there closer it might look different. So, I prepared to buzz the field, let down steeply over the trees, and down over the roof of Santiaku's house, going about a hundred miles an hour. When I got down in there, there was one tree sticking out along the edge of the strip, and I said to myself as though someone could hear: 'Roj, man, this thing

does have wings sticking out,' and I pulled up and got to thinking the problem over. The surface looked all right; I trusted Roj on that; I know he's careful about making sure that there are no soft spots; he's been through two other strip inaugurations with me. That is to say, he's gone ahead to prepare and check the ground, so I felt confident.

"There wasn't much time left; I was well down in gas again; so, 'Here goes,' I said to myself, 'maybe I can get by that tree.' And then the thought came to me that I might not be able to get out of there later. I figured that between the two of us, with the Indians, we could fell enough trees in a couple of days to get out of there. The radio was working on the airplane; I could tell Marj where we were; I told Barb that Roj was okay. 'Okay,' I called in quickly, 'preparing to land at Santiaku's place.'

" I reeled the antenna in, slowed the plane down, and put it in the approach toward the trees. As I cleared the trees, I took it into a very steep sideslip, pulled the flaps into full position, and cleared Santiaku's house by about 15 to 20 feet. As I measured the situation, I wasn't measuring just the tree sticking out but the whole thing, seeing everything at once. As a matter of fact, I didn't even see that tree; at least, I wasn't conscious of it. In a situation like that a pilot's subconscious drives him pretty much. It's a kind of automatic pilot that takes over because you haven't time to think out individual problems. They had been thought out while I was circling above, thinking through objectively and I'd decided that I could go in there safely and, as an old-timer said, from there on 'the seat of your pants guides you.'

"I went on in there and I slipped that plane just as steep as she'd slip-a pretty solid forty-five miles an hour; I straightened

out just over the 50yard rough stretch, plunked the wheels down just beyond the 'WHEELS' sign and got stopped in a little over half of the 250 yards that was available.

"I thanked God first of all for my being on the ground safe and sound. Naturally, the first thing you do in a situation like that is to get the trailing antenna out and transmit the news of the successful arrival without accident or incident to Marj and other loved ones and colleagues who are listening on their radios prayerfully. But this time I didn't. It never came to mind; there were too many things happening there too fast.

"Roj came running up and said, 'Have you got any medicine?' 'Yes,' I answered; 'it's in here,' and I tossed him the sack. I had it all bundled up ready to throw out of the plane. There wasn't any 'Hello, I'm glad to see you' or 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume' sort of stuff. Roj was haggard; he had a week's beard; a dirty tee-shirt, ripped full of holes; he was a really pitiful sight; emaciated. He was at the bundle, tooth and nail, taking that stuff out. Then he started shouting at the top of his lungs-voice almost breaking-to the Indians down the strip, barking orders. I've never seen Roj behave quite like that. I know that he can snap at people when things are tight, but in this case I didn't know quite what to make of the whole situation, so I grabbed him kind of firmly by the arm and said: 'Slow down now, Roj; slow down; we've got time.' He looked up out of those eyes and said, 'We haven't got time; we haven't got time.' So I didn't argue with him. He handed me two bottles of penicillin and said: 'Here, shake these,' so I did. He was barking orders at the Indians and I thought to myself, 'My goodness, how on earth can these people think he's a friend when he talks to them like that?'

"The first thing I knew, everyone and his brother were getting shots. It was soon evident that just everybody was sick with gripe. Some of them looked as though they were ready to die right there while we were working with the medicines. I did what I could to help Roj. Santiaku was sitting on a log, stoop-shouldered, looking sick, painted up 'fit to kill,' doing his best to look like a chief, but very, very sick. Roj told me while he was 'shooting' that one of the chiefs had already died the week before.

When he got there he had shot all the worst cases and they recovered and this was the next batch of light cases that were getting worse and worse and the people-well, you can imagine how they felt without any medical help.

"We had two little bottles of penicillin. How precious those bottles were, standing between life and death. When Roj threw down the first bottle, I said: 'Take it and try to see if there isn't another drop in it.' Mothers would shove their little bare-bottomed babies toward Roj. He'd give them a swipe with a cotton swab of alcohol. It was just a tiny bottle that Roj might so easily upset because his hand was shaking like a leaf. He'd holler out at the Indians: 'Now, don't move,' and everybody just obeyed his orders. He was the chief in that outfit, at the moment, the real master of the situation. There was no question about it."

Roj peered into the faces of the Indians as they came along. The graver cases got the medicine. He looked across the clearing, and there coming out of the forest was Tysha, a close Atshuara friend. The Indians had tried to save his life by carrying him out to an army base, but the river was too great an obstacle

for him in his weak condition. He arrived in time to get the last drop of penicillin from Roj's needle. "Praise the Lord," said Roj, "it's unbelievable, but here he is, and this will probably save his life!"

Roj straightened up for the first time, looked at Nate, and smiled. The strain was off his shoulders. Nate looked at his watch-just a few minutes before their deadline for getting out of there. While Roj walked toward the plane, now at long last relaxed and at ease, Nate ran over and offered his hand to the bewildered chief. "He didn't know what to do with it, but I just grabbed his and started talking English. They'd understand as much of that as of Spanish. 'So long, glad to have known you fellows,' I said, and headed for the plane."

Roj was shaking his head, smiling. "Well, God is certainly in this thing."

Nate took off alone to satisfy himself that he could get out with the heavier load, and then came back in to pick up Roger. In the plane on the way to Wambimi, Roj told how the work on the strip had been hindered by sickness; how, because of the sickness, his Indian carrier had refused to bring the radio, and how he had worked on the strip himself for lack of anyone else to do it. At one point an Indian had shouted at him: "Watch out! There's a snake by your foot! Don't move!" Roj froze, and there, not two feet away from his foot, lay a bushmaster, coiled to strike. The Indian grabbed a stick. "Nothing doing-that's too short!" yelled Roj. With the words "God help me" on his lips, Roj slashed his machete at the snake's head, cutting it off cleanly.

"You can't imagine how I prayed that you wouldn't make it on Friday, as we had originally planned," said Roj. "Then Saturday I prayed you would get here, and began to wonder if you'd make it. It got to be four o'clock, and no plane. I was getting pretty discouraged. Finally, there it was. We heard it coming, all right, but no-it was turning away! I just died a thousand deaths out on that field. I was really shot. After working all day in the rain on Friday, straining every muscle to get it done, and then straining our ears all day Saturday, well ... then half an hour later, we heard you again. Again, instead of growing louder, the sound faded away. The Indians tore down to the chacra, and saw the plane disappearing. This was it. I decided to call it a day, and gathered the Indians together for a meeting and a little Gospel teaching. We had just started when the Indians yelled that the plane was coming back. Some said, 'No, you're hearing it with your heart!' But soon we saw it. Man, you can't imagine what it does to a guy to see this little yellow job coming in over the trees!"

These two men, imbued with the Christian pioneering spirit of the first century, using the tools of the twentieth, had pushed back the boundaries of their faith one more step. Not only Roger and Nate, but also Jim, Pete, and Ed were missionary pioneers-always looking to the regions beyond immediate horizons. Just over the distant ridges were the Aucas. "One of these days we're going to spot those boys," Jim Elliot had said, "and from then on they'll be marked men!"

CHAPTER 8 The Aucas

For a number of years," Nate Saint once wrote, "the Aucas have constituted a hazard to explorers, an embarrassment to the Republic of Ecuador, and a challenge to missionaries of the Gospel."

Since his arrival in the Oriente, Nate had often flown over Auca territory, his trained eye trying to find houses or villages. It is no easy matter to find a people numbering perhaps five hundred to a thousand, in a dense jungle covering twelve thousand square miles. No census, of course, has ever been made; the area is merely estimated by the Quichuas as an area undoubtedly far larger than the Aucas themselves would claim, as the Quichuas (quite understandably) give them a wide berth. This part of the jungle lies about one hundred and fifty miles east of Quito. It is bordered by three rivers: on the west by the Arajuno, on the north by the Napo, on the south by the Villano. To the east it runs into the Peruvian border.

The history of the region goes back to the early days of the Spanish conquest of Ecuador. In 1541, Gonzalo Pizarro, brother of the famous Francisco Pizarro, who brought the Inca Empire to an end, crossed the Andes, explored their eastern slopes, and permitted one of his adventurous lieutenants to follow the Amazon to its mouth. In his astounding explorations he lost all but ninety-seven of his hundreds of soldiers. Some died of hardship but many were killed by hostile Indians. Some of these Indians were undoubtedly the ancestors of the Aucas. The conquistadors were followed in the seventeenth century by Jesuit missionaries, some of whom also were killed by hostile Indians. Little was done to settle or exploit the area from the

seventeenth century to the middle of the nineteenth. Then the demand for rubber in the industrial parts of the world brought rubber hunters to the Amazonian basin, at that time the source of the best rubber in the world. Unscrupulous, treacherous, cruel, the rubber hunters wooed the Indians with presents only to raid their villages, plunder whatever of value they might find, carry off the able-bodied young men as slaves to work on haciendas, and murder the rest so that there would be no one left to drum up reprisals.

In 1874 a later Jesuit missionary made a trip down the Curaray intending to found a mission but instead spent his time-according to his own report-protecting the Indians from the rapacious rubber hunters. Another record called the rubber traders "civilized savages against unbaptized savages." Certainly from that time on, hatred spread throughout the Auca country, and a legacy of reprisal has been passed on from father to son. It was the behavior of the white man that closed off this area to colonization. There was a time when the country could have developed with the co-operation of the Aucas but that time is now past. In the early days of this century, haciendas were scattered throughout what is now a "closed" country.

The Aucas' growing distrust of the white man is illustrated in a story told in the Oriente of a hacienda owner, a Senor Santoval, who lived in the Aucas' domain shortly after the turn of the century. Senor Santoval had two captured Auca families working for him and managed to carry on a lively rubber trade with the Aucas still in the jungle. They would leave rubber for him at the edge of his property and in exchange he would leave machetes, knives, and clothing for them. For about ten years this peaceful trading continued with no violence on either side. The

captured Aucas were such superior work men that Santoval asked them to approach their tribesmen with offers of work on the hacienda. Through his intermediaries, the patron offered them fair pay, good living conditions, clothing, anything they felt they wanted. The offer was refused out of hand and the answer came back that the Aucas wanted nothing whatever of the white man's world, that they were independent and wished to remain so. Santoval died in 1917 and his death was the signal for an Auca attack on the hacienda. Almost all his Indian workers were killed; those that survived, including some of the captured Aucas, moved permanently out of range of Auca attacks.

The Shell Oil Company, prospecting for oil in the Oriente from 1940 to 1949, had to contend not only with the usual hazards and inconveniences of the jungle but with attacks from Aucas on their workmen. In 1942 three of their employees were killed in the company's camp at Arajuno. The incident is described in a letter written by a Shell Oil Company executive:

"We regret to have to inform you that a most unfortunate incident occurred on Wednesday, January 7th last, in our camp at Arajuno. A group of hostile Indians attacked a gang of our laborers working near our camp and our foreman and two other Ecuadorian laborers were killed with spears. This attack caused some panic among the laborers which was aggravated when the following morning these Indians made another appearance and seemed to be surrounding the camp.... We fear it will become more difficult than before to engage an adequate number of laborers for our camp at Arajuno."

One year later the company lost eight employees. In an attempt to win the confidence of the tribe and ward off further

killings, a visit was made to an Auca house. Gifts of machetes, shirts, magazines, and empty bottles were left for the inhabitants, who proved to be absent when the white men arrived. The Aucas responded with a present of a vine-woven basket which they left on the trail. This encouraged the oil men, and one of them reported: "It seems that our hope of friendship is going the right way. I think that this will become a reality in the near future, so long as our personnel always follow the indicated line of conduct which could be put down as 'absolute respect of private property....' Astray bullet might, in my opinion, constitute something like a declaration of war, which could be fatal to our party."

An attempt at dropping gifts from an airplane was also made by the Shell Oil people, but, as Nate later observed, "a two-thousand horsepower transport, roaring over the village at a low altitude, would seem sure to scare anyone, not to mention particularly a stone-age people with no knowledge whatsoever of science." In spite of all these overtures, the hopes of the Shell Oil Company were not realized and no one made any further serious attempts to win the Aucas.

It was becoming increasingly important for these young missionaries to know every available fact about the Aucas. They read the reports of the Shell Oil Company and talked to anyone who had ever had any contact with the Aucas. An invaluable source of information was Senor Carlos Sevilla, who owns and operates a hacienda about ten minutes' flight from Sandia. Don Carlos had lived in Auca territory for twenty-six years, before he was driven out by repeated attacks. He is a tall, spare Ecuadorian

in his middle sixties who has probably had more experience with Aucas than any other living man. His body still bears six scars inflicted by Aucas during his last encounter with them.

His first narrow escape came in 1914 when seven Indians and one Columbian who were working for him were killed on the hacienda "El Capricho" on the Curaray. In 1919, while Sevilla was hunting for rubber, he left fifteen Indian families at a camp on the Tsupino River while he went upstream to get medicines. On his return, he was met by an Indian boy who was wounded in the arm, the sole survivor of an Auca attack on the camp. Hurriedly rounding up sixty Quichuas, Sevilla set off to find the Aucas responsible for the massacre at his camp. He found an Auca house, and one woman peacefully working in the manioc patch. She was captured, but as Sevilla's men surrounded the house, she broke away from her guards, and ran screaming into the bush. This sounded the alarm, and those who had been in the house were able to escape while the guards rushed to recapture the woman. As Don Carlos repeats this story, so many years later, there is still a note of bitter disappointment in his voice.

He has been able to observe Auca strategy closely. It seems that attacks are always by surprise, and that the Aucas invariably outnumber their opponents. One method of surprising travelers is to wait at the bend of a river until the current forces a canoe close to the shore, and while the polers are frantically trying to pull the canoe back into the mainstream, the spears are hurled, accompanied by wild yells to confuse the victims. The advantage is all with the Aucas. Sevilla's advice to any adventurer in savage territory is that he travel with at least two canoes, so that one canoe could fire to protect the other should an attack come.

In 1925 Don Carlos and his Indians were attacked twice within four months. Sevilla and his men were traveling by canoe upstream on the Nushino when, at a narrow bend in the river, they found themselves the target of dozens of Auca lances. The canoe capsized, five Indians were slain immediately, and Sevilla and one other escaped. Fighting his way through the hail of spears, he succeeded in killing two of the attackers with their own weapons, but emerged severely wounded himself. Eight days later he reached his hacienda on the Ansuc River, his body rotting with infection, his wounds worm-eaten.

An attack in 1934 finally drove him out of the territory, but it has not discouraged his making plans for a possible re-entry.

"I don't think it is too late," says Sevilla. "True, we've lost our best chances, but perhaps if we build a strong, lance-proof house fairly close to the Auca houses, make a large clearing around it, keep constant watch, and never use a gun, they would ultimately accept our friendship."

But there are men in the Oriente, who roamed the region looking for rubber, gold, or oil in the days when this was "open country," who say that never, never will the Aucas allow the white man to live peacefully in their land. It is too late. By the flickering light of kerosene lamps on the verandas of haciendas, these old-timers sit evening after evening recalling their experiences and conjecturing about the Aucas' real motives. Are they natural born killers? Do they kill only to preserve their land from outsiders? Do they kill to rob? No one knows and there is no set pattern that shows any one single motive behind the killings.

It is known that a few killings have been followed by robbery. Articles which the Aucas considered useful, particularly the machete, have been stolen. Other things, whose use they do not understand, they leave behind. In some cases all possessions of the victims have been left intact. Surprisingly, Quichuas are allowed summer fishing privileges in the heart of the Auca domain; undisturbed, they take their canoes down the Napo or the Curaray for weeks at a time. Then for no apparent reason, the Aucas will attack. They may kill or wound a group of Quichua fishermen within Auca boundaries, or they move just beyond their frontiers and attack a Quichua family working in its chacra. One fact only seems firmly established: the white man is unwanted. When he sets foot within the area that the Aucas have marked off for themselves, he risks his life.

Killings, however, also occur within the tribe. Anger finds immediate expression in a killing. As it was with the Hatfields and McCoys of the Kentucky mountains, feuds flare up frequently, each death to be avenged by the surviving members of the family to form a chain reaction of murder. Thus, the taking of life is not alien to the Aucas. From an early age on, young boys are trained in the accurate use of their nine-foot hardwood lances. Don Carlos tells of coming upon a deserted Auca hut, and finding there a life-sized human figure carved of balsa wood. The heart and facial features were clearly outlined with bright red achiote and the entire figure was torn with lance marks. This method, as modern as bayonet training for combat troops, had been used to develop the deadly marksmanship for which the Aucas are famous.

Don Carlos has working for him on his hacienda an Auca woman who escaped some years ago from a tribal killing. There

had been a typical family feud, in which both her parents and brothers and sisters were killed by a neighboring group. Dayuma, then in her mid-teens, had managed to escape by hiding out in the chacra until the invaders left. She then made her way to the nearest settlement of Quichuas, who took her to Don Carlos.

Like any refugee, Dayuma spent her first years among the Quichuas, adapting herself as quickly and totally as possible to their customs. One of her hardest adjustments was the food of her hosts. Aucas have no salt and it took her almost a year before she could enjoy seasoned food. Clothing was another major change. Aucas are entirely naked, except for vines that are tied tightly around wrists, ankles, and waist. Now Dayuma wears the customary shapeless cotton dress of the Quichua woman. In an effort to hide her Auca ancestry she combs her hair down to cover her disfigured ear lobes-ear lobes once adorned with round balsa wood plugs more than an inch in diameter. Watching her go about her work on the hacienda, feeding the animals, helping in the kitchen, there is little else to distinguish her from her Quichua fellow workers. The Aucas have the same straight black hair, the same tea-colored skin, and about the same height-a few inches over five feet.

Dayuma has been able to give many facts of ethnological interest. Although the Aucas drink chicha, made just as the Quichuas make it, they drink it unfermented; consequently Dayuma never saw drunkenness until she reached the outside world. Wife-beating was also unknown to her. Auca houses are long, oblong shaped, with mud-packed floors, and hammocks used as beds hanging from the roof. Living in each house may be anywhere from twenty to fifty members of a clan. The women work in the plantations of manioc and cotton. The men work on

their lances, shaping the sharp points with stolen machetes. Every man in the household has his collection of nine or ten spears, which he takes with him on a foray for food or on a raiding expedition. Dayuma says that the Aucas can recognize a footprint-in much the same way that we would recognize a familiar face, they can identify the individual Indian who has passed by. She told Don Carlos that every step he had ever taken in Curaray country was known to her people. They also spent many hours spying on the Shell camp at Arajuno. At one time during the Shell occupancy, the people had considered approaching the white man. They had talked seriously among themselves of the possibility of sending in two men as a scouting party and, if they were not killed, the rest of the group would follow. In actual fact, just the opposite happened; the Aucas attacked and killed three Shell employees.

Pets are common among Aucas; they snare parrots, monkeys, and the wild boar when they are still young and keep them in small huts surrounding the large main house. Like other people the world over, they have their legends and fairy stories. At one time, so goes the Auca legend, "fire fell from heaven," spread out all over the world, and burned all the trees. The Aucas hid under the leaves of the sweet potato plant until the fire was over and then came out and repopulated the earth. They fear evil spirits, as do all jungle people. They like their children and amuse them with tales. Dayuma tells one of the tales whose hero is a turtle:

One day a baby turtle met a powerful jaguar on the road.

"Ha!" said the jaguar. "Your parents are far away and there is no one to protect you."

The little turtle in fear drew in his head.

"Put out your head," the jaguar commanded.

And the turtle, hearing the mighty voice, put out his head. Then, looking into the jaguar's savage mouth, he said: "what terrific teeth you have!"

The jaguar was flattered. He opened his mouth still wider to display all of his fine fierce teeth. So the little turtle, who was much quicker than he looked, jumped into the jaguar's mouth and bit his throat so hard that the jaguar forthwith died.

Then the little turtle left the jaguar and went to the neighboring Aucas and told them that he had killed a jaguar and left it lying in the path. The Indians went to see, and there was the dead jaguar. Happily they snatched out the teeth and claws to make ornaments for themselves and went off, entirely forgetting to thank the little turtle. So the little turtle simply returned to the jungle and grew up to be a big turtle!

Dayuma is constantly asked why the Aucas kill, and she can only answer that they are killers. "Never, never trust them," she repeats with emphasis; "they may appear friendly and then they will turn around and kill."

There are those, however, who have not and will not accept this verdict as final—those who cannot rest in peace while generations of Aucas remain beyond the frontiers of Christianity. Pete Fleming was one of those who could not be content while the Aucas remained in darkness. In his diary he wrote: "It is a grave and solemn problem; an unreachable people who murder

and kill with extreme hatred. It comes to me strongly that God is leading me to do something about it, and a strong idea and impression comes into my mind that I ought to devote the majority of my time to collecting linguistic data on the tribe and making some intensive air surveys to look for Auca houses. ... I know that this may be the most important decision of my life, but I have a quiet peace about it."

CHAPTER 9 September 1955

September 1955 was the month in which Operation Auca really started, the month in which the Lord began to weave five separate threads into a single glowing fabric for His own Glory. Five men with widely differing personalities had come to Ecuador from the eastern United States, the West Coast, and the Midwestern States. Representing three different "faith-missions," these men and their wives were one in their common belief in the Bible as the literal and supernatural and perfect word from God to man. Christ said "Go ye"; their answer was "Lord, send me."

The missionaries who were about to join forces in Operation Auca had made several moves. After the flood it had been decided to rebuild Shandia, keep it as the main station of this area, and build outstations. The technique of maintaining a number of outstations is particularly important in the Oriente because the Indians in this part of the world, as already pointed out, do not congregate in large villages, but are scattered in small groups throughout large areas of the jungle.

It was agreed that an outstation should be established in Puyupungu. Jim and Ed and Pete had visited this little settlement

of Quichuas on a survey trip down the Bobonaza River in August, 1953. There they had met Atanasio, the chief who had invited them to establish a school for his children. "Because of God, will you not stay?" he had asked. "We need you very much. I have-let's see-thirteen, fourteen, and another one, yes, fifteen children. No one has taught them. They want to learn to see paper. I have some orphans too in my house. Will you not come?"

Usually it is an uphill struggle to win the confidence of the people in a new area. Here, however, was not only an open door, but an outright invitation. The three men saw it as the answer to their prayer for enlarged borders. So plans were made. The McCullys moved to Shandia to begin their study of Quichua, and Pete, who was still single, was chosen to stay and help them learn the language and get established. Jim and I decided it was God's time for us to marry so that we could, together, open the station at Puyupungu.

Thus it was that Jim and I arrived there in November, 1953, with all our worldly goods in four canoes. After greeting us with much backslapping, handshaking, and laughter, the men carried the white man's incredible quantity of equipment up the high bank where Atanasio's two wives and throng of children waited expectantly.

The building of the house and airstrip did not take all of Jim's time. Together we began having meetings for the Indians, telling them in their own language the most wonderful story in the world, that of the Son of God who had come to earth and paid the price of man's sin with his own blood. The recognition of God's great love dawned slowly in the Indian mind. But one

day we rejoiced as Atanasio said to Jim, "I am very old. Perhaps too old to understand well. But it seems to me your words are true. I will die in your words."

Meanwhile, the McCullys were making good progress learning the language in Shandia. Pete Fleming had built himself a little shack near their bamboo house, and took meals with them. He wrote in his diary: "It is surprising what joy and pleasure I had in building my little two-room house. I really got a kick out of it, and though it took only four or five days, I could hardly wait to move in. It is very comfortable and it is pure luxury to have a place to myself, a bed, a desk, and chair where I will not be under observation. Best of all, it aids in leading a disciplined life, things are in a convenient place, and privacy for prayer is now possible. I have begun again to add to my file system on the New Testament, a thing I haven't done since I left the U.S. I am happy inside myself to be getting things done in an orderly way again. There is no question that it is the way I was meant to live, with regular bedtime, evenings free for study, and a full hour's devotional time in the morning."

On Wednesday the missionaries began the period of waiting for a visit from the Aucas. They fished, read, and studied their notebooks of Auca phrases.

On Thursday the waiting continued. During the day Nate Saint took the plane up several times, circled above Palm Beach, and gunned the engine to help pinpoint their location for the Aucas. ABOVE. Two missionaries rest in the shade of the beach house. RIGHT. During the period of waiting, the men felt that they were

being watched by unseen eyes, but they got no sight of "neighbors." Jim Elliot, Auca notebook in hand, stands in the shallow river and shouts words of welcome into the jungle in the hope that Aucas might be lurking there.

The youngest of the visiting Aucas was promptly dubbed "Delilah" by the missionaries. At the end of the day she stalked down the beach. "George" called to her, but, failing to stop her, followed her into the forest.

As Pete watched the McCullys become oriented in the work, he began thinking more specifically about his own future. And about his fiancée Olive Ainslie, a slim and beautiful girl, with dark eyebrows in striking contrast to lighter hair and blue eyes. They had become engaged in an exchange of letters while he was in the jungle. With typical candor this quiet, studious man wondered if there were any conflict between his coming marriage and his "call" to the Aucas?

"Last night Nate and I talked a long time about the Auca problem," he wrote. "Strangely enough, I do not feel my coming marriage will prohibit me from being eligible to help in efforts to reach them. I feel that if pushed to it, Olive would rather have me die after we had lived together than to indefinitely postpone our wedding on the possibility that something fatal might happen. Our life has become one, and I do not feel that God will separate us in our discernment of the will of God."

In June, 1954, Pete felt free to return to the United States to marry Olive. After Pete's departure Jim and I moved back to Shandia with Ed and Marilou McCully. Puyupungu having been established as an outstation, we arranged for future visitation

and teaching sessions. Shandia, with a school, medical clinic, and small store, was considered our permanent base of operations.

We all agreed that Jim and I could take the responsibilities of the Shandia station, so Ed and Marilou began to consider a move to an area of their own-another place where the Gospel had not been carried. The McCullys knew of Arajuno, the abandoned Shell Oil Company base on the very edge of Auca territory. In survey flights over the area, Ed had estimated the Quichua Indian population to be somewhere around one hundred. Why not take advantage of the excellent airstrip which the company had built, and move in there for a while to preach to these Indians? The runway would need only a day's work at the most to clear it of grass, and the gravel base would be as good as new. Arajuno, one of several Shell Company projects aimed at finding oil in the area, had been fabulously expensive. A small city had been hacked out of the forest; roads had been built; a hotel and tennis courts, bakery, and even a narrow-gauge railroad had been included in the project. Now, abandoned since 1949, the buildings had been claimed by the rot and ruin of the jungle. However, some useful materials might be salvaged. The idea of opening a station at Arajuno seemed a good one.

Ed began visiting Arajuno each weekend, flying over with Nate on Friday. Ed visited the Indians' homes and conducted meetings for them on Saturday and Sunday. The welcome he received encouraged him to build a simple house, using the foundations of one of the abandoned Shell Oil buildings and boards salvaged from round about. Finally when Ed decided to stay on full time at Arajuno, he moved Marilou and the two children to their "new" quarters. Marilou soon had an attractive home fixed up-bright curtains at the screened windows, a "sofa" made of a pile of

salvaged bricks covered with a mattress and a sheet of plastic, pictures on the bamboo walls, and colorful Ecuadorian rugs on the cement slab floor. Nate Saint spent several nights rigging up a burglar-alarm system and an electric fence, for the McCullys and their co-workers on other stations were fully aware of the dangers of living near the Aucas. The Arajuno River forms the western boundary of the Auca territory and the new mission station was on the Auca side of the river. It was the very site where the Shell Oil employees had been killed some years before. Such sporadic raids, with the Aucas darting from the jungle to kill swiftly and disappear again, had made the Aucas fearful and fascinating to their Quichua neighbors.

The Quichuas never allowed the McCullys to forget the possibility of a visit from the Aucas. The Quichuas refused to remain after four o'clock on that side of the Arajuno River. "This is the Auca part," they would say. Every so often rumors would spread around that Auca footprints had been found near the house, or that the grass was pressed down, indicating that Aucas had been lying there, spying on the foreigners.

The electric fence was set up a good thirty yards from the house, beyond accurate spear-throwing range, and Ed and Marilou always kept a pistol or gun handy. "Even though we don't think they're around," Ed said, "it gives you a good feeling to know that the fence is buzzing. With our lights on in the house at night we'd make a good target!"

Thus it was that the Lord had placed Ed and Marilou in the strategic spot that was to become the base of Operation Auca.

Meanwhile, Pete had returned from the United States to Quito with his bride, Olive. They spent a year in the mountains while she learned Spanish and he translated Scriptures into Quichua, spoke at Indian gatherings, and refreshed his own knowledge of Spanish. In the fall of 1955, Pete and Olive came to the Oriente to begin Indian work together at Puyupungu, where they settled in the little thatched house which Jim and I had built. Pete began again to teach the Indians there, slowly and carefully, reviewing the things they had learned before, leading them into new truths.

Olive's initiation into jungle life included a spectacular display by the active volcano Sangay, visible from the living room at Puyupungu. "At night," Pete wrote, "it looks like a huge bonfire out of which shoot flares in a long graceful arc landing a couple of thousand feet down the mountainside. With the binoculars we could see individual balls of fire burst and spray out all over. It was a real show. Clouds of steam coming from the lava on the snow would momentarily blot out the pyrotechnic display, only to have it clear and start over again."

Their hearts were sometimes saddened by the drunken behavior of many of the Indians at a fiesta. The results of such fiestas can be imagined—husbands beating their wives; pitiful naked children left to find their own place to sleep at night while parents stagger about until dead drunk. On one occasion a drunken mother rolled on her two-week-old baby, smothering it. An Indian will sometimes attempt to find his way home through the dark forest, usually ending up asleep on the muddy trail, waking hours later to find huge scavenger beetles digging under his legs in an attempt to bury him.

But there were signs, too, that the Gospel message was getting through to these sons of the jungle. Pete's journal records: "Today the angels are rejoicing over Puyupungu, and so are we. How faithful God is. This morning a number of Indians decided for Christ. I felt led to speak on baptism since I had noted several misunderstandings while I listened to Indians talk. So after speaking from the story of Philip and the eunuch, I tried to explain simply and clearly the difference between faith and baptism. After an early fight with squalling babies the attention was excellent and I felt the Spirit moving in hearts, so asked for a show of hands after carefully explaining what a decision for Christ would involve. A number of hands showed-Tito, Benito, Pascual, and others. A number more began to put up their hands when Alejo broke out from the back telling them that it would mean giving up drinking and living immorally. Some of the hands went down at that. I closed in prayer, inviting those who were really repentant to go into the back room of the school where I could deal more carefully with them. Twelve came. We encouraged and exhorted them and arranged for a believers' meeting on Friday afternoon. Several others are very close. What joy! This is what we came here for.

"At twenty-six years how good God has been and how full and blessed His ways. How continually I thank God for bringing me here, almost overcoming the impossible and pushing me out. I felt 'thrust out' and how grateful I am for God's impelling."

In September 1955, "God's impelling" moved five pioneering missionary families to crystallize their plans of months and years into common action. Truly they were being

"thrust out" to carry the Word of God to the Auca. The McCullys, in the station at Arajuno, provided the vanguard. Jim and I were in Shandia. The Flemings were in Puyupungu. Roger Youderian and his family had returned from their outstation at Wambimi and were again helping the Drowns at Macuma. Nate Saint with his little yellow plane and Marj at the radio remained at Shell Mera, their permanent base at the hub of these outlying jungle stations.

CHAPTER 10 Operation Auca Begins

On the evening of the second day of October, 1955, Nate Saint fed some yellow tissue into his old typewriter and began:

"This will be an attempt to note developments that have led to the recent decision to launch efforts toward contacting the Auca tribe. These notes, of course, will record only personal points of view of the situation and will not touch past efforts of other missionaries.

"Last night Ed McCully, Jim Elliot, Johnny Keenan, and I were on the living room floor on elbows and knees poring over a map of the eastern jungles of Ecuador. We had just decided that it was the Lord's time to try to contact the savage Auca tribe located somewhere east of Ed's Quichua Indian mission station at Arajuno.

"Later, in the kitchen over a midnight cup of cocoa, we decided that our efforts should be carried forward as secretly as practicable so as to avoid arousing other non-missionary groups to competitive efforts. Their efforts would undoubtedly employ a heavily-armed invasion party going in overland. This we fear

might set back for decades the missionary effort among these stone-age people.

"This afternoon, in meditation on the situation, it seemed to me a shame that the secrecy required might deny our prayer-supporting colleagues at home the blessing of a fresh running account, reported at first-hand, of our efforts and of the Lord's good hand upon them. Therefore I have taken it upon myself to set down the status quo and hope to add to it as we progress in the days ahead.

"A number of sporadic efforts have been made to change the status of these killers of the forests. Armed attacks and counterattacks on the part of whites only thinned out the tribe and fanned the furor of hatred already present. Fear of firearms did not diminish the Aucas' desire for revenge even though it had to be carried out from ambush with hardwood lances.

"The story of the exploration attempted by Rolf Blomberg, a Swedish explorer, and guided by a missionary in 1947, has been written in detail. The party was approaching the Aucas' location on balsa rafts when they were ambushed at a point where the current pushed the rafts close to the riverbank. An Indian porter in the party opened fire immediately and then dove into the river, following the missionary who was swimming underwater. This experience makes us wary of combining our efforts with those who have no love or special regard for these people."

When Ed McCully moved his family to Arajuno he asked Nate for an aerial survey of the Auca territory, and together they looked up and down the Nushino River valley, where the Aucas were known to have been some seven years before. They found

nothing more than had Pete and Jim in their survey two years earlier-only the vast ocean of dark green treetops that stretches off into a smudgy horizon. The effect of an ocean is heightened by the choppy, wavelike hills that break up the terrain. The coffee-with-cream-colored rivers snaking through the trees serve as a reminder that it is landscape, not seascape. Only the trained eye, however, would be able to spot human habitation in this wilderness-perhaps a ragged scarf of smoke rising above the green, or the infinitesimal spot which indicates an Indian chacra.

Nate's diary continues: "The actual search did not get under way until the morning of September 19, when I was letting down for Arajuno on the regular weekly vegetable-run. It was around 8:30 A.M., as I recall, and the atmosphere was unusually clear. Visibility was about seventy-five miles and all the little river valleys, which are usually camouflaged by the more common light-haze foliage combinations, were clearly discernible in the distance.

When I climbed out of the plane and greeted Ed, I asked him how he'd like to go looking for his 'neighbors.' He was all for it, so we set to work raiding Marilou's larder for canned goods and scrounged around for other special emergency equipment and took off about half an hour later.

"We followed the Nushino east, but flying the north side this time. We were able to scan a six- or eight-mile radius. About fifty miles east of Ed's place, out over the middle of nowhere, we turned due north toward Coca on the Rio Napo. About five minutes later we spied some spots that looked as if they might have been planted manioc patches years ago. It's hard to be sure from a bird's point of view, even after you've been studying the

woods for some time. We circled and then went on north until the Napo was getting close, without seeing anything more. The left turn toward home was inevitable. We didn't have gas enough to press on much farther and we had covered what we had outlined for this particular trip. However, it was hard to give up. It takes so long to get that far out, and it is so difficult to find such ideal weather. I'd been eying a blemish, barely discernible in the jungle, maybe five miles away. Ed couldn't make it out, but we decided to fly that way for just a couple of minutes, and if we didn't turn up something more concrete we'd beat it for home.

"The blemish grew into a well-defined pockmark, and then into a good-sized clearing covered with well-cleaned manioc. This was it. We'd been cruising very slowly and our fuel consumption was getting low, but we could still hang around for fifteen minutes without cutting into the reserve. So we hung around. All told, we must have seen about fifteen clearings and a few houses. It was an exciting old time ... a time we'd waited for.

"We never did let down for a close look. In the first place, we had to watch fuel consumption; in the second, we didn't want anyone to get frightened on our first visit. We'd be back again with more thoughts on the best manner to approach these people.

"On the way back Ed observed that he thought there must be other clearings closer to his place. He felt it would be a long hike for Aucas from this settlement to show up at his place or in its environs. I didn't think so. To me it seemed logical that they should all be way out there in the wilderness since there had been a raid at their old location on the Nushino. We decided to keep thinking about the whole thing and to compare notes later.

We also decided to keep the 'find' in the family until we were sure it was okay to spill it.

"The news was exciting to Marj and to Ruth and Johnny Keenan. As we reflected, it seemed providential that we had investigated that tiny spot that turned into the first Auca clearing we had ever laid eyes on.

"A couple of weeks later (September 29) I was to take Jim Elliot and Pete Fleming over to Villano where they were to spend several days preaching among a group of Quichuas who had never heard the Gospel. Our route was to be via Arajuno, so we decided that since we'd be flying over what was Auca territory, and since it would take two trips to move in the men and their equipment and two Indian guides-which would mean that I would cross the area four times we would keep our eyes open and fly slightly different routes each time.

"On the first trip over with Jim and the equipment we didn't see a sign of life. The return trip also yielded nothing. Then Pete and the two guides and I started out. Having decided to go far enough east to see an area that hadn't been covered by the previous two crossings, we zigzagged slowly, favoring the more hospitable-looking jungle valleys.

"About fifteen minutes from Arajuno we spotted some clearings. Pete and I spoke only in English, but there was no hiding our excitement. Our Indian guides spotted the clearings also. They were sharpies and immediately said 'Aucas.' It was their first time up in a plane, yet they knew just where they were and could name the rivers. We flew down a little river and spotted a half-dozen big houses with smaller ones around them.

That was it. There they were as plain as the nose on your face and only fifteen minutes from Ed's place at Arajuno by plane.

"As we approached Villano we talked over the problem of keeping the guides quiet. We decided that we would have to impress on them the danger to them personally if word of the location of the Aucas got around and if, as a result, there were attacks on the Aucas by the Quichuas or others, followed by Auca reprisal raids.

"I landed from the inhabited end of the Villano strip, coming in fast so as to appear to have to use most of the strip. That took us away from the waiting crowd and gave Pete time to admonish the guides as per our agreement. They agreed to keep the secret ... (probably as secret as a full-sized toy elephant under a Christmas tree).

"Everyone who was in on our plan was again thrilled by the news. To some of us the most significant thing was not the information gained but the fact that after so much fruitless searching we had located the first group of Aucas and then in a couple of weeks had stumbled over the other group. It seemed to mean that now was the Lord's time to do something about them. Again we agreed to pray about the matter and compare notes further, after the whole episode had a chance to sink in.

"Several days later when Johnny Keenan was moving Jim and Pete and their guides from Villano back to Arajuno, he hit bad weather and finally had to come on back to Shell Mera to land and spend the night. That was the night that the map was on the Livingroom floor surrounded by four men who were now

laboring under the conviction that the Lord was leading us to do something about the Aucas.

"That night and into the wee hours of the morning we circumnavigated the problem a dozen different times. It is most fascinating to try to imagine how those people would respond to different approaches."

One of the problems that the missionaries grappled with that night was that of language. The need to convince the Aucas that here were friendly white men, could best be affected by communicating with them in their own language. This was of the essence. As the men talked over this problem, Jim Elliot came up with the answer. He remembered having seen Dayuma on Senor Carlos Sevilla's hacienda, which lay only four hours' walk from Shandia. He offered to go and talk to her to pick up phrases that could be useful in case contact were made.

A few days later, Jim trekked over. He found Dayuma cooperative, although he was very careful not to divulge to her the reason for his desire to be taught some simple Auca phrases. Among Quichuas gossip spreads as quickly as anywhere else. Fortunately, Dayuma- accustomed to the strange ways of strange people-assumed he was only casually interested in learning the language.

"Biti miti punimupa, " which means "I like you; I want to be your friend," Jim wrote carefully in his notebook. This was followed by "Biti winki pungu amupa "- "I want to approach you," or, more colloquially, "Let's get together."

"How do you say, 'What is your name?'" Jim asked in Quichua.

"Awum irimi, " Dayuma answered in Auca.

And so Jim built a practical vocabulary list.

Thus, one of the obstacles that lay in the path of the missionaries was partly overcome. A presentation of gifts seemed the obvious next step. Perhaps a carefully-planned, regular program of gift-drops, made over a period of time, would show the Indians that the intentions of these white men were friendly, and the repetition would gradually convince them.

CHAPTER 11 A Line from Plane to Ground

The men decided to begin the gift-drops to the savage Aucas at the earliest possible moment, employing the spiraling-line technique that Nate Saint had pioneered in Atshuara country. There, the accuracy of delivery had been of paramount importance. In the new venture, the technique would have the additional value of making it clear to the Aucas that the visitors in the plane had the power to give or retain the gift right up until the moment of delivery. From captive Aucas it had been learned that the Indians thought that the gifts from the Shell plane fell out of its "stomach" as a result of its being wounded or scared by the lances they had thrown.

Nate typed out his continuing record of the start of Operation Auca:

"That night on the living-room floor it was decided that we would make our aerial visits regularly, leaving something different each week in order to work on their curiosity. We calculated that under the circumstances, sooner or later the hostile spirit would melt.

"The following day Johnny flew Jim and Ed back to Arajuno. At Shell Mera I began tests with the line to see what kind of simple, dependable mechanism we could use to release our gifts when they touched the ground. Johnny and I flew together on most of the tests and Marj and Ruth hooked on the test weights and watched their release on the runway. We marked off a target on the runway and tried to hit it.

"Finally we were ready for a dress rehearsal. The test went off fine, except that when we flew over the strip to drop the line, it fouled the strut and we had to tie a knife on a stick so that we could try to cut it loose. There was no danger except that it could have come loose by itself while we were not over the field. And that is just what happened. I saw the line drape itself in some tall trees just beyond the end of the runway. However, by the time we landed and got in there to hunt for it, it was too dark, so that it had to remain there till morning.

"That night I was so keyed up I couldn't sleep much. On the other hand, I realized that the whole thing was in the Lord's hands. I had no way of knowing how long it would take the next morning to get the line out of the trees, but I told Marj that if I could be ready to take off by 9 A.M. we would go through with it; if not, we'd cancel until the following day.

"Next morning I rigged a 'fishing line' with a weight that I could toss over the lost line high in the trees. With that and a lot of trudging around through brush I finally got all the line and by 9 A.M. we were ready for take-off.

"October 6, 1955. The first gift was a small aluminum kettle with a lid. Inside we put about twenty brightly colored buttons- obviously not for their nonexistent clothes! But buttons do make good ornaments. Also we included a little sack with a few pounds of rock salt. We understand that they do not have any salt of their own. If only they could discover what the stuff was good for we felt sure we'd win friends. To these things we attached some fifteen brightly colored ribbon streamers about a yard long. All was ready.

"Out at Arajuno all was readiness and happy anticipation. I was very anxious lest by some fault of mine we might miss on this first attempt.

"We loaded in our emergency equipment, rigged our special gear, made a 'dry-run' test of getting the rig overboard, and took off for points east. We could hardly believe that we were to have the privilege of making the initial effort. Fifteen minutes' flying brought us over the first clearings. It was Ed's first look at his 'neighbors,' and he was plenty keyed up about it.

"We decided to try to find the downstream edge of their domain so that if we had a forced landing we could travel downstream away from their territory. About fifteen minutes more of looking around assured us that we were over the house that interested us.

"We were about 3,000 feet above the ground, and could not see anyone below; yet every indication showed that the house was occupied. The large house was thatched, with round ends, Jivaro style, and around it were several smaller squarish houses with thatched roofs, square on the ends. Well-beaten paths linked the smaller houses to the large central one. The main house was about forty yards from the edge of the stream and had a nice playa [sandbar] in front of it, perhaps seventy-five yards long and twenty-five yards wide at the widest place. A path showed that they used the playa frequently. It would be our target.

"We slowed the plane to fifty-five miles per hour and held the gifts over the side-the door having been removed at Arajuno-and hooked up the automatic-release mechanism. Slowly we lowered the gift packet until it was well clear of the plane. Then we allowed the airspeed to come up to sixty-five and began the heart-racking job of reeling out the line. I say heart-racking because if there is a bad knot anywhere in the bundle of cord, the whole effort is lost for that time. But all went well and we began circling at about sixty-five miles per hour.

"Since our altimeter reads only the altitude above sea level, we had no way of knowing how high we were above the ground. No sign of life below. We continued circling until the gift was drifting in a small, lazy circle below us, ribbons fluttering nicely. If no one was watching, it made it more important that we put the gift in an obvious place. The gift still seemed pretty high, so we started spiraling down, noting a considerable wind drift from the north, necessitating correction every time around in order to keep us over the target.

"Finally the gift appeared to be pretty close to the trees below. Time for the attempt. The wind was making it difficult and the hills on either side of the stream were covered with tall trees. A couple of times it seemed that we snatched our charge upward just in the nick of time to keep it out of trees bordering the sandbar. Once I believe the ribbons dragged across a tree and hung up momentarily. At any rate, that gave us our working elevation. We made about six attempts at this elevation, gradually drifting the prize against the wind until it was over the bar. Then we rolled the turn steeper and held our breath while it lowered toward the earth. It wouldn't be ideal for it to hit the water, and it was heading close ... close ... closer ... plunk! It hit about two or three feet from the water, directly in line with the path to the house. They couldn't miss it, since they probably got their water for cooking right at that spot.

"Now another problem. I thought I saw our gift move just a little as we began a slow climb, still circling. That raised the question as to whether it was released or dragging on the line. But finally we were sure the line was free ... and there was our messenger of good will, love, and faith, 2,000 feet below on the sandbar. In a sense we had delivered the first Gospel-message-by-sign-language to a people who were a quarter of a mile away vertically, fifty miles horizontally, and continents and wide seas away psychologically.

"How much do these people know? What do they think of what little they have seen of the outside world? We know they used to watch airplanes of the Shell Oil Company land and take off at Arajuno, for the Shell workers saw the spots where they hid in the bush to watch these monstrous messengers of another world.

"The trip back to Arajuno was short and happy. Back home again everybody who was in on the secret wanted to know if we had seen any Aucas. They were a little skeptical about anyone's finding our gift when we confessed we hadn't seen a soul. Nevertheless, a start had been made.

"Friday, October 14, 1955. I haven't brought the narrative up to the moment but rather than let the hottest stuff cool off while I catch up, I'm going to go ahead with what just happened today.

"This morning the weather was good, so we took off around 8 A.M. On the way out we could see some early-morning fog still lingering in the river valleys to the east so we were in no great hurry. We landed at Arajuno and began to prepare for the 'drop,' which was to be a new machete. We understand that these people have killed for machetes. That is, they have killed people working in the fields in order to steal their machetes or axes. It is easy to imagine the importance of such items among a stone-age people. We wrapped the blade in canvas so that no one would get cut and then tied on a number of colored ribbon streamers. After rigging the automatic touch release gadget, we climbed in the plane for a dress rehearsal. Going over all our plans and precautions again, it seemed that we were ready, so we had a word of prayer for the success of the trip and took off.

"It is always a bit of a strain on me to reel out the line in the air. But I slowed the plane down and we carefully lowered our second 'messenger of good will' over the side. By the time the line was all out we were almost at our destination. We used a little less line this time than last.

"Our plan was to check the sand bar where we left the gift last week. There were some low clouds but we found the house and the sandbar. The gift was gone. The binoculars removed any doubt. Either they had 'accepted' it or a flood had taken it away. We saw no one, but it was evident that the site was well occupied. The plan was to fly upstream to the next house this time and leave the gift there. We figured that if we specialized on one house, the others might get jealous or become suspicious that the occupant of that house was in league with us, or was in some way a traitor to their cause. When we got to the target house, we found it directly under a cloud so we inferred that the Lord would have us go on to the next.

"As we approached the house we had decided on, we spotted three or four canoes pulled up to the streambank in front of the house. That was interesting because one report has it they don't have canoes ... but there they were. That meant, too, that somebody must be around nearby.

"As we started to circle about 2,500 feet above the house it became apparent that we were going to be inside the cloud about ten percent of the time, but all other conditions seemed so favorable that we decided to go ahead. The high-riding machete was behaving nicely. Ed was glued to the binoculars. All of a sudden he let out a yell and all but crawled out the open door to get a better look. We were seeing our first Auca! He was running around but not hiding. Pretty soon there were three of them out in front of their big leaf-covered house. Now we felt sure that they had received our gift of last week and that the idea had caught on in a hurry. If it was half the sport for them that it was for us, their excitement was understandable.

"After about four circles we had compensated for the wind, et cetera, and started letting the gift down. I was no longer worried about their getting it because we felt sure they were already watching the dangling prize. We let on down. At first it looked as if it would hit the house, but it drifted toward the stream.... Splash! Then, quicker than you could bat an eye, another splash; an Auca had dived after the treasure. Minutes later there must have been a half dozen or eight of the men on the bank examining the prize. Our hearts were grateful. We had not hoped to see this for perhaps months. Of course, we wonder what they were thinking.

"Several things seemed evident: They got our first gift. They aren't afraid of us in this type of approach. They are as animated, in one way or another, about this thing as we are."

Back at Arajuno, Ed learned another interesting bit of news. His local Indians reported the tracks of Aucas who had apparently hidden in the brush near Ed's house to observe what was going on there. Although there was no way of verifying this conjecture, it was credible. A Quichua woman, Joaquina, who had been captured by the Aucas and later escaped, had once told Dr. Tidmarsh that it was the Aucas' practice to sit on a certain hill overlooking the camp at Arajuno to observe what went on. It seemed that they had an intricate espionage system, which perhaps at this very moment was operating near the McCully's house.

The men planned to make a wooden model of the plane-with ribbons dangling from it-to hang outside Ed's house in order to identify Ed with the operation.

Eight days after writing the previous report, Nate Saint typed a heading on a fresh sheet of tissue:

"Report on the third visit to the 'neighbors.' " He continued:

"We refer to the Aucas as 'neighbors' and to their area as the neighborhood' to avoid the use of the name on the radio, or in the hearing of those who aren't supposed to be interested.

"We couldn't go out on 'visitation' on Thursday as we had planned because the Army called on us for a flight down the Curaray River in the interior looking for the body of a soldier who had drowned. We did not see any sign of the missing man but we did see a lot of Ecuador that lies beyond habitation. We understand that beyond the area we checked, out toward the Napo, some vestiges of civilization reappear. However, we flew for forty-five minutes, following every curve in the river without seeing a single sign of human life ... saw a little wild life: several tapir, some giant turtles, and an abundance of birds of paradise ... beautiful things gliding over the woods below.

"Next day, Ed and I got away from Arajuno at about eleven o'clock while Marilou kept all the Indians in school so they wouldn't ask too many difficult questions.

"First we flew down the Curaray looking for possible camp sites or temporary landing strip sites. (This was forty or fifty miles above the start of the area searched yesterday for the missing soldier.) We saw some interesting possibilities, but nothing ideal for an airstrip.

"However, up on the horizon along the ridges we saw something that looked like smoke. It seemed to be about the place where the Aucas are, so we decided to have a look. Maybe the boys had a smudge going so we'd be sure to find them with our gift bag. The smoke turned out to be the remnant of a low cloud, but we found ourselves over the Auca neighborhood at a lower altitude than we'd ever been before, and took the occasion to circle each of the four main houses and take some pictures. We saw Indians all over, some running down the stream bed from the manioc patch toward home, others coming from other directions. They didn't seem at all afraid. We shouted Auca phrases until we were hoarse.

"After we circled the house where we had received such an open reception last week, and flew on toward the next house, the Indians apparently thought the show was scheduled there for this week, and all took off down the stream bed to try to be in on it. At any rate, when we decided to repeat at the same house to reward their confidence, we came back over and found the place deserted except for what appeared to be two women. But soon the menfolk came charging back up the stream bed. There must have been big excitement down there.

"This week our gift was to be another aluminum pot containing a bunch of trinkets and beads, well ribboned. We also tied on a little ten-inch Indian basket (empty) in hopes they might put something in it and send it back up. But somehow or other, after we got the whole thing clear of the plane, the automatic release failed and we lost the kettle to the jungle below, perhaps 300 yards distant from a smaller manioc patch. It seems likely that they might find it, but not too probable since everyone was over at the big clearing waiting for the show to

begin. We were already getting a little tired from all the photographing and shouting to them, but we felt we mustn't leave without giving them something, so we tied on a new machete from our emergency kit, left on the little basket, and lowered the whole works without any release mechanism.

"One of the more tiring elements on this trip was the rough air. We were constantly bouncing around and had a snappy drift from the northeast, so that our machete drifted badly. Several times when it was lowering near them, they would scramble helter-skelter in that direction. It is really great sport. We don't know whether or not they have any system for determining who gets the prize. But as long as the supply holds up they should all keep encouraged.

"Finally after a couple of near misses, we set the packet within ten feet of the front door of their house. They had it immediately and took it out on the riverbank. Here the wind fouled up the works because every time around I had to roll completely out of the turn to compensate for drift and thus stay over the house. And every time I'd roll out of the turn, the pull on the line got really hard. They must have had the line for several minutes. We could not tell whether they were putting anything in the basket or not. They may have put in something too heavy to pick up, or they may have tied the line to something. At any rate we finally saw one fellow run diagonally into the river and stop abruptly and do something, suggesting that he was unsnagging the line. I felt the line loosen and we were free. We shouted at each other about the thrill of holding a line, the other end of which an Auca held.

"Our next decision was to fly past them low enough so that they could see us. That meant pulling in the entire line, a tough job, but after ten minutes of hard work we had it all in. Then down we circled. As we got lower, the crowd, formerly eight or ten, thinned out until there were only two or three in sight. We had another little bundle of ribbon to throw out as we went by. We tossed the ribbon from about 200 feet and a brown skinned man had it like the spider takes a fly. We shouted. From the man's gestures and from past experience in similar operations among other Indians, I feel sure that the man shouted back to us, flailing his arms. He was the only one in sight and when we circled around the other side of the house, he ran in one side of the house and out the other.

"I felt a keen disappointment as I thought how frightened they must have been when we swooped low. However, as we circled slowly higher and higher, they seemed to regain confidence and slowly reappeared. Finally, everyone seemed to be present. How we hope that they regained their 'party' spirit and laughed off their fright.

"Going away, we flew directly toward the Curaray, since we feel more and more that that will be the site of the first contact if the Lord is pleased to continue blessing our efforts."

CHAPTER 12 The Savages Respond

From all appearances, the Aucas understood the white man's attempt to introduce himself. They seemed to recognize the regularity of the flights, and in successive weeks appeared in large numbers, more eager than ever to receive the gifts. Had they any idea of reciprocating? What were their real reactions?

For the fourth flight, Nate rigged up the plane with a battery-powered loudspeaker. As they approached the clearings, Jim called out the Auca words, "I like you! I am your friend! I like you!" Then they dropped another machete, wrapped and decorated as usual. Jim's diary describes the reaction:

"A group raced back into the trees behind the house, and one lone man walked to the beach. He cupped his hands and seemed to shout, then flashed the new machete over his head. We dropped a small aluminum pot, with ribbons. It contained a yellow shirt and beads. The Aucas below us converged on it 'like women at a bargain counter,' as Nate put it, and one was soon flailing the shirt. As we approached the house, two canoes some distance below it going downstream turned and came back upstream hurriedly. At one time I noticed people come running up through the water onto the beach, and another time a single one with a white cloth.

"We returned via the Curaray, looking for possible landing beaches. Hopes not good. Guide us, Lord God."

Back at Arajuno, the three pioneers had a council of war, deciding that the next full moon would witness the first attempt at a contact on the ground with these remote people who had won their hearts. Nate wrote that night: "May God continue to put His good hand on the project and may we drop it when not fully assured of His direction. At present we feel unanimously that God is in it. May the praise be His, and may it be that some Auca, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, will be with us as we lift our voices in praise before His throne. Amen."

On the next trip their reception was even more favorable. McCully manned the mike to call out, "We like you! We like you! We have come to pay a visit." The Aucas danced about eagerly, grabbing the machete the men had thrown, and stripped its canvas so that it shone in the sun. While circling low Ed leaned far out the door and held out both hands. The Indians, about three of them, responded by reaching out their hands too.

Ed's observations on this trip were:

"No fear manifest today, even when the plane was down low. No running inside or away. Most stood under the banana trees, possibly because of the sun. The plane gets close but somehow one longs to get closer. No sign of malice or anger. No lances seen. If there were a ladder down from the plane to them it would seem a good and safe thing to go among them."

By this time each man on the team had had time to form a judgment. "The team has a spectrum that ranges from impatience to conservatism," wrote Nate. Pete, who constantly conferred with the other three, did not feel that the next full moon was the right time for the first attempt at contact. It was too soon to assume that a longstanding hatred of white men had been overcome. The language problem was a big one-and it lay within their power to gain more knowledge of it, by working with Dayuma, the escaped Auca woman from whom Jim had gathered his material. Ed's reaction was that the next move should not necessarily be an effort at contact, but rather the establishment of a usable airstrip down the Curaray, perhaps within five miles of the "neighborhood." Meanwhile Jim was "chewing the bit." If a friendly contact were made, Jim and I were prepared to leave the work in Shandia for a time, and go in

and live among the Aucas. Nate felt that the men should follow the already established course of making regular contacts and that nothing should be done suddenly, but that each advance be allowed to "soak in" before pressing another.

On November 12, Nate Saint returned to his self-imposed task of keeping the record of Operation Auca. He wrote:

"This was the sixth week in succession that we have visited the neighbors.' It was a beautiful Saturday morning. There wasn't much cargo to go along, nor much fog in the river valleys, so I got out to Ed's place at about 8:30 A.M. He was waiting at the airstrip when I arrived.

"We took off with the public-address system and reel aboard. Ed had a machete and a small aluminum pot and a large aluminum pot set up with ribbons. Again we flew down the Curaray at low altitude so as to familiarize ourselves with the sandbars and various possible landing locations along the river. With familiarity, the sandbars look increasingly useful for our purposes. When we got to the point where we were closest to the 'neighbors' we decided that rather than turn in to them, we would fly on down the big river to see if perhaps there might not be some ideal landing spot farther down. We found none. Then we decided that since we were down that far we'd go a little farther and turn back up the little branch river along which the Aucas live.

"We flew perhaps eight to ten minutes up the small river before we stumbled onto a house ... one that we hadn't seen before. It had the coarser-leaf type of roof which slanted all the way to the ground, a gable roof. The ends of the house were also

of leaf and slanted perhaps ten to fifteen degrees out from the vertical. We saw no one by whom we could judge the size of the house. It appeared to be smaller than the others, but if in reality it is smaller, then the doors in the ends were such as to require one to stoop quite low to enter. Outside the house were two distinct plantings-two patches. The taller growth was darker green and covered perhaps an acre. It did not appear to be manioc, being taller and thicker in the foliage cover. But, the interesting thing was that the plot was surrounded by a well-made fence comprised of upright posts perhaps six feet apart, interwoven with what could have been opened-up bamboo basket-weave style, so that apparently an animal larger than a cat might not be able to pass through the fence.

"After circling three times to have a good look, we headed upstream to the next house, which was the one we had previously supposed to be the most easterly of this group. This house is also the one at which we did the first 'line' drop of the little pailful of buttons. Here for the first time now on this trip we saw people, about six, I would guess. One went out on the sandbar where we had left the kettle before and waited patiently. When we waved and yelled, he waved but not with the enthusiasm that is always displayed at the other place. We supposed that he was an older fellow. His body appeared to be smeared with something opaque such as clay. There were no clothes in evidence. We made a run and dropped him a machete, free-fall. It landed right on the sandbar and was carried off with relatively little ceremony or enthusiasm. Nevertheless, there seemed to be no demonstration of hostility whatsoever; nor fear. We went on, after shouting with the public-address system that we were friends.

"At the next house we ran across a few of the `neighbors' on the sandbar. We flew quite low, shouting and waving to them without using the public-address system. Then we dropped them the little pot. It hit the playa near them and was enthusiastically received. They jumped around quite excitedly.

"Also at this house (let's number them from the east, making this one No. 3) we noticed two items especially. First, at either side of the doorway were boards perhaps twenty-five inches wide and about five feet high, decorated with bold, bright red decorations. I suppose they are doors of some sort. The other item of note was that the owners had made a woven-leaf end for their house; heretofore it has been open where it faced on the river.

"From there we went on to house No. 4, which is the one we've visited most often and at which we've been received with the most evident enthusiasm. There was a good crowd on hand to welcome us. And to our surprise, out behind their house where there had been a stand of trees and undergrowth, there was now a clean clearing about seventy-five to ninety yards in diameter. Some of the stumps were still there, but aside from that it was as clean as a basketball court. From the reaction of the people below I would guess that they couldn't decide whether to expect the drop on their new clearing, or whether we would drop it down by the house as has been the custom."

Ed's diary picks up the account of this day's operation:

"We went in low and threw an ax head, wrapped in canvas. It lit just on the west side of the clearing in the bushes. They pounced on it immediately. Then we yelled. We will give you a

pot,' and went up higher. Tied on the pot, and reeled it out. This was a definite leading of God, for we had almost decided to throw the pot free instead of bothering with the line. Nate made a perfect drop. I held the line and could feel their holding on to it. They cut the pot off and tied something on! Nate spotted it and praised the Lord. When we got back to Arajuno we found that it was a Naitu or headband of woven feathers. A real answer to prayer; another sign to proceed, an encouragement that friendly relations are possible and that they will hear the Gospel!"

On November 26 Nate Saint recorded later developments:

"Last week, since Ed was not back from Quito in time for the usual run, Jim Elliot took it on with me. I picked him up in Shandia after doing some shuttling between Pano and Tena and Pano and Shandia. We stopped by Arajuno and picked up the 'gear.' There were two Indians near the plane and despite our caution they apparently managed to find out what was in the supply and said to Jim, `Why do you crazy fellows give all that good stuff to Aucas?' Jim ignored the question; but it meant quite surely that the secret was more or less out, even though they could not know any of the details.

"We flew, as I recall, quite directly to the `neighborhood' and started visiting around. At No. 4 house two men had climbed up on top of what we had previously thought of as a sun shelter—a high bamboo roof or platform perhaps six feet off the ground. We circled low several times and decided to go ahead with a previously discussed plan aimed at getting them to cut down the trees at the far side of the clearing as a sort of approach or 'go-around' which would permit us to fly low enough for them to

see us so as to be able to recognize us later on the ground. The plan was to drop our gifts into the trees we wanted down.

"First we dropped an ax head. Unfortunately, it landed at the foot of the trees in question. Next time around we tossed out four plastic combs with streamers of bandage material tied on them. Happily, a couple of them at least got hung up in the trees.

"Next we went to No. 3. Everyone was out in great style. One man had one of our gift shirts on. (The rest were in more typical uniform.) We circled and waved and then went on down to the old man's house. He was out with his two women. We didn't feel that he warranted too good a gift, so we tossed him a pair of 'store-bought' trousers. After circling back to make sure he got them okay, we went on back to No. 3. We tossed the people there a machete with a pair of shorts attached.

"From here we climbed on up over No. 4 to get ready to let down the kettle for the last act of the day.

"I neglected to mention earlier that in rummaging in the emergency kit Ed had made up, we found a roll of tissue. We thought it might help to get those tall trees down if we were to drape the tissue along the treetops. Such a drop might seem to be utilizing their curiosity to an unfair advantage but on the other hand they were amply repaid for any trouble that they went to. When we tossed the roll, however, it reeled off about six feet and then the wind tore off that length. This process was repeated until there was a curious white dotted line floating down into the trees. "The wind was rather strong today and I had trouble staying over the clearing as we let the kettle down. It

required some six or eight attempts before the kettle landed in the little river at the edge of the clearing. They were at it in an instant. But in that same instant I had to roll out of the turn upwind to keep from getting too far from the clearing. That put quite a pull on the line at the moment they were trying to work with it. In about thirty seconds they let it go. It appeared to have a gift on it ... something small, perhaps, like the combs [received earlier with the headband].

"As we left the area I called in and reported that we were on our way back. Marj answered that the Drown baby was sick and that I should make the best possible time so as to be able to fly into Macuma if necessary. Therefore, I flew at seventy miles per hour and somewhere along the line we lost the gift. About halfway back I noticed that it was missing. It was a keen disappointment."

In Jim's account of this day's operation, he said: "I saw a thing that thrilled me-it seemed an old man who stood beside the house waved with both his arms as if to signal us to come down! Aucas, waving to me to come! God send me soon to the Aucas!"

At the end of his record of the eighth visit, Nate wrote: "One of the problems we face now is getting another man to bring our manpower up to strength. The Lord is abundantly able!"

Although five men would eventually make up "Operation Auca," only three-Nate, Jim, and Ed-were definitely committed at this time. Pete, who had been as vitally interested as these

three, was, however, not clear whether God's leading was for him to go or to stay.

It was now that Nate thought of Roger Youderian. They had worked together opening up the Atshuara country, building two other outstation airstrips, and Nate was sure of Roger's capabilities. He saw him as a soldier of Christ, "a man capable of great effort, trained and disciplined," he wrote of him. "He knows the importance of unswerving conformity to the will of his Captain. Obedience is not a momentary option; it is a diecast decision made beforehand. He was a disciplined paratrooper. He gave Uncle Sam his best in that battle and now he is determined that the Lord Jesus Christ shall not get less than his best. Everything that made him a good soldier has been consecrated to Christ, his new Captain!"

Ed and Jim hardly knew Roger; working with different Indians in another part of the Oriente, they had had little occasion for more than a passing acquaintance. But they trusted Nate's judgment implicitly.

As it happened, Roger was in Shell Mera at this time. He had come out from Macuma to help build a mission-sponsored hospital there. So one day, as Roger was nailing down sheets of aluminum on the roof, Nate came to him, told him of Operation Auca, and asked him to go along as the badly-needed fourth man. Nate did not want to leave his plane on the beach at night where it might be open to damage. Neither was he anxious to leave the two men alone overnight. Would Roj go?

Roger agreed immediately. But all unknown to the others, he was, at that time, passing through a deeply personal spiritual struggle and he began to wonder if he should join the others in the physical venture when not with them completely in spirit.

Only he and Barbara were aware of the struggle he was going through. He questioned whether, after all, he was accomplishing anything whatever in the mission field. He had broken the language barrier, to be sure, but why had there not been an immediate show of fruit for his labors?

A missionary plods through the first year or two, thinking that things will be different when he speaks the language. He is baffled to find, frequently, that they are not. He is stripped of all that may be called "romance." Life has fallen more or less into a pattern. Day follows day in unbroken succession; there are no crises, no mass conversions, sometimes not even one or two to whom he can point and say: "There is a transformed life. If I had not come, he would never have known Christ." There will be those among the Indians who say that they accept Christ, but what of the forsaking of heathen custom and turning from sin to a life of holiness? The missionary watches, and longs, and his heart sickens.

The forces of evil, unchallenged for so long, are now set in array against the missionary.

Roger Youderian was finding out the power of these forces. He wrote in his diary: "About ready to call it quits. Seems to me there is no future in the Jivaria for us, and the wisest thing for us to do will be to pull stakes. Will wait until I've had a chance to talk it over with Barb and see what she has to say. We might pass

Christmas here, finish the hospital in Shell, and head home. The reason: Failure to measure up as a missionary and get next to the people. As far as my heart and aspirations are concerned, the issue is settled. It's a bit difficult to discern just what is the cause of my failure and the forces behind it. Since March, when we left Wambimi, there has been no message from the Lord for us. I just picked up my Bible to share with the same Lord who saved me in England eleven years ago. There was no word of encouragement from Him. He had kept us safe wonderfully, and met our needs, but the issue is far greater than that. There is no ministry for me among the Jivaros or the Spanish, and I'm not going to try to fool myself. I wouldn't support a missionary such as I know myself to be, and I'm not going to ask anyone else to. Three years is long enough to learn a lesson and learn it well. Some people are slow to catch on. It will be tough on Barb and the children, but I've always been convinced that honesty and sincerity pays. The milk is spilled - I'm not going to cry over it. The cause of Christ in the Jivaria will not suffer for our having been there, but I must be honest and confess that it has not been helped. I don't think it will come as much of a surprise to many and will only bean 'I told you so.'

"I realize that many along the way will say that we gave up too easy. Perhaps. But I believe that God's way is to face the issue and let our yes be yes and no be no. I'm all for the cause of Christ but believe that the Lord chose the Jivaria for us but I just didn't measure up to it. You will say that when the Lord calls, He supplies. You can have my boots anytime you want them. It isn't there. I'm not good at pretending.

"I do not put any blame on personalities or circumstances involved; the failure is mine, and my failure to achieve the

personal experience of Christ that could meet the needs here. It didn't pan out. It is not because of wife and family. Macuma station is ample for a home for them and all we need has been offered.

"The issue is personal, and personal it shall remain. What is the answer? I do not know. And I'm discouraged about finding any satisfactory solution. Have been battling and thinking the issue for many months. There is no answer. It is a combination of situations and talents that has me buffaloeed. This is the first time in my life that I have turned my back, but they say there is a first time for everything.

"We are a happy family. He has kept us well and given us sound bodies and, we trust, sound minds. Whatever He has for us is fine but I'm afraid that anything along missionary lines has been scared out of me. If I couldn't make the grade here in Macuma I'm not foolish enough to expect a change of setting would change me. This is my personal 'Waterloo' as a missionary.

"It seems strange to try and sit back and view it in an impersonal way. Of this much I'm sure: it will draw me to read His word more, be more tolerant of others, and less venturesome in my activities.

"Some will wonder why we don't seek a place in the Spanish or Quichua work. Frankly, I'm not interested. And, especially after this experience, I'm not begging for any more headaches. Only a fool makes the same mistake twice. One mess seems to me ought to be enough.

"Here I sit at 11 A.M. Wednesday listening to the services. I told them from the window that I would not come. First they sang 'Wonderful Words of Life,' and then 'Oh Say but I'm Glad.' I've found an English hymn book to see if there might be some consolation in a hymn. There is none. It is beyond me. My, what a world of time I've wasted. The ruts are worn deep and it won't be easy to change habits and give up the lost ground or let it be gained by the Lord. But surely it will be worth the battle. My mind was made only to love Him; my body, also, which includes my tongue in all its activities. How slow some of us are to learn.

"I will be led and taught of the Holy Spirit. God desires full development, use, and activity of our faculties. The Holy Spirit can and will guide me in direct proportion to the time and effort I will expend to know and do the will of God. I must read the Bible to know God's will. At every point I will obey and do.

Roger had not yet emerged from his "dark night of the soul" when Nate approached him. The days which followed found him in a desperate struggle to know the will of God. He had no doubt of his own desire - he would go if that were all that mattered. But to go without the smile of God - that would be impossible. Roger recognized something of what this decision might mean for him, and the hours spent on his knees with God witnessed agony of soul. But God, "who causes us to triumph," brought him out of his slough of despond.

"He was cleansed through the Spirit for the task that lay ahead of him," said Barbara afterward, "and went with a happy, expectant mind and his heart full of joy."

On December 19 he wrote in his diary: "I will die to self. I will begin to ask God to put me in a service of constant circumstances where to live Christ I must die to self. I will be alive unto God. That I may learn to love Him with my heart, mind, soul, and body."

Just before he left Macuma to join the four in Arajuno, he wrote this poem:

"There is a seeking of honest love
Drawn from a soul storm-tossed,
A seeking for the gain of Christ, to bless
the blinded, the beaten, the lost.
"Those who searched found Heavenly
Love and were filled with joy divine,
They walk today with Christ above

The last line eluded him, and as he put down his pencil, he said, "Barb, I'll finish it when I get home."

CHAPTER 13 The Search for "Palm Beach"

Although plans for meeting the Aucas on the ground occupied more and more time, the regular weekly visits to "Terminal City," the name the men had given to the Auca village, were continued without a break. On December 3 Nate recorded the ninth visit:

"We left Arajuno at about 8:45 with good weather. Before taking off, Ed and I shot some pictures that we hope will be suitable for enlargement up to almost life-size so that the 'neighbors' will recognize us when they first see us on the

ground. We took close-ups of our faces, together with the combs and headdress they had given us.

"When we got over the first house, No. 4, we noted that a couple of pretty big trees were chopped down where we had tossed the gifts into the trees for that purpose. There are not many trees left now between the two clearings. If we can get them to cut down the rest, we will be able to make low passes.

"Once this morning we swooped down so low that the two men who were up on the platform 'directing traffic' ducked down. When we swooped down again the two were content to view the proceedings from the ground. The platform appeared to be perhaps eight feet off the ground. Both the platform-men had on shirts, period: shirts we had given them, of course. In these runs we dropped an ax head, a plastic cup, and a cheap knife. We tried again to put these in the trees that still separate the two clearings. There were perhaps a half dozen other people around No. 4. "From there we went to No. 3. As we made a low pass we nearly fell out of the airplane, for there on the grass roof of the house was a model plane! We wondered if they made it after observing the model plane at Ed's place. In any case it indicates good will, and a craftsmanship hitherto unsuspected among such primitives.

"We noticed another platform, larger and higher than the other and made of chonta. I'd guess it is fifteen feet off the ground. On top was a man complete with his uniform (shirt). He waved responsively as we waved to him. We made a couple of passes and tossed out a machete so that it fell just beyond the 'director.' We noted that the east wall of leaves was off the house, so that we could see inside ... fire sites, et cetera. It was a

very friendly-looking deal, but it's possible that they are going to put in a chonta wall to replace the leaves. Yes, I just checked the photo of No. 3 taken a while back, and it shows leaf wall all the way around except at the river end which was open. It is easy to see how the availability of even so simple a tool as the machete can profoundly alter a culture.

"Next we decided to have a close look at a fresh clearing that has been made on the ridge-crest just above No. 3. No one was there. We discussed briefly the possible benefits of trying to lure them up and decided to try. First time around we tossed out an aluminum kettle. It was a poor shot and fell into the forest, fortunately on the slope facing the No. 3 house. It was then that we noticed that the undergrowth on the slope was in the process of being cleared out. That means that they will be tipping over the trees on that edge of the clearing which will enable us to fly within twenty feet of them in perfect safety. As a further lure Ed decided we should toss out a cheap, plastic-handled knife. (All these gifts are generously trailed by ribbon and bandage material.)