

Through Gates of Splendor

By Elisabeth Elliot

Part 3

In view of the miss with the kettle I said to Ed as we approached, 'Let's put this one right on top of the house,' referring to the sketchy shelter that must serve as a sun-shade while they work on the new clearing project. And that's exactly where it landed ... right on the roof.

"'Let's go see how the old man liked his new pants,' I suggested. 'Okay' ... so we went. He is about two minutes away from No. 3. He was waiting for us in pants and tee-shirt. His two women were out, too. One 'wore' a baby and the other nothing. The area around their house was nicely cleaned up, grass cut down to roots, et cetera. The old man evidenced the usual reserve and lack of enthusiasm. We dropped him a machete. One of the women had to go get it. His gestures are willing but slow. We flew by within 200 feet of them about three times, and headed back up river to No. 3.

"Back at No. 3 area we checked the hilltop clearing again. From a quarter-mile away I could see that someone was there. We were thrilled by this quick result since we had thought it might take weeks to coax them up. The figures proved to be two women, young; I would say about sixteen and twenty, maybe. They had got the knife and we passed within fifty feet of them

taking pictures. We made about four passes and for the first time looked full into an Auca face. She was good looking with hair cropped to bangs in front. The 'controller' of No. 3 was still on the platform. We waved good-by to him and headed on toward No. 4.

"Back at No. 4 the boys were all waiting for the last act, the 'bucket drop.' We climbed up to 3,000 feet and slowed down to forty-five miles per hour with power off. In this slow, power-off glide the kettle gets clear of the plane very nicely. It took only about three times around to set the kettle in the middle of the big clearing behind the house. They ran back and forth in a group, curiously to us. I was afraid that I was piling loose cord in after the kettle ... however it seemed to have too much tension on it for that. Finally, after a minute and a half, they turned it loose and up it came with a gift ... bright red and good-sized.

"We flew back to Arajuno at fifty-five to sixty miles per hour so as not to lose the gift if we could help it. We had no trouble setting the gift down on the runway and then we dropped the cord. On the ground we ran to the spot. We found another feathered crown-a new one, freshly made, and attached to it a little hank of hand-spun cotton string. It was all attached to our drop-line with a square knot."

That night Ed noted in his diary: "It is time we were getting closer to them on the ground." To Jim he wrote: "I've been giving the trip some thought, and I feel this way: we should set a definite limit on the number of days we will wait on the Curaray for them, and if they don't show, we should be ready to go in to them. For myself, I am definitely ready to go in and feel that it would be reasonably safe ... if we can ever use that term in our

initial ground contact with these people! We should go in (1) wearing the headdresses, (2) carrying small airplanes such as I have hanging here, (3) carrying gifts wrapped as we have been wrapping them, (4) shouting 'biti miti punimupa' (I like you) or other phrases that we are making familiar from the plane. God being with us-and up to this point we have every confidence that He is-I think this would put us in. The whole project is moving faster than we had originally dared to hope, and while I'm not for getting ahead of God, I feel that we shouldn't lag."

On December 10, Nate's journal continues with an account of the next visit:

"In spite of our evasive maneuver Ed's Indians tell him that they were down the Curaray last week and saw us go by. They say (what a sense of humor!) that they stripped off their clothes when they heard us coming and got sticks like lances so that we would think they were 'neighbors.' They probably thought that we would drop them gifts.

"During the week, in talks with the members of the team it was decided that January 2 would be the tentative date for the entry attempt. We were thinking in terms of going down with Indians, setting up a house and then having the Indians retire while the team would wait for a contact. Then with the plane we would try to get the 'neighbors' to come over and pay a visit. We know how to say 'come to my house' and also 'Curaray' in their tongue. And I feel confident that by repeated circling right over the ridge from them we can use curiosity to bring them over to the big river.

"Roughly, the strategy calls for the carrying of arms only by missionary personnel, and that out of sight. We presume that the first shot fired signals the failure of the entire project and the scuttling of any hope in the near future. Therefore utmost care will be taken and the guns will be used only to frighten the savages in case of need of self-defense.

"There were two views or two possibilities under consideration: (1) Set up a little house at Palm Beach [the name agreed upon to designate the river beach chosen for landing the plane] and then retire until the 'neighbors' would have had time to visit the site, and go back later; or, (2) Set up and attempt to make contact on that first trip. Since the events of this morning further affect this decision, I'll leave further discussion of it till later.

"This morning we took off from 'Centerville' [Arajuno] at about 9:15, armed with gift-wrapped machetes, axes and small knives, and plastic items.

"We also had three pairs of one-pound paper packages of paint pigment powder in three bright colors. These were for measuring playa sites that might serve for Palm Beach. Yesterday we ran tests here at Shell and found that when flying at sixty-five miles per hour we could drop little bags of flour at seven-second intervals and pretty consistently mark off from 190 to 210 yards. This measure was taken in view of the impossibility of satisfactorily estimating the length of sandbars where there is nothing that would serve as a basis of comparison.

"We took a route down the Nushino, inasmuch as some of the Indians from Ed's station were down on the Curaray River

fishing again this week. We gradually eased over to the south and picked up the Curaray in the area where we hoped to find a good site for Palm Beach. It wasn't long before we located a possibility. Most of the larger playas are on bends and therefore of no value without having approaches cut first. The river is so serpentine that there are few possibilities of a sandbar along a straight stretch. We dragged [flew low over] the first. It seemed reasonable. The only drawback was that this beach would require takeoffs with the prevailing wind ... a serious difficulty. Nevertheless, after dragging it a time or two we 'bombed' it with pigment and found that it had about 200 yards usable. Another difficulty was a big dead tree lying on the sand which forced the landing area very close to the river-bank foliage.

"The next one we found was about a mile or less downstream. It looked better-better approaches, especially into the prevailing wind. The approach would be steep but possible. The playa is low to the water so that a flood would easily cover it, but it is pebbly and firm-looking. We 'bombed' it and found a conservative 200 yards usable. I should not be surprised if a measure would show it to be more like 230 yards usable. Also it is such that an overshoot landing would only put us into shallow water. We dragged it once, keeping good airspeed until more familiar with the pull-out area. In the pull-out the trees along the banks overhang enough that it is a little squeaky, but by tipping over two trees after we land, we can take care of that problem.

"It began to look as if this would be our 'Palm Beach.' We decided to shoot a simulated landing on it. Down close to it I could see the surface well and I put the wheels down lightly twice as we accelerated again for the pull-up. The surface was

smooth as a gravel runway and seemed hard. It is really ideal, except for vulnerability to flooding.

"This finding brings into focus the possibility of landing the team right there with a prefabricated tree house and aluminum for a roof. It would mean that no Indians need to be in on the deal at all, and barring flood it would mean that I'd be able to fly them all out following a contact or whenever they should be ready to come.

"The picture would be something like this: (1) On a Friday morning, Lord willing, free-fall supplies and equipment onto the Palm Beach site from very low (just off the runway) so as to be sure they would not be in the landing area. (2) We land with Jim and Roger, keeping the plane very light. (3) We land with Ed and aluminum. (4) We land with Pete and more supplies (if Pete should feel led to go).

"On arrival, Jim and Roj would go to work tipping over the two or three medium-to-small trees in the approach. Then they would pick out a suitable tree for mounting the prefab tree house and start clearing around it. When the others are with them, all would go downstream to the first bend and tip over at least one of the two trees on opposite banks which make the pass rather narrow. (This is not an absolute must, but would be highly desirable.) During this part of the operation someone should always have a hand on a weapon inside a bag so that it could be fired on a moment's notice and thus upset the equilibrium of any possible lancer.

"Next, back to the sandbar, with two men widening the clearing at the foot of the tree while two work on getting the

tree house up in place and the aluminum roof on. Once the house is all set, the men would rotate on the clearing, perhaps with one fellow still concentrating on getting food supplies, stove, water, et cetera, up onto the platform. One man, resting from the clearing crew, could sit on the platform and cover the men on the ground, always keeping arms strictly out of sight. By evening, there ought to be a fair-sized clearing at the base of the tree, connected by clearing to the playa. The plane returns to Arajuno after checking radio set-up in the tree house, et cetera.

"Next day the plane begins the invitation of the 'neighbors' to the Palm Beach site, both by calling phrases as well as by coaxing, circling in that direction from where they are and then landing at Palm Beach and repeating every hour or so until we're sure they've caught on. Another detail will be the installation of a good-sized model plane on the site.

"Maybe five days would be committed to the effort. If unsuccessful we would withdraw, either by air or by sending a crew of Indians down river in canoes. Supplies in the tree house should be sufficient for two weeks to cover possible loss of the playa by flood or siege, the two rougher possibilities to be faced.

"The practicability of a raft composed of air mattresses and bamboo should be reckoned with as a downstream exit to an Army base on the Curaray in case the Indians should refuse to go to the rescue.

"Back to the narrative: We checked course and distance from the Palm Beach possibility to Terminal City-135 degrees and three minutes at ninety miles per hour. That makes about four

and one-half miles from the beach on the Curaray to the Auca village.

"While letting down we headed east to the old man's house. The old boy wasn't there but a young man was waving something like bark cloth and clearly offering it for trade. In the course of four passes we dropped (I think) a small knife, plastic cup, and possibly some article of clothing ... not sure of the latter.

"Next we moved up to the clearing on the hill above the airplane house, or No. 3. There were two women there. We dropped a small knife. The head man was down by the house on his platform directing traffic. He had on a red and black checkered shirt we dropped last week. We signaled and shouted to him, indicating that we wanted him to come up to the hilltop. While we circled some more he disappeared from the platform and two younger boys took up his post. Next we made a low pass to drop an ax head beyond the platform. We must have scared the younger fellows because one of them had a lance in his hand as we circled back. That was an unkind gesture and we swooped down low again to see if they would show any hostility. Someone must have given them the word because the lance had disappeared and all seemed well. Now we spotted the boss-man in the checkered shirt up on the hill. We couldn't afford to slight him so we made two passes and on the second dropped him a pair of pants which he caught in mid-air. (These fellows will be dressed like dudes before we get to see them on the ground.)

"Next, up to No. 4 and the main act. The big shots, four of them, were clad in white tee-shirts. Youngsters and women were in the older uniform. The trees that we had tried to get them to

cut down by tossing stuff into them, were now cut down. Also the walls (chonta) were off the house. (I failed to mention that they were also off No. 3.) And beside the house they had built a new and higher platform like No. 3's.

"We made a couple of low passes, calling to them, 'I like you, I like you,' et cetera. On the last low pass we tossed them a machete. While passing low we saw one of the four Big Wheels holding up a package, roundish and brown. We figured this was our trade item. We pulled up and climbed slowly. Ed was feeling pretty rough. It has been an unusually strenuous workout and Ed had had to attend to a sick baby across the river from his place earlier in the morning. He hadn't been feeling too sharp then. I was also feeling as though I'd been dragged through a keyhole but it was worth it. At 3,000 feet I throttled all the way back, pulled flaps, and settled into the quiet of a forty-five-mile-per-hour glide while Ed got the gift overboard on the line. This week we gave them a couple of little bundles of string, a few smaller items, and four six-by-nine-inch portraits of the team members, tinted and bearing the insignia of the operation, a drawing of the little yellow airplane. These were glue-mounted on Masonite board.

"When this stuff got down over by the trees, they got it and quickly took it out to the center of the clearing. They went into a 100 percent huddle over the contents of the white cloth mail sack that carried the mentioned items, except for the fellow who was busy fastening on their gift to us. I saw the gift leave him, drifting lazily. I rolled out of the turn and added power. Within three or four seconds the package was swished skyward from them and the last man joined the huddle over the pictures.

What wouldn't we have given to see those boys studying out our pictures and see their reactions!

"We headed home at sixty-five miles per hour with the prize dangling at the end of the line. At Arajuno we set it down at the edge of the strip, cut the line and landed. On the ground, I bashed my way through the brush at the edge of the strip while Ed lost his breakfast. This is the first time I've beat him to the prize. (His legs are at least a foot longer than mine.) When I got to the bark-cloth bag, it was moving. Since we had given them a chicken last week I figured it would be a bird, but as I started to peek in a hole the thought of a snake crossed my mind. However, it was a nice parrot in a basket covered with bark. It was well tied and was complete with a partially-nibbled banana inside for the trip! "I had lunch with Ed and Marilou and talked of the possibilities opened to us by the finding of a beach we could land on. We praise God for this-another indication of His leading and care. We believe that in a short time we shall have the privilege of meeting these fellows with the story of the Grace of God."

CHAPTER 14 An Auca on the Path

Friday a.m.!" Nate tapped out this opening on a borrowed typewriter in Arajuno, and continued: "This morning in Shell Mera as I was dressing in the bedroom adjoining the office-radio room, I heard Marj checking a message just received from Marilou McCully, who was holding down Arajuno alone while Ed helped in a conference ministry at Puyupungu. Marilou said she had rather sound reason to believe that Aucas were in the neighborhood.

"Two things flashed through my mind: first, the opportunity to make contact with them, then the danger that a shot by one of the local Indians would ruin all the efforts made up till now- and the consequent closing of the door that seems to be opening to us.

"While Mad got the message relayed to Ed down at Puyupungu, I was rolling the plane out of the hangar. Too much was at stake to hesitate. Also, the weather was threatening to sour to the north. The mission house at Puyupungu is about five minutes from the airstrip. I got to the airstrip about one minute before Ed. We returned to Shell Mera immediately. Then while Johnny gassed the plane, Marj and Ruth got some cargo and vegetables ready. Ed loaded, and I got some equipment together for the special nature of the expedition. I found that the little blank pistol I had just bought in Quito felt very nice in my pocket. It must be because I feel that it would surely break up an attack, yet I can feel confident of not accidentally hurting anyone with it. It also shoots tear gas cartridges, but as Ed notes, if there is an attack on and I get close enough to use tear gas ... well.

"The weather held okay until we got over the Arajuno headwater valleys. There, low ceilings pushed us down into the valley and within five minutes of Arajuno the clouds were on the mesas that line the half mile-wide valley. I kept a weather eye on the valley behind, got a final look at the clear area beyond the edge of the overcast and weighed the alternatives. In case of trouble, I could spiral up to 5,000 and head southwest into the clear area five minutes away. I yawed the plane to check the turn-and-bank indicator, without which this maneuver would be impossible. It was okay. Light rain-heavier in patches-made us circle a time or two to get a good look ahead. We slipped across

the ridge and down the other valley. In about another minute (these are the long kind of minutes that seem to last about five minutes each) we had the strip under us. We kind of figured the Aucas might have wanted to take a look at the plane on the ground, and, not having found it at Arajuno, they might have headed for home. We then circled several times to let the 'neighbors' know we'd come to welcome them. We landed around 8:30. As the bad weather moved southwest it became apparent that if we had delayed five or ten minutes we would have been too late.

"Walking from the strip to the house we wondered if we were being watched. Ed went ahead with both hands full. If they are looking for large steaks on long bone, they passed it up this time. I had one hand in my pocket nonchalantly flipping the safety on and off on my blank pistol, all the while wondering how far things should go before allowing a shot to signal the end of the whole operation. Again we felt the need of God's guidance and intervention in a special way.

"As we neared the house we heard a Christmas carol in Quichua. Ed explained that Marilou was rehearsing the local Indians for a Christmas program. When we got in the house, Ed took over for a few minutes and gave the locals a pep talk on 'How to win friends and influence people,' also exhorting the Indians regarding our Christian obligations to reach the Aucas with the Gospel. It would seem that at this point the measure of missionary zeal among these new converts would depend pretty much on who saw whom first and under what circumstances.

"The rehearsal for the Christmas program proceeded rather anemically a few minutes longer and was then dismissed. Ed

politely asked the Indians to hit the road for home. But they hung around. Finally, Ed offered them candy if they'd go. They agreed. He gave the two leaders some special candy for extra bravery.

"When we were finally alone, Ed ambled into the living room like the friendly local patrolman and said to Marilou, 'Now get ahold of yourself, lady. Everything's going to be okay. All we want are the facts.' (The capacity of these guys to toss something like this into a serious situation is a great asset. It kind of double-clutches you into second gear when you've been pulling too hard in high.)

"It seems that at 5:40 A.M., Fermin, the Indian who has been sleeping in the schoolhouse to help guard while Ed is away, went down the path toward the chacra to take care of the exigencies of nature. When about as far as the pole that holds the model plane aloft, he spotted a man at the end of the path ... naked, with lance, and with hair tied up in a bun on the back of his head. As they saw each other the Auca ran into the forest. At 5:40 and ten seconds past, Fermin was calling at Marilou's window. Fortunately his gun (in the schoolroom) was not loaded and he needed powder and shot. Of course Marilou would not give him any. He was sure she had gone mad and proceeded to try to convince her with sound advice on how to take care of Aucas. He was genuinely pale and excited. It looked like the real thing.

"First Marilou took the empty gun from the poor fellow. Then, although she is seven months pregnant, Marilou took a machete for a gift and headed down the path calling 'biti miti punimupa' ... I like you ... like you. In between her calls she could

hear Fermin calling after her in Quichua... 'You're crazy ... you're crazy ... they'll kill you first.' When she was two-thirds the way to the spot where the savage had been seen, Fermin and Carmela, the Indian girl who lives with Marilou to help in the house, both came running and caught up just in time for them all three to see a fresh wet footprint on a dry board across a little ditch. The print was headed toward the house. Across the path they found grass recently stepped on, leading to the forest. Marilou then tossed the machete on the fresh path, called out some more, and returned to the house. Half an hour later when the local witch doctor arrived for school, he accompanied Marilou to the spot. Finding no further indication of visitors, Marilou picked up the machete and they came back to the house. Carmela expressed a common feeling when she said she would have suspected that Fermin imagined seeing an Auca until she saw the footprint. When Marilou asked her if she was afraid she said she was only a little afraid, and that she was sure God would take care of them. Then Marilou heard Fermin call in to Carmela and ask if the Senora was scared. Carmela answered that as far as she could tell, she wasn't; to which Fermin answered that she would be when night came and he wasn't there to protect them. Marilou then asked him if he was going to stay that night. 'I will stay,' he said, 'if I have a loaded gun. Without a gun we will all be killed.'

"We talked things over while Ed prepared a machete and a pot the way we do when we deliver them at the 'neighborhood.' At 10:30 (still raining lightly) we paraded down the airstrip decked out in the feather headdresses they have given us on the line and calling in Auca phrases while waving the gifts over our heads. We must have looked like a couple of Don Quixotes in the role of Santa Claus delivering goodies to the trees.

"At 2:30 P.M., we made another safari down to the far end of the airstrip making our most unusual offer. Then we decided that evening would be the most probable time to contact them here so we'd fly down to the 'neighborhood,' count heads, and do tomorrow's drop today. We got ready and off, arriving over Palm Beach at 3:30. Spent about ten minutes there rechecking the beach. Dye and bandage material still on the sand, although nearby playas seem to have been under water at some time since last week's visit. We rolled the wheels of the plane on the beach about seventy-five yards and then poured on the coal. The approach is really difficult, but the pull-out is good except for one narrow place, but that is a good way downstream. The whole site had a friendly look to us this time. We checked trees along the beach that might be suitable for the tree house and then took the three-minute trip over to the 'neighborhood.'

"We found our friends scattered, with no waiting traffic manager, making us think that maybe indeed we had gotten them on a seven-day week by the regularity of previous visits. We made a couple of low passes over the old man's house, taking movies in slow motion. One person showed up holding the same piece of material as last week. We dropped nothing. At the airplane house we found about four people around the house and platform and three up on the cleared hill. The fellow on the hilltop had on the red swimming trunks [an earlier gift]. We dropped him a small knife with appropriate ribbons and hurried on to the main house, since by now we were convinced that men were clearly missing, making it probable that the visit at Arajuno was indeed real.

"We made a couple of low passes taking movies and then pulled up and let out a pot on the line. The contents of the pot

this week were little packages of food wrapped in banana leaves, beef, chocolate, manioc, cookies, candy, and some beads. They received these gifts and helped themselves to about twenty to fifty yards of line and tied on a gift. It was larger and heavier than any so far. We made tracks for Arajuno with it. We let it down, cut the line, landed, and hit out through the brush, trusting that any intelligent snake would know enough to get out of our way. (There's anti-venin in the plane.) The gift was a large black bird, apparently their chicken, in a basket cage reinforced with netting and a piece of bark cloth. We still haven't decided what to do with the bird. Also in the cage there was a spinner's distaff loaded with cotton yarn, a well received gift.

CHAPTER 15 Why Did the Men Go?

The time was ripening fast. The men and the other wives and I spent long hours discussing this project of which we had dreamed for so many months and years. Olive Fleming remembered what she had read in Pete's diary of his willingness to give his life for the Aucas. I reminded Jim of what we both knew it might mean if he went. "Well, if that's the way God wants it to be," was his calm reply. "I'm ready to die for the salvation of the Aucas." While still a student in college Jim had written: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Marilou McCully said: "I hope no one feels any pressure is being put on Ed to go. This is a thing for each couple to face by themselves."

Two gift flights remained before the actual ground operation was to begin. On December 23, when the Elliots and

Flemings had gone to Arajuno to spend Christmas with the McCullys, Nate flew Jim over the Auca settlement. Seeing the same old man they had noticed before standing in a clearing, they swooped down past him at no more than fifty feet.

"Wow!" said Jim, "That guy's scared stiff!"

Nate agreed. "It's as though they had steeled themselves against doing anything that would express either fear or hostility," he wrote later. "Possibly afraid that they might scare away the chicken that lays the golden eggs. But their eyes don't lie-they're full of terror. Understandable, though. The expression is that of a six-year-old in the front row when the circus clown points a big gun right in his face. He's sure it's all in fun, but ... oh, brother!

"At the main house the 'chief traffic director' was in full uniform-shirt and pants-everyone else more typically dressed, or undressed. Jim counted thirteen on hand. On our first swoop past, one of them held up what was apparently to be our gift. We dropped them a carrying net containing white cloth, a flashlight, a pair of pants, and other trinkets. What wouldn't we give to see them trying to make sense out of that flashlight!

"Jim announced the take-off of their gift on the line, and I rolled out of the turn to hold it up. It is the heaviest yet. We cruised at sixty-five back to Arajuno, and let the bark-cloth bundle down hard. It hit in some bushes about twenty yards from Ed's house. Contents:

"Cooked fish

Two or three little packets of peanuts

A couple of pieces of cooked manioc

A cooked plantain

Two squirrels, very apparently killed by the hard fall

One parrot, alive but a bit nervous

Two bananas in with the parrot

Two pieces of pottery, clay, busted to bits in the fall

A piece of cooked meat and a smoked monkey tail

"This is by far the most all-out effort at a fair-trade arrangement on the part of the neighbors. We are all delighted. Jim and Ed sampled the meat, and we all ate some of the peanuts. Then, meaning no ill to the kind folks who mailed all those goodies to us, we sat down and ate the meal that Marilou had prepared."

Even though Pete had not yet made his final decision, he and Olive with three other couples who would be directly involved in the project were together on the 23rd for discussion. (Roger and Barbara Youderian still were on their station in the southern jungle.) The wives were particularly concerned to know exactly what provisions were to be made for safety. It was decided that arms would be carried, concealed, and that if the situation appeared to be getting delicate, they would be shown, simply to let the Aucas know that the white man held the upper

hand. If this were not enough, shots would be fired with the intention only of scaring them.

Roger had drawn up a plan of operation. Jim was assigned to the task of prefabricating a house to put up in a tree. This would ensure safety at night, especially if a gasoline pressure lamp were kept burning to illumine the area at the foot of the tree. Ed was responsible for collecting items for trade with the Aucas. Roj would make up the firstaid kit, Nate saw to the communications and transportation, Jim took charge of arms and ammunition, and when later on Pete decided that he would go too, he was to be responsible for helping Nate on the flights to and from Arajuno, for flights over the Auca houses when he would shout over the loudspeaker, and for keeping supplies on the beach. Roj prepared a set of code signs to be drawn in the sand on the beach in case of emergency, and drew maps for each man with the code names he had made up for the strategic points.

The language material which Jim and I had gathered in previous weeks was organized and memorized by each member of the party. Marj's place was to be at the radio in Shell Mera, standing by at all times when the plane was flying, and keeping set schedules of contact with the men on the ground. It was decided that Barbara would stay in Arajuno, helping Marilou with the preparation of food which Nate was to fly daily to Palm Beach.

The appearance of the Auca at Arajuno, the fact that the Quichuas were guessing a little too shrewdly for comfort, the great encouragement in the drop flights-indeed, even the weather itself-seemed to be catapulting them toward their D-

day with now or-never exigency. Within a month the rainy season would start, flooding the rivers and making landings impossible. The ideal time for establishment of their beachhead in Auca territory would be early January during the full of the moon.

They set the date for Tuesday, January 3, 1956.

Christmas at Arajuno was made as much like Christmas at home as Marilou's genius could make it. She even had a little Christmas tree, made of bamboo and decorated with lights and tinsel. Ed and Jim, who already had "reserved seats" for the trip to Palm Beach, were keyed up. Pete was still waiting on God in prayer before making his final decision to go.

The other wives and I talked together one night about the possibility of becoming widows. What would we do? God gave us peace of heart, and confidence that whatever might happen, His Word would hold. We knew that "when He puts forth His sheep, He goes before them." God's leading was unmistakable up to this point. Each of us knew when we married our husbands that there would never be any question about who came first-God and His work held first place in each life. It was the condition of true discipleship; it became devastatingly meaningful now.

It was a time for soul-searching, a time for counting the possible cost. Was it the thrill of adventure that drew our husbands on? No. Their letters and journals make it abundantly clear that these men did not go out as some men go out to shoot a lion or climb a mountain. Their compulsion was from a different source. Each had made a personal transaction with

God, recognizing that he belonged to God, first of all by creation, and secondly by redemption through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. This double claim on his life settled once and for all the question of allegiance. It was not a matter of striving to follow the example of a great Teacher. To conform to the perfect life of Jesus was impossible for a human being. To these men, Jesus Christ was God, and had actually taken upon Himself human form, in order that He might die, and, by His death, provide not only escape from the punishment which their sin merited, but also a new kind of life, eternal both in length and in quality. This meant simply that Christ was to be obeyed, and more than that, that He would provide the power to obey. The point of decision had been reached. God's command "Go ye, and preach the gospel to every creature" was the categorical imperative. The question of personal safety was wholly irrelevant.

On Sunday afternoon, December 18, Nate Saint sat at his typewriter to tell the world why they were going—just in case. In speaking these words he spoke for all: "As we weigh the future and seek the will of God, does it seem right that we should hazard our lives for just a few savages? As we ask ourselves this question, we realize that it is not the call of the needy thousands, rather it is the simple intimation of the prophetic Word that there shall be some from every tribe in His presence in the last day and in our hearts we feel that it is pleasing to Him that we should interest ourselves in making an opening into the Auca prison for Christ.

"As we have a high old time this Christmas, may we who know Christ hear the cry of the damned as they hurtle headlong into the Christless night without ever a chance. May we be moved with compassion as our Lord was. May we shed tears of

repentance for these we have failed to bring out of darkness. Beyond the smiling scenes of Bethlehem may we see the crushing agony of Golgotha. May God give us a new vision of His will concerning the lost and our responsibility.

"Would that we could comprehend the lot of these stone-age people who live in mortal fear of ambush on the jungle trail ... those to whom the bark of a gun means sudden, mysterious death ... those who think all men in all the world are killers like themselves. If God would grant us the vision, the word sacrifice would disappear from our lips and thoughts; we would hate the things that seem now so dear to us; our lives would suddenly be too short, we would despise time-robbing distractions and charge the enemy with all our energies in the name of Christ. May God help us to judge ourselves by the eternities that separate the Aucas from a comprehension of Christmas and Him, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor so that we might, through His poverty, be made rich.

"Lord, God, speak to my own heart and give me to know Thy Holy will and the joy of walking in it. Amen."

CHAPTER 16 "We Go Not Forth Alone"

New Year's Day, 1956, saw Ed and his family, and Pete and Olive Fleming, in Shandia with Jim and me, while Roger and Barbara Youderian stayed in the McCully house in Arajuno, to be on hand in case the "neighbors" came calling. Nate was completing his preparations for the very serious task of transporting the missionaries and their equipment to the beachhead. Monday morning, January 2, was a clear day for flying. By this time Pete had decided to go, so Nate had planned to get Pete and Olive

and the McCullys back to Arajuno from Shandia that day, and to shuttle Jim over on Tuesday. But on the morning radio contact he said: "Think you better get ready to go to Arajuno today, Jim. We need time tonight for plans, and ought to take advantage of the good weather."

Jim began throwing his things into an Indian carrying-net while the McCullys and Flemings were flown over to Arajuno. Everything he could think of that might help or amuse the Aucas, should they pay the men a visit, Jim put into the bag: harmonica, snakebite kit, flashlight, View Master with picture reels, yo-yo, and, above all, the precious notebook of Auca language material, with the carefully arranged morphology file. I helped Jim get his things together, wondering all the while, "Will this be the last time I'll help him pack? Will this be the last lunch he'll eat in Shandia?"

When the little plane returned, circling over the airstrip, preparing to land to pick up Jim, his baggage, and the last few pieces of the prefabricated tree house he had made, we went together out the front door. Jim did not look back. At the strip he kissed me good-bye, and the plane was off.

That night in Arajuno the five men made a tentative schedule of timing for the next day's landing on Palm Beach in order to see whether the whole setup on the beach could be ready by evening. No detail was omitted; lists of equipment for each flight were made, and copies distributed among members. After supper and schedule conference, the stuff was laid out. The place began to look like a full-scale beachhead as each man checked and completed his equipment lists.

When they turned in, sleep did not come easily for Nate, on whom rested the greatest burden of responsibility. He was spending the night at Arajuno in order to save time in the morning. His diary tells of that night:

"I drowsed off quite soon, but was checking the luminous face of my watch dial at 12:30, again at 2:00, and from then on I was on horizontal listening-post guard duty. I prayed, tried repeating verses from memory, and even counting. My entire share in this business seemed to hinge on that first take-off and landing. Then, too, I had told the fellows that I would only take one in alone on the first trip. That meant a lonely vigil for someone. Roj was ruled out, because he spoke only Jivaro. Ed had already beat Jim by pulling straws, but Jim held out, claiming to be lighter. When I said a difference of fifteen pounds would be decisive, they dragged out the bathroom scales. Ed was only seven pounds heavier than Jim. 'Why, you cotton picker!' said Jim. 'You've lost weight.' "

Nate continued in his diary: "If I should misjudge, Ed and I would really be in a fix. If the plane were damaged it would mean vulnerability in a flood, possibly even dismantling it and making a strip on higher ground—all this in a forest inhabited by Aucas! We had faced it in the light of past tests and decided to go ahead. As I slept, or tried, it was still a rough decision. But there was no doubt in my mind that we should forge ahead. The stakes warranted it.

"The last time I 'punched in' was 4 A.M. From four until movement in the house woke me at 5:45, I slept."

The morning of January 3 dawned clear. Somehow Nate found time later to record the events of that day-the day of the first landing in Auca territory:

"Roj and I got right out to the plane. We'd been losing fluid out of the right brake. With a ten-cc syringe and No. 22 hypodermic needle we sucked brake fluid out of the left master cylinder and injected it into the right. No soap. Not enough. We'd lost too much when I fixed the brake fitting the night before.

"The others were hauling boards and equipment and aluminum to the strip and arranging all in order of priority.

"At the 7 A.M. radio contact we asked Mad to ask Johnny to bring us brake fluid as quickly as possible. Also, Olive had had a rough night (sick) and planned to go back to Shell with Johnny. This delay gave us a peaceful breakfast and time for prayer together."

At the close of their prayers the five men sang one of their favorite hymns, "We Rest on Thee," to the stirring tune of "Finlandia." Jim and Ed had sung this hymn since college days and knew the verses by heart. On the last verse their voices rang out with deep conviction.

"We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender, Thine is the battle, Thine shall be the praise When passing through the gates of pearly splendor Victors, we rest with Thee through endless days. "

Nate's terse account continues: "It was a beautiful day. Chiggers kept us scratching, but spirits were all high. Johnny hove in sight at 7:40. We decided he should stand by till we'd see how the first landing turned out. Ed and I got airborne at about 8:02 A.M. Curiously enough we had started the tentative schedule on paper at 8 A.M.- and when we got up over the first ridge we could see by the river fog over the Curaray that we never could have made it earlier. The fog got uncomfortably thicker under us but the holes allowed us to keep in touch with the river. The sun was shining and we figured it better to wait, if necessary, for the right holes rather than turn back and make a later attempt.

"As we got within two minutes of the site, the fog thinned so that we could safely slip down under it and make an approach. We went in, simulating a real landing, checked the full length for sticks and other hazards and pulled up.

"I had planned three runs before landing, but the thing was exactly as we had seen it several times before. As we came in the second time we slipped down between the trees in a steep side slip. It felt good as we made the last turn and came to the sand, so I set it down. The right wheel hit within six feet of the water and the left ten feet later. As the weight settled on the wheels I felt it was soft sand too late to back out now. I hugged the stick back and waited. One softer spot and we'd have been on our nose-maybe our back. It never came.

"We jumped out, rejoicing in the deliverance. The relief at being past that hurdle without damage dampened my sensitivity to the glaring possibility that I might not be able to take off. It was great just to be there.

"We ran up and down the sand hunting the best course for a take-off attempt and removing sticks that could puncture a tire. Then Ed took the movie camera to the far end while I taxied back toward a take-off position.

"About thirty yards from the end I felt the right wheel sink, and my heart sank with it. I cut the engine and Ed came on the double. He lifted the low wing and I hoisted the tail around. Then using the engine, and with Ed listing the wing, we got out of the softer stuff and cut the engine. Again we searched for harder spots. Finally we pushed the airplane backward into some bushes right at the edge of the beach. It meant losing thirty yards of the total 200 available-a critical loss in view of the generally soft consistency of the whole area. However, the plane had been lightened and we were now working only 1,000 feet above sea level, where we would get more lift out of the wing.

"As I got back into the plane, Ed went again to the far end of the beach. It shook me a little to think what Ed might record with that movie camera. After a final check I let 'er go. The sand really grabbed the wheels, but the acceleration still seemed satisfactory, so I hung on and was airborne in about 130 yards (about forty or fifty before being over the water) at about thirty miles per hour. I held it down close to the water to gain speed and then pulled up steeply out of that hardwood canyon; circled back, saluted Ed, and beat a trail for Arajuno-not quite sure yet what I should do next. At least I knew now what I was in for.

"At Arajuno everyone was glad to see the plane back, but my story dampened the festive spirit appreciably. We scrapped the scheduled list for flight No. 2 and took, instead, Jim and Roj and such basic equipment as was absolutely essential-like the

walkie-talkie and a little more food. The men gave me more ballast aft. If anything went wrong-if we nosed over in the landing-there would be four of us at least. Johnny continues to stand by now. He suggested softening the tires to keep them up in the sand. It never occurred to me, but having taken them down to about twelve pounds each, I felt much better.

"We took off three minutes behind schedule. The fog was almost gone. We circled once, checked safety harness and slipped down between the trees. The soft tires stayed on top of the sand much better and the sun was drying things out.

"The meeting of the three musketeers was jubilant. They set to work clearing debris from the playa while I got the plane into position for takeoff just as I had done last time-same deal: cut over the water, and then up and out.

"Trip No. 3 took in their radio and some tools and the first-priority boards for the tree house. Running about ten minutes behind schedule, I believe.

"The three fellows on the beach located a good tree, close to the open sand and slanted very slightly, in which they started to nail up the ladder and tree house. They hadn't figured on its being an ironwood tree, but that is what it proved to be-a wood which lives up to its name. Next flights brought in personal items, a larger radio, more food, and the last boards and aluminum."

Later Nate recorded: "Now twenty-five minutes behind schedule because I was spending time in unscheduled committee meetings on the beach."

Working with safety belts, plagued by myriads of sweat bees and tiny gnats, the men managed to nail up the two platforms on which they were to sleep, with an aluminum roof overhead. With Nate's fifth flight completed, he headed for Terminal City, where he called out to the Aucas over the public-address system: "Come tomorrow to the Curaray." The Indians "showed puzzlement at hearing this message." Nate swung briefly back to Palm Beach and called to the fellows that he had given the message to the Aucas. Then he flew to Arajuno to sleep.

Next morning, Wednesday, January 4, Jim wrote me a letter. "Just worked up a sweat on the hand crank of the radio. Nobody's reading us but we read all the morning contacts clearly. We had a good night with a coffee-and-sandwich break at 2 A.M. Didn't set a watch last night, as we really feel cozy and secure thirty-five feet off the ground in our little bunks. The beach is good for landings, but too soft for take-offs. We have these three alternatives: (1) wait for the sun to harden it up and sit until a stiff breeze makes a take-off possible; (2) go make a strip in Terminal City; (3) walk out. We saw puma [jungle lion] tracks on the sand and heard them last night. It is a beautiful jungle, open and full of palms. Much hotter than Shandia. Sweat with just a net over me last night. Our hopes are up, but no signs of the 'neighbors' yet. Perhaps today is the day the Aucas will be reached. It was a fight getting this hut up, but it is sure worth it to be up off the ground. We're going down now. Pistols, gifts, novelties, and prayer in our hearts. All for now ..."

Ed wrote to Marilou:

Dearest Baby:

It is 1:00 P.M. and we've just finished dinner and Nate is taking off to see if he can spot the boys. We are waiting for them to show up. Meals are fine and plentiful. I'll send some dirty clothes back with Nate this evening. Bugs are bad. Here's a list of things we need:

1. Two air mattresses-we are sending plastic ones back.
2. The pricker for gasoline pressure stove.
3. Three shigras [Indian carrying-nets] to hang up in our tree house to put stuff in.
4. 1 empty milk can to put candy in.
5. Alcohol for pressure stove.
6. My sun glasses.7. Insect repellent.
7. More milk and lemonade.
8. Old scraps of meat for fish bait.
9. Sun helmet, if around.

I love you very much. Give my love to the boys. Ed

Thanks for everything.

On Wednesday morning Nate and Pete took off from Arajuno, flew over Terminal City, and noticed a definite "thinning

out of the crowd" there. This encouraged them to think "the boys" were on their way to Palm Beach. Landing on the sand strip at Palm Beach, they found Ed, Roj, and Jim pacing the beach, holding out gifts and shouting welcome phrases to the trees. Nate set to work checking the radio and found the transmitter had not functioned because of a loose connection in the microphone. He was relieved to re-establish contact with Marj in Shell Mera. Roj and Nate built a beach house, then went swimming while Ed and Jim "sacked out" in the tree house.

The afternoon drowsed by, and as the tropical sun began to slide down behind the great forest trees, Nate once more elbowed the little plane out of the river valley, and he and Pete headed for Arajuno to spend another night. "Thank God for the unusually evident blessing we have seen yesterday and today," Nate wrote in his diary. "Thank God for a good team, and forbid that any man should fail to praise HIM."

Again on Thursday, January 5, Nate, with a driving sense of urgency, was writing of events as they happened. His account of the day's events, in the last week, was scrawled in pencil in a schoolboy's notebook (there was no typewriter on Palm Beach):

"All's quiet at Palm Beach. However, we feel sure we are being watched. On the way in this morning, Pete and I flew over Terminal City; two women and two children at Old Man's house. Airplane house is deserted. Probably women and children have gone up to big house. Big house showed five or six women, several children and possibly one old man.

"While letting down for Palm Beach we checked about a mile of playas below camp site. Saw several tracks, probably of

tapir and other smaller stuff. On way up to camp site we were down in riverbed thinking to salute the fellows and pull up and around to land when, just one bend below camp, we sighted footprints. We pulled up and doubled back for another look. They were unmistakable. We buzzed on up past camp, saluted, pulled up and around checking the two playas above camp (no soap) and landed. News of the footprints livened up the party considerably.

"Everyone had had a good night's sleep in the tree house. At 9 P.M. strong wind swayed trees and made such sounds that woke up the three men. But all three were soon asleep again. They had a lighted lantern up there to keep the target well lit. At 5 A.M. they shined the flashlight down on the playa to check a gift machete left the night before. It was gone! For the next fifteen minutes the jungles rang with Auca phrases-perhaps with a Midwestern accent. They then shined the light for a closer look. A big leaf had fallen on the knife so as to hide it. Tough!

"As Pete and I pulled in here Jim was out in the river fishing almost in Auca uniform. Modesty seems a small consideration after seeing the dress of our 'neighbors.' If our dress is any criterion, we're giving them everything. Pete's long-sleeved shirt, pants, and straw hat make him look like a beachcomber. Flies keep the rest of us pretty well clad in tee-shirts, pants, and tennis shoes. Jim sits in the smoke from the fire when not fishing or standing in the middle of the river 'preaching' out of his notebook of phrases.

"Except for forty-seven billion flying insects of every sort, this place is a little paradise. With the help of smoke and repellent we are all enjoying the experience immensely. A little

while ago Jim pulled in a fifteen-inch catfish. It is roasting over the fire now. Ed and Roj are up at the bend clearing a bad group of trees out of the approach. It's pretty close dropping down through there-will be much better now.

"Pete is stirring. Getting interested in lunch. Just emptied a plastic bag of prepared raw vegetables into a pressure cooker already partly filled with meat chunks. He's gone up to the tree house now for salt.

"The 'armor' Roj made (breast and tummy plate) out of a gas drum worked very well for a stove. While getting steam up on the stew we tossed termite nests on the fire to chase the gnats like the Indians do. By the time the three musketeers got back the stew was done and everyone was ready to test it. It went down easily, flushed along by generous quantities of lukewarm lemonade.

"Ever since Pete and I landed and reported the human footprints among the tapir and others, we were the objects of boisterous ridicule. However, curiosity brought on the acid test, and Jim and Roj started downstream, wading and running the beaches to check up at close range. We agreed that if they didn't show up in an hour, we'd look for them from the air. Fifty minutes later we saw them coming. I waded out to meet them and get the word-'Tapir,' they called. Then at closer range-'Aucas-at least thirty of them.' Characters! Sure enough, there were footprints-an adult, a youngster, perhaps twelve years old, and a little tot, but the prints were maybe a week old. The mud they were stamped in was cracked from drying. Sixty miles per hour or no, we had sure enough distinguished the prints from the many animal tracks.

"Among other tracks there were alligator, puma, tapir, et cetera. We also saw some good-sized ducks. Someone said, 'Too bad they're out of season.' (We banned firing guns for fear of frightening the Indians.)

"When someone noted with humor that although in Ecuador, we weren't speaking any Spanish, the response was, 'No one else around here does either.'

"We had all discovered the benefits of lolling in the shallow water nine-tenths submerged, and since I had just finished with the 2 P.M. contact, I shed my clothes and raced the gnats to the water, taking the sun helmet along. The fellows thought it a regal sight-nothing but a helmet and two bare feet sticking out of the water, so they dug out a couple of cameras. We enhanced some of the shots by adding Time magazine to the 'hydraulic siesta.'

"Jim then started reading us a novel. We roared over even remotely funny suggestions and finally skipped to the end to see who married whom and set it aside in favor of some readings from Time magazine.

One indulgent description really rolled us-'He looked like a tenement Tom starting his ninth life in the garbage can circuit.'

"At 3 P.M. I went aloft and circled up to 6,000 feet, where I could see the Auca clearing and Palm Beach at the same time. And then I glided down slowly, pausing now and then to circle tightly at full throttle so that anyone could hear me and judge the direction from the sound. As I approached to land I thought I saw fresh human tracks just two bends upstream from camp. They were among old tapir tracks-couldn't arouse any

enthusiasm over it at camp. I was about fresh out of enthusiasm too for everything.

"By 4:30 everyone felt that the Aucas had not yet found our location. Yet everyone was determined to 'sweat it out' till they should locate us and show themselves. One thing sure is that if we are fagged just waiting on the beach-the Aucas are really going to lose their zip by the time they locate us after tramping two or three days through the jungle. Pete and I were ready to take off for Arajuno at 4:45. The air was dead. We left all unnecessary weight behind. As we started slogging down through the soft sand on the take-off run we weren't doing at all well. At about the halfway point I cut the throttle and we stopped in about thirty yards. It looked like Pete might help guard the tree house for the night, but we plowed back to take-off position for one more try. Roj talked us into shutting the engine off and pushing the plane by hand just as far back as we possibly could. The tail wheel was just a few feet from the water! Then Jim went down to the wind sock to give signals and with Ed and Roj pushing the wing struts we started out. This time we made it okay and made a bee-line for Terminal City. We circled the main house twice, repeating the words 'Curaray Apa' (River).

"Engine skipped a beat over Terminal City (sparkplug trouble). A man was on the platform kneeling toward the direction of the camp site and pointing with both hands. This really gave us a boost. We hurried back and glided down over camp shouting the news. They signaled okay and we hit for home. At Arajuno we circled a couple of times, shouting a welcome to 'anyone' who might be in the bush, then landed. After landing, Pete and I walked the airstrip with a gift machete-no soap.

"We find we have a friendlier feeling for these fellows all the time. We must not let that lead us to carelessness. It is no small thing to try to bridge between twentieth century and the stone age. God help us to take care.

"Everyone is in bed and asleep here now. So it is left to me to go down the path and shut off the diesel. My little blank revolver is a welcome companion on such a venture. But safety is of the Lord. May we see 'them' soon. Nite."

CHAPTER 17 Success on Friday

About eleven o'clock Friday morning, January 6, Nate and Pete sat in the small cooking shelter they had built on the sand. Ed was at the upper end of the beach, Roj in the center, Jim at the lower end, continuing their verbal bombardments of the jungle. At 11:15 their hearts jumped when a clear masculine voice boomed out from across the river answering Ed's call. Immediately three Aucas stepped out into the open. They were a young man and two women-one about thirty years of age, the other a girl of about sixteen-naked except for strings tied about the waist, wrists, and thighs, and large wooden plugs in distended ear lobes. The missionaries, temporarily struck dumb by the surprise appearance, finally managed to shout simultaneously, in Auca: "Puinani! ... Welcome!"

The Auca man replied with a verbal flood, pointing frequently to the girl. His language was unintelligible, but his

gestures were plain. "He's offering her for trade," exclaimed Pete, "or maybe as a gift."

When it seemed that the Aucas wanted someone to come across, Jim peeled to his shorts and began wading over to them. The others cautioned him to go slow. Jim hesitated and the Aucas were slightly hesitant, but as Jim gradually approached, the girl edged toward the water and stepped off a log. The man and the other woman followed shortly. Jim seized their hands and led them across.

With broad smiles, many "puinanis" and much reference to their phrase books, the five conveyed the idea that their visitors had "come well" and need not be afraid. The Aucas' uneasiness fell from them, and they began jabbering happily to themselves and to the men, "seemingly with little idea that we didn't understand them."

Roj brought out some paring knives, which they accepted with cries of delight. Nate presented them with a machete and model airplane. The others, suddenly remembering the guns in the cook shack and tree house, went back to hide the weapons beneath their duffel. They dug out cameras and shot dozens of photos, while the women looked through a copy of Time magazine, and the man was being doused with insecticide to demonstrate civilization's way of dealing with the swarming pests. The group spontaneously began referring to him as "George."

Presently the girl-the men called her "Delilah"-drifted over toward the Piper, rubbing her body against the fabric, and imitating with her hands the plane's movement. She seemed

"dreamy," wrote Pete, "while the man was natural and self-possessed, completely unafraid. They showed neither fear nor comprehension of the cameras."

Pete continued: "Soon the fellow began to show interest in the plane and we guessed from his talk that he was willing to fly over the village to call his comrades. We put a shirt on him (it's cold up high), and he climbed into the plane with no sign of any emotion except eagerness to do his part. He acted out how he was going to call and repeated the words. Nate taxied down the strip and took off while 'George' shouted all the way. After circling and shouting briefly Nate landed again, thinking to give the fellow a rest before making the flight to his village. Nothing doing! He was ready to go right then."

Up they went again, this time to circle Terminal City. What must have been the thoughts of that primitive man as he peered down at the treetops and at the green sea below him, and suddenly recognized a familiar clearing, with familiar figures in it? "George" chortled with delight, and leaned out to wave and yell at his fellow villagers. "The woman at the Old Man's house," wrote Nate, "-her jaw dropped on seeing 'George' ... expression of delight on the face of the young man on the platform."

Back on the sand strip, "George" leaped out, clapping his hands. The five men immediately gave thanks to God, with heads up to try to show their visitors that they were addressing their Heavenly Father. As Ezekiel said, "The Word was in my bones as a living fire," and for these men the drive to deliver to the Aucas the message of redemption through the blood of Jesus was blocked only by the language barrier. If only they

might suddenly leap over the barrier and convey to the Indians one hint of the love of God!

The missionaries demonstrated for their guests such modern marvels as rubber bands, balloons, and a yo-yo; served them lemonade and hamburgers with mustard, which they evidently enjoyed. Then they tried to get across the idea that an invitation to visit the Auca village would not be scorned. For this notion "George" displayed no enthusiasm.

"Why is it he's so reluctant whenever we broach the subject?" one of the five demanded.

Another replied: "Maybe he lacks the authority to invite us on his own."

"At 4:15," Nate wrote, "we decide to fly again. 'George' decides to go along. We say 'no.' He puts his machete and envelope of valuables in the plane and looks at Pete as though he had already said it was okay and climbs in. On the way over we finally get Marj on the radio. Great rejoicing.

"Back on Palm Beach we held a strategy meeting; talking of going over to Auca houses if a delegation of, say, six Aucas arrive and seem happy to escort us. After that, every effort would be bent toward building an airstrip in their valley. The fellows tried to explain to 'George' how an airstrip should be cleared in his village."

At first he did not understand their word for trees. When he finally got it, he corrected their pronunciation. They stuck sticks in the sand to represent trees; then, with one of the model

planes, Nate showed "George" how the airplane would crash and tumble among the trees. With the model lying on its back among the sticks in the sand, the fellows all shook their heads and moaned in evident distress. The scene was then reenacted, only this time the fellows took machetes and cut down all the trees (sticks) and smoothed the sand carefully. The model airplane approached for a smooth landing, accompanied by great rejoicing.

As the day wore on, "Delilah" showed signs of impatience. Once when Jim Elliot left the group to climb up to the tree house, she leaped up and followed. When he then turned and rejoined the others, she acted downcast.

Later, as Nate and Pete got ready to return to Arajuno, "George" seemed to understand that he could not accompany them. Before the airplane took off the fellows carefully gathered all of the exposed film and everything that had been written to fly it out for safekeeping. If something unforeseen should happen, they did not want the record lost.

When the Aucas indicated that they might spend the night on the beach, the three musketeers hospitably offered them the small shack they had been using for cooking, motioning that it was theirs to occupy if they wished. "Delilah," however, had other ideas. She wheeled and walked off down the beach. "George" called to her, but she kept going. He followed her into the forest. The older woman stayed by the fire "talking a blue streak with Roj." She stayed on the beach most of the night. The next morning when Jim came down to start the fire, he found her gone, but the embers from her fire were still red.

The events of the next day, Saturday, January 7, were anticlimactic. The men waited hopefully, expecting the Aucas to arrive momentarily with an invitation to their village. But no one came. Around noon Jim looked at his watch.

"Okay, boys," he said. "I give them five minutes. If they don't show up, I'm going over!" Wisdom prevented him from carrying out his threat, but he did go back into the forest on a rudimentary trail he had discovered behind the tree house, hoping to find some trace of them. He found the forest floor remarkably open, and abounding in animal trails, but no human footprints.

Nate and Pete then flew over Terminal City and were disheartened to find some signs of fear. On the first trip all of the women and children ran to hide. A few men in sight seemed relieved to hear Nate call "Come, come, come!" He threw them a blanket and a pair of shorts to reassure them.

On the second flight "George" appeared with a group of men. One old man pointed toward Palm Beach, and "seemed friendly but not exuberant." The third trip showed that fear had vanished. Nate reported: "I got some good smiles from 'George' and another young man who, one can imagine, probably aspires to ride in the plane." Ed wrote a note to Marilou that afternoon:

Dearest Baby:

It's 4:30 and no sign of our visitors yet but we believe they'll arrive, if not tonight, then early tomorrow. Thanks for the clothes and food again. We are certainly eating well. This has been a well-fed operation from start to end.

We feel now that we ought to press going over there and get the airstrip in as fast as possible-but we'll have to wait and see how God leads us, and them, too. Looks like Pete will be there to help you tomorrow morning. Give Stevie and Mikey my love and tell them I'll see them soon, and Carmela too. All for now. All of my love,

Ed.

Tossing on his bunk that night at Arajuno Nate wondered if everything possible had been done to interest the visitors and encourage them to return with their friends. Why had they been so casual? They seemed almost bored at times as he looked back on it. Jim's explanation had reassured him:

"That's Indian. If you landed him on the moon, he'd be satisfied in five minutes."

As they climbed into the Piper on Sunday morning, Pete called: "So long, girls. Pray. I believe today's the day."

At Palm Beach the fellows enjoyed the ice cream and warm blueberry muffins, fresh from the oven, Marilou had sent along. All then agreed on a visit to Terminal City. This time Nate went alone. Circling over Terminal City, he found only a handful of women and children. This sent his spirits soaring. Undoubtedly the men were at last on their way to the Curaray! And, sure enough, on the flight back he spotted a group of men "en-route" to Palm Beach. As he touched his wheels down he shouted to the four, "This is it, guys! They're on the way!"

A contact with Marj in Shell Mera had been arranged for twelve thirty. Breathlessly and still using their code words, Nate told of spotting a "commission of ten" on the way from Terminal City, adding, "Looks like they'll be here for the early afternoon service. Pray for us. This is the day! Will contact you next at four-thirty."

CHAPTER 18 Silence

At four-thirty sharp Marj Saint eagerly switched on the radio receiver in Shell Mera. This was the moment when the big news would come. Had the men been invited to follow the Aucas to their houses? What further developments would Nate be able to report?

She looked at her watch again. Yes, it was at least four-thirty. No sound from Palm Beach. She and Olive hunched close to the radio. The atmosphere was not giving any interference. Perhaps Nate's watch had run a little slow.

In Arajuno, Marilou and Barbara had their radio on, too. Silence. They waited a few minutes, then called Shell Mera.

"Arajuno calling Shell Mera. Arajuno standing by for Shell Mera. Any word from Palm Beach, Marj? Over."

"Shell Mera standing by. No, no word as yet. We'll be standing by." Not a crackle broke the silence.

Were the men so preoccupied with entertaining their visitors that they had forgotten the planned contact? Five

minutes . . . ten minutes ... No, it was inconceivable that all five would forget. It was the first time since Nate had started jungle flying in 1948 that he and Marj had been out of contact even for an hour.

But-perhaps their radio was not functioning. It happened occasionally. The women clung to each little hope, refusing to entertain the thought of anything's really having gone wrong. Their suspense was the sharper because most of their missionary friends on the network were unaware that Operation Auca was in progress. In Arajuno, Barbara and little Beth Youderian had primed up a bit, since it had been planned that Roj would come to Arajuno that night, while Pete took a turn sleeping in the tree house. Surely the little plane would come winging over the treetops before sundown. They walked up and down the airstrip, waiting ...

Just after sundown Art Johnston, one of the doctors with Hospital Vozandes, affiliated with the missionary radio station HCJB in Quito, came into the radio room in Shell Mera. The radio was still on, but Marj sat with her head down on the desk.

"Is something the matter, Marj?"

She told him the situation briefly, but asked that he not divulge it yet. If nothing serious had actually happened, it would be disastrous to publicize what was taking place. There was little sleep that night for any of the wives.

By seven o'clock on the morning of Monday, January 9, 1956, Johnny Keenan, Nate's colleague in the MAF, was in the air flying toward the sand strip which Nate had earlier pointed out

to him. As he flew, Marj called me in Shandia: "We haven't heard from the fellows since yesterday noon. Would you stand by at ten o'clock for Johnny's report?"

It was the first I knew that anything was amiss. A verse God had impressed on my mind when I first arrived in Ecuador came back suddenly and sharply: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee...." I went upstairs to continue teaching the Indian girls' literacy class, praying silently, "Lord, let not the waters overflow."

At about nine-thirty Johnny's report came through. Marj relayed it to me in Shandia:

"Johnny has found the plane on the beach. All the fabric is stripped off. There is no sign of the fellows."

In Shell Mera, a pilot of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Larry Montgomery (who is also a reserve officer in the USAF), lost no time in contacting Lieutenant General William K. Harrison, commander in chief of the Caribbean command, which included the United States Air Rescue Service in Panama. Radio station HCJB was also informed and news flashed around the world: "FIVE MEN MISSING IN AUCA TERRITORY." By noon, all possible forces which might contribute to their rescue, including the prayers of thousands of people in all parts of the world, were set in motion.

Barbara and Marilou were flown from Arajuno to Shell Mera. They felt confident that there would be some survivors, and so left a note on the door of the house in Arajuno, stating

where medicine and food could be found. What if one of them should stagger home wounded, or if all of them arrived back after a grueling trip in the jungle? Marilou decided that she must return, to be there to help them. Late Monday afternoon she was flown home again, where she was to remain three more days. On Monday evening it was decided that a ground search party should be organized, on the assumption that one or more of the men still lived, and Frank Drown, Roger Youderian's colleague, a man with twelve years of jungle experience among the Jivaros, was unanimously elected to lead the party. Dr. Art Johnston offered to go along in his capacity as physician. Thirteen Ecuadorian soldiers promptly volunteered.

The news "put me in a cold sweat," said Frank, "but I asked my wife, Marie, if she minded if I went." "Of course you must go," was her reply, and Frank accepted without hesitation.

On Tuesday morning I was flown out of Shandia with Nate's sister Rachel, who had been with me while the men went on the Auca trip. Frank was brought out from Macuma, and many of the missionary men arrived in Shell Mera from Quito, some as volunteers to go on the ground party. Word was received via short wave that a helicopter was on its way from Panama, which lifted the spirits in Shell Mera. That night the pilot of an Ecuadorian airline came to the house to tell the wives that he had flown over the scene at about six o'clock in the evening, and saw, a short distance upstream, a large fire, "without any smoke," which would indicate perhaps a gasoline fire or a signal fire. Nate always carried signal flares in his emergency kit. This was a ray of hope for the five wives to sleep on that night.

On Wednesday Johnny Keenan took off again in MAF's second Piper Cruiser, a twin to Nate's plane, on his fourth flight over Palm Beach to see if there were any signs of life. Marj, who had hardly left the radio since Sunday afternoon, stood by for his reports. Barbara, Olive, and I were upstairs. Suddenly, Marj called: "Betty! Barbara! Olive!"

I raced down the stairs. Marj was standing with her head against the radio, her eyes closed. After a while she spoke: "They found one body."

A quarter mile downriver from the little denuded plane Johnny had sighted a body, floating face-down in the water, dressed in khaki pants and white tee-shirt, the usual uniform of the men. Barbara felt it was not Roger; he had been wearing blue-jeans.

Some of the land party went over to Arajuno to prepare the airstrip for the big planes which would be arriving soon from Panama. Late on Wednesday afternoon the roar of the planes was heard, and far on the western horizon where the volcano Sangay stands, a smoking pyramid, the great planes were silhouetted. As they drew near and circled the strip, the red, white, and blue of the United States Air Force became visible.

During the day the remaining volunteers who made up the ground party were transported to Arajuno where Indians, soldiers, and others of the missionaries were milling around the airstrip, waiting to start. In spite of the strain she was under, Marilou remained her efficient self; she had a meal ready for all the men before they headed downriver. There was some difficulty in securing Quichua carriers; they had long lived too

close for comfort to the Aucas and did not want to get any closer. However, their loyalty to the men who had worked among them overcame their hesitancy, and about ten-thirty the party was ready to move off on foot, guns handy, eyes sharp.

Dee Short, a missionary from western Ecuador, who happened to be in Quito when news of the disaster arrived, had come to Arajuno. As the party left, Marilou turned to him and said with finality: "There is no hope. All the men are dead." Probably most of the ground party would have agreed with her, but, nonetheless, every time they rounded a bend of the river they looked expectantly for one or more of the missing men.

Back in Shell Mera the radio crackled again. Marj answered: "Shell Mera standing by."

Johnny Keenan reported. "Another body sighted, about 200 feet below Palm Beach."

And once again, God, who had promised grace to help in time of need, was true to His word. None of us wives knew which two these bodies might prove to be but we did know "in Whom we had believed." His grace was sufficient.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon the ground party reached Oglan, an Indian settlement situated at the place where the Oglan River meets the Curaray. Here camp was set up for the night. Frank Drown organized the group, appointing one man to hire canoes, one in charge of cargo, one to plan seating in the canoes, one as mess chief, two for safety precautions. That night they slept on beds of banana leaves. Watches were kept all night.

Before the party set off on Thursday morning, the missionaries offered up prayer, committing themselves into the hands of God; and the Ecuadorian soldiers, of a different faith, prayed with them. The party moved cautiously down the Curaray; the river was at its lowest, making navigation difficult, and special care was exercised in rounding the many bends, for it was feared Aucas might be lying in wait.

At about ten o'clock Johnny Keenan again flew over the ground party in the Piper, and Frank Drown was able to make contact with him by means of a two-way radio which the Air Rescue Service had supplied. Johnny told them of two canoes of Quichuas, proceeding upriver in the direction of the ground party; he feared that in their excitement some one of the men in the party might shoot at the first sight of an Indian on the river. Soon the two canoes of Quichuas appeared. They were a small group of Indians from McCully's station at Arajuno. On their own initiative they had boldly pressed into Auca territory ahead of anyone else, and had gone all the way to Palm Beach. The ground party was saddened when one of the Indians, a believer who had come to know Christ since Ed had gone to Arajuno, told them of having found Ed's body on the beach at the edge of the water. He had Ed's watch with him.

Now the missionaries knew who one of their fallen colleagues was, but a chance remained that at least three others had survived. They pressed on.

In the big house at Shell Mera, children played, babies were fed and bathed, the members of the Rescue Service came and went, Mad maintained contact on the short wave, meals were somehow cooked and served, visitors greeted and informed of

the latest word, and prayer went up to God continually. The mechanics were making the final adjustment on the blades of the Army helicopter which had been dismantled and shipped from Panama in an Air Force cargo plane.

My diary recounts the events of Thursday afternoon, as the helicopter was dispatched to Palm Beach:

"2:00. Johnny's Piper and helicopter headed for Arajuno. Also Navy R-4D, Captain McGee and Major Nurnberg in helicopter.

The ground party conducted a brief burial service. While it was in progress, a violent tropical storm broke around them, drenching everyone and terrifying the Indian guides (who are convinced that the Auca witch doctor conjures up a storm every time his people plan a murderous attack). In the darkness of the storm (LEFT) the group offers up a prayer of praise and dedication, led by Frank Drown.

Immediately after the burial, the ground party left Palm Beach and headed out through Auca territory. At first the engine of the helicopter coughed and sputtered and everyone feared that it might have to be left behind. Finally, however, the craft rose into the air. RIGHT To ease the load in the canoes traveling upstream, and to shortcut the tortuous bends of the river, the ground party crisscrossed the Curaray - alternating by foot and canoe.

The end of the record of Operation Auca: These sheets, torn from Nate Saint's pocket diary and laid out to dry, were found on his body and were brought back to Marj by the ground party.

Among the objects brought back from Palm Beach were Aucalances. This one, pulled from Nate Saint's body, had a Gospel tract wrapped around it. The tract had been dropped to the Aucas, probably as a giftwrapping. Members of the ground party speculated that Nate, as the pilot of the missionary plane, had been singled out by the Aucas to be killed by this particular lance.

"3:00. The aircraft are stacking up over the site of the incident now. I feel sick at my stomach.

"3:20. 'Blessed is she that believed ...' The aircraft are circling the site. "3:30. 'Yea, in the way of Thy judgment, O Lord, have we waited for

Thee. The desire of our soul is to Thy name.'

"4:00. Still circling. 'Hope thou in God, for f shall yet praise Him ...'"

As the wives hoped and prayed and waited the procession of flying machines moved slowly down toward Palm Beach, the airplanes circling to keep pace with the slower helicopter skimming along at treetop level and following the bends of the river. The airplanes chose different altitudes to avoid danger of collision as pilots circled with eyes on the jungle below. Johnny Keenan in the little yellow Piper was lowest. A few hundred feet above were the U.S. Navy R-4D (the Navy version of the familiar DC-3), and higher, the big amphibian of the Air Rescue Service. Close by, Colonel Izurieta in a plane of the Ecuadorian Air Force flew in wider circles ready to help should decisions be needed. The teamwork of the United States Army, Air Force, and Navy and of the government and military services of Ecuador was heartwarming to the wives.

Air Force Major Nurnberg, riding in the Army helicopter, landed briefly to talk with the ground party, still some distance up the river from Palm Beach. Ed McCully's name was mentioned guardedly on the radio. Those hearing guessed that somehow Ed's body had been identified. Was his one of the two bodies that had been seen from the air? Had three perhaps escaped into the jungle? Or been taken captive?

After a few moments the helicopter moved on. Finally, rounding a bend, it came at last to Palm Beach and landed. Nurnberg, carbine at the ready, jumped out and looked around. Anxious minutes went by. Back in the "chopper" he radioed: "No one here." Hope flickered brighter in those who heard.

The helicopter was off again and started slowly down the river. Crossing to the other side it stopped, hovering, the force of its down washing disturbing the muddy surface of the water. Minutes later it moved on, only to stop again two hundred yards farther on. A third and a fourth time Nurnberg and McGee hung motionless ten feet above the water, rotor blades beating dangerously close to overhanging jungle trees. Hearts sank in the aircraft above as those watching guessed the meaning of those stops.

The aircraft returned to Arajuno. Once on the ground, Nurnberg, his face showing strain, confirmed suspicions. Speaking in low tones to the tight circle of military men, he explained that McCully's body, identified by the small party of Quichuas the day before, was now gone from the beach, no doubt washed away by the rain and higher water in the night. He leafed through his notebook for a moment. A few Indians stood silent in the tall grass nearby, listening and watching. "We found

four in the river," Nurnberg said, finally. "I don't think identification will be possible from what I have here-" indicating his notebook. "One of them may be McCully."

He did not have to say what was in every mind. There might be one who got away, possibly wounded, still in the jungle.

How to inform the wives was the question uppermost in military minds. Should Marilou be told? She was right there at Arajuno in the house.

"We'd better wait," Nurnberg said. "DeWitt is running this show. Let's get back to Shell and talk it over." Captain DeWitt in the big Air Force amphibian was overhead, not wanting to risk a landing on the small strip at Arajuno. All returned to Shell and the military men gathered in the cabin of the amphibian. The wives would have to be told. But how?

Someone else had wisely decided to tell Marilou that four bodies had been found. Later in the afternoon Johnny flew her out to Shell to be with the other four wives.

In the end it was the wives who persuaded DeWitt and Nurnberg that there was no need to soften the blow. We wanted to know everything in detail. We gathered in Marj's bedroom away from the children. Major Nurnberg opened his notebook and in tense sentences described what he had found. It was immediately evident that identification could not be positive. One body was caught under the branches of a fallen tree; only a large foot with a gray sock appeared at the surface of the muddy water. In reading his notes of another, Nurnberg said: "This one

had on a red belt of some woven material." Four of us turned our eyes toward the fifth, Olive Fleming.

"That was Pete," Olive said simply.

As the Major concluded, it was still not known whether Ed's body was one of those in the river. There was still the hope that one might have got away.

The military men, to whom the breaking of such news to loved ones was no new thing, left the bedroom silently. Their news had been met with serenity. No tears could rise from depth of trust which supported the wives.

Barbara Youderian wrote in her diary:

"Tonight the Captain told us of his finding four bodies in the river. One had tee-shirt and blue-jeans. Roj was the only one who wore them.... God gave me this verse two days ago, Psalm 48:14, 'For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our Guide even unto death.' As I came face to face with the news of Roj's death, my heart filled with praise. He was worthy of his home-going. Help me, Lord, to be both mummy and daddy. 'To know wisdom and instruction.. 'Tonight Beth prayed for daddy in Heaven, and asked me if daddy would come down from Heaven to get a letter she wanted to write him. I said, 'He can't come down. He's with Jesus.' She said, 'But Jesus can help him come down, and God will take his hand so he won't slip.'

"I wrote a letter to the mission family, trying to explain the peace I have. I want to be free of self-pity. It is a tool of Satan to rot away a life. I am sure that this is the perfect will of God.

Many will say, 'Why did Roj get mixed up in this, when his work was with Jivaros?' Because Roj came to do the will of Him that sent him. The Lord has closed our hearts to grief and hysteria, and filled in with His perfect peace."

That Thursday night the ground party pitched camp at "El Capricho," the former hacienda where there had been some Auca killings. Throwing up some little leaf shacks, a guard was set up of two missionaries, two soldiers, and two Indians. The missionaries, when not on guard duty with the others, tried to decide the best course of action, knowing, through contact with the helicopter, that four of their colleagues were dead. It was a long night, and Frank Drown felt an old fear that had haunted him all his life of touching the body of a friend: "Here I was, getting nearer and nearer to seeing the bodies of five fellows who were as dear to me as my own brothers."

Starting out again at six in the morning on Friday, January 13, the party was on the last lap of its mission, with a date to meet the helicopter at Palm Beach at ten. The men had to hurry to get there and everyone was jittery from the strain of the trip and the thought of the job that lay ahead. At this point the course of the Curaray is a series of short, sharp bends and twists and offers an ideal ambush for an Auca attack.

At last the beach was reached. Quichuas were sent up first, as they were best able to spot evidence of recent Auca visits. There was none. The rest of the party followed. "I remember," says Frank Drown, "that the first thing that struck me as we hit

the beach was the smell from a pot of beans that had been overturned and were spread all over. I don't think that I'll ever forget that terrible, rotten smell."

There was no sign as yet of the helicopter. The ground party set to work, everyone having been assigned different duties: the Ecuadorian soldiers spread out in a semicircle in the jungle behind the beach to act as cover, two Indians set to digging a common grave under the tree house, others waded into the river looking for the men's possessions. Dee Short and Frank Drown crawled up into the tree house to try to find a clue to what had happened. Some of the men began to dismantle the plane, others looked for bodies. It was not until the helicopter arrived at twelve-fifteen and hovered over the bodies where they lay in the muddy waters of the Curaray, that the ground crew was able to find them. Frank Drown told of the scene:

"First Nurnberg pointed out one body downstream and Fuller jumped into the water and pulled the body across. Then Nurnberg showed us Nate Saint's body, and we got in a canoe and went downstream, and saw an arm coming out of the water, so I tried to attach a string to the arm and I just could not bring myself to do it. I'd reach out and try and then pull back, and have to try again until finally the man who was in the canoe with me did it. Now we were three canoes with three bodies attached to them, going upstream. We laid all four face down in a row on the beach. We never did get the fifth, which was Ed McCully's body. Then I got over my feeling of hating to touch the bodies, because a body is only a house and these fellows had left their house and, after the soul leaves, the body isn't much after all. The thing that is beautiful to us is the soul, not the body."

Identification of the four bodies was finally positive from wedding rings and watches, change purse, notebooks. Ed was not one of the four, so it was finally definite: all five were dead. In the providence of God the missing body was the one identified by the Quichuas the day before. Not only had they brought back his watch, but also they had taken off one of his shoes (a tremendous shoesize thirteen and one-half) and thrown it up on the beach. The day before, Nurnberg had picked it up and brought it back to Shell Mera.

While the bodies were drawn ashore a violent tropical storm was gathering. At that moment the helicopter came in low and fast. Cornell Capa, a photographer-correspondent on assignment for Life magazine, jumped out, camera in hand, and ran across the beach. Then the full fury of the storm struck and the missionaries felt as if the powers of darkness had been let loose.

Later Capa wrote an account of his landing and of subsequent events:

"We floated above the jungle about two hundred feet over the treetops. The Naval Mission plane circling overhead did not let us out of their sight. Suddenly the sun disappeared and we headed into a tropical storm. The pilot looked grim and wasted not a minute landing on Palm Beach.

"The atmosphere on the beach was fantastic. Everybody's hand was on the trigger, looking toward the jungle. I did not have to ask why. The rain was coming down in buckets; my handkerchief served no more to clean my water-soaked lenses. Suddenly I saw a struggling group of men carrying the last of the missionaries to his common grave. He was on an improvised

stretcher, made out of the aluminum sheets that had covered the tree house where the men had lived.

"It was a terrible sight. The light was eerie. The pallbearers struggled against a muddy bank that led to the grave. I just made it in time to see the lifeless legs disappearing into the hole. Grim, weary missionaries looked for the last time at their friends, whom they could no more identify. One said: 'It's better this way. I feel less miserable.' They lingered for a moment, offering up a few words of prayer. At the end, Major Nurnberg, facing the jungle with carbine in hand, turned back toward the small knot of men about the grave and called: 'Let's get out of here!'

"The rain let up a bit, the helicopter was ready to leave and the time was near for decision. I could either go back with the pilot or stay with the ground party starting the overnight homeward trek. It was an easy decision. To leave now would be cheating. I gave my exposed film to the pilot. The struggle of the living to stay alive had just begun.

"At last, they were off. The canoes were overloaded and at the slightest movement water poured through the side. This was to be no fun at all, I thought quietly to myself. Major Nurnberg was in front with his carbine and I could see from the back of his head that he had a mean look in his eyes. Nurnberg leaned back on Dee Short (a redheaded, very long-legged missionary, in a very small boat), who in turned leaned on me, and I leaned on the dismounted wheel of the ill-fated plane which we had salvaged. My back ached. Like a mother hen, I tried to protect my film pouches and to hide my cameras from the rain. It was futile.

"Soon my rangefinder clouded up. I had to guess the focus. A little later my viewfinder fogged up as well. Now I only aimed the camera and prayed-like a missionary-that it was pointed in the right direction.

"In and out of the canoe ... marching with water squelching out of my boots. Anxious eyes everywhere. I unbuttoned my.45 holster. Fortunately, no sign of Aucas. This lasted for about two hours; then it was time to bed down for the night.

"Major Nurnberg, Missionary Drown and the Ecuadorian underofficer picked an open site for the camp. Their aim was to give us a chance to spot the Aucas before they had a chance to throw their spears. Guards were posted all around the perimeter and changed every two hours. We had a meal, cooked by one of the missionaries. Shelters were erected from the metal sheets we carried, and palm leaves formed the side walls and the floor. It was a temporary paradise.

"Missionary Don Johnson, sitting in the darkness of the house, buried his face in his hands, and offered a prayer. He thanked the Lord for helping them to reach and bury their friends. Then, with great feeling, he evoked the modest and loved characters of the departed men. In the darkness of the night, with the firelight flickering on his face, and the sound of jungle birds and pumas' groans punctuating the air, this clearly spoken 'conversation' with God was of great emotional impact. Don was not expressing sorrow for the departed so much as testifying to his faith in the Lord's will. When he finished only the crackling of the campfire filled the air.

"But there was to be no sleep. All through the night we were in a wakeful readiness.

"The rushing waters of the River Curaray were always in the background. There was the sound of an occasional tree falling to set off the trigger fingers of the nervous guards. And at intervals came the beams from their flashlights as the guards made their rounds. Slowly dawn came and our nervousness increased for this was the hour, we had been told, when the Aucas liked to attack. Our Indian guides stirred, particularly when they heard the continuing sounds of a puma. The Aucas are well known for their clever imitation of the jungle animals, and the guides were sure that in the shadows of the early morning light our 'neighbors' were everywhere. Major Nurnberg crawled forward and with a sudden burst of fire silenced the 'puma.'

"Breakfast was oatmeal and coffee. Then we collected our gear and the march was on. Dried socks became wet again. Tired feet dragged. The searching eyes and ready fingers of Nurnberg and Drown brought up the rear. Sudden excitement: the 'chopper' appeared overhead, always watched by its 'Big Brother,' the Navy's R-4D. Suddenly the Twentieth Century descended in the wilderness of the jungle. The helicopter had come for me.... As I took off I was sorry to leave my friends, but, no, not sorry to leave."

On Saturday morning Captain DeWitt of the Rescue Service asked us five widows if we would "care to fly over Palm Beach to see your husbands' grave?"

We replied that if this were not asking too much, we would be grateful. The Navy R-4D took us out over the jungle, where the Curaray lay like a brown snake in the undulating green. Pressing our faces close to the windows as we knelt on the floor of the plane, we could see the slice of white sand where the Piper stood. Olive Fleming recalled the verses that God had impressed on her mind that morning: 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' He who has prepared us for this very thing is God ... 'Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.' "

As the plane veered away, Marj Saint said: "That is the most beautiful little cemetery in the world."

Young Venancio, a Quichua convert at Shandia, preaches there on the Sunday following Jim's death. He had been among the first of the Shandia Indians to make overtures of friendship to Jim and Pete, and is now assistant teacher at the Shandia school.

Dayuma, the escaped Auca woman who taught Jim Elliot his vocabulary for Operation Auca, is helping Rachel Saint prepare a list of key tribal words and phrases. This list will be used by future missionaries who will seek to take the Gospel to this savage tribe.

CHAPTER X19 "Yet Have We Not Forgotten Thee"

Two days later we widows-already we were adjusting ourselves to the use of the word-sat together at the kitchen table in Shell Mera. Dr. Art Johnston was describing the finding of the bodies. He had just returned with the weary, stragglng ground party. When he hesitated, we urged him to give us all the facts.

It was evident that death had been caused by lance wounds. But how had ten Aucas managed to overwhelm five strong men who were armed with guns? Over and over we asked ourselves this question. The only possible answer was an ambush. Somehow, the Aucas must have succeeded in convincing the men of their peaceful intentions. Nate had assured Marj that they would never allow Aucas with spears in their hands to approach them. Perhaps the "commission of ten" that Nate mentioned on the radio had been a decoy party. Certainly if this party had carried spears, Nate would have reported this and the men would have not looked forward so eagerly to their arrival. This group may have walked peacefully onto the beach while a second party, carrying spears, moved up under cover of the jungle foliage to carry out a surprise attack. It seems likely that the missionaries and the unarmed Aucas had been mingling together, as they had on the previous Friday, with friendly words and gestures. And then, at a secret signal ...

There was evidence of a struggle on the beach-marks of Ed's leather heels in the sand; one bullet hole through the windshield of the plane. However, no blood was found. If any Aucas had suffered, it was not apparent. Had the men tried to avoid shooting by backing into the river?

A lance was found thrust into the sand in the river bottom near the body of Jim Elliot. The fact that all of the bodies were in the water might indicate that they had tried desperately to show the Aucas that they would shoot only as a last resort.

The condition of the Piper showed real malice. Possibly some Auca had punctured the fabric of the plane with a spear, and, finding it vulnerable, had begun to peel it off. Others

helped, and soon they had denuded it completely, tossing the strips into the water nearby. But someone intended to put this man-carrying bird out of commission once and for all. Some of the framework was bent, and a part of the landing gear, made of tubular steel, was battered in as if by a very heavy object. The propeller and instrument panel, however, were intact. Perhaps to touch the "soul" of the creature was taboo, but they had torn the stuffing from the seats, as if to disembowel the flying beast.

Why, after the overtures of friendship on Friday, had the Aucas turned with such sudden and destructive anger on their white visitors on Sunday? The answer can only be guessed. Among the most qualified to venture a guess is Frank Drown, whose work with the Jivaros had given him shrewd insight into Indian thinking. He says: "An Indian, when he first hears or sees something new, will accept it. Perhaps he accepts merely from normal curiosity, but he does accept. But after he has had time to think about the novelty he begins to feel threatened, and that is the time when he may attack. A group of Indians will sit back and discuss a new contrivance or a new way of doing things with some eagerness; but the witch doctors, who are the real conservatives, can be counted on for rejection. They have a lot of authority and, when they work on their fellow tribesmen to reject an innovation, the people seldom go contrary to their advice. As in any culture, the younger men may be looking for a new way of life, but the older ones hang on to their traditions and maintain the status quo. Furthermore, most Indians are basically and understandably skeptical of anything the white man offers him. And don't forget that, after all, this was the first time within memory that the Aucas have had an encounter with the white man which was completely friendly. We can only hope they are pondering that fact right now."

In the kitchen we sat quietly as the reports were finished, fingering the watches and wedding rings that had been brought back, trying for the hundredth time to picture the scene. Which of the men watched the others fall? Which of them had time to think of his wife and children? Had one been covering the others in the tree house, and come down in an attempt to save them? Had they suffered long? The answers to these questions remained a mystery. This much we knew: "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it." There was no question as to the present state of our loved ones. They were "with Christ."

And, once more, ancient words from the Book of Books came to mind: "All this has come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee.... Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from Thy way, though Thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death."

The quiet trust of the mothers helped the children to know that this was not a tragedy. This was what God had planned. "I know my daddy is with Jesus, but I miss him, and I wish he would just come down and play with me once in a while," said three-year-old Stevie McCully. Several weeks later, back in the States, Stevie's little brother, Matthew, was born. One day the baby was crying and Stevie was heard to say, "Never you mind; when we get to Heaven I'll show you which one is our daddy." Was the price too great?

To the world at large this was a sad waste of five young lives. But God had His plan and purpose in all things. There were those whose lives were changed by what happened on Palm Beach. In Brazil, a group of Indians at a mission station deep in

the Mato Grosso, upon hearing the news, dropped to their knees and cried out to God for forgiveness for their own lack of concern for fellow Indians who did not know of Jesus Christ. From Rome, an American official wrote to one of the widows: "I knew your husband. He was to me the ideal of what a Christian should be." An Air Force Major stationed in England, with many hours of jet flying, immediately began making plans to join the Missionary Aviation Fellowship. A missionary in Africa wrote: "Our work will never be the same. We knew two of the men. Their lives have left their mark on ours."

Off the coast of Italy, an American naval officer was involved in an accident at sea. As he floated alone on a raft, he recalled Jim Elliot's words (which he had read in a news report): "When it comes time to die, make sure that all you have to do is die." He prayed that he might be saved, knowing that he had more to do than die. He was not ready. God answered his prayer, and he was rescued. In Des Moines, Iowa, an eighteen-year-old boy prayed for a week in his room, then announced to his parents: "I'm turning my life over completely to the Lord. I want to try to take the place of one of those five."

Letters poured in to the five widows—from a college in Japan, "We are praying for you"; from a group of Eskimo children in a Sunday School in Alaska; from a Chinese church in Houston; from a missionary on the Nile River who had picked up Time magazine and seen a photograph of her friend, Ed McCully.

Only eternity will measure the number of prayers which ascended for the widows, their children, and the work in which the five men had been engaged. The prayers of the widows

themselves are for the Aucas. We look forward to the day when these savages will join us in Christian praise.

Plans were promptly formulated for continuing the work of the martyrs. The station of Arajuno was manned to be ready in case the Aucas should come out for friendly contact. Gift flights were resumed by Johnny Keenan, so that the Aucas would know, beyond any doubt, that the white man had nothing but the friendliest of motives. Revenge? The thought never crossed the mind of one of the wives or other missionaries.

Barbara Youderian returned to her work among the Jivaros, with the two little children, and I went back to Shandia with tenmonth-old Valerie to carry on as much as I could of the work of the Quichua station. Another pilot, Hobey Lowrance, with his family and a new plane, were sent to the mission airbase in Shell Mera, while Marj Saint took up a new post in Quito. After the birth of her third son in the United States, a few weeks after the death of her husband, Marilou McCully returned to Ecuador with her boys to work in Quito with Marj. For Olive Fleming, who had spent only two months in the jungle when her husband died, the problem regarding the future has been more difficult. But for her, as for all, one thing is certain: her life belongs to God, as had her husband's, and He will show the way.

In the months since the killing of the five men, Nate Saint's sister Rachel has continued with the study of the Auca language, working with the Auca woman, Dayuma. Many flights have been made over the houses of the Aucas. The first group of houses was found to have been burned, a common Auca practice after a killing, but not far away new houses were discovered, and gifts were dropped to the waiting Indians. When Johnny Keenan

swoops over, "George" appears, jumping and waving the little model plane given him by Nate Saint. "Delilah" also seems to be there with him. Patches of bright yellow fabric from Nate's plane adorn the roofs of some of the houses.

Thousands of people in all parts of the world pray every day that "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" may be carried to the Aucas, a people almost totally unheard of before. How can this be done? God, who led the five, will lead others, in His time and way.

From among the Quichuas with whom Jim, Ed, and Pete worked, several have surrendered their lives to God for His use, to preach to their own people-or even to the Aucas, if He chooses. They have carried on the work begun by the missionaries, speaking to their relatives of Christ, reading the Scriptures that have been translated for them, traveling sometimes in canoes and over muddy trails to teach the Bible to others who do not know its message. A converted Indian, formerly a notorious drinker, came to me one day and said, "Senora, I lie awake at night thinking of my people. `How will I reach them?' I say. 'How will they hear of Jesus?' I cannot get to them all. But they must know. I pray to God, asking Him to show me what to do." In the little prayer meetings the Indians never forget to ask God to bless their enemies: "O God, You know how those Aucas killed our beloved Senor Eduardo, Senor Jaime, and Senor Pedro. O God, You know that it was only because they didn't know You. They didn't know what a great sin it was. They didn't understand why the white men had come. Send some more messengers, and give the Aucas, instead of fierce hearts, soft hearts. Stick their hearts, Lord, as with a lance. They stuck

our friends, but You can stick them with Your Word, so that they will listen, and believe."

For the wives and relatives of the five men, the mute longing of their hearts was echoed by words found in Jim Elliot's diary: "I walked out to the hill just now. It is exalting, delicious, to stand embraced by the shadows of a friendly tree with the wind tugging at your coattail and the heavens hailing your heart, to gaze and glory and give oneself again to God-what more could a man ask? Oh, the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth! I care not if I never raise my voice again for Him, if only I may love Him, please Him. Mayhap in mercy He shall give me a host of children that I may lead them through the vast star fields to explore His delicacies whose finger ends set them to burning. But if not, if only I may see Him, touch His garments, and smile into His eyes-ah then, not stars nor children shall matter, only Himself.

"O Jesus, Master and Center and End of all, how long before that Glory is thine which has so long waited Thee? Now there is no thought of Thee among men; then there shall be thought for nothing else. Now other men are praised; then none shall care for any other's merits. Hasten, hasten, Glory of Heaven, take Thy crown, subdue Thy Kingdom, enthrall Thy creatures."

Epilogue

NOVEMBER 1958

Nearly three years have passed since that Sunday afternoon. Today I sit in a tiny leaf-thatched hut on the Tiwanu River, not many miles southwest of "Palm Beach." In another leaf house, just about ten feet away, sit two of the seven men who killed my husband. Gikita, one of the men, has just helped Valerie, who is now three and one-half, roast a plantain. Two of his sons have gone to the forest, shouldering their skillfully-made blowguns in search of meat to feed the fifteen or twenty Auca Indians who are at present in this clearing.

How did this come to be? Only God who made iron swim, who caused the sun to stand still, in whose hand is the breath of every living thing-only this God, who is our God forever and ever, could have done it.

After the death of the five men the pilots of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship continued making gift-drops to the Aucas. Apparent friendliness on their part was unchanged, but we know now that we could never base our judgment of their attitudes on that.

Rachel Saint, sister of Nate, the pilot, patiently keeps on with her study of the Auca language with the help of Dayuma, who came to know the Lord Jesus and began to pray, with thousands of others, for the entrance of the Light to her tribe.

One day in November, 1957, I was at the McCullys' former station, Arajuno, when two Quichua Indians from the Curaray River arrived to tell us that there were two Auca women at their house. I went with them immediately, and there at the Quichua settlement where the rescue party had spent a night, I met

Mankamu and Mintaka. Mintaka was the older of the two women who had come to "Palm Beach."

Later these two women went with me back to Shandia, where I began the study of their language, praying constantly that the Lord would take us into their tribe. His answer came first in a promise which He gave from Nehemiah 9:19 and 24-

"Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud did not fail to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take... Their children went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites, who lived in the land."

When Rachel and Dayuma returned from a visit to the United States, we went to see them, and the three Auca women- united after more than twelve years-started to talk of returning to their people together. This they did, on September 3, 1958. Remaining among them for three weeks, telling them of the kind foreigners they had come to love, the three returned once more to Arajuno where Marj Saint and I were waiting for them. They brought with them seven other Aucas, and an invitation for Rachel and me to come and live with them in the tribe.

Thus, on October 8, 1958, we arrived. The longed-for entrance had been made. The Aucas were friendly and helpful, receiving us as sisters, building us houses, sharing their meat and manioc. They say they killed the men only because they believed them to be cannibals. Basically it was fear that led them to what they now regard as a mistake.

"Thou art worthy ... for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation."

GLOSSARY

(All a's are pronounced halfway between the 'a' in father and the 'a' in cat.)

ARAJUNO a-ra-hoo-no. An abandoned Shell Oil Company base in the eastern jungle. The station where the McCullys worked; also the base from which the rescue party set out.

ATSHUARA at-shwa-ra. A group of Jivaro Indians among whom Roger Youderian established an outstation.

AUCA ow (rhymes with cow)-ka. A group of savage Indians inhabiting the eastern jungle. The word is a Quichua term meaning "savage."

CURARAY coo-ra-rye. The river on which the five missionaries established their "beachhead."

DAYUMA dye-u-ma. An Auca woman who escaped from her tribe several years ago. She furnished Jim Elliot with the data used on the initial contact.

JIVARO he-va-ro. A group of Indians known for their ancient practice of head shrinking, who live in the southeastern jungles of Ecuador.

MACUMA ma-coo-ma. Home base of the Youderians. A jungle station among the Jivaros.

PUYUPUNGU pu-yu-pungu (all four u's are long). Outstation opened by the Elliots; later the home of the Flemings.

QUICHUA keech-wa. Any of a number of groups of Indians in Ecuador who were conquered by the Incas. Also the language spoken by these people now (it was forced on them by the conquerors). This is the Ecuadorian spelling of Kechua, or Quechua. In this book, Quichua refers to the Lowland Quichuasthose who live in the eastern forests, among whom Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, and Pete Fleming worked.

QUITO key-toe. The capital of Ecuador.

SHANDIA shan-dya. The station where Peter Fleming and Jim Elliot worked when they first went into the forest. The McCullys lived here for a time, and later only the Elliots.

SHELL MERA shell-meh-ra. The base of operations of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship in Ecuador, at the edge of the jungle. It is accessible by road from Quito. Home of the Saint family.