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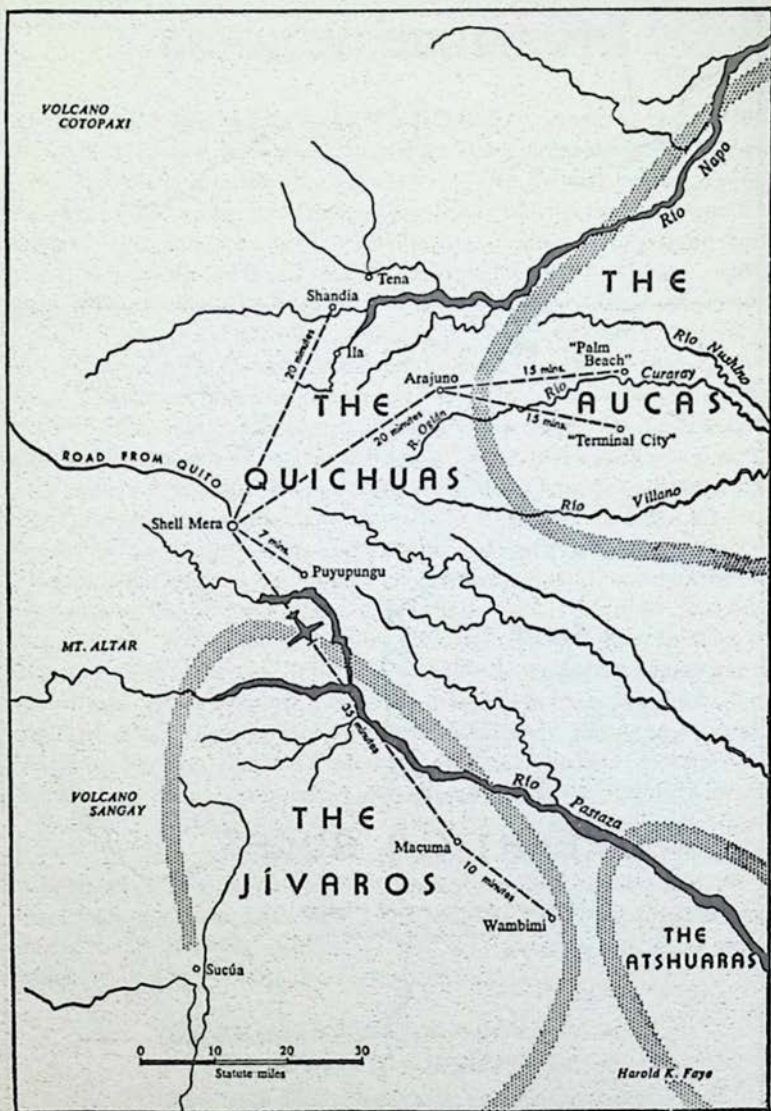
Through Gates of Splendor

Five missionaries gave their lives in the jungles
of Ecuador and made headlines around the world.

ELISABETH ELLIOT

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VOLCANO
COTOPAXI

THE

THE

THE

QUICHUAS

THE

JÍVAROS

THE
ATSHUARAS

ROAD FROM QUITO

MT. ALTAR

VOLCANO
SANGAY

0 10 20 30
Statute miles

Harold K. Faye

CHAPTER I

"I Dare Not Stay Home"



The *Santa Juana* is under way. White stars breaking through a high mist. Half moon. The deep burn of phosphorus running in the wake. Long, easy rolling and the push of steady wind."

It was hot in the little cabin of the freighter. Jim Elliot, who was later to become my husband, was writing in the old cloth-covered ledger he used for a diary. It was a night in February, 1952. Pete Fleming, Jim's fellow missionary, sat at a second desk. Jim continued:

"All the thrill of boyhood dreams came on me just now outside, watching the sky die in the sea on every side. I wanted to sail when I was in grammar school, and well remember memorizing the names of the sails from the Merriam-Webster's ponderous dictionary in the library. Now I am actually at sea—as a passenger, of course, but at sea nevertheless—and bound for Ecuador. Strange—or is it?—that childish hopes should be answered in the will of God for this *now*?

"We left our moorings at the Outer Harbor Dock, San Pedro, California, at 2:06 today. Mom and Dad stood together watching at the pier side. As we slipped away Psalm 60:12 came to mind, and I called back, 'Through our God we shall do valiantly.' They wept some. I do

not understand how God has made me. Joy, sheer joy, and thanksgiving fill and encompass me. I can scarcely keep from turning to Pete and saying, 'Brother, this is great!' or 'We never had it so good.' God has done and is doing all I ever desired, much more than I ever asked. Praise, praise to the God of Heaven, and to His Son Jesus. Because He hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' I may boldly say, 'I will not fear. . . .'"

Jim Elliot laid down his pen. He was a young man of twenty-five, tall and broad-chested, with thick brown hair and blue-gray eyes. He was bound for Ecuador—the answer to years of prayer for God's guidance concerning his lifework. Some had thought it strange that a young man with his opportunities for success should choose to spend his life in the jungles among primitive people. Jim's answer, found in his diary, had been written a year before:

"My going to Ecuador is God's counsel, as is my leaving Betty, and my refusal to be counseled by all who insist I should stay and stir up the believers in the U.S. And how do I know it is His counsel? 'Yea, my heart instructeth me in the night seasons.' Oh, how good! For I have known my heart is speaking to me for God! . . . No visions, no voices, but the counsel of a heart which desires God."

Jim's mood of the moment was felt by Pete. Pete was shorter than Jim with a high forehead and dark wavy hair. The two had learned to understand and appreciate each other long before, and their going to Ecuador together was, to them, one of the "extras" that God threw in. Pete, too, had met with raised eyebrows and polite questions when he made it known that he was going to Ecuador. An M.A. in literature, Pete was expected to become a college professor or Bible teacher. But to throw away his life among ignorant savages—it was thought absurd.

Only a year or two before, the problems of Ecuador, on the northwest bulge of South America, had seemed remote. The two young men had talked with several missionaries who had been there, who described the enormous problems of transportation, education, and development of resources. Missionary work had done

much to help the country bridge the cultural span of a millennium between primitive jungles and modern cities. But progress was pitifully slow. Evangelicals had been working among the head-shrinking Jivaros for twenty-five years, among the Quichuas of the high Andes, and among the red-painted Colorados of the western forest. The Cayapas of the northwestern river region had also been reached with the Gospel, and advances were soon to be made into the Cofan tribe of the Colombian border.

But there remained a group of tribes that had consistently repelled every advance made by the white man: the Aucas. They are an isolated, unconquered, seminomadic remnant of age-old jungle Indians. Over the years, information about the Aucas has seeped out of the jungle: through adventurers, through owners of haciendas, through captured Aucas, through missionaries who have spoken with captured Aucas or Aucas who have had to flee from killings within the tribe. Whatever Jim and Pete had been able to learn about them was eagerly recorded, so that by now the very name thrilled their young blood. Would they someday be permitted to have part in winning the Aucas for Christ?

They were aware that the first missionary to have entered Auca territory—Pedro Suarez, a Jesuit priest—had been murdered by spears in an isolated station near the confluence of the Napo and Curaray. That was in 1667. His murderers were Indians who might have been the ancestors of some present-day Aucas. For about two hundred years after this the Indians had been left in peace by the white man. Then the coming of rubber hunters wrote a dark page in the history of this jungle area. For some fifty years—from about 1875 to 1925—these men roamed the jungles, plundering and burning the Indian homes, raping, torturing, and enslaving the people. It was a time when the concept of "lesser breeds without the law" was almost universally accepted. For the Aucas to have no love for the white man was understandable. Could Christian love wipe out the memories of past treachery and brutality? This was a challenge to Jim and Pete as they hoped to bring the message of God's love and salvation

to these primitive people. It was a challenge and leading for which they had both been prepared since childhood.

God *had* led Jim—since boyhood, when, in his home in Portland, Oregon, he learned that the Book of all books is the Bible, and that to follow its teaching is not necessarily to live a cloistered, dull life. Now as he sat in his cabin on shipboard his mind went back to his family house on a hillside facing snow-covered Mt. Hood. Jim's father, a red-haired, iron-jawed Scotsman, would gather his four children each morning after breakfast and read to them out of the Bible, trying always to show them that this Book was to be lived, and that the life it depicted was a happy and rewarding one. The children would squirm in their seats in the little breakfast nook, but some of the truths sank in, and Jim, third of the Elliot sons, soon received Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

When he entered high school, Jim, following the example of the Apostle Paul, was "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." A Bible always rested on top of his stack of textbooks when he entered the classroom. Academically his early interest was in architectural drawing. His talent in this was exceptional, and his drawings were kept by the teacher to be used as examples to future classes. Before finishing Benson Polytechnic School, however, he began orienting his life toward the mission field.

While at Wheaton College in Illinois, Jim limited his extracurricular activities, fearing that he might become occupied in non-essentials and miss the essentials of life. He refused requests that he run for several offices on the campus. He did, however, go out for wrestling, explaining his choice in a letter to his mother:

"I wrestle solely for the strength and co-ordination of muscle tone that the body receives while working out, with the ultimate end that of presenting a more useful body as a living sacrifice. This God knows, and even though He chose to allow it to be strained, the motive was for His glory and the faith He honors. Simplicity of heart and freedom from anxiety He expects of us, and gives grace to have both."

During his sophomore year in college Jim came to the conclu-

sion that God wanted him in a Latin-American country, preaching the Gospel to those who had never heard it. This decision was immediately followed by action; he began the informal study of Spanish. He chose Greek as his major, preparatory to translating the Bible into some unwritten language. His professors remember the vigor, if not always the accuracy, with which he translated some of the ancient classics—Xenophon, Thucydides, patristic literature. It was a thrill to him to read for the first time in Greek the old stories of the New Testament, so familiar in English.

"Today I read the story of the Cross in John 19 for the first time in the original," he wrote to his parents. "The simplicity and pathos made me almost weep; something which has never occurred in my English reading. Surely it is a wonderful story of love."

In November, 1947, Jim wrote a letter to his parents which showed where his ambition lay: "The Lord has given me a hunger for righteousness and piety that can alone be of Himself. Such hungering He alone can satisfy, yet Satan would delude and cast up all sorts of other baubles, social life, a name renowned, a position of importance, scholastic attainment. What are these but the objects of the 'desire of the Gentiles' whose cravings are warped and perverted. Surely they can mean nothing to the soul who has seen the beauty of Jesus Christ. . . . No doubt you will hear of my receiving preliminary honors at school. They carry the same brand and will lie not long hence in the basement in a battered trunk beside the special gold 'B' pin, with the 'ruby' in it for which I studied four years at Benson. All is vanity below the sun and a 'striving after wind.' Life is not here, but hid above with Christ in God, and therein I rejoice and sing as I think on such exaltation."

Jim and my brother, Dave Howard, were both members of the class of 1949 at Wheaton, but although I was also at Wheaton, I had not met Jim until Christmas, 1947, when Dave brought him home with us for the holidays. I smiled later when I learned Jim had written his parents about "a tall, lean girl, far from beautiful, but with a queer personality-drive that interests me."

His junior year at college completed, Jim wrote to his parents: "Seems impossible that I am so near my senior year at this place, and truthfully, it hasn't the glow about it that I rather expected. There is no such thing as attainment in this life; as soon as one arrives at a long-coveted position he only jacks up his desire another notch or so and looks for higher achievement—a process which is ultimately suspended by the intervention of death. Life is truly likened to a rising vapor, coiling, evanescent, shifting. May the Lord teach us what it means to live in terms of the end, like Paul who said, 'Neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish my course with joy. . . .'"

During that summer, after preaching to a group of Indians on a reservation, Jim wrote: "Glad to get the opportunity to preach the Gospel of the matchless grace of our God to stoical, pagan Indians. I only hope that He will let me preach to those who have never heard that name Jesus. What else is worth while in this life? I have heard of nothing better. 'Lord, send me!'"

In his diary of the summer he wrote: "'He makes His ministers a flame of fire.' Am I ignitable? God deliver me from the dread asbestos of 'other things.' Saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be a flame. But flame is transient, often short-lived. Canst thou bear this, my soul— short life? In me there dwells the Spirit of the Great Short-Lived, whose zeal for God's house consumed Him. 'Make me Thy Fuel, Flame of God.'"

The man who wrote these words was no recluse. He was an American college senior, school-champion wrestler, consistent honor student, president of the Student Foreign Missions Fellowship, amateur poet, and class representative on the Student Council. Jim was warmly admired by fellow students. He was known as "one of the most surprising characters" on campus. Able to recite such poems as "The Face on the Barroom Floor" and Robert Service's "The Cremation of Sam McGee," he was at the same time recognized as a man of spiritual stature above his classmates. George Macdonald said, "It is the heart that is not yet sure of its God that is afraid to laugh in His presence." Jim spoke of "joking with God." "Every now and

again," he said, "I ask for something—a little thing, perhaps, and something answers. Maybe it's only me, but something answers, and makes the request sound so funny that I laugh at myself and feel that He is smiling with me. I've noticed it several times lately, we two making fun of my 'other self' who does so hate to be laughed at!"

Sure that he belonged to God by faith in His Son Jesus Christ, Jim was equally sure that the God who had redeemed him would also guide him. "I am as sure of His direction as I am of His salvation," he used to say. During his senior year a large convention was held at the University of Illinois for students who were interested in foreign missionary work. Jim attended and asked God to show him what He wanted him to do.

At the end of the convention he wrote: "The Lord has done what I wanted Him to do this week. I wanted, primarily, peace about going into pioneer Indian work. And as I analyze my feelings now, I feel quite at ease about saying that tribal work in South American jungles is the general direction of my missionary purpose. One more thing: I am quite confident that God wants me to begin jungle work single. Those are good-sized issues to get settled finally in a week, but just now I am happy about them."

Toward the end of the summer of 1950, Jim's "general direction" became specific. He met a former missionary from Ecuador who told him of the needs in that field, and mentioned the great challenge of the dread Aucas. This was the climax to several years of seeking direction from God. Jim devoted ten days largely to prayer to make sure that this was indeed what God intended for him. He was given new assurance, and wrote to his parents of his intention to go to Ecuador. Understandably, they, with others who knew Jim well, wondered if perhaps his ministry might not be more effective in the United States, where so many know so little of the Bible's real message. He replied:

"I dare not stay home while Quichuas perish. What if the well-filled church in the homeland needs stirring? They have the Scriptures Moses, and the prophets, and a whole lot more. Their condem-

nation is written on their bank books and in the dust on their Bible covers."

This feeling is reflected in his diary account of Gospel meetings that he and his college pal Ed McCully conducted in southern Illinois: "Sterile days. Have had thirty-two nights of 'Youth Rallies' in Sparta, with fifty or sixty out in the public school gymnasium. There is little interest, and very few young people are reached in this way, I'm beginning to see. This problem of meeting a culture with truth from God is the most difficult kind of thing. One comes as a renovator, a conditioner of society, and society is in no mood to be conditioned. The fixedness of the human mind is the 'wall of Jericho' to Gospel preaching. *God* must shake, or there will be no shaking.

"There has been a sense of discouragement and doubt come over me through this. . . . There is a strong pull to the philosophy that 'chaos created this lump of clay in his own image'—and to let fall the whole gamut of theological arguments. Again, I'm held by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Were it not that I believed that Jesus was seen of men and proved Himself to be supernatural in outwitting death, I would throw the whole system back to the troubled skies and take a raft down the Mississippi today. But the fact is founding, settling, establishing. It holds as nothing else, and gives the sense that there *are* answers, not yet discovered, for which I must wait."

It was typical of Jim that, once sure of God's leading, he did not turn aside easily. The "leading" was to Ecuador, so every thought and action was bent in that direction. Jim practiced what he preached when he wrote in his diary: "Wherever you are, *be all there*. Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God."

Jim had been praying for some time that God would give him a comrade with whom to go to the mission field, a single man ready to enter tribal work with him. For a while he thought that it might be Ed McCully, but when Ed married in June, 1951, Jim began to pray for another. In August he saw an old friend, Pete Fleming, who had just obtained his master's degree and was at that time seeking God's direction for his lifework. Jim later wrote to him:

"I would certainly be glad if God persuaded you to go with me, but if the Harvest-Chief does not move you, I hope you remain at home. To me, Ecuador is an avenue of obedience to the simple word of Christ. There is room for me there, and I am free to go. Of this I am sure. He *will* lead you too, and not let you miss your signs. The sound of 'gentle stillness' after the thunder and wind have passed will be the ultimate word from God. Tarry long for it. Remember the words of Amy Carmichael: 'The vows of God are on me. I may not stay to play with shadows or pluck earthly flowers, till I my work have done and rendered up account.' "

Jim's hopes were to be fulfilled when he and Pete set sail from San Pedro in 1952.

Their paths had crossed when groups of young people interested in studying the Bible had gotten together from Seattle and Portland for conferences and mountain-climbing expeditions.

Pete had once gone east to join Jim Elliot in a series of speaking engagements at religious conferences and other meetings. Six weeks of traveling together brought them into a deeper comradeship than they had known before. Driving back across the country to the northwest, Jim wrote:

"Pete is a most engaging traveling partner, interested in all the things that I notice—geology, botany, history, and the sky and all the good things God has scattered through the west in such extravagant variation."



Pete, who was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1928, early learned to appreciate the Bible and to hold it as his supreme rule of life and conduct. Those who knew him in his late teens and early twenties were impressed by his intelligent grasp of Scripture, and by the breadth of his spiritual knowledge. Converted at the age of thirteen after hearing the testimony of a blind evangelist, Pete, like Enoch, "walked with God" in a way that set him apart in the eyes of

fellow high school students. He earned his letters in basketball and golf, and the members of the letter club asked him to be their chaplain. In his valedictory speech at graduation he said: "Where shall we look? Where shall we go? I believe that we have a right to go back to the Bible for our anchorage. Here we have a recognized foundation . . . let us build upon it."

This conviction stood Pete in good stead when, in the fall of 1946, he entered the University of Washington as a philosophy major. He was a man with a critical mind, and the study of philosophy challenged him to re-examine his whole view of life and of the world around him. For a while he almost foundered on the shoals of conflicting thought, but at last the God to whom he had long since "committed the keeping of his soul" brought him back to the harbor of truth, His eternal Word.

Pete worked part time, studied hard, and was president of the University Christian Fellowship. He was a man who drove himself, yet in his busy schedule he took time for prayer and study of the Bible. In 1951 he received a master's degree, his thesis being on Melville's *The Confidence Man*.

In the meantime, having seen and corresponded with Jim, he reached a decision about his lifework. He surprised his friends by announcing that he believed God was calling him to Ecuador.

"I think a 'call' to the mission field is no different from any other means of guidance," he once wrote to his fiancée, Olive Ainslie. "A call is nothing more nor less than obedience to the will of God, as God presses it home to the soul by whatever means He chooses."

He had known Olive since childhood; the two of them had attended the same worship group on Sundays. When he responded to God's call to Ecuador, however, he went with the intention of serving Him without the responsibilities of home life—at least for the first year or so.

On September 6, 1951, he wrote to Dr. Wilfred Tidmarsh, an English missionary with twelve years' service in the Ecuadorian jungle, who had addressed many Christian groups in the States:

"Since your visit I have been very much in prayer about going to Ecuador. In fact, I have never prayed so much before the Lord about anything. Jim and I have exchanged several letters in which I told him of the increased desire to go forth, and of the Scriptures which God seemingly had brought to mind to confirm it. My thinking, both in and outside of the Scriptures, was directed toward the stringency of Christ's words to His disciples, when he sent them forth: 'I send you forth as sheep among wolves. . . .' 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. . . .' 'He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me. . . .' 'He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.' It has seemed that the severe requirements of a difficult field like Ecuador are matched on a spiritual level by the severe requirements placed on real disciples. Ecuador, as it seems, is a God-given opportunity to place God's principles and promises to the extreme test.

"This door seems to be opening at a time when I was looking to the Lord regarding the future, and thus is the Lord's answer to my prayers."

On the verge of his sailing from the States, Pete said to one of his college friends: "Remember the last few verses of I Corinthians 3: 'For *all things* are yours . . . and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.' Throughout all our personality we are God's, and since God has made our whole selves, there is great joy in realizing who is our Creator. This realization is to permeate every area and level of life. In appreciation of beauty, mountains, music, poetry, knowledge, people, science—even in the tang of an apple—God is there, to reflect the joy of His presence in the believer who will realize God's purposes in *all things*."

CHAPTER II

Destination: Shandia



After eighteen days at sea Jim Elliot and Pete Fleming arrived in Guayaquil, Ecuador. "About half-way up the Guayas River," wrote Pete, "I finally comprehended that this, *this* was Ecuador. I felt a tingling sensation for the first time. Jim and I sang quietly, 'Faith of our Fathers,' as the boat pulled into the harbor:

*"Faith of our Fathers, holy faith
We will be true to thee till death."*

Leaving the ship, the two young men made their way through the stacks of baggage out into the hot sunlight on the Malacon, the parkway beside the Guayas River. The tide was coming in, and out in the center of the current, great masses of water hyacinths rode swiftly upriver. A gleaming white fruit ship stood at anchor, and beside it crowded the barges and long slim dugout canoes of banana vendors. A ferry was disgorging its sweating, shouting multitudes, with their straw suitcases, cloth bundles, chickens, and baskets. Jim and Pete stopped to watch the faces until the crowd dissipated in all directions; then they turned and crossed the street. Portals over the sidewalk

shaded them from the tropical sun, and they gazed at the store windows with their astonishingly heterogeneous displays: sweaters and typewriters, frying pans and automobile tires, fake shrunken heads from the Jivaro Indians, and Camay soap. In one side street, cocoa beans were spread out like a nubbly red-brown carpet to dry in the sun. Businessmen, dressed in crisp white suits and Panama hats, were coming out of the buildings for their two-hour lunch break. Cadillacs and donkeys, nudging each other for the right of way, epitomized this land of contrasts.

With a growing population of over three hundred thousand, Guayaquil is the country's largest and most modern city, with wide streets and imposing office buildings. The streets are crowded, as owners, managers, and clerks from the various importing and exporting firms bustle about their business. Guayaquil is the banana capital of the world, and also from here, since World War II, more than three million bags of coffee, some seventy million pounds of cocoa, and more than three hundred million pounds of rice have annually been loaded for the export market. An air of prosperity prevails, production is constantly rising, and this port city serves as the country's trade barometer.

Pete and Jim spent their first night in a third-class hotel. Heat, mosquitoes, the occasional bray of a burro, and the Latin rhythm of a dance band nearby made the night a memorable one. The next day they took a plane to Quito, traveling up over the western cordillera of the Andes, crossing a 13,000-foot pass, and landing in the capital of Ecuador. Quito is 9,300 feet above sea level, and to the west rises the volcanic mountain Pichincha.

Here was a new opportunity to "live to the hilt." This old-world city, with its adobe houses, high mud walls, cobblestone streets, ornate churches, with its red geraniums and eucalyptus trees, was to be their home for the next six months. For before they could get to the Oriente—the eastern jungle area of Ecuador, goal of their tireless preparation and planning—there remained this last requirement, the learning of Spanish, the national language of Ecuador.

They signed up for Spanish lessons with a *señorita* who expected

nothing short of perfection, and they also engaged a room in the home of an Ecuadorian doctor who had five children. Here was an unparalleled opportunity for practice. They were forced to speak Spanish, and the children were quite uninhibited in pointing out the mistakes and peculiarities of their guests.

"Señor Jaime," said little Moquetin, a bright-eyed imp of six, "why is it that your face is always red?" Jim countered, "Why is it that *your* face is always brown?" "Because it is much prettier that way," was the unexpected reply.

"Language is a tyranny of frustration," Pete once said. But learn it they must. During those months of study Pete wrote in his diary: "I am longing now to reach the AUCAS if God gives me the honor of proclaiming the Name among them. . . . I would gladly give my life for that tribe if only to see an assembly of those proud, clever, smart people gathering around a table to honor the Son—gladly, gladly, gladly! What more could be given to a life?"

"These almost six months have been crammed full of goodness and God has given us special privileges by way of having not set responsibilities, of giving us the money and the freedom to live with a national family and undoubtedly we have learned things that will stand us in good stead all our missionary lives. And it has been a terrific boon; praying together and seeing God give us faith, getting more and more from the Spanish Bible, gradually finding Spanish easier and getting useful phrases fixed in my mind so I didn't have to think out every one. It has all been good and we have learned things; how to cope with situations and how to keep our mouths shut on some subjects, how to get along with the nationals, what their perspective on missionaries is. . . . God is going to give us Spanish by one means or another, and Quichua as well."

Finally the day came when Jim and Pete were to leave Quito. They saw their gear thrown up on top of a fat, ungainly vehicle that served as a bus. An American truck bed had been surmounted by an amazing superstructure that protruded on both sides accommodating perhaps thirty or more passengers inside, and as many as dared

cling on the outside. Squeezing themselves and their cameras, hallmark of the missionary as well as of the tourist, in among the other riders, they each found a seat—a board perhaps ten inches wide, with as much room again for the legs, between it and the next seat. They were fortunate indeed to be in a bus with an aisle, for in some vehicles passengers cheerfully clamber over the backs of the seats to their places. And they were able to sit up straight and still see out of the low windows. To have one's knees close to one's chin is not the most comfortable position, but then, they could take turns sitting by the aisle to stretch their legs.

"*Vamos!*" called the driver. Jim and Pete rejoiced that the bus was going to start on schedule. But no such luck this time—for this is the land of *mañana*. Everywhere there are unexplained delays, and perhaps the most trying thing of all to an outsider is the fact that no one seems to be the least interested in giving an explanation. No questions are asked. Silence. In this case, the delay lasted only ten minutes or so; and, without warning, the driver gunned his motor and the bus lurched to a start.

Leaving the city, the bus climbed up over the paramo, where a cold drizzle added to the bleakness of great stretches of brown grass. An occasional Indian galloped by on horseback, red wool poncho flying in the strong wind. A woman dressed in a heavy wool skirt and embroidered blouse passed at a dog trot, the usual gait of the Indian of the high Andes. Her baby, dressed exactly as she was, complete with fedora, joggled in a cloth on her back. The mother's hands moved nimbly, spinning wool on a spindle.

At 12,000 feet the men could see the small grass huts of the highland Quichuas. They eke out a living herding cattle and sheep, growing potatoes and certain grains. This scene was soon replaced by the arid territory surrounding Ambato, the city of the earthquake of 1949, and the "gateway to the Oriente." Here the bus stopped, and was immediately besieged by women with their trays of fried pork, meat pies, glasses of fruit drink, or slices of pineapple piled into an enamel basin. Each called her wares in a peculiar singsong.

The trip was resumed once more, with the bus climbing up between lofty, snow-clad peaks, then tipping forward to swoop down in dizzy, hairpin turns into the vast gorge cut by the Pastaza River through the eastern cordillera of the Andes, past the cone-shaped Tungurahua, an extinct volcano. With startling suddenness the desert of the western slope and the high mountain pass were replaced by lush greenness on the breathtaking eastern descent. Purple orchids nodded out over the road as the bus swayed and jerked along the narrow shelf of road, a precipice on the right, a steep wall of rock shouldering up on the left. Toward late afternoon the bus rounded another curve, and the Pastaza spread itself out before them, flowing in broad ribbons over black beaches. This was the western extreme of the mighty Amazon basin, which terminates three thousand miles to the east, as the river empties into the Atlantic Ocean. Another little town or two, and Shell Mera was reached. A former base of the Shell Oil Company for prospecting operations in the area, it is now an unpretentious huddle of dilapidated wooden buildings; houses, a hotel, and stores on one side of the road, and an army base and mission-sponsored Bible school on the other.

The Ecuador base of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship was at the southern end of town. Here Jim and Pete met Dr. Tidmarsh, the missionary with whom they had corresponded before coming to Ecuador. And with him they were soon flying north from Shell Mera, over the green sea of jungle, following the Ansuc River toward the Atun Yaku, headwaters of the Napo.

They were headed for Shandia, the Quichua mission station which Dr. Tidmarsh had had to abandon because of his wife's health. They planned to reopen the station, Dr. Tidmarsh staying till they could get established. Shandia did not at this time have an airstrip, so the three flew to another station nearby. Here they landed and set out on foot through the jungle. It was late in the afternoon when they started, and knowing that it was normally a three-hour hike, they raced against the sudden tropical twilight. Slipping on grassy roots, stumbling and struggling through deep mud at times, they pressed

eagerly on to the place that would be their home for months to come. They were full of anticipation for what lay ahead, but at the same time they drank in the beauties of the great Amazon rain forest through which they passed.

It was virgin jungle. Trees with buttress-shaped roots grew to tremendous heights, often with no branches except at the top. Under these umbrellas an incredible variety of flora thrives. It was often impossible for Jim and Pete to distinguish the leaves which belong properly to the trees, for the huge tangle of lianas, air plants, and fungus that sponge a living from them. Orchids everywhere lent their soft colors to the living green. Fungus grew in vivid colors and bizarre shapes—vermilion, shaped like the ruffle on a lady's dress; turquoise, shaped like a shell, half hidden under a rotten log.

Just as the moon rose over the forest, the three men burst into the clearing that was Shandia.

"Indians immediately gathered around," wrote Pete, "and I remembered a couple of faces from Tidmarsh's pictures, and felt a kind of pride in remembering. My first thought was, 'Yes, I can love these people.' The ink-colored designs on the women's faces interested me and the pitiful drape of the faded blue skirts. Lots of children were about, smiling shyly. Babies sucked on big, tremulous breasts, and the young, eager faces of boys looked up at us. Heard Tidmarsh's first conversation in Quichua; wondered how I would ever learn it."

At the same time Jim wrote: "We have arrived at the destination decided on in 1950. My joy is full. Oh, how blind it would have been to reject the leading of these days. How it has changed the course of life for me and added such a host of joys!"

At the far end of the clearing stood the small thatched house in which Dr. Tidmarsh had lived. It was walled with split bamboo, floored with boards, and set on posts to insure circulation of air and to give protection from both the damp ground and the invasion of insects.

"At my first glance the house looked spacious and comfortable,"

Pete wrote in his diary, "and I thought how easily Olive and I could live in such a set-up, feeling joy in the knowledge and anticipation. Afterwards we got cleaned up a bit, washed our muddy feet in the ice-cold Napo, took a look around, and settled down to a meal of rice soup, plantain, manioc, and rice, with coffee. Now by the light of the kerosene lamp I am writing on the dining room table . . . tired but full of thankfulness to the Father, who leads on. In reality, this is not an end but a beginning."

CHAPTER III

“All Things to All Men”



In Shandia, Jim and Pete became full-fledged missionaries for the first time. They had come to reach the Quichuas with the Word of God, a task for which they were prepared but could accomplish only if they gained the Quichuas' confidence and love. So by living among them, sharing in their lives and thus laying the foundations of mutual trust they hoped to open the minds and hearts of the Indians to the Christian message. And Jim and Pete knew that whatever knowledge they gained from their experiences among the Quichuas would prepare them for work among other tribes further removed from today's civilization.

The two young missionaries learned quickly that the Quichuas hunt a little, farm a little, and work occasionally for a neighboring hacienda owner. They are subject to a variety of diseases and debilitating intestinal parasites. They are caught between two cultures—the disappearing one of the forebears and the rising white man's world of today. They are a gentle people, unlike their neighbors to the south, the headhunting Jivaros, and to the northeast the feared Aucas. Every facet of the lives, health, language, education, birth, and death of the Indians was of immediate interest to Jim and Pete.

Night after night they sat in their little hut, listening to the jungle tuning up its nocturnal orchestra, and recording their experiences in diaries and letters. Moths and flies swarmed against the lantern, dropping to the paper and clogging penpoints. Great beetles zoomed at their faces, which glistened with sweat from the heat of the lamp. Every evening they were surrounded by a circle of dark, laughing faces—schoolboys who came in to watch whatever the missionaries might be doing.

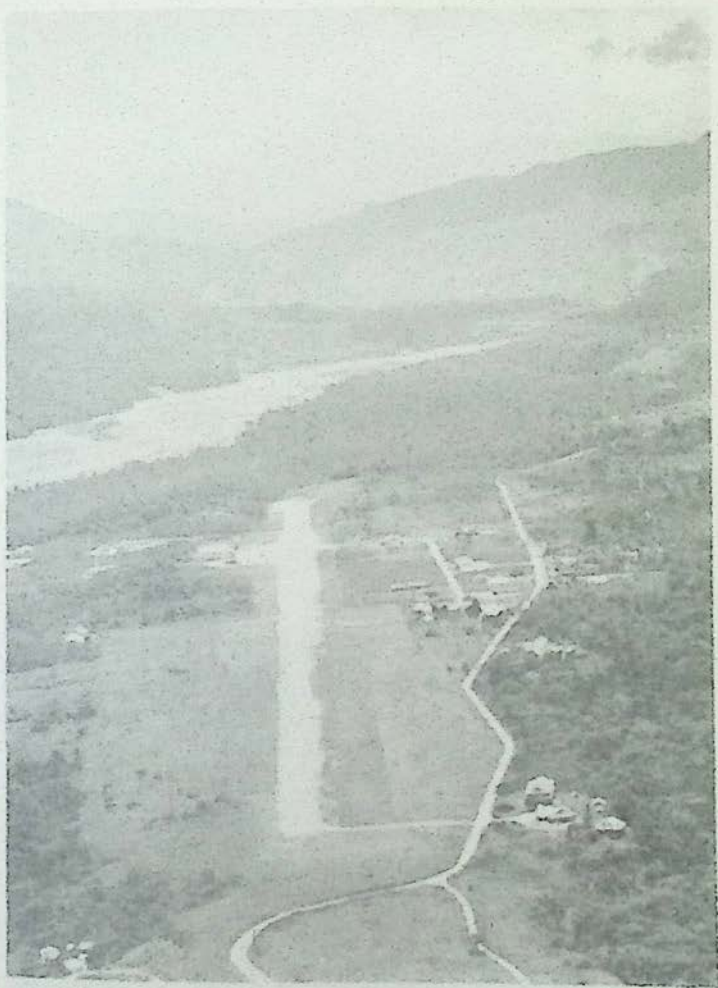
"Don't white people ever get tired of paper?" said one to Dr. Tidmarsh in Quichua. "These two, all they do is look at paper and write on paper. My father says white men smell like paper. He gets mad at me for smelling like paper when I come home from school."

Pete Fleming smiled as Dr. Tidmarsh translated. How was a man to concentrate for five minutes? But then—he loved these Quichua boys. This is what he had bargained for—this is why he had renounced the solitude and silence for study, which had been his pleasure before.



I was by this time in the western jungle of Ecuador, and Jim kept in touch with me as frequently as jungle mail service would permit. Soon after he reached Shandia he wrote: "Days begin at 6 A.M. with the swooshing of the gas stove on which Dr. Tidmarsh heats his shaving water. The box we use for a wash stand sits on the corner of the front porch, and the drain is over the wall, where you aim the basin at a ditch which runs right around the house. Breakfast, usually consisting of a bowl or two of banana soup or ground corn, a fresh banana and a cup of coffee, has so far been interrupted at 7:15 each morning to make radio contact with the other mission stations of the region. At meal-time we speak only in Spanish. Breakfast is followed by a reading of Daniel in Spanish, and morning prayer.

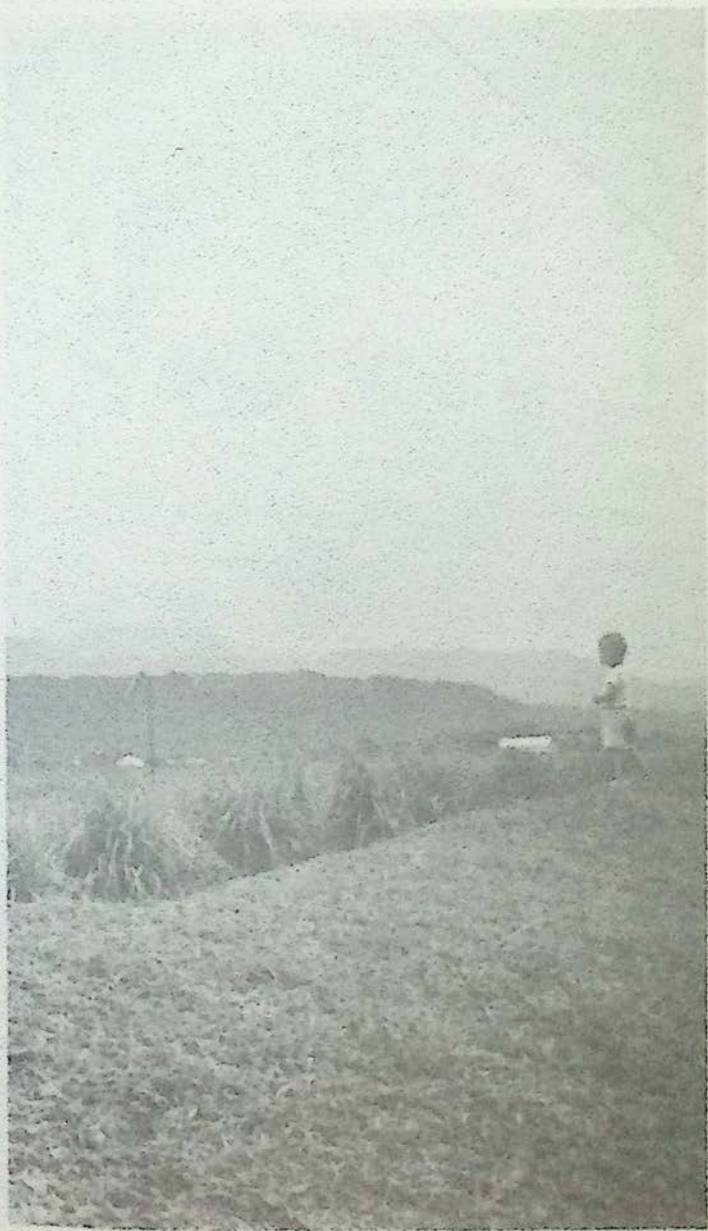
"So far my mornings have been consumed in watching the doctor do medical work, studying, or making some gadget to bring things



Airstrip at Shell Mera—home base of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship. *Lower right:* MAF quarters, house occupied by the Saint family, and hangar. *Left:* the Pastaza River. *Top:* foothills of the Andes.

OVERLEAF: With a playmate, five-year-old Stevie Saint (left) watches his father taxi down the runway in the MAF's bright yellow Piper Cruiser after a flight over the danger-filled jungle.







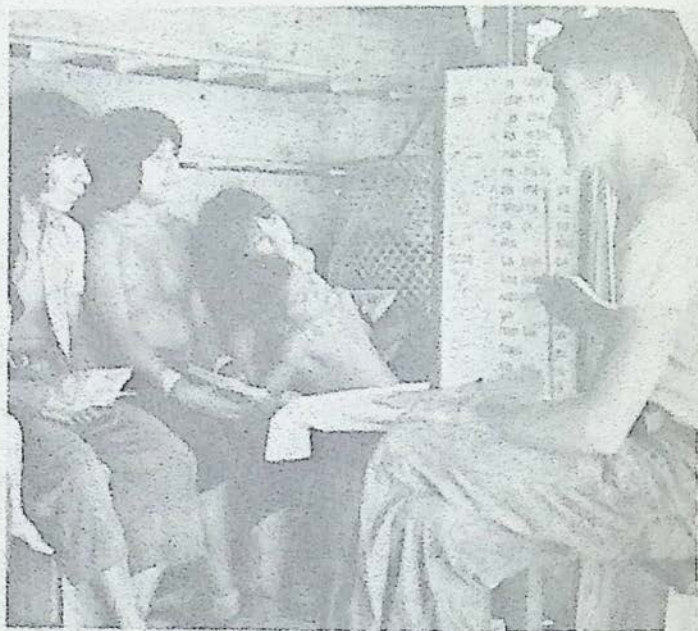


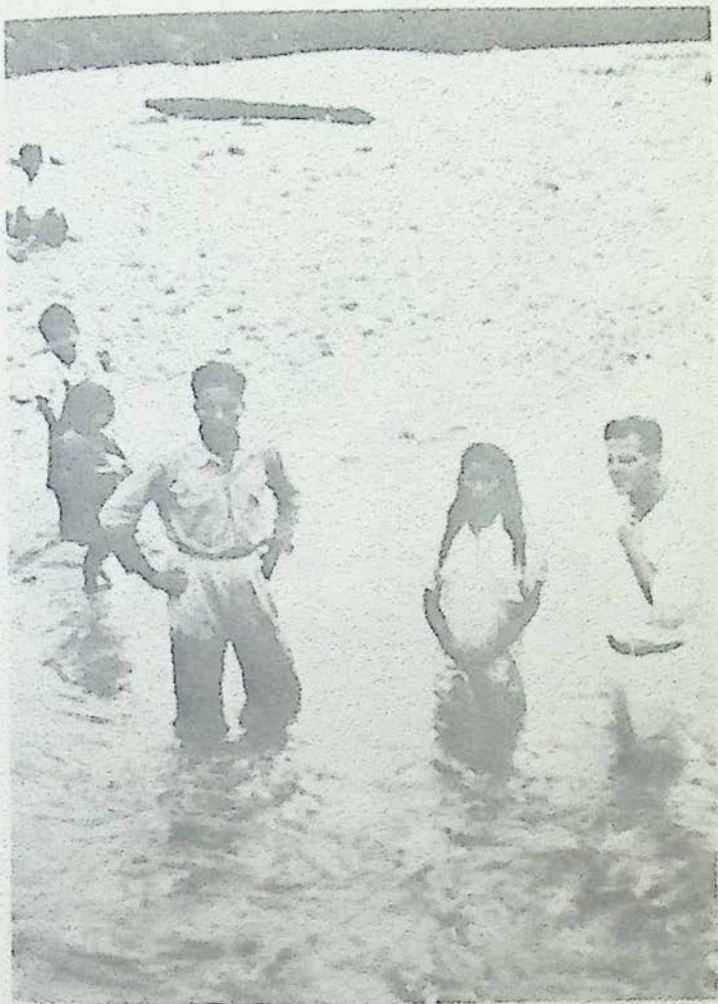
ABOVE: In 1953, long before they were to launch Operation Auca, three of the missionaries made a survey trip down the Bobonaza River. *Left to right:* Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, Jim Elliot. The tame parrot was a gift from friendly Quichuas.

LEFT: This picture of Roger Youderian, and similar pictures of the other missionaries, was dropped to the Aucas to familiarize them with the faces of their sky-borne friends. To aid in the identification, Roger holds a feathered headdress, a gift from the Aucas; in addition, a plane was sketched on the edge of the picture.

RIGHT: Nate Saint, the pilot among the five men, whose development of a bucket-drop system from his plane made possible the interchange of gifts between the missionaries and the Aucas.







TOP LEFT: Roger Youderian, using a language chart developed by the missionaries, teaches Jivaro Indians to read in their own language.

LOWER FAR LEFT: In Puyupungu, Pete Fleming translates the Bible into Quichua for Atanasio, the local chief.

LOWER LEFT: Nate Saint pauses during a welding job at Shell Mera.

ABOVE: Jim Elliot baptizes an Indian woman.

to a little better state for comfort, and interspersed with visits to the airstrip to see if the men are working. Today, as a herd of wild pigs upriver sent most of them scurrying to the hunt, there were only a dozen or so working. They had arrived at that part of the strip which was planted in patches of plantain [a tropical fruit, 'cooking cousin' of the banana] and they were loath to cut them down. I helped them push over the trees to get them started. It's like destroying food to them, and it hurt me a little, too, but there are other plantains and no other airstrips.

"Our room is exceedingly pleasant; a huge window looks out on a beautiful view. Door is monk's cloth curtain, between our room and the living room. Two throw rugs and the two aluminum chairs make the place look very civilized and the Indian, Venancio, sweeps it daily to clean out the mud and dead cockroaches."



Old Venancio, a typical Quichua, was Dr. Tidmarsh's right-hand man. He dresses as the white man does, in ordinary pants and shirt, his parents having years ago left the old costume of the Quichuas, the *kushma*. Travel on jungle trails, sometimes in knee-deep mud, makes shoes an absurdity for him, though a few others wear them on special occasions as a sign of prestige. A safety pin adorns a conspicuous spot on the front of his unironed shirt, handy for removing chonta palm thorns from his feet. As he travels the trails, he carries a well-worn machete, which he swings aimlessly at trees. If he comes to a steep or slippery bank, he can cut steps for his toes as he ascends. If a vine hangs in his way, one swipe removes it. His wife Susanna trudges behind him, carrying her baby in a cloth on her side, and a great basket containing cooking pot, chickens, blanket, and plantains. This basket is strapped with a jungle "rope," a strip of bark or a long, fibrous leaf, which is passed around the basket and up over Susanna's forehead. She, too, carries her machete, with which to dig and peel the manioc which is their main diet, trim

Five men entered the jungle
in search of a savage tribe . . .
and never returned.

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At an agreed-upon time, their five young wives sat by their radios, waiting for a message that never came. . . .

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