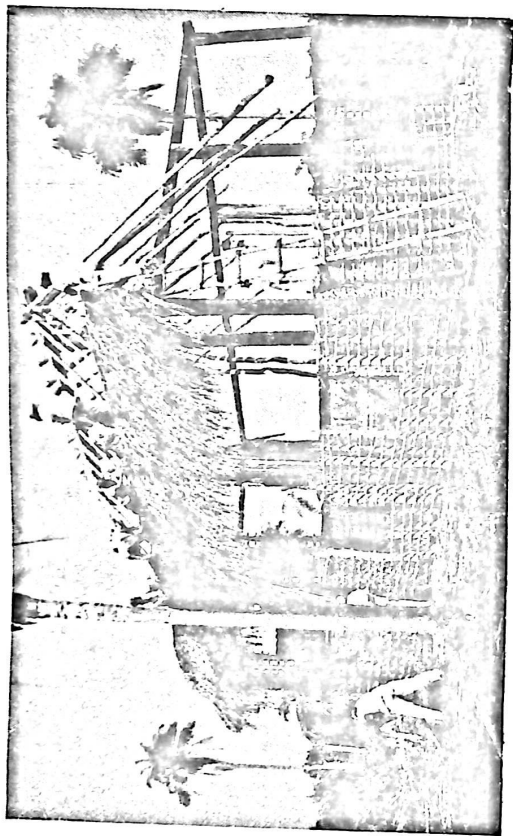


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*Mitchell house under construction in indian village in low jungles of Bolivia.*



## ON THE ROAD TO SAN JOSE

The cattle car was swaying so violently that I was half afraid it might overturn. I looked around at my fellow passengers who were quiet now. Some of them were resting in their hammocks which they had swung across the car, tying their ropes around the evenly spaced 1 x 4's that composed the walls. Others were stretched out on sacks of feed that covered the floor, two deep.

A full, white moon lit the car making the night seem colder than it really was. Dwight was sitting on a sack of feed and resting his head over on old Piloto's cage. I wondered if he was asleep.

The little wood-burning steam engine was about five cars up from us. I could smell the smoke from the burner and hear the pistons slap as they pushed the wheels along. We had reached our top speed of 35 miles an hour. Behind, somewhere, was the boxcar that was half full of our furniture. What an embarrassment it was going to be to pull into San Simon with all that stuff. I wondered what the Indians would think. They could put most everything they owned in a saddle bag.

But the way the train was jolting, I thought there wouldn't be much left but kindling by the time we got to San Jose anyway.

And if that didn't do it, the 235 miles on to San Simon by truck was bound to.

The problems we had encountered even trying to get started toward our future home in San Simon had left Dwight and me practically dead on our feet. We had arrived at the train station early the preceding morning in Santa Cruz, to see if they were going to try to follow their schedule. We had already loaded our furniture into the boxcar and hired a guard to watch it overnight.

*"Claro, traiga su cosas muy rapido."* (Certainly, bring your things quickly.)

As we ran out to flag down a Jeep taxi, the station master shouted for us to be sure and be there by 2:30 as the train would leave at *"tres en punto"* (3:00 sharp).

At 2:15 we were there. Piloto, our dog, who was completely unacquainted with obedience in any form, had fought his leash every step of the way.

The station master peered at me over his granny glasses and said with a bleak smile, "But, *senor*, the train will not leave today, possibly *manana*."

Mary Ann grabbed my arm and counseled, "Now, Jurl, don't get excited."

But I could not accept it.

*"Porque, hombre, porque no se van hoy dia?"* (Why, man, are they not going today?)

*"Porque, senor,"* he was hardly embarrassed at all, "we cannot find the engine."

So on this day I had stationed Mary Ann and Dwight at the home of our fellow missionaries, with instructions that when I sent a taxi for them, they should come with all possible haste. We had built a cage for the canine terror. I told them I would not call them until I knew the train was actually going to go.

At 9:00 the train people said, "We are going at 10:00." I didn't budge.

At 10:00 they said, "We are going at 11:00." I did not call.

At 11:45 an engine backed into the train and coupled up. The station master cut his eyes significantly at me and announced

with enormous sincerity. "This train will leave in 15 minutes."

I sprang to the street, hailed a taxi, and told him to bring the others "*muy rapido*."

At 12:30 the engine gave two greet hoots, signifying something was going to happen. I kissed my wife good-bye. She was going to fly out to San Ignacio on the DC-3 and meet us there. She gave last-minute instructions to Dwight about keeping up with our food she had packed. There was a small lurch and the engine took off . . . without the train! We never saw it again for several hours.

At 4:00 Mary Ann gave out and went to the house. By then there were about 30 of us in the cattle car . . . each with his own idea of what was going on.

At one point another train backed in. Word came that it was the train that was going. Twenty-eight of our bunch grabbed their things and took off. Dwight was watching them through the slats as they boarded the caboose of the new train. We could hear them shouting how comfortable it was.

"Daddy, I think we had better go, too."

"Naw," I said, "they'll be back."

In 30 minutes they were back, whooping and hollering and telling us they didn't see how we foreigners knew more about their trains than they did.

I thought to myself that I wasn't even sure the Lord knew what that train was going to do.

Dwight ambled off up to the engine (it had returned) about 5:00 and asked the engineer where he was going to take our train. He said he wasn't sure just where it was going.

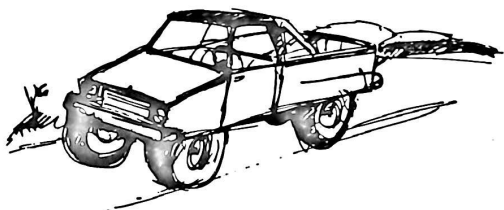
So Dwight asked him when it was going to leave. He replied, "*en una o quatra horas*" (in one or four hours).

Suddenly at 5:30 the train lurched into motion with no warning of any kind — not even a toot. Several passengers were outside on the ground. Dwight was among them. Fortunately they were all men who were able to scramble aboard. If any had been women or feeble, they would have been left behind.

So at last we were on our way to San Jose, stopping often at remote villages to let off passengers or take on cargo. Sometimes we stopped to get a load of wood to fuel the engine.

**And all through the long, cold night, wherever we stopped there would be someone selling coffee, fried fish, or just bread.**

**As the moon began to sink down behind the hills, we rolled into San Jose. It was 5:00 a.m.**



# 2

## ON THE ROAD TO SAN IGNACIO

The train was going on to Curumba from San Jose, so I was worried that the train crew might not set our furniture off on a siding. When I approached the engineer with this concern, he said there was no problem and that I should have confidence in his crew, because they were railroad men who knew their business.

"Yes, I know," I said, "but we did have a few problems back there in Santa Cruz."

"*Claro, pero ya llegamos, no?*" (Sure, but now we are here, aren't we?)

I had to agree that we were indeed "here," but I was not certain that "here" was truly San Jose.

Trusting the train crew to set our car aside, I turned my attention to finding the truck that was to meet us and take our furniture on to San Simon.

Perhaps while we wait for the truck to come, I should tell what we were doing in Bolivia, South America. We were there as missionaries for the Baptist Missionary Association of America. My wife, Mary Ann, our 13-year-old son, Dwight, and I had been living in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, a city of the in-

terior of Bolivia, for about eight months. We had gone there first to learn the rudiments of the Spanish language and to acquaint ourselves with the work to be done.

There were two other missionary families in Bolivia who were connected with the BMAA — the M.S. Arringtons and the Marvin Loyds. During the eight months we spent in Santa Cruz, I had worked with Marvin and M.S. In fact, the field to which we were headed had been located during a trip Marvin and I had taken. The work we three missionaries did together is told about in another book I have written called, *En La Manana*.

After six months with a tutor in language study (we had one hour a day), Mary Ann and I felt we could venture out on our own. We were by no means fluent, but one can get by if he has the nerve and doesn't mind being laughed at. And if you can't bear to be laughed at, you had better not try to learn another language in a foreign country. I have had rude people fall on the ground and howl with glee because of the way I tried to speak Spanish. It takes a lot of patience to keep your cool when that happens, especially when you are dog tired and are only trying to find some food and shelter at the end of a long day.

Well, here's the truck now. I could hardly believe the driver was actually there to meet us. He lived 160 miles away, and that's 160 miles of wilderness. We had to pass through his town, in Ignacio, on our way to San Simon.

The sun was just up good when I approached the station aster about getting our boxcar to a place where we could unload it.

"*Si, senior, se puede a las ocho.*" (Yes, sir, you can at eight.)

Then he changed it to 9:00, then 10:00, and finally 2:00.

About 2:00, a small "pufferbelly" pulled our car up to a dock, and we began to unload it.

Dwight reported each broken piece and each deep gash as he helped hand the furniture out. I said a little peevishly, "Son, I've got eyes; I can see." I was thinking what Mary Ann would say when she saw the remains — and the worst by far was yet to come.

By the time we got it all loaded, it was a full truckload. The weather had warmed up considerably and Miguel, the truck

driver, wanted to wait until dark to start. The sand was so deep in the road for the first twenty-five miles that the truck would overheat if we didn't wait for the day to cool off some.

We had supper in a little cafe while we waited for dark. Dwight got his first experience with the hot pepper test. Nearly every backwoods cafe had a standard table ornament — a dish of peppers so hot that when I once bit into one, I lost my breath, shed tears and could not speak for a while. These peppers are used by the men as a macho test. When they sit down at the table, one will pop a pepper into his mouth and chew it up, then each of the others will do the same. The first who popped will pop another and so on until all have burned out except the champion.

They must have cast iron mouth liners. They said the “*gringos*” mouths were “*muy delicado*” (very delicate). It seemed a strange madness to me, to burn one's mouth up trying to prove manhood.

About 6:00 we pulled out and how that truck did suffer. It was a powerful Nissan with a 4-wheel drive, but it labored along at five to ten miles an hour through sand that dragged it down until the differential made a track in the middle of the road. It took a little over two hours to pull past the sand and then we hit the hills.

Picture a wagon load in the United States a half century ago — a road which wound over boulder-strewn hills and down into sandy river bottoms. There were no bridges over most of the creeks and shallow rivers. Fortunately for us the road was very dry. It was not so fortunate for the inhabitants, however, as they were beginning to move out of their homes because of a lack of water.

About midnight we came up behind a cattle drive. The *vaqueros* were taking the animals to a large river several miles away. The head drover told us if we frightened the cattle they would stampe.

I told Miguel that Dwight and I would be glad to stop and get some sleep, something we had had very little of for a few days. He didn't want to make the *vaqueros* work any harder, so he agreed. We knew the cattle would be to the river by morning.

We stopped dead in the road. Dwight and I pulled his bed down from the truck, threw a mattress on it, threw ourselves on the mattress and fainted dead away. Miguel and his partner swung their hammocks in the nearby trees and soon our camp was quiet.

Sometime before dawn a Power Wagon pulled up behind our truck and stopped. I heard some men talking but drifted back into a deep sleep almost immediately.

It was 7:00 the next morning before I knew anything again. When I raised my head, Miguel, his partner and the two men from the Power Wagon were squatted around the coffee pot on the fire. They were laughing about how old Piloto had growled all night. I hadn't heard him, but I didn't doubt it.

You would have had to know Piloto to appreciate him. He was black as night, with evil yellow eyes and was as big as a police dog. On top of that he was crazy. He loved to fight his fellow dogs, which he could whip by the dozen. The only dog he couldn't whip was a bigger and stronger one which Marvin Loyd owned. But in spite of the fact that Marvin's dog had almost killed him twice, Piloto would still attack him on sight.

We had these brutes as watch dogs in Santa Cruz. Nearly everyone there had big, mean dogs to keep the thieves from carrying away all their possessions. I was to wish many times I had left old "P", as we called him, in Santa Cruz. Out among the Indians he got a reputation that was known for miles in every direction. People used to come to San Simon just to see him.

We passed through several *pueblos* that day, some of which were abandoned because of a lack of water. In one very isolated village there was a tremendous Catholic cathedral in a state of awesome disrepair. Miguel said it was 300 years old and had been built by the Jesuit priests. I was amazed that such a building could have been built among those poor Indians. He said that the Jesuits had been driven from the country 100 years ago because they had grown so rich.

Most of the people we were seeing were Indians, not of the same tribe we were going to work with, however. Our Indians were called *Chiquitanos*. I do not know what tribe those Indians belonged to. They were very poor. There were ranchers, too,

and some of the others in the pueblos were not Indians. None of the *pueblos* had over one hundred people in them.

The little villages were usually fifteen or twenty miles apart with only wilderness between them. It was a pleasant thing to approach one of them from the wilds. Their streets were built for horses and oxcarts so that the great trucks would usually fill the entire street. We would wind up among the grass huts, making sharp turns this way and that until we entered the main square. The square invariably consisted of a grassy plaza, surrounded by sandy streets. There would usually be a store or two. The people would flock out to see us pass and the children would run behind the truck. They were amazed at Dwight's blond hair.

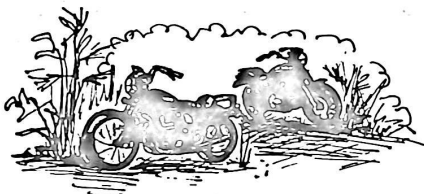
By and by we approached San Ignacio, where Miguel lived and where Mary Ann was waiting. She had gone on out by DC-3. Nearly all the *pueblos* in Bolivia with more than one thousand population were serviced by the old DC-3's. Flying is used more in Bolivia by the average person than by his counterpart in the United States, mainly because the only other way to go was the way we were traveling. The road was just too slow and tortuous.

As we came near the edge of the village, we found a freshly cut, very large tree, blocking the road. Some folks nearby told us there was a political upheaval of some kind in San Ignacio and the tree had been cut for that reason. Miguel ran the cable out from his winch, but the tree would not budge. He then had to hire some men to cut a road out through the woods, and we drove around the tree and on up into the main part of town.

Mary Ann was there and had rented a room at one of the two "motels." We were very grateful to get off the truck and relax for a while.

Miguel said we would start for San Simon "*bien temprano*" (very early) in the morning, and he drove on home.

# 3



## ON THE ROAD TO SAN SIMON

We three were ready to go at 8:00 the next morning. As I reflect on the incident, I don't know why I thought that Miguel would be ready to go early in the morning. The only evidence I had was the fact that he said he would be — and that was no evidence at all.

Dwight and I went to find him. "*Ya, me voy ahorita.*" (Yes, I'm going now.)

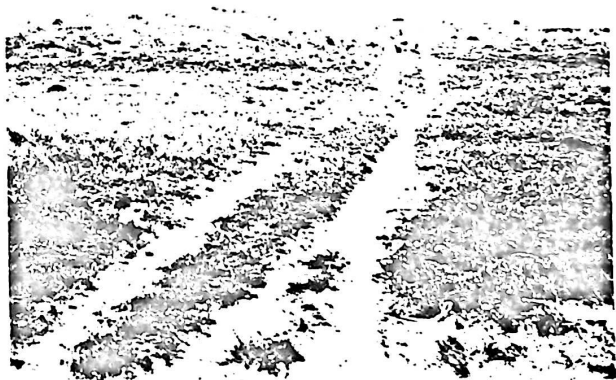
Forty-five minutes later I went again. I was beginning to feel unfriendly.

"Okay, okay," he shouted, somewhat irritably.

I sat and watched him until he climbed into his truck and then I hurried to our room. We sat all our things out on the street and waited and waited.

While we are waiting, I'll tell you about San Ignacio. Maybe it will help me to cool off a little.

*San Ignacio de Valasco*, strictly interpreted, means Saint James of Valasco. (Valasco is the name of someone that is admired in Bolivia, and so a province was named after him.) It is a town of some four to five thousand inhabitants. It's not a poor town, nor a rich one. Most of the people there seem to do all



*Typical highway in dry weather zone of Paraguay of Bolivia.*

right. All the streets are dirt, with each one radiating out like spokes from the hub of a wheel. The hub is the main plaza, an enclosed park of flowers and great trees.

The plaza is the town's chief civic ornament and is interlaced symmetrically with little paths that wind around under the shade of the impressive trees. All the paths meet in the center at a rather derelict bandstand. The main street is wide and makes its way around the plaza to form the main square. There are several stores that border the outside edge of this principle street.

Few automobiles were in San Ignacio, and they were of the four-wheeled drive variety. Mostly, the motor driven vehicles were motorcycles. The most common mode of transportation was by horse, burro, or oxcart. At night the hitching rails were busy with horses and burros standing waiting for their owners to finish business.

Burros roamed the streets day and night. No one had a good

word to say for them, but they were not molested either. A burro has about as much personality as a giant gooseberry. I suppose one of their main contributions is in the manufacture of mules. In crossing a jack (male burro) with a mare (female horse), one could secure a mule and thus have an animal with the stamina and intelligence of the burro (also the vulgar voice) plus the size and strength of a horse. The size of the mare determines the size of the subsequent mule. Now if one did not wish to have an ordinary mule, he could then cross a stallion (if you have led a sheltered life — a male horse) with a jenny (female burro) and so have an animal that very much resembles an ordinary mule, but is not. It will still have that hopeless face common to the mule but narrower hoofs and a more nervous disposition. This creature is called a ninny. My advice to you is to stick with the jack-mare arrangement.

But I see I have been side tracked into mule chasing. Let us return to the business at hand, looking at San Ignacio. All supplies for the *pueblo* came in by air, or more usually by truck over the nearly three hundred terrible miles of road from Santa Cruz. Or it might come as our furniture did, by rail as far as San Jose, and then by truck on to San Ignacio.

From San Ignacio to San Simon is 75 miles. There were no stores, doctors, hospitals, phone services, post offices, or airplane services between the two places. In fact, San Ignacio was the jumping off place for the next 225 miles north to where the trail reached the Itenes River, which is the border of Brazil. So, you see, San Ignacio was a very important place to us during the time we lived at San Simon.

On the main square of the town, across from the plaza, is the big Catholic church. The priests had just about complete control of the town. They had two very well equipped garages, a radio station, hospital, and hundreds of acres of good farmland. Also they had a number of schools in and around San Ignacio. As chapter gives place to chapter in this book, you'll probably get pretty fed up hearing me fuss about the Catholics.

Even though the Catholics were big in San Ignacio, the priests paid little attention to the Chiquitano Indians that lived north of town. The Indians of that tribe were scattered all around the

town, especially for 225 miles north. About once a year a priest would hurry through the area, urging the Indians to marry and confess their sins, neither of which they would do.

The day we were moving our furniture was not the first time we had been to San Ignacio or San Simon. Mary Ann and Dwight had spent a week in San Simon, and I was there often in the month or two before we actually moved there. In fact, we were having a house built there which we hoped would be finished and ready to receive our furniture.

I had brought my Jawa motorcycle out by air to San Ignacio to use on trips out to San Simon. We also had an airstrip cleared off out there so that Marvin Loyd could land the Cessna 182 when he brought out supplies from Santa Cruz.

So we were more or less acquainted with several of the folks around San Ignacio and San Simon. One man was our almost constant benefactor, Louis Mayer; "Don Louis" we called him. He owned the ranch at San Simon, but lived in San Ignacio. I'll tell you more about him and introduce you to others later.

Well, here comes the truck. I must learn to control my impatience and adjust to the lackadaisical ways of the Latinos. It is not easy to be an efficient, highly motivated North American for thirty-five years and then suddenly be forced to face life on the same terms of the South Americans. I certainly do not mean to imply that I think if everybody would just take it easy as the Latins do, the world's troubles would be over; but I'll tell you this, a man in a hurry in Bolivia is going to have a problem.

I looked straight at Miguel and made him promise he would come on and not stop anywhere.

"*Clara, hombre, como no!*" (Sure, man, why not!)

We had not even gotten out of the *pueblo* until he had turned in to someone's house and stopped.

Mary Ann pleaded, "Now, Jurl, don't jump on him; let's just go on."

I was plenty mad; but I didn't know enough Spanish to really tell him off anyway, so I just did what she said. If it takes trials to make one patient, I thought, I'd be the most patient fellow who ever was.

The next six hours were very pleasant as we made our way along the rustic little road. It was, for the most part, just two ruts with grass between them. Sometimes we were running over pampa, other times through jungle, and often climbing up into the hills. We crossed creeks and rivers, most of which were dry. Occasionally we stopped to open a gate.

We passed through villages, none of which had over forty people — all Indians. The children would run out to watch us pass. What did they think when they saw a blond-headed boy, the same age as some of them, riding his own cycle? I expect they talked a long time about the three *gringos* that passed by.

More often, we passed single dwellings made of bamboo and mud, with grass roofs. There were several ranches owned by non-Indian Bolivians. You must not often pass these ranches without stopping, especially those whose owners have befriended you. It is a strict social more that you stop, have a cup of coffee, and chat awhile. It took some time to figure out which ones I could pass all the time, which ones I could pass some of the time, and the ones I shouldn't ever pass without stopping.

Now lest you say, "I would be my own man and do as I please," let me point out that social custom in Bolivia is very strict. While they recognize that an outsider cannot know all their customs, his acceptance and, to some extent, his success as a missionary is in direct proportion with his desire not to be offensive to their way of life. Hospitality and conversation is a must in the out of the way places of South America. I am not a "breeze shooter" or a "time killer" by nature, so things like stopping here and there as I made my way about the country were very difficult for me. But I did it.

As we rode out that day we stopped at two ranches. The ritual was always the same. The owner, his wife, or both had heard the sound of the motors coming thirty minutes before we got there and were standing in front of their house, waiting. We pull up into the yard and he or she begins to shout at the servants to make "*cafecitas*" (little cups of coffee) for "*los Senores*." People gather, dogs bark, and all hands which belong to those of any importance at all are shaken.

Then the questions, "*Donde viene?*" (Where do you come

from?) "*Donde va?*" (Where are you going?) "*Porque?*" (Why?) are asked.

Those questions out of the way, one may then be asked if he has any medicine for certain ailments. If so, the sick are produced for inspection. Usually it is for a shot of penicillin, or something for pink eye or worms.

At last you are questioned as to who may be coming out from San Ignacio in a "*mobilidad*" (motor vehicle).

This type of thing takes a lot of time. Of course, the Latins enjoy it and are never in a hurry anyhow. About the only advantage I ever saw to it was that it gave opportunity to talk about the Lord and hand out tracts and Bibles. But as time went on we found close friends along the trail that we really did enjoy visiting. The only problem was that they were not necessarily the elite that custom prevailed upon one to visit.

In time we arrived at San Simon to find our house a long way from finished. All the fight was gone from me though, and my blood pressure did not even rise.

Roberto, our cowboy-contractor, said the reason that it was not finished was because all his workers had taken off for a week of hunting. He felt sure they would be back, "*en la manana*," and then they would make short work of it. I smiled bleakly and said nothing.

About 5:30 Miguel came with our furniture and we unloaded the bits and pieces onto the front porch. Many Indians had gathered and they helped us unload.

Miguel presented me with a bill that was half again as much as we had agreed upon. Tempers flared once more. He said that was what his boss told him to charge me. I paid him only what we had agreed on and told him I would settle with his boss later. He went away angry, for he had many plans for the extra money.

Little remains to be told of our arrival. We were just glad to be where we felt God wanted us to be. We went into the second floor of the house, leaving 30 Indians standing in the downstairs. Kneeling on the rough floor, we thanked God for the safe arrival and begged Him for grace to do what we were positive could not be done without Him.



## THE HOUSE

Our house was a curiosity to everyone for miles around. It was a two-story job, of which there was only one other in the whole country. Most of the houses were constructed of bamboo poles, with mud plastered in between and over them. All had roofs of grass which extended down within three feet of the ground. The roof coming down so low protected the mud walls from the rain. I didn't realize that when our house was built, and so lived to rue the day that we had such high walls unprotected from the weather.

When we were planning to build the house, Don Louis Mayer waved his hand about grandly and said, "Build it wherever you want."

We chose the highest spot around, with a panoramic view of the countryside. To the east of us, at the bottom of the hill upon which our house sat, was the lagoon. The lagoon itself was very interesting, in that it was home to alligators and large snakes, a watering place for deer, a resting place for ducks, and a stopping place for herds of cattle that were driven through our area from time to time.

Across the lagoon was the Indian village. It consisted of one-

room grass and bamboo houses scattered about in a haphazard fashion over about five acres of land. There were, more or less, 100 living there — all Indians except the school teachers. The village had no stores of any kind and was sort of situated around the large grassy plaza. The men and boys played soccer in the plaza often, and we could easily hear their voices drifting across the lagoon. It was not long until we could distinguish Dwight's voice among the ball players over there.

Looking on east from our porch over the lagoon, beyond the village and the jungle, about 40 miles away, we could see a string of blue mountains that were close to the Brazilian border.

To the west of our house the hill upon which we lived dropped off rapidly into the lowlands. The main trail ran down right in front of our house, entered the lowlands, and within sight of the house it forked, with one trail running on west and another turning north. We could see quite a distance up both of these trails. During the rainy season that area became a shallow lake.

Northward, the direction the house faced, the ground fell away gradually to the corrals of the ranch and to the ranch house itself. It was just a replica of the Indian houses, only larger.

In back of our house were thousands of acres of pampa — sage-grass land with islands of palm trees dotted here and there. From the second floor we could see most of the landing strip 100 yards behind the house.

The house itself was a work of art. First, four logs 40 feet in length were cut in the jungle and brought out on two-wheeled carts pulled by oxen. The logs were hewn with axes along chalk lines into 8 x 8's. The Indian axe men were so expert that the timbers were as perfectly square as if they had been cut at a sawmill.

The four timbers were buried upright five feet in the ground, and eight other short but similar timbers were placed four on each side of the house. Then bamboo poles were tied between these upright timbers. The bamboos were doubled with one row inside the timbers and one row outside. After that, mud mixed with fresh cow manure was packed between and around the bamboo poles.

To get the mud, a large pit was dug down near the lagoon, and boys were hired to haul water from the lagoon to the pit, while others were sent to the corrals continually for the fresh cow manure which was also dumped into the pit and mixed by the feet of the unfortunate boys. They carried on in a grand way, probably about like North American boys would if you could get them to do such a job. The smell of the mixture was enormous; but once applied to the walls and dried, it was odorless and hard.

When the walls to the structure were up, all hands turned to cutting "*cusi*" — branches from a type of palm tree. These leafy branches were skillfully woven into the roof along with grass. Not once did that roof leak no matter how hard it rained.

Meanwhile logs were hauled in by the oxen and hoisted onto a scaffold, about six feet off the ground. Lines were chalked onto the logs from which sawyers cut boards with crosscut saws. One sawyer was on the scaffold above the log, and one was below on the ground. Every board for the second story floor was cut in this manner. It was back-breaking work. The Indians did work very hard at times; but when they got enough of it, they would take off hunting, fishing, or just lounging in their hammocks until they got ready to work again or I got smart enough to entice them back.

When we arrived that day with the furniture, there were no doors or windows in and much of the walls were not yet "cow dunged." But we managed to get all the hands to make one final effort, and we pretty well wrapped it up within a few days of our arrival.

The furniture was in shambles, and it took many nails and much wire to put the various pieces back together again.

From the moment of our arrival there was an endless flow of visitors. Crowds of Indians stood about and peered in the downstairs windows from daylight until dark. Since there were no doors up we could not keep them out of the downstairs part of the house, but we really thanked God for the upstairs part. We would put the ladder up through the hole where the stairs were to be, climb up, pull the ladder up after us, and so have a few minutes of privacy from time to time.

The best feature of the house was the second story front porch. It was about eight feet off the ground and could only be entered, in the beginning, from the second story. So we often sat up there the first weeks, eight feet above the others, who stood, sat or lay on the ground and watched us. I told Mary Ann and Dwight I doubted that we would ever put steps from the ground to the porch. But later, of course, when we were more accustomed to the Chiquitanos and they to us, we did not have the constant multitude about the house and I did install steps.

Veteran missionary friends had told us not to try to entertain the poor folks among whom we worked, but just to go about our business. No missionary family we knew would allow the people to pass freely in and out of their houses. But if you don't have any doors I'd like to know how you are going to stop them. As fast as we would gently evict them they would enter another door or window. They were like children and did not know when to leave, or not to come every day. One might go outside at midnight and find two or three grown men or women just squatting there.

"*Buenos noche, senores,*" they would entone. ("Good evening, sir.)

This about drove Mary Ann batty. "Jurl, go down there and see what they want," she would insist.

But I wouldn't do it. So down she would go to sit and talk to them, trying to make them feel welcome. All they would do would be to grin and say "si" or "no" or "seguro" (our equivalent of saying "really").

What a blessing when we finally got our downstairs doors up and closed. Still, there were few daylight hours when the windows were not full of faces. It certainly taught one to get his britches on before descending the stairs.

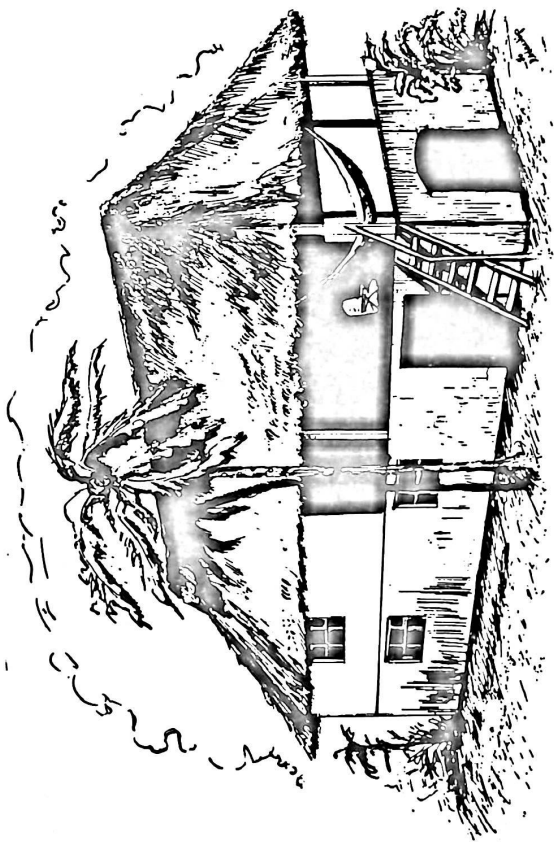
Most of the Indian women would bring something for a gift on their first visit. Several of them wanted a gift in return — money, coffee, or kerosene. It was hard to know what to do, but we mostly gave the impression that we were not to be considered as Santa Claus.

As I recall those first few weeks among the Chitquitanos, I

remember there was a feeling of great inadequacy and much prayer.

The lack of privacy was the roughest part. Perhaps we have always had a more than common need for privacy. Also we were at a loss as to how to deal with the Indians from a standpoint of how far to let them go. We wanted, above everything, to let them know that we cared for them, yet to be firm as to what we expected of them.

It was very difficult. Yet in spite of the mess our house was in and our lack of experience in dealing with the Indians, we were glad to be there. And nothing could have clouded the beauty of the country. Each day closed with the most beautiful sunsets I have ever seen before or since.



*The Mitchell house was the second largest in the area, and the mud and straw walls were a constant maintenance problem in rainy weather.*



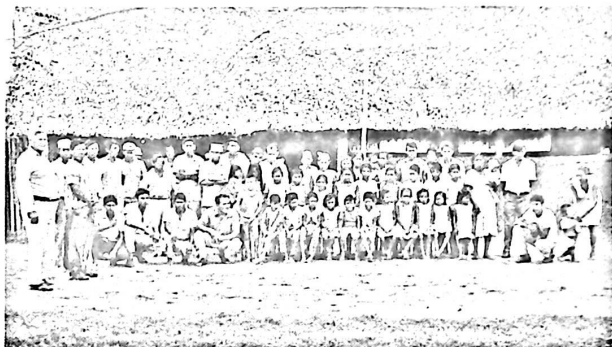
## MAKING A START

I can't tell you exactly how much I dreaded our first Sunday among the Chiquitanos. I have never been more prayerful or scared. It was not to be my first time to get up in front of folks to speak in Spanish, for I had done that back in Santa Cruz at Bethel Church a good many times. But they were sophisticated compared to the Chiquitanos. Besides, the saints in Santa Cruz were used to "*gringo*" Spanish while the Indians were not even used to *gringos*. I was one of the first two North Americans they had ever seen.

So it was with much fear and trembling that we approached the little school house. Dwight stepped up to the bell and rang it smartly. A few came. We waited a while and rang it again. The Maestro (teacher) came and a few more. It didn't look too good.

Both Dwight and I had our guitars, and I had a harmonica fastened in a holder around my neck, so that I could play it and the guitar at the same time. So we cut down on "Send the Light." Almost immediately the whole world and his wife appeared and filled the school house to overflowing.

Mary Ann had written the words of a chorus or two on cards



*One of the first congregations at the school house at San Simon.*

so that they could read the words and learn the songs. They had never sung songs before, but they tried to follow as we sang. I had the Maestro read some Scripture, and then I gave sort of a sermon speech, telling them why we had come there to live. In my stammering Spanish I told them the gospel story. I don't know if they understood it or not, but they listened politely.

Things were working out pretty well, and I was vastly encouraged. Then suddenly someone spotted a deer drinking at the lagoon. Tomas, the main hunter of the village, cleared three benches with a single bound. With several lesser hunters in pursuit, he ran half crouching and clutching a rifle which had appeared from somewhere. The hunters circled to approach the deer from downwind. My congregation had forgotten me completely, and the only ones still seated were Mary Ann and Dwight. The others were all running here and there trying to get the best view of the stalk.

Somehow the deer got spooked and ran off. The Indians came straggling back into the building, but I was so unnerved by it all that I just hollered out that we'd have a "*culpa*" again in the evening. At this they cracked up and we crept home. I meant to say we'd have a "*culto*" (meeting) not a "*culpa*" (mistake).

When we left the states I had the idea that it would be a fine thing to go as a missionary to a remote Indian village. I thought

maybe they would look on me as a father come to enlighten his children, and that they would naturally know that we were not ignorant and gladly follow, love, and imitate us in our example for Christ.

It did not take me long to get cured of these romantic dreams. In the first place backward people do not judge you by your standards, but by their own. The measure they and the ranchers used was simply this: can you handle a gun, track game, ride a horse, skin an animal, use your fists, cook over an open fire, build mud houses, or weave useful things out of palm leaves? And here you stand, hardly able to speak their language, much less do well at all that other stuff. So a new missionary can sure have some gloomy days. It will make you say, "Lord, You are the only one who can help me, so please don't get too far away." I learned that I was not so self-sufficient as I thought.

In San Simon and surrounding areas there were hundreds of souls with absolutely no hope because they had never heard the Word. And their bodies had unnecessary pain because they had no doctors and no medicine.

As we viewed the need of the Chiquitanos the odds against success seemed overwhelming. The very first Sunday Mary Ann had asked a woman how the village would celebrate carnival (a time of merry making in South America).

"Oh, with everyone drunk," she had answered brightly.

"Not even one person will stay sober?"

"Not even one, *Senora*."

It was not at all unusual for the whole village to be drunk. And they didn't have to have alcohol either, they could get drunk on their native *chicha* made from corn. As a result of such living there was always a want of food, clothing, and medicine. There was always a lot of illegitimate children, too.

We had during the beginning of our work in San Simon about 15 Indians working for us on a daily basis. We paid them in cash for their labor, and unprincipled men would come in from the outside, bringing alcohol, and leave with the money. I lectured, shouted, stomped my feet and shamed everyone involved; but nothing helped. They would trade anything for alcohol — their money, dogs, crops, guns, or whatever they had.

Finally we hit upon the idea of paying them off in fabric, ammunition, clothing, etc. This plan pretty well foiled the alcohol dispensers.

The Chiquitanos were not quick at all to receive Christ as Savior. In fact, after three months among them, we could not point to one convert. But on the other hand, from the very beginning, we would often hear the children and some of the adults singing the hymns we had taught them.

When we could hear the sounds of the village drifting across the lagoon clearly there would almost always be a child's voice singing "Jesus Loves Me" or "This Little Light of Mine." And it was encouraging, when we were out on one of the trails a mile or two from the village, to hear an adult working in his *chaco* (garden) and singing one of the hymns.

Our services were well attended even in the other villages around San Simon. They loved to sing the songs and were nearly always attentive to the Word of God. Still we were impotent in those first few months to get any of them to step out and confess Christ as Savior.

But we were doing all we knew to do, believing Romans 10:14-15, "*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?*" All the ingredients were there; we had been sent, we were preaching, they had heard, and we had faith that in time some of them would believe.



# 6

## **OUR NEIGHBORS**

Almost all our day-to-day dealings were with the Chiquitanos. Some of them were coming or going from our house at any given moment throughout the day. The murmur of children at play could be heard nearly anytime outside our door. They enjoyed the soft grass in the yard which we kept mowed with a push-type lawn mower. The Indians kept every sprig of grass scraped from their yards; I suppose because they had no way to cut it neatly. But all the Indians, and non-Indians, too, admired our plush lawn; adults as well as children loved to sprawl upon it.

Twice a day a gaggle of girls would come running from school at recess for Mary Ann to teach them choruses. They would assemble at the foot of the steps and earnestly sing; afterwards they would run back around the lagoon to the schoolhouse.

The children of our village were as lovable as children can ever get. They flocked around us wherever we went in the village and would have spent every waking moment at our house if their parents had permitted it. We could hear them outside our doors discussing us with one another, recalling comments we had made during the day or talking about some of the wonder-



*A gaggle of girls.*

ful material things we used. Sometimes they would just sit on the grass and sing all the songs we had taught them.

If Satan had not fought us so hard and if he had not had so many unscrupulous people to use, we could have claimed the souls of every child in the village of the Chiquitanos anywhere around us for the Lord Jesus Christ. The children loved us and we loved them, but we lost most of them — not their friendship, but their souls. However, I am getting ahead of my story.

We soon were well acquainted in the three surrounding communities of Chiquitanos, for we began almost immediately to go to them with our singing and preaching.

The main trail running north and south forked just below our house, and one trail went west. This west trail is the one we took to two of our other villages. It ran through the lowlands as a sandy two-rutted horse and oxcart road, passing through patches of jungle and several swampy fields until it came to Riabe, the ranch owned by our friend Juan Cochamani. Juan and his wife, Olga, lived in San Ignacio. They came out to their ranch every now and then, at which times we would visit them; or when we went into San Ignacio, we would always go by and see

them. It was about three and a half miles from San Simon to their ranch.

After leaving the ranch of Don Juan (*Don* is a title like *senor*, but a little less formal; *Dona* is used for a woman), the road began to climb up into some low hills that were covered with short jungle foliage. There was one small ranch after leaving Juan's, before coming to the little *pueblo* of San Pablo. It was about three and a half miles to San Pablo from Riabe.

San Pablo was a very poor place. The people were always much more dirty than necessary and plagued with itch, pink eye, and stomach parasites. They had no school. We never knew why, as there were about 40 of them living there. The village was situated halfway between the two main trails running north and south. No motor vehicles ever passed, except ours, Don Juan's, and a motorcycle of the young school teacher who lived in the next village over. They, and others, said they were just sitting there "*abandonado*" (abandoned).

We were not too high on the adults of San Pablo, but the children there were as precious as those of our own village. So we had services there at least twice a month and tried to doctor hem every week.

San Pablo was situated on the edge of a river. Do not imagine a regular river with high banks and a swift current. No, it was an odd river with no clear-cut channel. In fact, you never could tell where the river was, except in the middle of the rainy season; then it was everywhere. In the dry season it was nowhere.

You would go down a fairly steep bank, after leaving San Pablo, and enter the river bottom along a path through grass higher than your head while mounted on a horse. This path would wind around through the grass, crossing small rivulets, and skirting water holes. It was a mile or so across what was called the river. About halfway across there was a strip of mud, ankle deep to the horses; it was nearly 40 feet across this. Then more high grass, holes of water and you would climb a high bank and be out of the river.

After crossing the river it was another mile and a half to our other mission point, the village of Palita. This village was placed on high ground and was populated by Indians who were always

clean and neat as well as hard working. There were about 60 of them. One of the two main north-south trails passed through this *pueblo*.

We met in the school house in Palita and went about twice a month. The school teacher there was a young Bolivian bachelor with whom we became pretty good friends. He professed to be an "*evangelico*," that is one of "us" instead of one of "them" (the priests).

So it was 10 miles from San Simon to Palita. In the rainy season we used horses for transportation and in the dry season we went on the cycles. Later, when we got a jeep, we used it mostly to come and go from San Pablo to Palita. We usually had 30 to 40 in Palita and 25 or so in San Pablo. Of course, if there was much sickness, the number would be greater as we always doctored after services.

There were two other ranches near Palita; but we did not visit them very much, although we were well acquainted with their owners. One ranch was owned and occupied by a seedly looking character who harmed our work behind our backs and stayed drunk a good deal of the time. The other rancher was the fellow who brought out alcohol for the Indians. Of course, when I would get on to him about it he would deny it. All I know is that it was always his cart that the booze was loaded on.

These two ranchers would often ask us for favors, but we did not ever ask anything of them. We did not wish to be beholden to them. They came to us for medicine, gas for their cycles, or a ride in the Jeep or airplane. Usually we would sell them these things, but it was after a sermon on the way they lived and especially the way they treated the Indians.

Our nearest non-Indian neighbors became our best friends. They lived northeast of San Simon four miles, in a beautiful location which they simply called "*El Valle*" (The Valley). Don Agapito and Dona Flora Hurtado were in their early seventies and by the standards of that area were quite well off. They had a prosperous ranch with many cattle, oxen, goats, sheep, horses, burros, fowl, and what have you. They grew everything they needed to be self-sufficient.

All their servants lived nearby under great high-reaching



*LOS VIEJOS, (Those old ones) our neighbors.*

trees. The servants were Chiquitanos, some of whom had been servants of the Hurtados for three generations. There were about 25 people in all at El Valle so we had our meetings there, too.

Don Agapito and Dona Flora called themselves "*Los Viejos*" (the Old Ones). So we also adopted that term of affection for them. Seldom two days ever passed that Don Agapito did not come riding his big white horse over to see us. He was something to see, with his great bulk shaded under the big sombrero he wore. He always had his Smith and Wesson .44 strapped low like a gun fighter. He would yank it out and kiss it or pat it in his holster and say, "This does my talking."

Then I would lead out with something like, "You're pretty bad with that thing are you, Don Agapito?"

Whereupon he would look sad and reply, "No, Don Jul, I'm just a poor old man." He would launch into a tale about how he hadn't always been old. There was a time when no one would have fooled with him, he said. And from what others told me it must have been true.

So we passed many pleasant hours with the Old Ones, either

at their house or at ours. They respected the Indians more than most of the other ranchers did.

There were other non-Indians with whom we became good friends, too. One such man was the owner of the ranch in San Simon. We did not see Don Louis Mayser often, but he was a man of great character, never failing to help us and never wanting anything in return. He was, along with being a rancher, a politician and occupied an important post in the Bolivian government. I guess he was known all over Bolivia. I know that I have never been anywhere in that country that he was not known.

The Indians at San Simon looked on Don Louis as their "*Patron*" (boss or benefactor) and held him in the highest regard of all men. Sometimes Don Louis would come swooping onto the airstrip with several of his high government colleagues. He would be loaded down with gifts for all the Indians and for us. Usually I would take him in the Jeep or on the motorcycle over to El Valle to visit, for he was married to the Old One's daughter. Then he would fly away and we might not see him for months. The Indians were either talking about his last trip or they were anticipating his next one. If we could have won Louis Mayser to Christ, I wonder what things could have been accomplished. But he was a man of the here and now and cared little for spiritual things. He is certainly a great humanitarian though.

When Don Agapito would say, after patting his gun, "I'm just a poor old man," the next thing he usually did was to throw out his chest and bellow, "But what will they do with this, Louis Mayser?" That's about the way everybody felt about him.

We had other friends in San Ignacio, where we went at least every three weeks to buy supplies. But mostly our society was composed of the Chiquitanos, the Old Ones, and the passerby along the trail.



## SUNDAY WORK

One Sunday morning about six weeks after we had moved to San Simon, the Old Ones came over to have lunch with us. They were riding matching white horses. Dona Flora was riding hers, seated on an ancient English side saddle. Don Agapito swung down his 225-pound frame more or less easily, and helped his wife dismount.

They had brought a roasted suckling pig which had been stuffed with duck. The duck was ground up with some sort of green vegetable. Don Agapito said they had brought it for us to "prove" it.

We placed the pig on the table where it lay grinning at us, and all of us walked over to the school house, accompanied by the usual host of children. I was glad to get to preach to the Hurtados. They were very Catholic, but they did not seem to know much about being saved.

They enjoyed the singing, accompanied by Dwight and me on the guitars. Mary Ann led the children in their special song, "*Cuando El Me Llama Le Contesto*" (When He Calls For Me I Will Answer). The kids really sang and the Old Ones murmured compliments.

As I got up to deliver the sermon, Juan Cochamani walked in and hung up his Colt .38 by Don Agapito's Smith and Wesson. He, too, was a Catholic without salvation, and I thanked God for the privilege to preach to these three influential people, as well as to the Indians.

While Mary Ann used the flannelgraph, I preached a well-rehearsed sermon on the prodigal son. The attention was good and when I asked at the end of the sermon who would like to learn more about the Bible and be a follower of Christ, three of the Indians raised their hands. It was the first public interest any one of them had shown as an individual. There was much nudging and pointing by the others toward the three hand raisers, but they didn't seem to mind.

After the service there was a good deal of enthusiasm over the selection of a place to build the church building. Don Louis Mayser had told them to let us build it wherever we wanted to, but we met with all the men of the village and discussed where would be a good place.

I had always been impressed by announcements in the papers at home about churches who had bought property "located just off of interstate so and so, next to interchange such and such." Having despaired of ever being able to make such a purchase, I was gratified to find my church in San Simon in just such a position. We were given land next to the main trail that ran for 225 miles north and south and connects every Indian village one with another. Never a day passed without a horse and rider and possibly even an oxcart, with up to three yoke of oxen, coming by.

Furthermore we were on the main path that ran through the village. A few hundred feet north was the main east-west trail. I am sorry to report though that it didn't go anywhere much.

So it was a happy group that paraded back up to our house. The whole congregation went. Several of the group were from other places and wanted to see the house. An old fellow from El Valle was one of them. He was nearly blind and could barely see the bulk of it, but he pronounced it "*grande, linda, and hermosa*" (big, fine, and handsome).

I took all who wanted to on a tour of the house and when we

arrived on the upstairs porch I began to direct them to the steps shouting "*hasta luego*" (see you later) at them, but by the time I could get back downstairs they had reentered the house and were standing in the kitchen oohing and aahing over the stove and refrigerator. Don Agapito and Don Juan thought it vastly amusing.

By and by order was restored and we all set down to the grinning pig. By the time we finished with him there was not much left but his grin. Juan had brought some beef from a calf he had killed the day before, and we had some of that too.

We had a kerosene cook stove that worked from pressure built up from a hand pump. It has a full-size oven and Mary Ann was able to produce some beautiful pies and cakes in it. She had baked a chocolate cake that day. Neither the Old Ones nor Juan had ever seen anything like it and were very impressed.

We had a large kerosene refrigerator which really could give out the ice. Our guests liked ice, but only wanted their drinks cool, not cold. Many of the Indians had never seen ice that was made in a "box" as they called it. The refrigerator was a curiosity that attracted people from all around. They would come and stand around outside all day before gaining the courage to ask to see an ice cube.

We had told our non-Indian friends that we really did not have time to visit on Sundays because of services at San Simon and other *pueblos*, but they had come on anyway. As it got on in the afternoon we told them we were going to have to go to San Pablo for a service. They began to say, "No, it's going to rain." The sky did look very threatening, but we were determined to show everyone (there were many people standing around in the yard) that nothing would stop us from our services on Sunday.

So, reluctantly, Juan got on his cycle and went on to his ranch, and the Old Ones sent their servant to get their horses. Dwight caught ours and saddled them, and we all went our separate ways.

It made us uneasy at first, to leave a yard full of Indians, but in all the time we lived among them nothing was ever stolen from us.



*The children of San Pablo were always ready to gather for Sunday School.*

We found a lot of sickness in San Pablo. I told them they must assemble and be still or we would not doctor them. I preached them a sermon about how their souls also needed doctoring and that Jesus was the Great Doctor. There was good interest on the part of a few.

At first Mary Ann was squeamish about my using my fingers to spread ointment on sore eyes and sores in their hair; but it was not long until she saw there just wasn't any other way to do it handily and so she plunged right in.

Dwight held the flashlight while we gave several injections of antibiotics. We gave small cakes of soap and urged them to wash themselves. At times their body odor was overwhelming.

The children of San Pablo would nearly break our hearts. We petted them as much as we could take the odor. They were fascinated with the hairs on my arms and would want to sit by me in order to stroke my arms. Even now, after these years, I have a strong sadness when I remember the Chiquitano children.

The lightning was really cracking by the time we had finished doctoring and turned our horses toward home. In order to beat the rain, we succumbed to Dwight's assurances that he knew a shortcut. He already knew the whole area better than we because he had been hunting a lot, so we followed him. Things

didn't look the same at night, and we became lost in one of the swamps of the river bottoms.

As we were letting the horses drink from the river, Mary Ann's beast began to paw the water. I had seen them do that before, but I didn't know what it meant.

Dwight said in his best Arkansas drawl, "Mama, do you know what he is fixing to do?"

No, Mama didn't know, but she soon found out! Her horse laid right down in the mud and water.

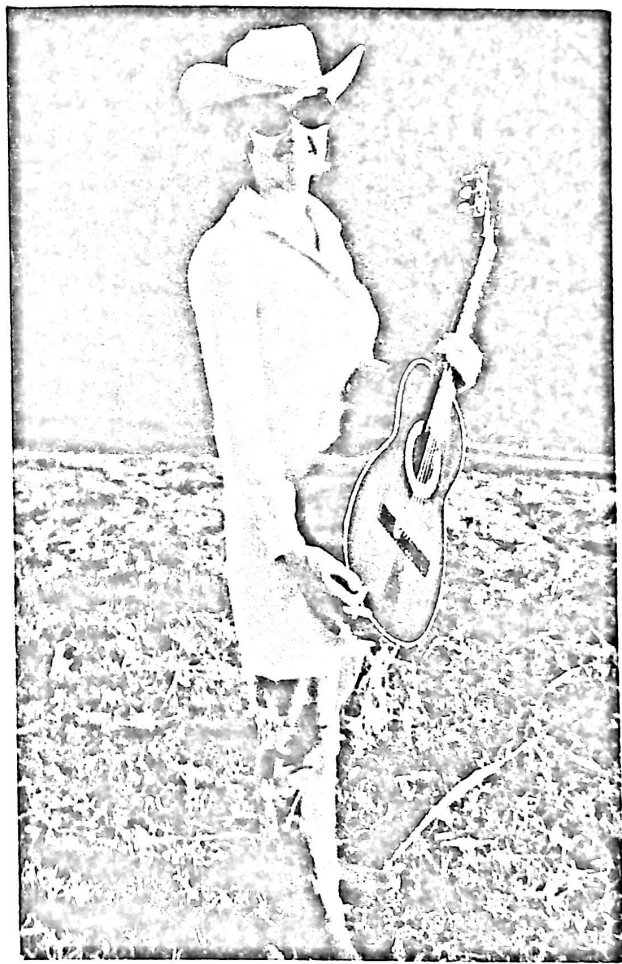
Wow! You talk about mud and water flying. She talked mean to that animal.

At last we found our way back to the main road, just as a rider was passing along singing, "*Y<sup>o</sup> Tengo Christo en Me Alma*" (I Have Christ in My Heart). It was a song we had taught in our services. He did not know we were there, but what a blessing it was to us to hear him singing that song, even if he didn't fully understand what it meant yet.

When he had passed on by, going the opposite direction, we turned toward San Simon. Just before reaching the village, we came upon a large herd of Brahma cattle lying right in the trail. They have kind of a mean reputation. If we had been on foot we could not have passed through them. It was not a funny thing to be among them even on horses. Their fierce eyes were flashing with the lightning. The bulls were huge beasts.

When we were at home finally and Mary Ann had peeled off her muddy clothes, we sat down to more of the grinning pig. It was about 10:00. We heard a noise at the window, and there peering in at us was the face of a small boy named Loy, who was seven years old. We brought him in and fixed him a sandwich with cake and milk. He never said a word until later when Dwight led him back over to the village. Then all he said was "*Quight*" (Dwight).

It was not the last time we found him roaming around in the pitch dark. We were always afraid that a lion or tiger might get him. They sometimes came to the village and grabbed pigs that were bigger than Loy. We could hear them squealing all the way to the river.



*Mary Ann often carried the guitar to services on back of a motorcycle.*



## LAYING ADOBE

About midnight one night, I was awakened by shouts and cheers from the village. As I lay there in bed listening, it became obvious that something was amiss, because there was no laughter, only shouting and cheering. Slipping out of the bed, I eased out of the house without awakening the others and made my way around the lagoon and up the path to the source of the noise.

From the shadow of a tree I could see ten or twelve men sitting on benches under the porch of a house. A flickering wick which stuck up out of a can of kerosene did not give enough light to make out who they were. The men were very drunk and agitated about something which they were debating hotly.

"*Escucha me, escucha me*" (Listen to me), they were all shouting at once.

Because of their drunken, slurring talk, I could not understand what they were saying, but I knew that I was the topic under consideration because I kept hearing the word "*gringo*." I slipped closer to see if I could determine why they were so angry with me.

I still couldn't tell. They would babble something about that

“*gringo*” and then shout in unison “*vive Bolivia,*” or some other patriotic slogan. I knew that my public preaching and things I was saying in private would be bitter medicine to many. People are alike everywhere, in that few want to hear their favorite sins condemned. I preached against drinking, illicit sex, lying, and gambling — all of which were at the top of their list of fun things.

I had sneaked up to within ten feet of them, but they were so absorbed in their denouncing of me that they had not noticed. So I just stepped in and sat down among them. Most of them could not tell who I was. One fellow’s mouth fell open, and he just sat pointing at me while he made sounds like the neighing of a horse. A few were beginning to bob and weave trying to get my face into focus.

I did not know what to expect from them, but the surprise that showed on their faces as they began to see the light was worth all the effort.

Their hostility quickly melted and they became very merry, calling me “*Pastor*” and saying how glad they were that I had come to drink with them. As drunks will, they were hugging me and getting right in my face, looking at me eyeball to eyeball. I knew I had lost the round completely.

“If you will not drink with us, then we will not come to church ever again.”

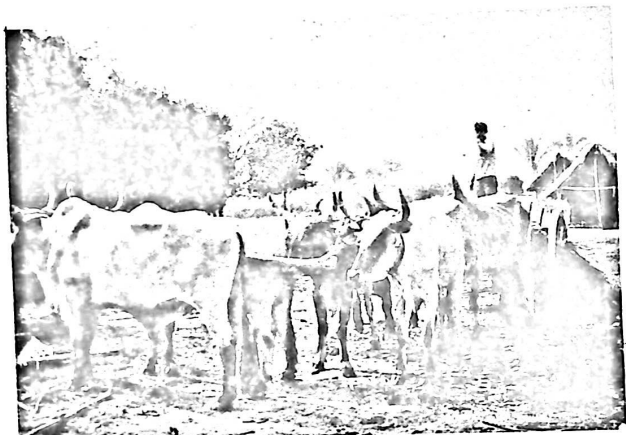
I ventured, “*Porque ustedes estan hablando mala de me?*” (Why are you talking bad about me?)

“No, no, *Pastor*, it wasn’t you. We were talking about that other *gringo*.”

It mattered little that there wasn’t any other *gringo* — only me. At any rate they declared all of their talk null and void since I had come out in the night to visit with them.

They followed me back to my house and would have spent the night had I not told them if they would all go home and go to bed I would hire them tomorrow to work on the church building I was going to start building. They went back to their alcohol, but they didn’t shout and cheer anymore.

The next morning none of them showed up — nor any of my workers I had previously hired. I went around hunting them up,



*We traded goods to Don Agapito for the use of his oxen in construction of the church house.*

finding them just sitting in little groups, looking dejected. They were all sober.

*"De donde este alcohol?"* (Where did this alcohol come from?) I questioned.

They said a local rancher had brought it in and the school teacher had sold it.

*"Cuanta cuesta?"* I asked. (How much?)

*"Dies pesos un botella, Pastor."*

*"Que cosa incredibly!"* I shouted, "It only cost five pesos in San Ignacio. No wonder the others say you are stupid."

I lectured each group on the follies of spending their money on alcohol when they needed sugar, clothes, medicine, ammunition, and other things.

They agreed wholeheartedly.

"From now on," I continued, "when I pay your wages, I'll have things you need right there at my house, and you can buy it immediately. Okay?"

*"Si, si, Pastor."*

I sent several of them into the jungle to cut trees from which the loadbearing timbers would be hewn, and others were dis-

patched to dig a well in a swampy area where we would soon be making adobe bricks. These would form the walls of our new church building.

Don Agapito's big cart was hired, pulled by three yoke of enormous oxen. This was the means of bringing in the large timbers and the palm leaves for the roof.

Oxen are tremendously strong, but just as slow as they are powerful. They move about two miles an hour and have to do an uncommon amount of resting, it seems to me. I'm certain a team of mules could work circles around them, but mules were not used. I could never find out why. They were ridden but never worked in harness.

Most everyone agreed that mules could do more work, but as old Don Agapito said, "We have always used oxen; and we are not like you *Americanos*, we don't like to change."

I placed a sullen fellow named Domingo Lluvio (the name means "Sunday it rained") over all the men. He never smiled and was built like a gorilla. I think most of the men were afraid of him. Some said he was suckled by a wolf and guarded by a black woodpecker. I don't know; that sounded a little farfetched to me. I only endured him because he could get more work out of the men than anyone else could. I'm nearly certain that he made fun of me behind my back, but I could never actually catch him at it. He attended our services regularly and was very quick to catch on to the songs. He played the first harmonica he ever saw five minutes later, and soon learned to pick the guitar. But he was overbearing and had a great feebleness for drinking and fighting.

The Indians kept telling me that it would be a long time before Roberto Justinano, the man who had built our house, could come and lay the adobes for our building. I didn't tell them that I was going to lay them myself. This may sound as if I knew a lot about laying adobes. No, I was innocent of any type of that skill. But if I had told them I was going to lay them, they would have hooted in derision. It took a lot of convincing before they would ever accept the fact that not only could we do most of the things they did, but also several things they couldn't.

Dwight was the first to make an impression on them from the physical standpoint. They saw him start riding horses, and soon he was able to ride as long or as hard as most of them. He could shoot with them and bring home the game just as they did. In fact, the men treated him as their equal, even though he was only 14. He was far more mature than the Indian boys of his age.

It was an amusing thing to see grown men sitting around Dwight out on the lawn at night, and hear their questions of him about the moon, stars, and other celestial bodies. I'm not so sure of the accuracy of all his answers, but his Chiquitano friends were certainly impressed.

When we had enough water in our well which the men had dug, we began to make adobes. A pit was dug near the well, about eighteen inches deep, ten feet wide, and twenty feet long. A certain clay found in the vicinity was hauled and dumped into the pit. Water was poured in and the men began to work the clay into mud by trampling it with their bare feet. A grass, resembling sagegrass, was cut up into short pieces and cast into the pit to be mixed with the clay. The clay was then put into forms that shaped them into blocks eight inches wide, 15 inches long, and three inches thick. We made hundreds of these.

I waited until one day when nearly all the men were gone out of the village to their gardens, and I took Dwight and our yard-boy to the church, which was just a pavilion still. By the time the men returned in the evening we had laid up one wall.

When the men learned that Roberto Justinano had not been there, they went and looked at the wall much closer. It was a pretty good job, if I do say so myself.

I saw them gathered over there at the church and I sauntered over, trying to look nonchalant.

"*Pastor*, did you do this?" They cast admiring glances at me.

"*Si*," I said barely able to stifle a yawn.

"You never told us you could lay adobe."

"You never asked me," I replied.

They loved that. They whooped and hollered, pounding one another on the back, shouting over and over, "You never asked me."

The children ran from house to house telling it and the

women came and smiled at me.

That was a good feeling — to be accepted as one who could also work with his hands. They knew I could drive a car, fly an airplane, and they thought I was rich; but all of that was nothing. They could not identify with those things. But to lay adobes, why even they did not know how to do that.



## EMERGENCY

***"Pastor, pastor!"*** Someone was calling from the porch. Mary Ann shook me awake and announced the time.

**"Something's wrong,"** she said, **"it's 12:30."**

I groped my way to the front porch. A full moon lit up the countryside and when I opened the front door, I could see the corrals clearly, down at the ranch house. The porch was cast in a shadow, but I could see it was Asencio and Serjio standing there.

***"Que pasa?"*** I asked.

Isabela, Serjio's wife and Asencio's daughter, was trying to have a baby and had apparently had a heart attack.

Mary Ann and I hurried with them over to the house where she was. She was having body-racking convulsions and her breathing was in loud, gurgling gasps. We had no idea what could be her problem, but it was plain she could not last long at that.

Mary Ann held Isabela's hand and smoothed her hair back. Those present murmured against the pain and sinister sickness that had come upon the young woman. They looked at us in big-eyed wonder, their expressions clearly stating, **"It's your**

responsibility. What will you do now?"

Yes, when we had moved among them we had taken on the responsibility for their bodies and souls — an impossible task. But there is no easy job in the Lord's work. Without the help of the Master, the business of men's souls would be hopeless.

I looked at Mary Ann, "We have got to get Marvin over here with the airplane and take her into San Ignacio to the hospital."

Marvin and Helen Loyd had moved among the Chiquitanos farther north. They also were missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Association of America, and Marvin was the pilot of a Cessna 182. We had no radio communication between us. He passed by at certain intervals with our mail and supplies. We had hoped later to set up means of communication, but to help Isabela that would be too late.

In the dry season the trail up to where the Loyds lived could be used by "*mobilidad*," as any motorized vehicle was called. In the wet time of the year only a horse could go by swimming the river.

We prayed by the bedside of Isabela; and leaving Mary Ann to help as best she could, I ran home to get my motorcycle.

The road was very slick from a recent rain and I knew I would be in for a spill or two before the night was over. As I pulled away from the house, I heard Dwight call, "you may not be able to cross the river."

A "*surraso*" (south wind that brings cold weather in South America) had blown in, and it had become quite chilly. I was already dreading the river crossing, that I knew would leave me soaked.

Upon leaving the village, the trail immediately entered the lowlands, which was a wilderness area. The trail was two sandy tracks with grass in the middle. At times the road ran over hard packed clay and I could get up to 30 miles an hour. With the road wet though, it was like riding on ice and soon I had taken my first fall. The Jawa was a heavy machine and lying under it in the mud with the exhaust burning my leg was not the type of thing I enjoy.

My left arm was bent behind my back and had no feeling in it, which made it difficult to drag myself from under the cycle. I

don't know how long I lay there before I could move my arm enough to ever hope to get the machine back on its feet.

One blessing from the hurt arm was that while I sprawled there I discovered my .32 revolver had fallen from its holster and I was able to recover it.

Also while lying there moaning and feeling sorry for myself, my attention was drawn to the most glorious worm I had even seen before or since. It was glowing all over like a lightning bug and was outlined in dark green spots of light with light green stripes of light across its back. Right on its end was a bright red light. I peered and peered at that marvelous creature. Most worms do not lead very noble lives. But that one was an apparition the likes of which Solomon, in all his glory, probably never saw.

I said, "Lord, I can't believe You have made such a thing." You could tell I had never seen anything like that before.

Feeling much restored, I gained my feet. I've seen lots of bugs in my day — moths that have long snouts which are exact miniature replicas of alligator heads, caterpillars that have a false head on their tail ends, butterflies that have a grotesque face painted on their backs, fireflies with lights as big as ping pong balls and never blink, grasshoppers eight inches long, centipedes a foot long — but for something purely out of Walt Disney, that worm took the prize. I just wonder if the Lord didn't make that thing for me that night, so I'd get up out of the mud and go on.

Which I did — I got the cycle up and was surprised when it fired right up. I went forward much more carefully. The headlights picked out various animals. Two of the biggest foxes I've ever seen ran along in front of me on a stretch of trail where it ran through a dense jungle. When we came to a *pampa*, they veered off and disappeared from my sight.

Once an *ante* (tapir), a large horse-like beast, stumbled out of the jungle into the trail and was confused by the glare of my headlight. Instead of continuing on across the trail or running away from me, it came toward me. I was not anxious for a head-on collision with 600 pounds of *ante*, so I shut off my light and set down on the horn. When the *ante* got its bearings, it plunged

back into the jungle and made off, crashing through the brush like an elephant.

At last I came to the river and my heart sank as I saw it was up just as Dwight had predicted. A horse could have made an easy crossing even without swimming. There was no current much, but in the dead of night so far in the wilderness and with so much depending on it, it was a discouraging prospect.

I had forded rivers several times with the water up to the bottom of the seat, and the old Jawa kept on chugging. But I didn't know how deep it would be out in the middle. It was a river that was wide but not very deep. It was not confined to easily distinguished banks, as we are used to rivers in the states.

Committing myself to God and the cycle, I drove off into the water, thinking a fleeting thought about the alligators and large snakes that lived in the river. The cycle had knobby tires on front and back and was very adept at gripping the road.

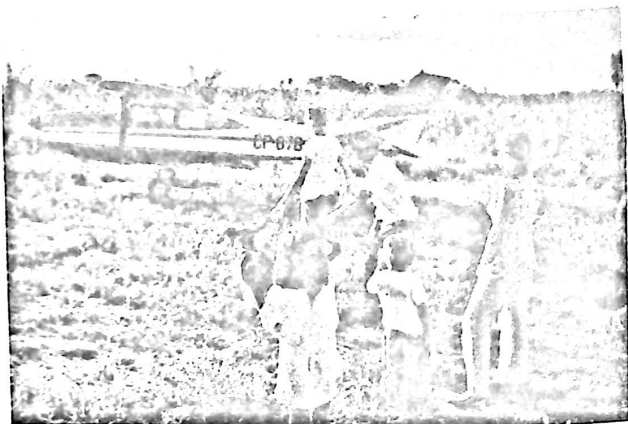
There was no problem until I neared the middle and it began to get deeper and deeper. The water was over my knees and still coming up. I was about to abandon all hope when the cycle began to climb out. At the same time my headlight went out. Fortunately the moon was still up, although getting into position to drop below the western horizon.

I felt my way along until the eastern sky began to glow. When I arrived at the ranch of Carlos Mayser, I knew it was only a short distance to the main road, where I could hurry on. There was a lamp burning in the window of the ranch house when I stopped the open the gate. I knew they would be wondering who could possibly be foolish enough to be fording the river on a motorcycle at high water in the night. But I had no time to stop and visit.

About 8:00 I pulled into the yard of the Loyds. By 8:30 we were in the air and had soon let down at San Simon. They were bringing Isabela by the time we got stopped and turned around.

She was still gasping for breath but unconscious as we loaded her into the 182. Her old grandmother, Isabel, climbed in too. She had never ridden a plane, but she did not have her mind on the ride, so great was her concern for her granddaughter.

In San Ignacio the doctor took one look at her and said,

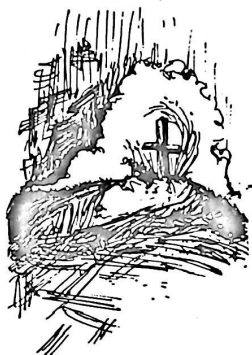


*The Cessna 182 was used to ferry supplies, mail, the sick and the dead.*

“You have brought me a corpse.”

By noon she had seemed a bit better. We left word with our friend, Louis Mayser, that if Isabela died to send a message by radio and we would return for the body. This was just a regular radio station that the Catholics owned and messages were sent out over it. All of the ranchers and some of the Indians had radios.

We flew on back to Marvin's village, and I made an uneventful return trip to San Simon in daylight.



## DEATH

The next evening after we had taken Isabela to the hospital, about dark, we saw Asencio and Serjio coming around the lagoon. We sat on the porch and watched them as the path took them through the little patch of woods near the end of the lagoon, behind Juana's house, up the hill and across the field to our gate.

"Isabela must have died," Dwight ventured.

When the two men came up the steps, they faithfully went through all the greetings to each one of us, complete to the handshaking. Then tears rolled down the cheeks of Asencio as he said, "*Pastor, me hija ha morida.*" We were many miles from home in an isolated Indian village, but the grief and pain were just as real. There is no escape from the hurt of our fellows.

Margarita Mayser had sent the message by radio, saying that Isabela had died at 3:00 of the same day we had brought her in. There was no explanation as to why we had not been notified sooner. There is no embalming in Bolivia, at least not out where we lived, and it had gotten very hot again.

"Pastor, will you bring her home to be buried?"

I knew that we would, in fact, Marvin and I had already agreed that when the word came over the radio, he was to come on. I knew he would be there the next morning. The folks over in the village would be wondering, "What will the pastor do now? Do these strange people really care about us?"

Our desire was not only to help them, but at the same time to instill in them a sense of responsibility toward us and the work we represented, so that some day they could carry it on themselves. In order to accomplish that, they had to learn to give too.

"*Asencio, es muy lego a San Iganacio* (It's very far to San Ignacio)," I said.

"*Si, Pastor.*"

"And it will cost a lot of money to fly the plane."

"*Si, Pastor, yo se.*"

"And," I continued, "they will bury her in San Ignacio, you know."

Tears rolled down his face.

I hurried on faster than I meant to, "I'll share the cost with you and Serjio. You do not have the money, but you have pigs. I have the money, but no pigs. You give me a pig to eat and I'll hire the airplane to go get Isabela."

Flying the plane 150 miles would cost much more than the price of a pig, but it was a thing that he understood and respected.

By 6:00 the next morning Marvin had landed on our strip. As we were ready to leave, a man from a nearby ranch arrived with the news that his little boy was very ill and requested that we take him into San Ignacio to the doctor. So we had to wait while he rode his horse back home then walked back with his servants carrying the boy on a stretcher.

I was very impatient, remembering how quickly a body can decompose in the tropical heat. She had already been dead nearly 40 hours. I knew we were in for it.

At 7:30 we got off and because of a strong tail wind we sat down in San Ignacio at 8:00, or just a little after.

Margarita Mayser met us and, in the fashion of her good husband, hustled us into a waiting Dodge truck which belonged to a

fellow who had helped her get the body prepared. They had decided that if we had not come by 10:00 they were going to go ahead and bury her. Since the radio had been out of commission for a while, we had not gotten the message sooner.

Instead of taking us immediately to the body, the truck owner brought us to his house for refreshments. I nearly fainted, knowing that every minute wasted was a body more decomposed.

I tried to take it like a man, as we observed the Latin custom of talking about everything under the sun except the business at hand. Finally my nerves gave way and I shouted, "Take us to the body."

They seemed relieved at that, and what seemed like the whole world piled onto the old Power Wagon and we drove out of town a kilometer or two to a little hut that was bare of furniture. There was the body of Isabela, resting four inches off the floor on two old planks and wrapped in a blanket with just the head sticking out. She seemed younger than her eighteen years. Her nose was stuffed with cotton and her mouth was tied shut with a rag that was under her jaw and passed over the top of her head. Flies were buzzing around her nose and eyes. The odor was faint. A candle burned at each corner of her body and a smudge fire was burning at her head. Poor old Isabel and another weebegone granny were the only two there when we arrived.

We loaded the body onto the truck and went to the airport. While Marvin was filing a flight plan, some of the multitude gathered there helped me load the body into the plane. Dona Isabel climbed in and took her station.

As we were loading the corpse, I had to pull her head close to my face in order to clear the front seat. The odor hit me clear down to my stomach. I wretched so forcefully that I suddenly was ushered into that great fraternity of those who suffer from that obscure malady called hiatus hernia. My stomach was sore and tender for days afterwards.

I didn't see how we could make it back to San Simon closed up in that plane. Odors always were hard on me. I saw a fellow there smoking and I got a few cigarettes from him and held them burning under my nose. With the windows open, I

somehow got through.

Marvin suffered too, but nothing like I did. Poor Dona Isabel, I don't know how she stood it. Her face was about a foot from the corpse, but she remained faithful to the body. I had wrapped a blanket around the head, but either the odor finally soaked through or Dona Isabel loosened the blanket to see the face of her granddaughter. Anyway the odor at the last was like a nightmare to me.

Most of the *pueblo* was there when we landed at San Simon, and all shed tears as we unloaded the body. It was very sad.

They had not prepared a box because no one had any lumber. I gave them enough for it. I think Asencio's brother finally made it.

Later in the day Mary Ann and I went over to the house where they had taken Isabela's body. I read scripture and prayed. The body was in very bad shape and the odor was terrible. They had folded her hands to hold a little hand-made cross and had candles lit all around the body.

Late in the evening Mary Ann, Dwight, and I saddled our horses and rode out toward the river. The heat of the day had passed and with it the terrible humidity. A thunderstorm was building in the west, and it cast a refreshing shade over the land. Late in the evening the parrots are most active as they return home from whatever parrots do all day. They are every color and we never tired of watching them. The many trees with their different, beautiful blossoms filled the air with sweet perfumes and made the evening pleasant.

We rode through the wooded area where we knew there to be a troop of monkeys. It didn't take long to find them. They came into the low branches to peer at us, darting their worried little eyes here and there. We enjoyed those same monkeys all the time we lived at San Simon, never telling the Indians about them, for they killed and ate them when they could.

There never failed to be one or two of that absurd bird, the ostrich, about. Few things could be more firmly rooted in the ludicrous than those birds as they stalked about on their ponderous business. Their odd and eager heads are perched upon the end of long necks like a small periscope. The neck and

head stick out of their great bodies about eight feet in the air on a full-grown one.

Besides their looks, which can make you laugh out loud, there was their willingness to race anything — horses, each other, motorcycles, trucks — or they might just run for miles racing nothing.

When we encountered several that day the race was on. With our horses at a gallop, they raced along on either side of the trail, or down the middle. Their habit mostly was to cross back and forth from side to side. We raced them until we were far from home and it was growing dark.

I was under the impression that the moon would be up about thirty minutes after dark, but I missed it a bit and it got very dark. Rain began to fall lightly too. We had a flashlight but the batteries were about gone. The horses were slipping and sliding all over the place. They couldn't seem to see any better than we could.

We reached the ranch of San Antonio without realizing it. The snorting of cows was all around us, but no landmarks could be seen to indicate exactly where we were. I finally pronounced us lost as a goose, supposing our location to be at a large corral northwest of the ranch house.

Somehow Dwight thought he could see the ranch house and to our relief, he was right. We found a good many cowboys there but none had any batteries for sale. It was so dark that one old boy came out and mingled with us without even knowing any strangers were about, until we said, "See you later." We heard him ask, "Are there people here?"

We headed back into the river bottoms, praying that the moon would get with it. We plodded on, turning the flashlight on every once in a while and seeing absolutely nothing. About 8:15 it began to get light and in 30 minutes I could read my watch.

How contented we were then, and tranquil. Our faithful beasts caught the mood and put on their rocking chair gaits. We came on in home with the sorrows and cares of the day melting away.

At the cemetery, by the grave of Isabela, we dismounted to pay our last respects. One does not get to stay carefree long. We felt she was probably not prepared to meet her maker.



## **BROTHER**

One Sunday morning I asked the congregation when Jesus would return. One little fellow spoke up quickly and said, "*Qualquiera rato* (Any moment)." Amen! Exactly as I had told them many times.

Thus encouraged, I ventured another question: "What is the first book in the Bible?"

Silence.

I coaxed them a little and finally one man spoke up and said, "I think, God."

"*Si,*" they all chorused, "God."

I decided to pass on to other things until after I had preached. My subject was concerning Elijah and those characters he had to deal with. I got on Jezebel's case pretty heavy, painting her blacker than night. I left no stone unturned that would expose her wickedness. I said she was meaner than a snake and probably never did a good thing in her life.

Later I decided to test Gomercindo, our yard man, on what I had just preached. Now, Gomercindo was one of the two most favorite people we ever knew in Bolivia. He served us faithfully in every way. We trusted him with all our material possessions,



*Church group in San Simon. Indians built pavillon and later the adobe blocks were laid for walls.*

and in all the times we knew him he only let us down once — when he got drunk. He was child-like but with a sort of shrewd common sense about him. In no sense was he a scholar.

Nevertheless I asked him, “Gomercindo, was Jezebel a good women?”

Almost always he would preface all stout statements with “whoooo.” So he said, “*Whooo, muy buena, esta mujer. Hiso muchas cosas buena* (Very fine, this woman; she did many good things).”

“No,” I cried, “She was bad — very bad.”

“Whooo,” he continued, “afterwards she was very bad, but at first she was very good.”

I told him she was never any good, first or last. Whereupon he countered, “Then what is the fifth book in the Bible?”

Deuteronomy is hard to say in Spanish for the unimble tongue, so I was trying to say it. Old Gomercindo had the habit of repeating nearly everything you said. So while I was trying to get Deuteronomy out he was repeating just the part I was getting out.

“Du . . .” I stammered.

“Du,” he repeated.

“Du . . .” I quavered.

“Whooo Du,” said he.

*"No, es mas que Du (It's more than Du)."*

*"Whooo, es mas que Du."*

Everyone was laughing, and my face was red. In exasperation I said, "Gomercindo, it is much more than Du; it's long."

He rolled his eyes with the effort of it all and exclaimed, "Whooo, I can't say it because it is more than Du!"

It was discouraging mostly because even though we had good attendance and the children were quick to learn, no one was being saved. At least after three months no one had declared publicly that he or she was going to follow Christ.

We had finished our church house, and no one had yet made a profession. It was nice with its white-washed walls and with screens on all the windows. For seats we split logs in half and fastened them, rounded sides down, to posts driven in the ground. Everyone was proud of the building. But still we regretted that no one would respond to the invitation to publicly receive Christ as Savior.

One Monday morning a cold south wind was blowing, and it was spitting rain. Dwight was laboring over his correspondence studies. They were from the University of Nebraska and were very difficult. He spent every morning on his school work. Things weren't going well that morning for him. He and his mother were not "gee-hawing" very well over algebra.

I was down in the dumps over several things, but mostly over our lack of success in what we Missionary Baptists are fond of calling "reaching the people." Suddenly there came a tapping on the plastic that covered the closed window to the porch.

*"Pastor, pastor,"* a young voice called.

I knew it was Erlan Ardaya, one of the boys who attended our services regularly. He was a handsome and intelligent boy, but sort of know-it-allish and a bit of a nuisance. I was in no mood to listen to his cocky talk, so I told him I was busy and to go away.

There was silence for a while, but I could see his shadow against the plastic. He leaned down close to the window, "Pastor, I have a desire in my heart to trust Jesus Christ," he whispered.

My eyes met those of my wife and son and I cleared the space

to the door with a single bound. There were tears in the eyes of that 13-year-old boy as he said, "*Quiero dar la mano en las cultos* (I want to give my hand in the services)." This meant he wanted to come forward and give me his hand to show his new commitment to Christ.

We read the Bible and prayed. He gave a good testimony of how he had wanted for a long time to confess Christ, but was afraid. He said that others did too, but they also were afraid. He said he would come forward the following Sunday to give his testimony, and he did.

So he became our first brother in Christ. I can't describe the joy I felt about that one boy. I told Mary Ann that after four months, having Erlan come to be saved made it all worthwhile. After these several years the last we heard of him he had surrendered to preach.

After Erlan came forward, Gomercindo followed saying, "Whooo, I need Christ too."

The devil was not slow to counter with his own efforts to thwart God's work. I thought I was not ignorant of the wiles of the devil, but I guess I was. We saw the devil in action there in a way we had never begun to see in the states.

The persecution began with the first convert and never completely stopped. Mostly the instruments used in the persecution were the Catholic priests who were working in San Ignacio. They resented our being among the Indians and did nearly everything in their power to put us out of business.

At first the persecution was in the form of violence. One morning I opened the front door to the porch to find Gomercindo standing there with his face looking like raw hamburger.

"What happened, man?" I cried, pushing him into the light for a better look.

"Whooo, they beat me nearly to death." Both his eyes were black and his lip was cut deep.

"Who did this to you, *hermano*?" We were already calling each other brother. "Whooo, Domingo and the *alcalde*. (*Alcalde* is the head Indian of the village.) I took out my knife to defend myself, but the *alcalde* took out a much bigger one and whooo, I put mine back in my pocket."

"Why, *amigo*, why did they do this to you?"

"Because they said I had just 'given the hand' in order to get presents. But, *pastor*, it's not so — I don't need any presents."

I asked Mary Ann to see if she could do something for Gomercindo's face. It had happened the previous evening about 9:00, but his face was still bleeding.

I was trembling with rage. If Gomercindo had been my own son, I could not have been more upset. Indeed, he was only twenty. Hardly more than a boy.

As I hurried toward the village, I thought of how Domingo had become more and more silent, bitter and vicious. He still was directing my men in building the church building, but he had quit attending the services. The *alcalde* had never been our friend because he was a minion of the Catholic priest in San Ignacio.

By the time I had reached Domingo's hut, I had not calmed down at all. His wife said he was not there; he was over at the school teacher's house. The school teacher was also a cohort of the priest.

I practically ran to the maestro's house and rounded the corner of it right into a group of men who were drinking and, I suppose, talking about the beating Gomercindo had gotten. Their eyes widened with surprise as I strode in among them.

They rose and began the salutations that every meeting demanded. I waved them aside and asked where Domingo was. The teacher pointed toward the door of his house, and I barreled on through.

Domingo was asleep in the hammock. I grabbed the rope and dumped him out on the ground where he then sat, looking up at me in a most extraordinary way.

He made a scramble for the door and I caught him on the porch. The men who had been sitting there drinking, scattered like quail.

"Wait *pastor*, wait." Domingo threw up his hands. "I've done wrong, I know I've done wrong. I was drunk."

I turned to one of the men standing there and told him to go get the *alcalde*.

When that worthy came, he denied having hit Gomercindo,

blaming it all on Domingo.

"*Es verdad, Domingo?*" I asked.

"I don't know, *pastor*, I was so drunk."

I was beginning to calm down by then, but I turned looking especially at the *alcalde* and the school teacher and said, "Those that come to my church are my friends and anyone that ever bothers them will have me to answer to."

The *alcalde* was about half sneering. I walked up to him and putting my face close to his, I said in low tones, "Do you understand me?"

He stepped back and answered, "*Si, Pastor.*"

I have several excuses for behaving like this. My main excuse is this. The code of the men in that area was a rough and tough one. I believe they would have run me out of the country if I had not demonstrated an aggressive spirit on such occasions. I must confess, though, that living in that environment caused me to take on a tendency to become more tough than seems fitting to a man of God. I have noticed that veteran missionaries in rough areas are some of the most hard-nosed men I have ever known. I guess it is an occupational hazard.



## “OLD SAL”

After the ruckus with Domingo we did not see him the next Sunday at church, but by the following Sunday he was in service. When I gave the invitation to come forward and confess Christ as Savior, he came. It took a lot of courage on his part. He was trembling and tears were in his eyes, but he came with obvious determination. Probably conviction of the Spirit of God had made him harder to get along with than usual.

A day or two later he apologized to Gomercindo for beating him up. Gomercindo shook his hand and said, “Whoo, it sure did hurt.”

It wasn't long until Domingo was helping to lead the singing at church. He knew all the songs by heart. He also read the scriptures publicly. I have not seen Domingo in years, but I understand he became a preacher and then a missionary among the Chiquitanos.

So out of the first three saved, two became preachers; and Gomercindo, who lacked the intellectual capacity to be a leader, has nevertheless stayed in the work, so I have been told.

The people had various reactions to the commitments of these three men. The more shallow thought it was funny and the



*Our first converts, Erlan, Domingo and Gomercindo.*

serious were scared or respectful. I'm sure that many were frightened that three of their own would openly go against the Catholic tradition that was upheld by the ranchers around about.

The Catholic tradition was an integral part of their lives. They did not even name their babies until they had been christened. After we had a good many converts, this was a real problem when babies were born to our congregation.

All holidays in Bolivia are linked to the Catholic Church, too. There just wasn't any quick way to escape the influence of the Church of Rome. Even though the constitution of the Bolivian government guarantees religious liberty, there is no question on anyone's part that the Catholic Church has first claim on everything.

We were soon aware that we had vastly underrated the influence of the priests among the Indians. It appeared, on the surface, that there was very little pressure from the *padres*, 75 miles away in San Ignacio. They had paid little attention to the Indians, until we had arrived; but apparently the association they had with the ranchers was the source of their being

enveloped in the horrible tenacles of Catholicism.

In spite of that pressure however, after Domingo was saved, others came professing Christ, Juan Pokibiki, Marciano Justinana, Gido Masai, Ovidio Ganzales, and others — all men at first.

The men, immediately upon being saved, began to accompany us to the other *pueblos* for our services. I was impressed with that. We did not ask them to go; it just seemed a thing that automatically went with being saved. We were quite a cavalcade of horses and riders every Sunday afternoon.

Soon we were having professions in the other *pueblos*. You should not suppose that everything worked in storybook fashion, however. No, it was a far cry from that — more than a far cry; it was a far shriek. The temptation to drink was powerful, as our neighbor rancher would bring in alcohol. I was told time after time that a certain priest — I'll call him "Old Sal," for that's what I did call him, — was urging his friends in the area to bring in more and more booze, so that as the Indians stayed drunk, we would get discouraged and leave.

I would hate to try to prove that he did that, or that he was urging some of the "toughies" like Domingo and the *alcalde* to beat up our believers. We were told these things often enough that, as incredible as it seemed, we mostly believed it.

Old Sal was the priest in charge of our area. He usually came out once a year; but after we arrived, he began to come out often. There was a war on for the souls of the Chiquitanos. I considered it, and still do, as a war between the Lord and Satan.

Old Sal was mean and tough. He could, and did, ride a horse 50 miles a day, day after day. He threw our Bibles into the fire when he found them in the houses of the Indians. He took away our medicine and told the people they would burn in hell if they took any more of it from us. Some died right under our door step because of his terrorism. It was mostly the children who suffered.

Just so did the persecution happen, but not all at once. Gradually it built up as we were more and more successful in gaining converts.

One day Old Sal was in our village for a couple of days, and

the Indians and the ranchers were telling me things he was saying and doing. They said he was calling me a devil and was really making up some outrageous lies about me. I looked over to the village and saw a large crowd gathered at the schoolhouse, during the afternoon of his second day there. I knew he was about to leave so I hurried over there to test his mettle.

I had never met him face to face and did not really know what to expect. That he was no creampuff, I was certain. Most everyone feared the old rascal, but I did not know if it was a physical fear or a spiritual one. Nearly all the people in Bolivia fear the priests.

He was already mounted when I swung around the schoolhouse and suddenly appeared in his path. I saw a man of about 50 years, with a strong leathery face and cold blue eyes. He was sitting on a big, grey mule. As all the Austrian priests, he wore a full maroon robe that reached to his sandaled, cracked, and callused bare feet.

"Do I have the honor of addressing Senor S\_\_\_\_?" I asked, knowing full well I did. I did not call him Old Sal.

"*Senor,*" he acknowledged me with a pitiless stare. The crowd of Indians gathered in close, nudging one another and looking highly amused or very frightened, depending on their courage or knowledge or the matter.

"*Senor,*" I began, "I understand you have been calling me a devil and saying (thus and so) about me."

He turned pale as death — not because he was afraid of me, I knew, but because there was no graceful way to get out of his predicament. He had heard enough about me to be unsure of what I might do if he admitted to calling me names and telling lies about me. He knew that could be very sticky. On the other hand, to deny it all right in front of some of the very ones that had heard him say it was equally unhandy.

I watched as he struggled to get a firm grasp on the fundamentals of his problem. He looked around at the Chiquitanos; they looked at the ground.

Finally he said, "Why should you ask me such a question, here in the presence of these, our friends? Why would you not come to me personally and privately?"

“Because you say these things behind my back, to these our friends, when if you are going to call me names and tell falsehoods you ought to say them to my face.”

“I have not called you a devil!” he screamed at me. Here was the ultimate in lies. His face was contorted with rage. Foam came from his mouth and dripped down onto his maroon garments. It was a scene like you probably never saw. Several of the Indians darted around the corner of the schoolhouse.

“You have no right to be here! These people belong to us and you must leave! They do not want you here; we do not want you here; nobody wants you here!”

He was shaking violently and could hardly talk for the foam.

“Are you saying, then, that you have said nothing bad about me?” I asked again.

He spurred his mule forward, nearly running me down.

“Just leave here!” he cried and hurried on down the path without looking back.

I turned to the Indians, most of whom, were visibly shaken. They were murmuring softly, “*Muy malo, este sacerdote* (very bad, this priest); *mentiroso tambein* (liar, too).”

Actually the rough stuff and the slanderous lies used against us, instead worked for us. Our congregation continued to grow and people were saved nearly every week. The trips to the other villages on Sunday afternoons, were happy affairs as more and more of the Indians joined us for the horseback rides to and from. Usually we arrived back to San Simon about dark, and Mary Ann would always have some treat to eat which everyone enjoyed immensely.

It would be hard to overemphasize how much help Dwight was in our dealings with the Chiquitanos. They liked him a lot, and he felt the same about them. He visited with them as much as they wanted and showed more than we could, that we were interested in them. In short, he did naturally and easily what was very difficult for us, especially me. Small talk was and still is something that I can hardly accomplish.

When we had gained 10 believers in San Simon, we began having a Bible study fellowship at our house every Tuesday night. We had eight men and two women. No one but believers

were allowed to attend. Our fellowship was pretty close. It is a wonderful thing how sharing the gospel can bind folks together. We studied the Bible for nearly an hour and then had refreshments and fellowship.



## DOCTORING

Most of our days were taken up with maintaining our house, doctoring the sick, entertaining passing travelers in the dry season, (few people passed in the wet), and finding something to eat.

When we first moved to San Simon I had hired several men to cut logs and bring them into the sawmill. The sawmill was a scaffold where the logs were placed about six feet off the ground and cut into boards with a crosscut saw. I had two scaffolds and two pairs of sawyers down by the corrals under huge tree.

One morning after we had just about cut all the boards we needed, Gomercindo came up to tell me his sawing partner had not shown up to finish the last log. I told him I would go down and help him finish it. We sawed two more boards out of it. By the time we had finished those two boards, I was surely glad I had not gone off down there to saw up a whole log. It was terrible work. It is no wonder that all the Indians were so muscular.

Gomercindo said, "Whoo, we could saw up several logs without any trouble."

"Naw!" I said hurriedly. "We have plenty of boards."

Besides finishing the house, a lot of time was taken just to

keep it from falling down. Since it was made of mud, the rain would cause great chunks of it to fall out. There was nothing else but to plaster the outside with cement. What a great mistake it was for us to have made the walls so high. But once it was done we had to live with it.

Mary Ann took care of most of the doctoring in the village. Pink eye, headache, itch, insect bite, toothache and stomach parasites (worms mostly) were the main everyday items. Also we gave many antibiotic shots, for infections of every kind. There were many deaths all around us, mostly among the children.

Life being so hard may have caused the Indians to develop such a morbid sense of humor. If anyone got hurt or died in an accident, they would often think it was the funniest thing in the world. For example, a man from San Pablo told us that when the doctor in San Ignacio gave his little boy a shot, the boy died immediately. Several Indian men standing nearby heard it and they laughed and laughed. Once when I took a baby into San Ignacio to a doctor, he died before we got there. The Indians thought it was hilarious that I would make such a long trip only to have the baby die. We shamed them in this a lot, but they still could not keep a straight face when they heard of an accident or death.

Suffering was all around us, and there was never a lack of those who sought us out for help. It was hard to tell how sick most of them were because they carried on equally whether the ailment was minor or major. Sometimes they would be moaning and groaning and we expected them to be dead soon, only to learn that they had gotten out of bed and gone on a long journey. Conversely, sometimes when we pronounced them "not very bad," they would up and die. One thing we were certain of: we were not doctors. One doctor told me, "You don't have to worry about a Bolivian, if he were half as bad as he let on, he would be in a coma and wouldn't be able to say anything." That's pretty humorous but inaccurate I'm afraid.

Worms were the worst enemy of the children. The village people did not build toilets (they thought our's ridiculous); consequently they were always stepping in both human and animal feces with their bare feet. Worm eggs were transferred to their

feet to their mouths via their hands. Once in the stomach the eggs hatched, and the vicious cycle would continue. They allowed domestic animals of all kinds to roam in and out of their houses at will.

We dreaded the business of worming, because of the ignorance of the parents who failed to observe the children afterwards. More than a few children died (not from our doctoring, thank the Lord) as a result of worming and no bowel movement afterward. For this reason, when it was not possible for us to observe the child personally, we didn't go for those thin and messy worms.

When we saw precious little children whose stomachs were full of parasites begin to eat dirt, we knew they would die. I don't know exactly why the children would eat dirt when they got that kind of worm; I'm sure someone knows why. Perhaps they just crave dirt, or maybe their stomachs hurt so badly they just fill them with dirt to stop the pain. For whatever reason, one can't live long with his intestines full of dirt. And we could not bear just to ignore them when we saw them sitting about eating earth by the handful.

One little girl in El Valle was eating dirt regularly. Two children in her family had already died after doing that for a while. Their mother, a rather distressing woman, was not capable of following instructions, so we were afraid to give the child the two strong doses of medicine without knowing for sure if she afterwards had a good bowel movement. So we gave the medicine and then a laxative; then we closely monitored her until she did eliminate properly. This involved much running back and forth from San Simon to El Valle on the motorcycle.

She had the bowel movements, but we discovered we had not gotten the wretched worms. There followed only one course and that was to take the child into San Ignacio to the hospital. The mother agreed; but on the day we came to get her, both mother and child had gone away to another village. The mother could not bear to have her little girl taken away for a month and had gone away with her, thus pronouncing a sentence of death upon her sole remaining child.

We were more fortunate with the son of our wash woman,

Juana. We had tried three times to worm our little friend, Juancito, but we could not kill the worms. Finally, we told Juana it would be necessary to take him to San Ignacio to the hospital and he would have to stay there for a month, taking a series of doses of worm medicine until his system was free of them. He was already eating dirt every day.

What a struggle it was for Juana to trust us with her 5-year-old. She cried every day, but on the appointed day she delivered him to me. Little Juancito was crying when I put him in the airplane. He was crying when I left him with the kind nurses at the Catholic hospital. But somehow he got through it and was given a new lease on life. There was a happy reunion when I brought the lad home. He entertained both children and adults for days with tales of stern adventure which had befallen him during his 30-day sojourn in a far country.

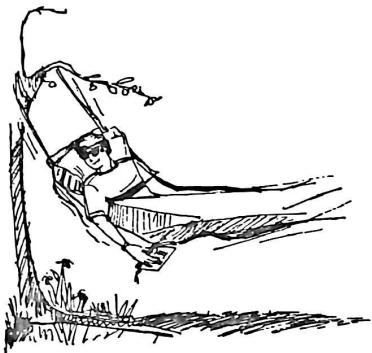
Now and then we would bring out doctors and dentists, who either had a desire to help the Indians or just would come out because it was a chance to see some new country. Marvin would fly them out from San Ignacio or Santa Cruz and then fly them back. Especially the dentists were useful, because there were many toothache problems among the Chiquitanos.

We tried not to just give things away, feeling the people needed to assume as much responsibility as they could for their own physical well-being. Inasmuch as they had little, if any, money, we soon began to acquire a flock of various fowl. Receiving feathered meat in return for medicine and other things worked out well for us and the Indians too. We accumulated 20 chickens, one rooster, four ducks, and two turkeys. Never would I have dreamed that chickens were so fine. They sang from dawn 'til dusk.

I recall a school teacher in the states who was also a part-time chicken grower. Suddenly he quit teaching school and went into full-time chicken growing. When he was asked why he gave up his profession for the chicken business, he replied, "I found that the more I was around kids, the better I liked chickens." Perhaps, I too, had begun to prefer the company of chickens.

Our little rooster left something to be desired. He tried to crow, but he was about such a crower as I was a missionary. He had a chipmunkian voice which when emitting from his odd,

somewhat prehistoric looking head, left him bereft of any sort of credibility.



# 14

## THE CHRISTMAS GOOSE

Much of our meat came from the wild game we killed or got from others. I usually had too much to do to spend time chasing wild game, but Dwight loved hunting above all things and took every opportunity to pass an hour, a night, or several days and nights hunting, usually deer or wild pig. His companion on these jaunts was almost always Gomercindo, who had quite a bit of savvy as a woodsman.

The correspondence studies from the University of Nebraska which Dwight took had become increasingly difficult. He had started out studying all morning with the afternoons off for hunting. But as the courses became harder he was having to stay at it in the afternoon also.

The day before Christmas Eve, he began to say he ought to have Christmas Eve off in order to go and kill a Christmas goose or possibly even a Christmas deer. He "guaranteed" that if we would let him off and if I would go with him to spend the night in the wilderness, he would show me a place where I could see nothing but deer as far as my eye was able to see. I caught the spirit of his enthusiasm and told him to go saddle the horses while I got the gear together. His mother said she would prepare



*Dwight, Erlan and Gomercindo prepare to butcher a deer that provided for several days.*

some food for us.

As we rode out of the yard it began to rain. I fell in behind Dwight as he took the trail for the mountains. He was headed for a great, natural salt lick, he said, and it would require two hours of "stepping on out" to reach it.

Five hours later we were still stepping on out, but we had not seen any salt lick. It was still raining.

He was used to that sort of thing, I mean riding for hours in

the rain and all, and could not understand why I was beginning to lose interest in the venture.

"I know it's around here somewhere," he said, looking furtively this way and that.

I withdrew deeper into my parka and said nothing.

Suddenly he exclaimed, "Why, here it is. We are at it now!"

I peered out of my hood and said nothing. It was raining harder.

"Well, no question about it," he said with great enthusiasm, "this is it. Let's get the horses staked out, and I'll show you where the deer are."

The light was going fast by the time we had hobbled and staked the beasts. Mosquitoes had come in clouds, and the rain had slacked off to a drizzle.

We were in a grove of tall, slender trees that appeared to be growing up out of a very shallow lagoon. It was hard to tell about its being a lagoon because so much rain had fallen that water was standing everywhere.

We looked around for a proper tree in which to hang our hammocks. Dwight found a large tree and pointed to a place about thirty feet up in it. "Climb up there," he suggested seriously, "and hang your hammock."

This I flatly refused to do, feeling that a fall from up there would very likely disable me.

My refusal to swing my hammock among the stars brought forth the prediction from him that we would consequently see no deer.

I said that I could not see why my aversion to hanging my hammock at such an altitude should result in our not seeing any deer. But I offered to go a quarter or half mile away, where I could string my hammock near the ground so as not to disturb the game, and he could ascend to the top of the tree and swing his hammock if he wanted to.

He considered the proposition thoughtfully, but decided we should compromise the altitude appropriate for our hammocks and remain together.

Just so it happened. We put our hammocks five feet off the ground. He stood on my back and climbed into his and I swung

into mine from a tree limb. The mosquitoes were large, fierce and busy. It was still raining.

He was in his hammock under a blanket and poncho. I was seated in mine, taking off my boots, when a large, white goose landed in a tree out in front of us. (Geese often land in trees in Bolivia.) It was so dark that I could hardly see him. Dwight drew a shotgun bead on him and when the trusty piece spoke, down came tumbling the Christmas goose. We had to turn out then and gut him.

With Dwight in his hammock again, I was once more extracting my boots, when one of the ropes holding my hammock parted and I was deposited with a splash into the mud and water. We laughed so hard my head began to hurt in back, just above my neck.

Out we came into the rain again so I could cut his rope to replace my rotten one.

When I reminded him of his previous desire to place me thirty feet up, we became very silly. Some of the Indians did put their hammocks up that high, when hunting around a waterhold or salt lick, but I still think it is an outlandish thing to do.

At last we were stretched out on our beds again, eating the meat and bread that Mary Ann had fixed for us. It was raining right down, and the mosquitoes were as bad as they get. I was under my pancho and blanket, head and all, breathing through a tiny hole. The mosquitoes were eating my nose up.

Dwight said, "You are not going to kill a deer covered up like that."

"I'm not as interested in killing a deer right now," I explained, "as I am in these mosquitoes not killing me."

For some time it was quiet. Dwight was playing the beam of his flashlight around among the trees, hoping to spot a deer. The only sound was the water falling from the trees to which Dwight's hammock was tied. When he moved he would get soaked with cold water. He was trying to swat mosquitoes quietly and was growling under his breath.

In about 45 minutes when I was nearly asleep, he said, "Daddy." I grunted. "I believe I'll just forget the deer and concentrate on survival."

I chuckled about that several times in the night, and a bunch of times since.

The next morning I was glad to see daylight and that the rain had stopped. I felt like an accordion after spending the night in that hammock. Hammocks are great if you don't ever have to get in one. While Dwight "snuck" around the other side of the salt lick to where he had killed a deer a few weeks previously, I broke camp and saddled the horses.

We made several other lagoons and saw quite a few geese. Dwight wanted to stalk each one, but I persuaded him to pass them by in as much as we already had one. We were still looking for a deer.

After two hours, we found ourselves in back of the ranch of the Old Ones. Before we even reached their house, they had spotted us and both of them, plus all the servants, were standing out in back shading their eyes, trying to see who was coming upon them from "out of the wilderness," as they put it.

Don Agapito and Dona Flora began to shout orders for "*cafecitas y empanadas*" (coffee and bread) for "*Don Jul y Don Guite*." Agapito was dancing around, his great belly bouncing as he laughed heartily about Dwight and me passing the night in the wilderness.

"Oh, you Americans are valiant people," he cried merrily.

After we had had our coffee and bread the old Don said that we must "prove" the cane juice that he was at that moment in the process of squeezing from his cane press. The press was sitting right in his front yard. A patient oxen was pulling the long pole round and round, which in turn moved the gears that actually squeezed the juice from the cane that a servant was shoving into them. The juice was warm and sweet, very delicious to drink.

As we drank the cane juice, our conversation drifted to talk of the trouble that the bullies had been giving our believers in San Simon.

Dona Flora said it was the school teacher's fault. "He's a black heart," she said indignantly.

"No," argued Don Agapito, "he's a *comunista!*"

"He's a black heart," Don Flora repeated.



*Jurl and Dwight traveled many miles by horse.*

"I, tell you he's a *comunisto*," the Don glowered threateningly.

"*Bueno*," she conceded, "he's a *comunisto con corazon negro* (a communist with a black heart)!"

The old Don leaned over and told me confidentially that the school teacher had, at the Fifth of April celebration, made the kids at school salute the red flag and sing the communist national anthem. Of course, I knew better than that because I had been present at that celebration.

There never was a dull moment around the Old Ones. They really tickled us the way they would get so excited over things we brought them from Santa Cruz. We brought them two *sombreros* like mine and him a handsaw. They put their hats on and danced a jig while he waved his new saw aloft.

The thing that really pleased him the most was that the things we got in far off Santa Cruz for them seldom cost them anything in actual money. By the time we got through trading

for his work he did for us in making saddles, holsters, hiring his oxen and cart, plus the meat we brought from them, they hardly ever owed us any more money for the things we brought.

After a time of receiving all those "fine" things from the big city without laying out a *peso*, Don Agapito would lean back, pat his great stomach and say, "*Que linda, este vida* (How fine, this life)." Yet they always managed to give more than they got. They kept us loaded down with oranges, grapefruit, bananas, *platanos*, yucca and many other things which they grew on their ranch. They were certainly a young couple for their 72 years.

Dwight and I said good-bye to our friends and continued on toward home. As we approached the house, Dwight asked, "What's that on the porch?"

It was something like a big snake head raising and lowering. Such a thing as a big snake on the porch would not have been farfetched at all. It looked pretty weird and scared both of us a bit.

As we got closer the answer came when Mary Ann raised up. She was thrashing about in her daily calisthenics. The snake head was her foot raising and lowering as she rolled about on the porch.



## BICHOS

We found it convenient to allow two large and very fat toads and one other frog to live unmolested in our house, in order to have them join us against the hordes of insects that constantly molested us. Of course, there were many other frogs that lived in the house, too, but they were not as personable as the aforementioned ones.

We had also two favorite turtles and a host of praying mantises. Anything that was against mosquitoes, we were for. Only rarely were we not troubled by mosquitoes. Surely no one could like a mosquito. But it would be easier to like one than to ignore it. As the rainy season approached, and subsequently took over, the mosquitoes became nearly unbearable. Even though our windows were all screened, they were still able to find their way in. By using a lot of mosquito spray, we could exist until bedtime, at which time we escaped to the heavenly mosquito nets. Without them, sleep would have been out of the question.

The livestock and wild animals suffered terribly and it was not unknown for the mosquitoes to kill animals that were weak and sickly. We let old "P," our dog, in the house at night during the worst of the season.

While the mosquitoes may have been the greatest pests, they were not the only *bichos* we had to contend with. The Spanish word *bicho* covers every non-human, wild-type thing. I don't know of an English word that could cover that much ground.

One great haven for *bichos* was our grass roof. No honest person would pretend to know what all lived in that roof. It seemed to be mostly bats that lived there permanently. One of our (mine and Dwight's) chief sources of amusement was to sit in our living room and shoot bats out of the roof with little balls of hardened mud fired from our sling shots. Mary Ann frowned on this type of pastime, but she hated the bats even more; so she tolerated it.

One *bicho* that we all hated and feared was the eight-inch centipedes that entered the roof to catch, kill, and eat the bats. You talk about something lethal, even a small one could knock you to your knees if it popped it to you. We always knew when a bat was caught by one, for there would ensue the most distressing squeak.

Often the centipedes fell from the high roof (we had no ceiling, other than the roof) and would hit the floor with a "splat." No other creature that fell sounded the same. The sound was indescribably sinister. Without seeing it we always could tell if it was a snake, bat, rat, beetle; or one of those dreadful centipedes that had fallen. When we heard that splat, we would be off in pursuit immediately, and almost always get our *bicho*.

Once, there was an enormous "splat," and we heard it rolling down the stairs into the lower part of the house. In our shock at the size it must have been, we hesitated before we ran to find it and let it get away without even seeing it. We searched and searched but did not find it. There wasn't any walking around barefooted for a while after that.

What could fall out of that roof into your face in the night did not lend itself to much comfortable thought. However, we did not often sleep without a net.

One night it was so terribly hot that we just could not sleep under the net, so we had pinned it back away from us. In the wee hours we were awakened to a sound of what seemed to be a swarm of bees. But since it was pitch dark the possibility of a

swarm of bees being abroad did not appear likely. Mary Ann got the flashlight and shined it up into the eave of the roof and, behold, there was a swarm of those little, high strung, depraved, black hornets.

Before I could protest, she had climbed upon the head of the bed and blasted them with the spray. They took in the poison and fell forthwith. As they plummeted to the bed en masse, she bounded off it and ran like an ostrich from the room, taking the flashlight with her, leaving me to grapple around among those dying hornets. I managed to sit square on one and suffered the consequences. I tell you it smarted, and it continued to do so for the next five hours.

Mary Ann drew what amusement she could from that incident and was still so employed the next day. As we were riding our horses down a narrow trail, which was darkened by the great trees that overshadowed it, I spied ahead in the dimness one of those spider webs that has about a zillion big, fat-bodied spiders living in it. Just before I rode into it, I turned my beast from the trail and said, "Hon, you go ahead of me, I want to look at something here."

The web was squarely across the trail and she rode right into it. You talk about a show. She flipped her hair until it all stood on end. She tore her blouse and squealed. She kicked and shrieked while frailling about like a windmill. I just knew her horse would run away, but he plodded on unconcerned. I guess he understood because he was always making a big deal out of anthills, logs, and fences.

But back to the grass roof — snakes also enjoyed hunting for bats there. I cannot be certain, but I think they were afraid of the centipedes, too. I know we have sat in the living room and watched snakes running around up there as though something were after them.

The snake we were most afraid of was a small one called *yopi*. It is about the size of the average copperhead — maybe a little smaller — and compares with it in poison. There were much more poisonous snakes around, but the *yopi* was our chief concern because it liked to come into the house, especially up in the roof. It is not a bad-tempered creature; one would almost have



*Mary Ann holds one of the boa constrictors which frequently came into the yard.*

to step on it or put his hand on it for it to bite. That was easy to do though because it chose to lie about under foot and hand so much.

The snakes we feared the least were the large boas and other constrictors that lived in the lagoon and high grass around the house. Dwight and I did not fear them, but we did not care for a deep friendship with them either as Mary Ann seemed to.

She soon got a reputation (one she still has) as a handler of the snakes. So when a big snake was captured, it usually ended up at our house. Word of the capture would spread and a crowd would gather to "watch Dona Anna Maria hold the great snake." Actually the big constrictors were very easy going, for the most part, especially the boas. If they once got angry though, they could be dangerous. Most of the Indians were afraid of them. One day when Mary Ann was fooling around with a seven-foot boa, one of the women asked, "How come you can hold these big snakes, and they kill us all the time?"

Juan Pokibiki was about the only Indian that would hold a snake, and he wanted his picture taken while holding a big boa someone had caught. While the others would not dare even

touch it, they wanted in the picture too. So they came creeping up behind Juan so as to be in it. When Juan heard the camera click he just slung the boa over his head, and it dropped around the necks of the others. They nearly tore our barbed wire fence down in their rush to escape.

Another *bicho* that occupied much of our time was the lowly worm. We observed early after our move to San Simon that the Chiquitanos did not worry in the least about the fruit they ate being full of worms. In fact, there was a fruit that usually had a fat, white grub in it. They would suck the grub out and let it crawl around on their tongues before swallowing it down.

Since almost all the fruit was infected with worms — mostly I mean wild fruit; the oranges, grapefruit, bananas, and other domestic fruit did not have worms — we began to eat it, worms and all, too, reasoning as Dwight said, that the worms were just fruit with legs and eyes.

One day we wanted some rice but found each grain was full of tiny white worms. "Okay," I said, "I feel like a pot of peas anyway."

We took those peas outside and sifted through them, finding that each one had a little bug in it. After five minutes of sifting, Mary Ann said, "Look, we've already got this many." She had six. Finally, we just sifted all the bugs, worms, and webs out of the corn meal and had corn bread.

During the rainy season there was mold, eternal rottenness and odors. And insects, insects, and still more insects. Every morning there were piles of dirt filled with termites all over the downstairs floors. They were literally eating our house up.

We often exulted in the fact that under our couch, in the living room, there was in reserve, 100 American dollars, tucked up in the springs, ready for instant use in case of an emergency. We were only 50 miles from the Brazilian border and planned to flee there should there be a grand revolution in Bolivia.

So we fondled this pleasant fact from time to time. Dwight decided he would see such a marvel for himself. We watched in amusement as he turned the couch upside down and looked for a good while. At last he pointed out that there may have been 100 dollars under there at one time, but no longer did that situa-

tion exist. An hour later, after a search of all the living room furniture, we were forced to conclude he was right.

We knew the bugs had gotten it. There were many types of bugs that would have been ecstatic over the prospects of consuming 100 American dollars. Most of them had never had even a bite of a Bolivian *peso*.

Mary Ann laid her little New Testament down on the kitchen table for a while. When she returned an insect had cut a page from two directions, pulled the edges together overhead, glued them with its own glue, and was reposing inside his holy temple as snug as a bug in a — well, in a Bible.

So we had bugs, worms, spiders, toads, snakes, turtles, bats, mosquitoes, termites, centipedes, and other assorted creatures too numerous to mention, living in the house with us. But above all and beyond all, the worms that got in our feet were the most outlandish. The first time we observed this oddity was when Dwight called attention to a movement under the skin on the bottom of his foot. We peered closely and sure enough there was something in there. He said it had been itching.

We cut in there and out rolled a red worm all balled up around what appeared to be a gristle. It came unwound and began to thrash around on the floor. Gomercindo passed by about that time and came in to take a look at it.

*“Whoo, muy malo este bicho (It's from a mosquito).”*

He said it was necessary to search one's feet every night, find the eggs the mosquito has laid beneath the skin and dig them out before they hatch as the one in Dwight's foot had done. The hole left in his foot was as big as the end of Mary Ann's thumb.



## **A JEEP WOULD BE NICE**

The 75 mile trail to San Ignacio was soon as familiar to us as our own back yard. About every two weeks we made the 150 mile round trip by motorcycle. We did not actually depend on these trips for supplies as much as for a chance to get our mail, see certain persons or just to get away for a day or two.

Marvin brought us supplies from Santa Cruz once a month. During the dry season, when trucks were running the roads, our barrels of gasoline and kerosene could be brought out.

The ranchers and Indians thought of San Ignacio as being a long journey away. It was five days by ox cart, two and a half days by horse and three hard days by foot. Some made it by horse in a long day and a half. Tomas Salvatierra was known for making the fastest trips by horse. He would leave at 2:00 a.m. and arrive at noon the next day. But he had been known to ride a horse to death. The people frowned on these fast trips on horses. He could not have ridden a mule to death, but he didn't like to ride mules.

The motorcycles, jeeps, and trucks came out usually when the roads were dry, in from six to ten hours. No one had ever known of a trip being made into San Ignacio and back the same

day. Of course, the airplane went even to Santa Cruz and back the same day; but the Chiquitanos could not identify with that, so they were not much impressed.

In casting about for some way to impress the Indians as a short cut to gaining their respect, Dwight and I decided we would go into San Ignacio and back the same day.

The men and boys gathered at the house early that morning — some to send for small items and others just to see us off. They could not get over Dwight having his own cycle. Of course, people in the states do not consider a Honda 50 to be much of a serious cycle, but in Bolivia it was considered to be perfectly capable of making any journey that needed to be made.

"When will you be back, pastor?" they all wanted to know.

"*Oh, en la noche!* (in the night)," This I said very nonchalantly.

They sucked in their collective breaths. "*No, es muy lego.* (very far). You can't go and come the same day."

"*Si*, there is no problem; we can."

"*Guite*, too?"

"Yes, we both will be back tonight."

And we did, we arrived back about 11:00 that night, completely beat and vowing never to do anything like again. One hundred fifty miles of sand, rocks, mountains, and rivers will take it out of you. The road seemed to say at times, "Look how far I can go and still be called a road."

Mary Ann said it was what we deserved for showing off; she doubted if the Indians would be impressed anyway.

But she was wrong. When we got up the next morning several of the men were out in the yard, gathered around the cycles. I walked out on the porch and greeted them. "*Bueno dias, amigos.*"

"*Bueno dias, pastor.* We heard you come in the night very late, and we watched to make sure it was you and Guite. *Que cosa maravilloso* (What a marvelous thing.) To go and come the same day."

"*Ah, no es nada* (It's nothing)," I said, turning back into the house to hide my wide grin.

In a little while Don Agapito came riding up shouting, "Ho, ho, ho, *Don Jul*, you are like a *Boliviano*, you still haven't gotten off to the *pueblo*." When the Indians told him I had already gone and come back, he looked sad, and said, "Oh, we know so little of life; what must the rest of the world think of us?"

You might think it a juvenile thing to gain respect in this way, but you have to realize that it was a hard country where a man is judged by what he can do with his hands and by the courage he has. I gained a reputation as willing to do what others were hesitant to do, and it helped me in several ways.

As the rainy season began to get in swing, the cycles were more and more handicapped by the mud and water. You should not think of it as raining day and night; every day about the same hour, there would come up great thunderclouds and rain would fall two or three hours. Then the sun would come out again and the humidity would make it seem as if one were breathing under water.

As the rivers, creeks, and low places filled with water, much of the trail would be inundated. Then we could go easier by horse, which was not much fun. It was splash/plop, splash/plop — mile after mile. We began to wish mightily for a jeep.

One trip Mary Ann and I made into San Ignacio at the beginning of the rainy season, convinced us to buy a jeep. At times we got desperate for mail. Sometimes it would be sent out with this one and that one, but at other times no one was coming out and we would not have our mail for as high as three weeks. We had received letters from loved ones at home saying that my brother-in-law, Gene Gambill, and my brother, Ron, were coming down from the States to visit us. This news excited us so much that there never was a day that we didn't talk about it right on up until the day they arrived. Anyway we were so anxious to know exactly when they were coming that Mary Ann and I decided to try riding the muddy trail to San Ignacio and get the mail. Practically all "*mobilidad*" had stopped coming out because of the mud and water.

So on January 20 at 7:45 a.m., Mary Ann turned over to Dwight about three notebooks full of instructions on how to

survive until we returned, and we set forth. We had not gone far until it began to pour down rain. I put the pancho on and she pulled the tail of it up over her head. We rode on in peace and dryness. Up in the mountains were about six miles of the trail that was as slick as grease when it was wet. One bobble and you had had it.

Soon the brakes were wet and we were left to descend those steep inclines into the ravines, brakeless. We had some close calls. A motorcycle is a dangerous machine under the best of conditions; in driving rain and slick mountain roads, it is an instrument of death.

We encountered Santiago Vaca's truck blocking the road near the ranch called, Mercedes. Both front wheels were off and no one was about. We had to take to the woods to get around it.

We plunged off into a creek that was a good deal deeper than I thought, and only by really pouring the coal to the old Jawa were we able to make the far bank and come slipping and sliding out.

The road passed through a dense jungle about five miles out of San Ignacio. Halfway through this wooded area we met a bald and mangy fellow with very fierce eyes. He told us that a herd of cattle had just entered the other end of the trail where it came into the woods. We would have to go back to the last savana or pull off into the brush and keep very still, for the cattle were wild and easily spooked. We elected (or I did, Mary Ann wanted to go back) to get off in a little nook in the jungle. The fierce-eyed one followed us to it and sat on his horse until we saw the cattle round the bend a 100 yards away.

"Don't even bat an eye," he said gruffly, and rode on.

We could hear the cattle coming, but could not see them until they were right on us. Somehow they knew we were there before they could see us and began to snort, bellow and bunch up. The *vaqueros* drove them forward and as they passed us, our hearts beat faster; they were terrible beasts, with their very long pointed horns and awful, frightened eyes. I was sure wishing we had gone back. Mary Ann was trembling as she squeezed her arms tightly around my waist.

There must have been one hundred of them. As they passed,

each one looked as though it might run those murderous horns through us. The *vaqueros* were shouting and probably cursing (we didn't know any curse words). The cowboys must have been sons of the fierce-eyed one up in front, because they had the same kind of eyes which they used to glare at us. They did not return my salute.

In spite of all these hindrances, we entered the *pueblo* about 3:00 and went straight to the post office. But we had ridden for nothing as far as letters from Gene or Ron were concerned. We did have a letter from the missions office and *The Gleaner*, our missions magazine.

It was very disappointing to have no news as to when the fellows were coming, but we got other business taken care of and visited with the son of the Old Ones. Also we went by to see Juan and Olga.

It was thundering and lightning as we moved into one of Carlos Mayser's rooms which we had rented for the night. We wondered what the rain would do to the creek that we had nearly not been able to cross that day. If it got any deeper, we would not be able to get over it the next day.

The next day was Friday and I bounded forth at 5:00 urging Mary Ann to do likewise. We were loaded and pulling out by 5:30. The skies were gray, low and full of rain. The early rising "*puebleros*" stared at us with obvious curiosity, and without embarrassment, as we rode out of the *pueblo*.

On the trail the cycle was humming along perfectly, thanks to a local mechanic. It had mud tires on the back and on the front and when we were in mud holes knee deep, they never slipped.

One time in seeking for a way around a bad place we wandered farther and farther into the fields away from the road. The water got deeper and deeper until we found ourselves in a shallow lagoon about an acre in size. The water was up to our knees and the grass as high as the handlebars. Mary Ann had to get off finally and wade out while I continued to swim around on the cycle, hunting high and dry ground. It is nearly impossible to drown out a Jawa I guess, at least I never did.

Back on the trail, we entered a very deep mud hole and got the front wheel turned sideways, getting the machine down on

top of us. Mary Ann was pinned under it with just her head above water.

I shouted, "Get up, get up, and help me get this thing up out of the water!" I was afraid it would never start again.

She was trying to hold her head above water and say at the same time, "I'm pinned and can't get up!" I got tickled and could not summon the strength to pull the cycle off her, until she got kind of ugly about it. Then I managed the energy to get it up.

When we arrived back at the creek that was so deep on the way down, it was, for some unknown reason, nearly dry. We plunged off into it and promptly buried up to the chasis in the quicksand-like mud. The more we shoved and worked the deeper it mired.

It was not far from the ranch, *Cabeza de Toro* (head of the bull), where I knew they had oxen. By and by I got back to the scene with one of those ponderous beasts, which merely leaned into his yoke and the motorcycle came free with a sound not unlike that of a cow pulling her foot out of the mud.

We looked like two people made of mud by the time we got back to San Simon.

Dwight said, as he looked down on us from the porch, "Well, I guess now you'll buy a jeep."



## CARNAVEL

Since *Carnavel* was near, we thought it best to postpone our hunt for a jeep until that wicked time was past. There were about 20 people who had made a profession of faith in Jesus by then, and we feared for them during the week of *Carnavel*.

I may have known at one time what *Carnavel* is all about, if so I have forgotten now. All I know is that it is celebrated all over South and Central America and in Mexico too. The only thing I can compare it to is the Mardi Gras of New Orleans. It is a time of reveling with much dancing and drunkenness.

The Chiquitanos didn't really need *Carnavel* as an excuse to get drunk. Whenever there was anything to get drunk on, they would proceed in that direction with all due haste. It was no uncommon thing for them to pound their drums, wail their flutes, and dance in drunkenness for three or four days without stopping.

We knew that at *Carnavel* the temptation for the believers would be even greater than usual. For one thing we expected there to be plenty of alcohol available. *Carnavel* is around the second week of February.

As more and more Indians turned to Christ, the persecution

stepped up. When the old year passed away, and the new year came on, a new and more sinister force made itself felt. I will not try to convince anyone of anything, but merely relate what began to happen.

This new force, as far as I am concerned, was a spiritual one. There is a vast difference between persecution from man and that "wrestling against" what is not flesh and blood, as Paul spoke of in Ephesians 6:12. The devil is not all-wise, all-present, or all-powerful. If he is in Europe at a given time, then certainly he is not in South America at the same time. I do not presume to say that I thought Satan himself came to San Simon to do battle with us, but there are other spiritual personalities who have aligned themselves with that old serpent. I'm of the opinion that one or more of these perverted spirits had a deep interest in the souls of the Chiquitanos.

Had it not been for the grace of God, we would have been knocked down for the count, for some of the blows left us reeling. Some of the wiles of the devil were enacted in such a personal way that I cannot even speak of them. But in it all I was made to realize fully that as far as the devil's crowd was concerned, we were involved in a no-holds-barred, knock-down, and drag-out battle for the souls of those Indians.

Prior to the first of the year, mysterious things had begun to happen, but there were only annoying, not serious. The first of these events that I can recall occurred on November 8. I entered the room where I kept all my tools on a big table and hanging on the walls and found them scattered all over the floor. I wondered who could have done it for no one came in there except one employee, besides my family. But I did not think about it long. Later in November we put a chicken in a cage in that same room; the next morning the chicken was gone and we never saw it again. The doors and windows had been locked in the night.

It was during that time that our \$100 had disappeared from under the couch. We laid it to bugs, but I reserve the right to think if the wicked spiritual forces around San Simon had had any need of American dollars, they certainly would have taken them.

Late in December a thing began to occur that, at the time, I passed off as natural, though inexplicable. In the wee hours, our aladdin lamp globes would suddenly shatter. This happened twice in December. We would awaken with a start and find the glass scattered about over the floor.

As *Carnavel* approached we were having souls saved at practically every service. In fact, the Sunday it started three grown people were saved. There was a direct correlation between the deliverance of souls and the sudden manifestation of this new force. Let me say again, it was not the same as the persecution we had been getting from men. It was much more fearful.

On January 18 we had our first really frightening experience with the "presence" of the evil force. That is, this was the first time we actually felt it. It was about 2:00 a.m. when I was awakened with a dreadful feeling, like someone was standing over me in a threatening way. Thinking I had had a bad dream, I lay quietly so as not to awaken Mary Ann. But the feeling persisted and got worse, until finally I shook my wife awake.

I asked her to light the lamp and get the Bible. Her selections coincided exactly with the situation. The only one I recorded in my journal the next day was Psalm 27:1-3. The first verse spoke to my heart, "*The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*" The other passages she read were just as fitted to the occasion also.

As she read the passages the fear began to abate and the dread subsided. In thirty minutes I was feeling normal again. Afterwards, I attributed the experience as caused by some strong antibiotics I had taken due to being bitten by a large, venomous ant that afternoon. I thought probably I had been hallucinating.

Later, however, these experiences were repeated several times and we found that in every case only Bible reading and prayer would restore calm in our hearts. All we know, for the most part, of the wickedness of evil spirits, is what the Bible tells us, and there is more implied than outright said.

As the time of *Carnavel* neared, the Indians were having more drunken *fiestas*; they would cry and shout all night, sometimes for three days at a time. We felt the force of evil most during

this time. Mary Ann, who was not one to be afraid of anyone much, would go out on the porch or out into the yard, only to come rushing back in, pale and frightened, claiming, "There's someone out there."

At first it was funny and I would say, "Well, I'll go see who it is as I'd like to see the person who could scare you that much."

But there would be no one, and at times I could feel the "presence" she felt. How shall I describe it? We soon learned that it was mostly threat, like a bully who blusters but never actually touches his victim. It was definitely a feeling of hatred, as though a great shape was looming over us with malevolence and loathing. This, combined with the pounding drums, wailing flutes, and weird shouts of the drunken Chiquitanos made us feel at times like we were in an insane asylum.

It became apparent after awhile that something had to give. The answer came when we began reading the Bible four and five times a day. We prayed specifically to the Lord, asking Him to come to our assistance and drive the evil forces away from our house. Soon we noticed a lessening of these experiences; when they came we would say, "You can do nothing and you know it." At these times we would quote a scripture and/or testify of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We never quit reading the Bible and praying often during the rest of our stay in San Simon. Finally this type of harrassment started tapering off and eventually stopped altogether.

But it did not stop until long after *Carnavel*. We planned a service for our believers for each night of *Carnavel*, so that they would have somewhere to go while the others "partied."

*Carnavel* started on Sunday. On Friday night before, our kerosene pressure lantern (this was our main light) quit working and I could not get it to go at all. On Saturday a wind sprang up out of nowhere and blew one of our two aladdin lamps off a table, breaking it all to pieces. This left us with only one aladdin lamp and a tiny kerosene lantern to face the nights of *Carnavel*. When we had all the lamps lit at our house, the Indians loved it. They said, "It lights up our whole village."

On Sunday night, long after we had gone to bed, we were awakened to the sound of our one remaining aladdin lamp

globe cracking, popping and finally shattering. I shouted into the darkness, "You can't stop us. Go ahead and destroy the lantern, too. We'll still have our services every night." And we did — by adopting the lighting system of the Indians. We put wicks into little cans of kerosene.

On Sunday night the *fiesta* started and continued all night and all day on Monday. What was happening was that different ones were inviting the musicians to their house and the people were drinking all the *chicha* and alcohol at each house before moving on to the next.

On Monday night we were pleased to see every believer coming up the path to our house for the regular Bible study, with their Bibles in their hands. We had been told that out of all of them only Serjio had been drunk. But he came, too. He could have been drinking still, but he chose to come to Bible study. Believe me, on that mission field, you took your encouragement where you could find it.

Manuel started to drink, he said, but instead went hunting. Marciano who used to be first drunk and last sober had not had any alcohol. But he was playing a drum for their dancing. Francisco, who had a terrible feebleness for drinking, had not gotten drunk so far.

We had not said a word about their dancing, figuring it was by far the less of the evils. It was mostly just hopping around anyway. We did tell them to observe where they saw alcohol and avoid those places.

Low and marvelous to behold, on Tuesday the *pueblo* ran out of booze completely and the *fiesta* bogged down and finally petered out. The drinkers were frantic and we were happy. The believers were relieved as they were no longer under temptation. We praised God for it and went on with our services the rest of the week.



18

## WE BUY A JEEP

Having negotiated, with our believers, safely past *Carnavel* with all its pitfalls, we felt free to pursue our hope of buying a Jeep. Gomercindo was moved onto the front porch and given instructions as to how to care for our sizeable flock of feathered meat.

Marvin flew in about mid-morning and we loaded in our stuff for an indefinite stay in Santa Cruz. In San Ignacio we let down long enough to get the mail, in which was the news that Ron and Gene would be coming to visit us in May. It was a great excitement to us to anticipate their visit.

Our trips to Santa Cruz were so seldom that the Jeep hunting trip was like a vacation to us. It was about three hundred miles from our house to Santa Cruz, which was a bustling city of some 250,000 people. It offered many luxuries that San Simon or even San Ignacio did not have. To Mary Ann and me the greatest luxury was the variety of food, a welcome change from our monotonous diet in San Simon. Every night at 8:00 we could be found at the China Law Restaurant eating our favorite Chinese food.

Although we would not admit it, the thing Dwight most en-

joyed about the city was looking at all the pretty girls. He thought they were an improvement over the Indian girls.

After we had bought a lot of supplies and sent them on back with Marvin, I began to look for a Jeep in earnest. We put an ad in the paper that we wanted to buy one and the first thing on Tuesday morning a man showed up with two, 1965 models. He wanted about \$2,000.00 for each of them. One of them caught my eye right away. It was a bright orange with a white top and had five new oversized tires. On the front bumper was a big winch with 100 yards of cable. I drove it around some and he said we would go out to his ranch the next day and put it through its paces.

When he came by early the next morning, he said it would only take three hours to go out to his ranch and back. Dwight and I climbed in and we were gone the whole day. He was a distressing fellow who could make a day seem like a week. His chief aim in life seemed to be to declare everything nul and void. It is typical of Bolivian men to put everything out front. They figure if you are much of a man, you'll say so. If you don't say so, it must be because you just don't have it.

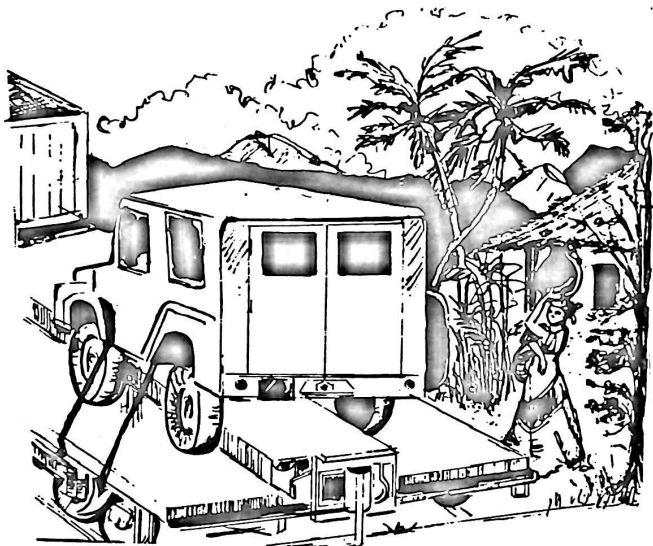
But the Jeep impressed me so much more than its owner that when we returned to Santa Cruz late in the afternoon, we began the paper work on the transaction. As I was looking at the title to the machine, I discovered his '65 was really a '62. He argued stoutly that it didn't matter, but I withdrew my offer of 30,000 pesos. I told him I would make another offer the following day.

The next day was Friday and I walked over to his house from our hotel which was nearby. No doubt to him I appeared very anxious to get the Jeep, seeing it was 7:00. I offered 27,000 pesos. He insisted on 28,000 then 27,500. I bid him adieu.

"I won't take a peso less than 27,500," he declared with considerable drama. We shook hands and I left.

I had not walked a block until he had sent a boy running to bring me back. I told the boy to tell him to come to my hotel. In 10 minutes he was there.

We had a friend change our dollars into pesos at a good rate and that brought the price of the Jeep to \$2,030.00. About twice what it would have cost in the states. The owner kept insisting



on 27,500 pesos right up until I laid 27,000 in his hand. Bolivians love to bargain, skin and have a hullabaloo about everything. My method is to buy or trade in the manner of a weaver's shuttle. So it wasn't much fun for either of us.

Anyway, we found ourselves to be the owner of a beautiful, little 4-cylinder Jeep. We loved it at first and we never stopped loving it. What a faithful little hunk of iron and steel it was! Immediately we headed for the river where it ploughed through mud holes, winched up sand banks and had a grand time in general. We came back to Santa Cruz with a filthy Jeep but merry hearts.

On Saturday we were winding up our buying down at the market, when a miracle occurred. As we got into the Jeep to leave the market, Mary Ann discovered that her purse was gone from the handbag she was carrying. It had over \$300.00 in it. We just knew someone had taken it from her handbag. Mary

Ann said we should rush out and begin to look for it. I said it was useless to do that. Dwight said we should not get excited about it. We dropped his suggestion as being absurd and mine as being cowardly and rushed off to the last place we had bought some little things to eat.

Lo and wonderful to behold, there lay the purse on a sack of potatoes. Mary Ann grabbed it while the poor soul that owned the stand's eyes got bigger and bigger. She had not seen it there. You talk about rejoicing over the lost coin!

The next day being Sunday we attended our church in Santa Cruz where I preached both services. Bethel was doing pretty good, but they sure needed a pastor. We encouraged them as best we could.

We had planned to leave at 5:00 A.M. on Monday, but the prospects of starting a 300-mile Jeep trip through the wilderness had so excited us that we couldn't sleep. So at 1:30 A.M. we began tiptoeing out to the Jeep with boxes and things and by 2:00 we had it loaded.

Some young, half drunk men were leaning against the vehicle, strumming their guitars and singing to the top of their voices. I have often seen that — young guys singing and playing in the streets in the wee hours. No one ever rebukes them.

Try to understand the mellowness of our mood as we fired up the old 4 x 4 and eased through the vacant streets. We were full of talk and laughter, refreshed from our vacation, but most of all the excitement of the next few days had us in its grip.

By 5:00 we had arrived at the Rio Grande — two hours too early to be pulled across the railroad bridge on a small flat car. An old guy was the only one about. He had led a steer down on the main street of the little *pueblo* and had killed it. It was lying on its own skin and he was cutting it up by the light of his kerosene pressure lantern, to sell at the first light.

Dwight lay down in the front seat of the machine and we other two threw a blanket down in the bitterweeds. A crone in a nearby hut kept yelling about coffee, so we figured she had some to sell. She had a voice like the neighing of a horse and more to silence her than anything else, we arose from the bitterweeds and went for some of her coffee.

At 7:00 the station master directed us to drive up on the flat car and three men pushed us a mile or more that took us across the river. The road on the other side of the river had a very disgruntled character. Dwight and I took turns driving two hours each. Mary Ann didn't want her turn. If you have ever traveled into the Mississippi River delta country, south of New Orleans, you know pretty well what the country we were traveling through looked like. It was very flat country, covered with scrubby trees in most places. The earth was whitish looking with a consistency like glue when wet.

Soon we were forced to stay in four-wheel drive and once in the morning we had to winch. After our noon siesta (under the mosquito net) the road continued to worsen and the Jeep was taking quite a beating. There were a lot of mud holes and very deep ruts.

Late in the afternoon we passed through the isolated *pueblo* of Poso del Tigre (Tiger Hole) and continuing on for another 20 miles we pulled off the road behind some thorn bushes and set up our camp for the night. We had met no other vehicle all afternoon nor seen more than two or three people other than in Poso del Tigre.

The next morning we were up at 5:00 to begin one of the bad days of my life. After a good breakfast, we pulled out and had not gone more than three miles before we entered a long, and terrible looking mud hole. I was not too concerned as there were trees on both sides to hook the winch to. As we crawled through the mud hole the Jeep kept turning more and more on its side. Suddenly the engine died and refused to start again. From then on the day was in ruins.

The winch would not work without the engine running. We worked with the jack and shovel for four hours. The battery ran completely down. The sun shone down on us with malice.

I diagnosed the problem to be a weak fuel pump that would not pump the gas with the Jeep tilted as it was. Doubtless, some could have made it go but I could not.

There was a slough nearby with some more or less clear water in it, and we filled our water jug from that, dosing it good with halazone tablets. It was better water than that which we had

brought from Santa Cruz. Taking stock of our food supplies we found there to be no danger of starvation as we had brought 25 pounds of potatoes.

The road was running parallel to the Santa Cruz-Brazil railroad tracks (no train had passed), so I decided to walk back down them toward Poso del Tigre until I found someone with a yoke of oxen to come and help us out of that mess. It was 10:00 when I set out down the track. I walked for an hour when lo, what should I come upon except a crew of railroad workers. I felt it was an answer to our prayers. They said they would pass by us in the evening and help us then.

After an hour back in the blazing sun and very high humidity, I found my crew out in the jungle under the mosquito net. I drank all the water we had and while Mary Ann fanned me I literally poured sweat for another hour.

We lay under the net all afternoon reading and listening to tapes of music which we had bought in Santa Cruz. Mosquitoes covered the outside of the net, but it really wasn't too bad, especially knowing help was on the way.

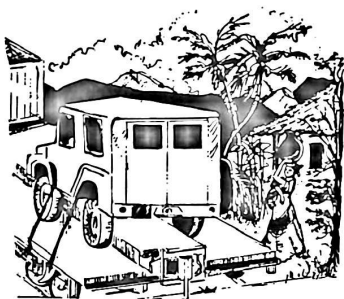
At 3:30 we heard the railroad men coming on a hand car. Seven of the eight men waded across the slough to help us. The winch was still out near the end and with a pole tied by the cable, they pulled. The rest of us pushed, but we could not budge it. However after digging and heaving considerably, we managed to get it out on solid ground where it was an easy matter to push it and start it.

We gave each man 10 pesos, which I'm sure they were glad to get as their salary probably was not over 20 pesos a day. And we were very thankful for their help.

I told them we would be in their *pueblo* as soon as we could make the next four miles. As they boarded their hand car they shouted that we would have no more trouble as far as their *pueblo*, but after that it would be impossible to continue as the road was under deep water.

As we continued on toward their village, we dropped off into holes of mud and water that were thigh deep and each time was a miracle when we were able to get through. I think the Lord knew we were about used up, so He gave us a little push

time or two. We were three tired people when we finally pulled into Tunas, their forsaken little *pueblo*.



## HOME BY FLATCAR

At one time the railroad company must have had some big ideas about the several *pueblos* where they built large cement buildings to house the men who worked for them. Tunas was an example of whatever their dream was — gone to pot. The great mustard colored houses were dilapidated, stark and ugly to the extreme. Most of the window panes were gone from the windows. There were about eight of the buildings that were completely abandoned, but we could not tell which ones were, just by looking.

We stopped at the first of these monstrosities because one of our benefactors from the mud hole was standing in the yard waving us in. He said we could sleep in one of the high ceilinged, dirty rooms of his house. Mary Ann borrowed a home made straw broom and swept the concrete floor free of some of its debris.

The mosquitoes and gehenies were very fierce, which caused us to give our first concern to pitching our net. Surely you have had experience with mosquitoes, but probably not many of my gentle readers are acquainted with the gehena. The word is the same Spanish word as hell. And the usage is no exaggeration.

They are often small enough to go through a mosquito net and their bite will almost always raise blood and itch like crazy for hours. Our ankles were soon a mass of knots. I've never seen them elsewhere as bad as they were in Tunas.

After the floor was swept and the net was up, we gave the lady of the house some coffee and potatoes which she fixed for us on her fire. We used our fingers to eat the potatoes for supper. The people were as poor as anyone could be, but they were friendly and wanted to help. We had spent so much time in Bolivia "making do," so we had little trouble adjusting to the situation.

The man of the house had told us that a passenger train would be through "sometime" the next morning and he was right; it came through at 7:30 and we caught it. Our plan was to go back to Santa Cruz, rent a flat car, come back with it, load the Jeep and take it on to San Jose.

When we boarded the train we found our car full of big, fat women sprawled this way and that, taking up two, three and four seats. They were eating corn on the cob and meat in the fashion of hogs. Their trunks and boxes of black market goods, which they had gotten in Curumba, Brazil and were taking to Santa Cruz to sell, were piled everywhere.

They were determined that we should not be seated, but we were not to be intimidated and were soon comfortably seated in a seat from which we had evicted trunks and boxes. They raised their great bulks and shouted, "This car is to be used only by us."

We were not impressed by this declaration, but it did serve to remind me of a story I had heard (and which I related to Mary Ann and Dwight), of a village which had built a very stately gallows upon which to hang criminals. A neighbor village, which did not have such a nice gallows, asked if they might use it to hang one of their own outlaws.

"Absolutely not," the answer came, "this gallows is for ourselves and for our children alone."

Our train arrived in Santa Cruz at 1:00 p.m. and we went straight to our previous motel of the Sunday before (it was now Wednesday). About 2:30 Dwight and I went back out to the

depot to see when we could get a flat car.

"We'll send one out this evening on the 6:00 passenger train." They would leave it for me to load on the Jeep and pick it up for the trip on to San Jose the next day.

So at 6:00 we were headed back to Tunas, marvelling at how somethings do work out occasionally in Bolivia. The train was so packed with humanity that the only place we could find to sit was on the steps of the caboose. People were lying in the aisles and even sitting and lying on the roof of the train. Some of the young guys were casually walking back and forth the entire length of the train. Dwight accomplished this feat once and came back to brag about it. We put him out of the train walking business.

It was past midnight when they switched off the flat car in Tunas on to a side track a good hundred feet from the loading dock. I told them I couldn't load the Jeep onto the flat car unless it was at the dock.

"*Claro, que no,*" (of course not) they agreed and puffed away into the darkness, leaving me to grind my teeth alone.

No one had to rock us to sleep that night. We had bought two blankets that day in Santa Cruz to help take some of the hardness out of that concrete floor. The gehenies made the remainder of the night not much fun.

Friday dawned sticky hot and full of mosquitoes and gehenies. I got out early so that the railroad workers could see I needed some help to push the flat car up to the dock. They just got on their handcar and pumped away. I guess they thought I would hire them to push it as I had done when we were stuck in the mud hole.

The little Willys just leaned back against the winch cable and easily pulled the car to the dock. Then it was a small matter to load the Jeep. We tied it down with rope I had bought in Santa Cruz and scotched it good with 2 x 4s all around.

The train was to come "sometime in the afternoon," but by dark it still had not. Mary Ann and I stayed under the net most of the day to get what relief we could from the gehenies. About 4:00 we bought a scrawny chicken from the lady of the house and she made some soup with it.

At 11:30 we were asleep when the approaching train brought us back to the business at hand. I could hardly believe our good fortune when the train crew actually stopped and hooked on to our flat car.

Soon we were sitting in the Jeep as it rocked and rolled along. There was no way to sleep with all the motion. Dwight took his blanket and went out on the car to try his luck.

Sometime in the night the train was standing idle for a few minutes when a wild Indian, naked except for a loin cloth, came out of the jungle which bordered the track, and climbed up on the flat car. With him was a woman, equally undressed, and two small children, who were totally naked. Even though we had rented the flat car it had wall-to-wall people. But they moved over and made room for the primitive family.

As we sat on the hood of the Jeep, we had ample opportunity to study this unusual scene. The ordinary folks were not the least afraid of the wild folks. In fact, it seemed to us that the ordinary were quite proud of their wild neighbors, for many were the eyes turned to us throughout the night to see if we approved. The people would grin and point to them and nod their head agreeably. Nor did the wild family seem ill at ease. They were as children examining their surroundings, as guileless as could be. From time to time the train would stop and in whatever village we happened to be, the villagers would come running to sell food to the passengers. We observed that our wild friends were looking on curiously and so I gave the man a few pesos with which to buy food for himself and his family. He held the money in the palm of his hand and looked long at it, then he raised his eyes to mine and smiled a filed tooth grin. He chuckled so contagiously that I chuckled too. He went back to his family and showed them the coins and they held them, turning them over and over. We realized too late that they did not know what to do with them. They did not associate the money with food. The train had already started up again and there was no other opportunity for them to buy food.

When we rolled into San Jose de Chiquitos the sun was just sending its rays against the hills west of town. After the train crew had set us off on a siding, we three took a nap before set

ting about the business of getting the Jeep unloaded.

A man and two teenaged boys were sitting on the end of our flat car when we awakened and I hired them to help us push it down to the loading ramp. It was slightly down hill and we easily did it.

A Bolivian breakfast of coffee and bread brought us into contact with several of the *puebleros* (people that lived in the pueblo), who assured us that the 150 miles on to San Ignacio de Valasco, was "*muy bueno*" and that we could traverse it "*tranquilamente*."

"There are six trucks on the road to there now. There'll be no problems." This they declared with absolute confidence. Of course they weren't the ones going. The part about the six trucks, even if true, meant little, as they all might have been at that very moment under water. One thing we learned over and over, no one ever knew much about road conditions. If you wanted to know, you just had to go and find out for yourself.

So committing ourselves to the Lord and our vehicle, we drove out of San Jose, dodging kids, burros, dogs and ox carts, into the wilderness.

We had not gone far when we came upon a dreadful scene. A mare and colt were down in the road and were covered with vultures. The loathsome creatures were attending their business with all due seriousness. As we sat contemplating all this, suddenly the mare raised her head and whinned! Poor beast was being eaten alive!

There was nothing for it but to take the revolver and place it to her ear for a shot to the brain. Apparently the mare had given birth to the colt and could not get back up. This grizzly business cast us under a melancholy spell.



# 20

## **IN THE WILDERNESS**

For the first 25 miles or so, the road ran over sand which was damp and so provided a fine surface. We purred right along. After the sand, came the hills with their great rocks, over which we bounced with bonejarring jolts. The small valleys between the hills contained some bad places, but we were able to pull through them in four-wheel without winching.

Then we hit the bottom country. From the very beginning of the low land, I knew we were in trouble. Winding down off the last hill we could see where the six big trucks had entered the tall trees. There were ruts as deep as the duals that made them and they had gone at it from every direction available. Water was standing knee deep in the most shallow places.

Fortunately the Jeep was narrow enough that it could pretty well fit into every situation where it was possible to straddle the ruts made by the trucks. They were great machines with dual tandems and four-wheel drive. Each one was equipped with a powerful winch.

If they had not been ahead of us, we probably would not have had too much trouble. But where the trail ran between immense trees, that there was no way to get around, the trucks had

ploughed through in single file. The ruts left were sometimes mid-thigh deep and full of water.

To fall off into one of those ruts meant that Mary Ann and Dwight had to get out and wade with the winch cable a hundred yards to tie it to a tree. Then I would winch up to the tree. This we did mile after mile. I was afraid the Jeep would quit again as it did near Tunas when it was leaning at such an angle. But it never did.

Late in the afternoon we arrived at a terrible looking stretch of road that ran between huge trees on one side and a marsh on the other. The trucks had literally churned it to pulp. We were so muddy already that I hoped we could get past this stretch and spend the night beyond it, cleaning up a little before we camped.

I eased the Jeep out into the weeds at the edge of the marsh, hoping to circumvent the deep ruts in the road. In less than fifty feet it was right down on its chassis. As we began to winch, our machine was pulled along like a sled. We came right up to the edge of a water hole that was about seven feet across and far too deep to get into for any reason. We had not seen it because of the waist high weeds we were in.

The only tree our cable would reach was one off to the left of the water hole and we were passing to the right of it. So we were going to be pulled right into it at the rate things were going.

As the light was fading fast, there was no question where we would be spending the night. The mosquitoes were terrible and we were filthy, tired, hungry and discouraged.

While stumbling around in the weeds and water, I found two old boards, doubtless left by some other hapless traveler, which I placed near the front wheels of the Jeep. In the morning, I thought, if we could somehow get the wheels up on those boards, it might provide enough traction to get around the murky hole of water. It was a vague and rather hopeless plan, but it was the only one we had.

As darkness settled down over the jungle, every frog in the world commenced to gurgle, bellow, trill, peep, grunt and quaver from the marsh. This din was punctuated periodically by the guttural voices of alligators. A few birds called sadly, or in fear.

We were feeling very sorry for ourselves — even thinking perhaps we would never get out of our predicament. But as we listened to the various frog voices we became so amused that our ideas brightened up considerably and we sat about to be as comfortable as possible.

Dwight fixed him a bed on top of all the stuff in the back. We got the By-Gon out and sprayed the multitude of mosquitoes inside the vehicle. It was pretty hot with the windows all up, but at least the insects were kept to a minimum.

After snacking on peanut butter, bananas and bread, we sat in to endure the night.

The Lord's Day dawned dismal and foggy. We read the Bible by flashlight and prayed the Lord to bless those two boards upon which so much depended. In the soggy half-light the situation looked worse than it had the previous evening.

I dug down and put the boards into my slanting upwards trench, even with the bottom of the tires. The cable was stretched out in such a way that if the Jeep did not slide sideways at all, we would barely skirt the water hole.

With the Jeep fired up, I breathed another prayer and engaged the winch. The wheels got up on the board and the vehicle slowly inched around the edge of the hole. We were then able to winch back to the chaos, called a road. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

I have never seen any road anywhere look worse than what faced us then. We began to winch and winch and winch and hope, moving forward for six or seven hundred yards. Mary Ann and Dwight were out in the water, sometimes up to their waists, moving the cable from tree to tree. Finally we were off into the deepest hole of all and out and so found ourselves at last on firm ground.

It was then that we met one of the six trucks that were ahead of us. The driver and two helpers had unloaded their cargo and were going back to San Jose, they said.

That seemed madness to me as they had neither four-wheel drive nor winch. I asked them how they had managed to get that far and was told, "*Los ostros, nos ayudan.*" (The others helped us.)

In a few more miles we came to where they had stacked their cargo and were surprised to find another truck there, broken down. A fellow, who was lying in a hammock, told us the truck had a bursted piston and the driver had returned with the truck we met to get parts. He said they had spent three days getting through the part where we had spent the night.

He said there were four trucks up ahead somewhere. I always admired the truckers that ran the back roads of Bolivia. They are a breed all their own, a fraternity which takes its trucking as seriously as its counterpart in the States. Their patience seems to be inexhaustable. It is nothing to them to spend days camped around a mud hole where they are stuck, or to leave their vehicle in the wilderness with a guard, while they ride a horse, or whatever, to the nearest train or airplane to fly to Santa Cruz for a part. Sometimes this can take a week or I have known it to take a month. Everyone hangs loose about it.

A short while before noon we caught up with the other trucks. There were two of the big four-wheel Nisans and an old Dodge Power Wagon. The caravan was stopped in the road and the crew were having their lunch.

They were an amiable group and not at all covered by the road they had been so slowly traversing, nor intimidated by what lay ahead. It was all great sport to them. All success in the future was based on the premise of "*si Dios quieri*" (If G wants it).

Lavish praises were poured out upon us for having come this far in such a "*chicatinga*" (tiny) machine. Each of us in turn were honored by the truckers; I was pronounced "*muy macho*," Mary Ann was said to be "*bein valienta*" (very valiant), and Dwight carried away the honor of being a "*joven-sito sin temor*" (a little young man without fear).

I told them they weren't doing so bad themselves, and requested that they let us be in front so that we might have a crack at the road before they ploughed it asunder with their great wheels. One and all gave to this their whole hearted consent.

I told them we would sort of wait along on them and we eased on off. What a blessing it was to be able to travel the road before those trucks left their deep tracks. However we soon

began to see that there was yet another vehicle ahead of us. The truckers had not mentioned any other traveler.

We would stop from time to time to wait on the trucks to catch up. The roaring of their engines could always be heard anytime we stopped.

The tracks of whatever we were following were very mysterious. Sometimes they would just disappear for quite a long space of the road and then reappear. And few of the mud holes seemed to be disturbed. It was very strange.

We had left the bottom land and the high jungle and were traveling through a sort of rolling hill, Savannah country. The only trees were short and scrubby and growing in patches. Mostly the land was open. No houses came into view the whole day until we reached the river.

About 3:30 we began to hit some very bad mud holes and had stopped to see if we could hear the trucks. While sitting there, voices came to us from a nearby woods and the sound of an axe chopping. We didn't pay too much attention to it until we heard a truck start up and move forward a couple of hundred yards before stopping again.

I was very curious to see what sort of odd business was going on out there in the woods and to know if it was the vehicle we had been following. Dwight and I walked out to the sound of the chopping, and came up behind a 1948 two-ton Ford truck. An old, grizzled fellow was sitting behind the wheel and two boys were cutting a road for the truck to pass through the woods.

I got a head start on him with those three very important questions: "Where do you come from?", "Where are you going?", and "Why?"

After he revealed he was six days out of San Jose and bound for San Ignacio with a cargo of goods, I proposed a fourth question. I asked him why he was out in those woods so far from the road.

He said that since he neither had four-wheel drive, chains or winch, it was his custom to make his own road when possible, rather than risk the deep mud holes.

I told him that it just didn't seem possible to me that his an

cient truck could have come through the bottom land where we had spent the previous evening.

"Well," he answered, "there are two reasons for it. *Lo mio es Ford, el primero nombre en los camiones.*" So that was the main reason, he had a Ford, the first name in trucks. The other reason, he went on to say, was that it had taken him six days to do it.

But I was still skeptical. His version had an improbable ring to it. That he was there, I could see, but it still did not seem possible — about as likely as a 90-year old man running in a marathon.

Anyway he was a likable old rascal, the way he bragged on his old truck. He had an odd and eager head that put me in mind of an ostrich peering about.

When Dwight and I returned to the Jeep, we decided from the engine noise of those Nisans that they were bogged down back there somewhere. So we elected to go on to the river which was just a short distance ahead and wait.

A man standing by a Power Wagon greeted us as we pulled down into the narrow bottom land which borders the river. He said, "You can't cross the bridge because it has been partially washed away by a flood. But I have it nearly repaired and we can cross it in the morning."



## HOME AGAIN

We pitched our camp on the high ground overlooking the road where it ran off the bank into the narrow bottom land. The river was only a few hundred feet away, but we could not see it for the trees. When I walked down there I saw that the river was up some and had flooded around each end of the bridge.

The Power Wagon owner had repaired the bridge by placing poles across a place where the planks were washed out. He was hoping that by morning the water would be down enough to cross the bridge. The river was not deep, probably not over waist deep, but it was swift. Ordinarily it would have been little more than a branch.

So we swung the mosquito tent and put down four blankets for padding. A roasted potato each and a can of peas, which we warmed in the can by the fire, composed our supper. We were very contented and thankful to God for His care over us.

About two hours after dark, the two big Nisans, the Power Wagon and the old man and his '48 Ford came roaring in. The Nisans and Power Wagon plunged down the bank without hesitation, crossed the narrow bottom, ploughing the road to smithereens, and went over the bridge where they camped on the

other side of the river.

The valiant old guy with his "first name in trucks," took a look at what was left of the road and wisely elected to wait until daylight to try it. He forthwith retired to a nearby shack where he and the shack's tenant got roaring drunk. It turned out that his whole cargo, nearly, was whiskey. The Power Wagon owner, who had been repairing the bridge, told me that he had been pulling the old fellow's truck through the mud holes for days. Uh huh, I thought so.

In the night Dwight became very ill, with high fever and diarrhea. To make that worse, the drunks went wild and started yelling about killing someone. We could not determine who they wished to kill, but just in case it was us, I laid the pistol under my pillow.

Monday morning finally arrived with a grand convocation of parrots in the trees along the river. What beautiful creatures, but how uncouth their commentaries. They certainly know how to start a day though.

We had not even broken camp when an engine roared into life on the other side of the river, followed shortly by a great splash. Whatever it was that had jumped into the river was coming toward us, crashing through the brush and raising a fearful ruckus.

Presently an outlandish looking vehicle appeared on the road below our camp. It was coming through the mud holes as easily as though on a paved highway. The thing came on toward us and I had the feeling that nothing could stand in its way — that it could come on night and day, forever. It looked like a great, long-legged bug. The tires were the size of those you would see on an earth moving Uke. The body was quite small, with room only for a driver and a cargo bed about the size of an old model, half-ton pickup. The motor was perched five feet in the air. Each wheel was suspended separately, and each one pulled.

When the monster reached the bank upon which we were situated, it did not seek the road up but, taking the closest point, it strode up and over in grand fashion.

I was flabbergasted and could not get enough of looking at it. The Power Wagon owner said it was an "Unimoc," and was

made in Germany. The machine was so old that all identification had been lost or faded from sight. But its driver agreed heartily that it was indeed an Unimoc.

I was doubtful, but what could I say? I had never seen anything like it in my lifetime.

The owner of the '48 Ford, who somehow was miraculously sober, came rushing out of the shack, clamoring for the driver of the "Unimoc" to pull him across the bridge. As soon as the thing was loaded with cargo taken from the shack, it hitched onto the old man's Ford and tore out down the bank (on the road fortunately) and through the mud holes, on a ride that the grizzled old fellow will not soon forget. His steering wheel had about a round and half of play in it and I could see him all over the cab, trying to hold it in the road. Of course when they hit the mud holes the Unimoc thing covered the truck with muddy water, blotting out everything. He honked his horn frantically all the way across the bottom and over the bridge. Nevertheless the driver of the Unimoc did not let up until he stopped on the other side and even after it was all over the man kept honking. I think he was pretty excited.

One thing the Power Wagon owner and I agreed on was that we didn't want that thing to pull us over.

Dwight was still feeling pretty rough as we loaded our stuff into the Jeep. We figured he had picked up a "bug" from all the mud holes where we had been drinking.

With the Power Wagon following close behind, the Jeep eased down into the goo and wallowed around, turning and twisting, slithering this way and that, finally bucking up onto the bridge and across.

When we arrived on the other side of the river, we found a house and a yard full of trucks and men. One of the men was a fellow from San Ignacio named Victor Rivero. He had come with his trucks for some of the cargo brought by the trucks from San Jose. Victor, a very fat man, hugged me and said in a loud voice, "I told them I was coming down here to bring in my gringo. What a valiant fellow this Americano is?" All this nonsense was viewed with vast amusement by the congregation.

The lady of the house took Mary Ann in for some coffee and

made some Kool-Aid for Dwight.

Meanwhile the Power Wagon had stopped on the bridge and I went back to help him. Every time he would start up the steep climb to get on the bridge, the engine would die. The fuel pump was too weak to pump up the gas to the carburetor. At last we filled a bottle with gas and I sat on the roof of the cab with it. We ran a rubber hose from the bottle to the carburetor and with this gravity flow system in operation, the truck came on over.

All of us had a bite of breakfast and we were ready to travel on with the Power Wagon owner. But he was a piddler and I soon tired of waiting on him. He said for us to go on and he would catch up. But I knew he wouldn't, because I had already seen that nothing could hold a light for a Jeep on roads like those. Nothing, that is, if you exclude the Unimoc thing. It was still running back and forth with cargo when we left. It disdained the bridge, preferring to jump right off into the swift current.

So we left the others far behind, for Dwight was really sick and we wanted to get him to San Ignacio to the doctor. It was just dusky dark when we entered the *pueblo*. We had some rough going, winching a number of times. Dwight was not able to help and so Mary Ann had most of the hauling out of the winch cable.

The next day Dwight was not any improved, so we took him over to the hospital, where the doctor gave him a pint or so of glucose and some medicine, for what he also thought was an intestinal parasite. Afterward, Dwight returned to our room and Mary Ann and I ate breakfast and read the mail. We were shocked and saddened when we read in our mission magazine, *The Gleaner*, that our good friend, A.R. Reddin, had died in Conway, Arkansas. We certainly felt the loss of this fine Baptist preacher and leader in our work, even though we were far from the scene of his death.

Receiving mail was always an exciting time for us, but especially so since we were expecting news of when Ron and Gene would be down. Among the letters from friends and family that day was the news that the fellows would be arriving in May, even giving out flight numbers and hour of arrival.

Marvin came flying in about noon and since Dwight was real-

ly not up to a Jeep ride on out the last 75 miles, we left the Jeep with a friend and flew on into San Simon with him.

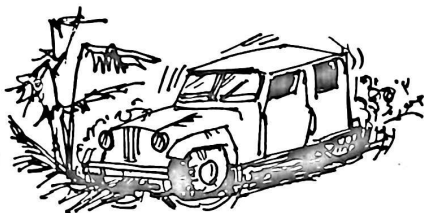
Everything was in order at our homestead. Gomercindo had moved from the porch out into the chicken house, exclaiming, "Whoo, it got very cold on the porch, but it's nice among the chickens." He stayed with the chickens for a week after we got home, and I guess he would have continued to dwell there had not Mary Ann told him to move back over to his mother's house.

Dwight continued to run fever for two days, even though we were giving him a penicillin shot every day. He was really missing out on his school work because he felt too bad to concentrate on it.

The screen wire we brought from Santa Cruz was put on the windows of the church house on Wednesday so that we could have some relief from the mosquitoes during the services. This also served as an incentive for folks to come to service, as it was the only place to get away from the insects.

But we inherited a problem with the blessing of the screens. The bats couldn't get out. On Wednesday night we discovered that the building was full of them. We had to dismiss church due to their darting about. The men and boys got poles, a broom, slingshots, and a whip to kill the bats, but we only managed to kill 35 of them. Finally we just had to go off and leave the door open so that they could fly out during the night.

# 22



## **RUPTURED APPENDIX**

The Monday following our return from Santa Cruz, Marvin and Helen flew into Santa Cruz. I took Gomercindo and came into San Ignacio with them in order to bring the Jeep out to San Simon.

While there I went by to see the doctor to tell him that Dwight was still running a fever. He said if he wasn't improved considerably by the time I got home, I'd better bring him in as he might have typhoid or appendicitus.

Gomer and I went over to the gas station to get gassed up. The gas station was also the bakery. There were no gas pumps, of course. The gas was stored in 55-gallon oil drums just the way it was brought in by truck from Santa Cruz. Then it was brought out to the vehicle in 5-gallon buckets. After the Jeep was filled, we placed a 55-gallon drum of gas in the back of the Jeep. From then on all the gas and kerosene we used was brought out in our vehicle.

A good crowd had gathered around the Jeep at the station to discuss whether or not the "*Pastor*" could make the trip by "*mobilidad*" out to San Simon. No one had ventured out that way by motorized facility for about two months because of the

water.

So amidst cries of "*que macho*" and "*que valiente*," Gomer and I departed the *pueblo* about 3:30 wondering what lay ahead. I certainly wasn't feeling very macho or valiant. The words of the doctor were weighing heavily on my mind.

We soon crossed a long hole of water with no problem. There is normally a dry creek at San Miguelita that was now full of water. Gomercindo waded out into it and the water came to just below his waist. We wrapped the coil, distributor and each plug top in plastic and with the hood raised I eased the Jeep into the creek. The fan threw the water out in a long arc; that was the purpose of raising the hood. We crossed with no trouble and continued on to the small village of El Carman, where we stopped to eat our food we had brought along.

The Catholics had a school in San Miguelita, and also were very big in El Carman. Since we had all we could handle in the north, we did not try to preach in these *pueblos*. but as we ate our sandwiches, we handed out tracts and doctored pink eye and gave a few antibiotic shots for infections to those who gathered around us.

Gomer said, "Whooo, I didn't know I could be a doctor."

It was dark by the time we fired up and moved on. One very long and deep mud hole bogged us down and required the winch. Only there was no tree to tie to. I sent Gomercindo into the woods to cut a pole while I dug a trench angled back toward the Jeep. All of this involved wading around in the muck considerably. We placed the short pole back in the trench and fastened our winch cable to it and thus were able to pull up to within reach of a tree.

After we had escaped that mud hole, we decided that we didn't want any more winching in the dark, so we just stopped in the middle of the road. Gomer strung his hammock to some nearby trees and I sprayed the mosquitoes out of the Willys and rolled up the windows.

I lay in the front seat reading the mail by flashlight. There were letters from my parents, my sister's family, Marcus Hill Church in Arkansas, a GMA group of the Rose City Immanuel Church in Arkansas and from several other friends. No one can

know what mail is really worth more than an isolated missionary.

By daylight we were rolling again and in an hour were standing looking at the deepest water we had to face. Gomer waded out into it waist deep.

*"Es hondo,"* (deep) I shouted.

*"No, no es,"* he countered, even though it obviously was.

He continued on and suddenly disappeared ears and all. Just his hat floating on the water showed where he had been.

"Whoo!" he sputtered, when he got back to higher ground, *"es hondo."*

*"No, no es,"* said I.

We checked out another fording place or two and found that the most shallow to be up to Gomer's mid-chest. But the deep place was very narrow, just practically down and right back up again. I backed the Jeep up to the crossing, wrapping everything in plastic again, plus removing the fan belt. I didn't want water flying from it with the hood down. Then I slowly moved the machine backward out to the deep place. With the motor revved up good, I poured the coal to it and for the next few seconds there was water everywhere. I could see nothing but water. But soon I was high and, well, not too dry, but safely across.

But backing across, the rear of the vehicle pushed the water up behind and created a hole in the front around the engine. Of course, the wall of water behind came right on over the Jeep but by then we were safely across. I could have tied my big rubber pancho around the front of the Jeep and over the hood, and gone across frontways, but this would have forced water over the hood toward me and would have let in much more water around the loose fitting windshield.

The Bolivians, especially the truckers, knew all the tricks for wilderness traveling by motor. I have seen them dismantle a motorcycle, carry it across the river in a boat, put it back together and continue on as nonchalantly as you please.

Gomer and I continued on, winching at Ramada Quemado and Seis de Agosto, just two bad places in the wilderness, and finally arriving at San Simon at 1:30 P.M.

I was so in hopes of finding Dwight better, but instead he was

worse. Mary Ann showed me how he could hardly bear to have the area of his appendix touched. I knew then nearly that it had ruptured. What worry and anxiety filled Mary Ann and me as we realized the seriousness of the situation. We had had so little sickness that we had not paid enough attention to Dwight's symptoms.

Since Marvin and Helen were gone to Santa Cruz in the plane, there was nothing for it but to return to San Ignacio by Jeep. If it didn't come a big rain in the night, I was sure we could make it. But the road was so rough in spots, I knew Dwight was in for a rough time.

We sought the Lord that night as earnestly as we ever have. We told Him we needed a miracle badly. Before we were finished praying we each felt at peace about everything and knew tomorrow would work out.

At 6:30 the following morning we were waving to the Indians who had run out to the trail to see us pass out of the *pueblo*. Soon we had safely negotiated Remanda Quemado and Seis de Agosto without winching.

At the ranch Tapera, we crossed the deep water again with the fan belt off, hood up and everything wrapped — and head on. Mary Ann and Dwight had the big rubber pancho covering them, but I got soaked. The important thing was we made it.

Poor Dwight took a beating. He hurt so bad, but he never complained. And the Lord brought us through every obstacle. Once we hit a log that was hidden in the weeds close to the trail. It bent a wheel and a spring causing the Jeep to run catawampus, but we kept coming on.

At 3:00 we entered San Ignacio, having made the trip in nine hours and never having to winch once. There was no doubt in our minds how it was done. "For the Lord is strong in behalf of them that love Him."

We drove straight to the hospital, where Doctor Rodrigas took one look at Dwight and turned pale.

"Get this boy to the operating room immediately," he shouted to the nurses. As he ran to change his clothes, he flung back over his shoulders, "Get Doctor Ramos to help me, the boy's appendix has ruptured."



## **THANK GOD AND THE DOCTOR**

The surgery had been underway for 30 minutes when a nurse came rushing up the hall, shouting "Senor Mitchell, come quick."

Both Mary Ann and I exclaimed, "Oh, no!" and began to run behind her to the surgery room. She threw open the door and I saw a terrible sight. Both doctors turned to face me as I hesitated in the door. Mary Ann was trying to see over my shoulder. The masks of the doctors hid their expressions. I could not tell what was happening.

Dwight was lying there pale as death, and I thought possibly dead. I could hardly bear the moment. From an incision in his side there poured forth a stream of blood and pus. The odor was dreadful.

If Mary Ann and I had known that it was not uncommon for the doctors in Bolivia to call relatives into the operating room, it would have helped. But we didn't know. We could only assume that Dwight had died.

I looked at Doctor Rodrigas and was barely able to ask, "Are you saying Dwight is dead?"

"No," he answered, "I only wanted you to see for yourself

how bad it is. It is very grave — peritonitis. There is a lot of poison. He may not make it. I only wanted you to see, just in case.”

“*Si, si. Gracias, Doctor.*” I stumbled from the room. Mary Ann was in the hall crying and praying.

The nurses were crying and praying.

I cried and prayed.

The next two hours were the longest I’ve ever spent. Doctor Rodrigas had done hundreds of appendectomies. Only those who have been the recipients of a doctor’s skill in surgery can know the gratitude we felt as he fought to save Dwight’s life.

I wish I could tell you how thankful I am to God even now, years later. Words are such clumsy implements and cannot tell how I feel. I am weeping now for joy and gratitude and praise to His holy name. He is so good and I love Him for being so great.

When Mary Ann and I were so afraid as we stood in the hall and prayed, I thought then of how desperately we were praying to our Heavenly Father who gave His Son, that He might spare ours. I knew it was a selfish prayer, but I also knew that He knew just how we felt.

Dwight was more of a blessing and a help to us on the mission field than anyone will ever know except the Lord. Even now after the passing of several years, I can still recall how his sense of humor would make us laugh at times.

His easy way with the Indians took a great burden from our shoulders, especially mine. He could sit out on the porch and entertain grown men with conversation for hours at a time, and when they went away they would go laughing.

These kinds of thoughts were racing through my mind as we waited in the hall.

At last the doctor appeared with a smile on his face. “That boy is strong,” he said. “I believe he is going to be all right.”

We could have kissed him!

At midnight the city generator was turned off, and a nurse brought us in two kerosene lamps. Dwight was pretty much awake by then. He looked at us and big tears rolled down his cheeks. “I don’t know what I’d do without yu’all,” he said.

Tears rolled down some other cheeks, too.

It was hot and we took turns fanning him. Sweat poured off him. He was very thirsty.

About 3:00 A.M. there was a commotion out in the hall, and we were invited to view an 18-foot tape worm that a girl had just given birth to. Everyone was so excited about it, but we had no idea that the young girl standing there had produced it. She was some proud, as though she had just caught a giant catfish or killed a 12-point buck.

They had the worm stretched out on the floor and had dispatched one to find a tape measure. The girl was filling everyone in on the gory details. Even when a woman arrived on a bicycle and was ready to have a baby, she had to stand aside until the worm was measured. Eighteen feet proved to be a record tape worm for the little hospital.

Dwight had his surgery on Thursday and by Saturday we were glad to hear him begin to complain, which we took as a sign of his getting stronger. Several of our San Ignacio friends came to visit him every day and brought him things to eat.

It was pleasant at first being *puebleros*, especially in the early morning and in the late evenings. From about 10:00 until 3:30 when the world was in bondage to the sun's rule, the *pueblo* would become a morgue of inactivity. The siesta of South America, or all of Latin America actually, is not just laziness. During the rainy season especially, there is such high humidity that one can do little but lie in the hammock and gasp for breath during the hottest part of the day.

After a week of staying in San Ignacio we were more than ready to return to the country. Dwight was doing fine, but the doctor said he should remain in the *pueblo* a few more days. We agreed that he should continue his stay in the hospital instead of going to one of the hotel rooms. He was able to be up and around and could even go to a nearby cafe for meals.

We were expecting Marvin and Helen back from Santa Cruz in a few more days, so we left word at the airport for them to check on Dwight when they came in and, if he was able to, bring him on out with them in the plane.

With all these arrangements made, we bid Dwight "*hasta luego*" and headed the Jeep north toward San Simon. It was

about noon when we got away on Saturday. We found the trail in good shape as far as being dry was concerned.

We were still 15 miles from San Simon when the moon came up huge and beautifully yellow. Under such a moon the Bolivian motorist will shut off his lights "to save his battery." I have ridden a bus over high mountain roads in the Andes with the lights off because the moon was adequate for light. This strange madness is equaled only by the custom of turning the key off at every incline in order to coast. This also is said to be done to "save the battery and the motor."

So when such a fine moon arose, I employed the Bolivian way and switched off the lights. This consternated Mary Ann very much even though I kept telling her I was saving my battery.

We were wrestling over the light switch when suddenly up ahead by the side of the road there appeared a very large creature. I switched on my lights and lo, there stood Don Agapito.

"I told them it was Don Jul coming," he cried jubilantly, while dancing a jig.

That meeting provided one of the most pleasant scenes I have ever had the privilege to view. They were on their way to San Ignacio and had come that far the first day — about 18 miles from El Valle.

Two ox carts and two horses composed their caravan. Each cart was pulled by three yoke of enormous oxen. As we pulled up one of the big wooden wheeled carts was parked along side the trail. The oxen were tied in pairs to the trees, their massive jaws working as they munched the hay thrown before them on the ground.

The other great, two-wheeled cart was standing level, tied by the tongue to a tree. Inside were five large hogs. Stacked about the camp were crates of chickens, stalks of platynos and bananas, piles of yucca and several cow hides filled with rice and then sewn up.

The Old One waved his hand grandly at the cargo and said, "*Puro negocio!*" (It's pure business.)

The hammocks were slung more or less around the main fire and among the trees. Several other fires were glowing softly. We

l lounged in our hammocks drinking our coffee and having the usual laughs about nothing.

Dona Flora said, "We are so backward, the way we travel. It will take us five days to reach the *pueblo*. I wish we could be like you. You go and come the same day."

They were embarrassed about their mode of travel because the Bolivian thinks the more modern the better. They disdain anything rustic. When we told them people in the States like rustic things, they were amazed.

Agapito motioned the movement of the moon from its position "to when it is here, we will move out." That meant about 3:00 A.M.

He said Antonito would drive the first cart and Jose the second. Gaisa and Mafia would walk along behind the second, while he and Flora would ride on ahead on their matching white horses, which could easily out-distance the oxen. This way they would have plenty of time to visit their friends along the way.

What a life! We envied them. It was a fine memory to put back — that moonlit camp. I would have hated to miss knowing the Old Ones.

Since they had to get up so early, we made ready to leave. "Just one more thing, Don Jul and Dona Ana Maria," Don Agapito stood up from his hammock. "My life has been threatened by two scoundrels, whom I have accused of rustling my cattle. They have sent word to me that they will kill me as soon as they catch me alone in the trail."

He drew himself up to full height and attempted to suck in his great belly. Swinging his .44 cal. Smith and Wesson around to the front, he patted it and said in a low voice, "Don Jul, this will do my talking when I meet them."

He stood there ramrod straight a few seconds longer, then slowly sank back down into his hammock. With a voice quavering with emotion he then continued, "But what can I do, I'm just a poor old man."

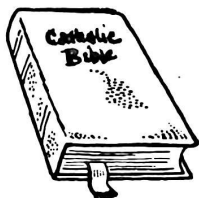
One would have thought Dona Flora had been stuck with a pin. She shot straight up out of her hammock with fire flashing in her eyes.

"You could have handled ten like them in your day!" she

shouted, causing the horses to skirt around the trees to which they were tied, "and you can still handle two! They are black-hearted thieves and they had better not mess with us!"

Don Agapito got so tickled about his "*mujer brava*" (his fierce woman) that as his great bulk shook with glee, the ropes of his hammock parted, dumping him on the ground.

On that note we left them, and we could still hear Don Agapito laughing when we were far down the trail.



# 24

## **THE CATHOLIC BIBLE**

In due season we got Dwight back home and, things being normal, settled down to the task of fighting the devil and his crowd for the souls of the Chiquitanos.

About 75 regularly attended our church in San Simon and there were good crowds in our services at the other *pueblos*, too. Thirty people had made a public profession of Christ. Twenty-two of them were in San Simon and eight in the other two villages where we had regular services.

The devil's crowd was not taking all this sitting down. We had raised such a fuss that the rough stuff had nearly stopped, but then they started using their brains instead of their brawn. I suspected that the priest, "Old Sal," was masterminding it all, but I could not prove it. It got to the place that every time we were ready to start our services there would be a soccer game also ready to start. This was happening both in San Simon and in Palita. It disturbed our services a great deal and did not work too well for the disturbers either, because every time they would start to play, I would go and tell them not to start until after our services.

Most of them were obligated to me for services I had rendered

to them or else they were afraid of what I might do if they didn't stop when I told them to. At any rate that type of persecution didn't work well enough to be worth the hassle it caused them, and they stopped doing that after a while.

The roughest blow came when the priest began to offer free schooling to the young men of San Simon if they would only go and stay at San Miguelita where they had a very well organized school. This took some of our best potential. I could not really blame the boys for going. They wanted to learn so badly.

I don't feel too comfortable making sweeping accusations against the Catholics there because they did do some good things with their schools, hospital, farms, radio station and other works. The thing that I most resented was that until we and the Loyds came, they cared little for the Indians of our area and on north where the Loyds lived. But when we began to reach the Chiquitanos they stooped to some pretty low methods to hinder our work.

The basest thing done was the constant supply of alcohol that was shipped into our area. With this toxic drink available the Indian men could be manipulated by whomever had the supply. I do not know that it is positively true, but I was told over and over that "Old Sal" was behind this devilishness.

Anyone that I could single out as being involved in the alcohol business I would speak against and grant no favors to. Marvin was doing the same up where he lived. Since we were the only ones in the whole country (not counting San Ignacio) that had at our disposal, medicine, gas, kerosene, airplane, money, work, influence with Louis Mayser (and hence, the authorities) few men wanted to be at outs with us.

Still, little by little the priests were hurting us more and more.

It was heartbreaking to us to see children, who loved us so much, taken from our influence. Some of these children even died because their parents were told that they would burn in hell if their children were allowed to take any of our medicine.

The priests began sending more workers into our area. They built a church in San Simon and brought out movies which they showed, running the projectors by gas powered generators. I don't really blame them for working so hard to get the people

over to their persuasion, I'm only saying it cost many people their soul's salvation and increased drunkenness four-fold.

Our work continued on, and at this writing is still continuing.

We went all out for our believers, helping them in every way we could. When we needed workers, we hired believers. We bought their corn, eggs, rice or whatever they had that we needed or could sell again. We secured for them such items as cooking utensils, blankets, hammocks, clothes, ammunition, tools and kerosene. In fact it was our custom to pay our workers in these items instead of money which they would then be tempted to waste on alcohol.

I also helped them bring in their crops in the Jeep from their *chacos*, which were often a far distance from the village. I don't mean to imply that we would not help non-believers, but we always gave our own first priority. The fellowship among the believers was close and they were beginning to pray for "their brothers and sisters in Christ in Santa Cruz, the United States and the whole world."

Mary Ann loved and was loved by the women and children of the village, even by those who did not embrace our faith. She was the nurse of all those who were sick among the women and children.

I had let her practice giving me shots whenever I had an infection of any kind. The first shot she gave me was in the hip and the needle broke right in two. It so unnerved her that she began to cry and refused to try again until I finally shamed her into it. But soon she was giving injections like a pro.

We were amazed to find that most of the men we treated could hardly be given a shot in the hip because their hide was so tough from riding horses every day.

But I have digressed considerably. Let me return to the subject of how the devil reacted to people getting saved. The second school term we were there, the priests in San Ignacio managed to get one of their loyal subjects appointed school teacher in San Simon. She and her husband came out, ready not only to run the school, but also to begin Catholic church services every Sunday. Of course we had no objections to either her as school teacher or to their starting a Catholic service every Sunday. But

one Sunday after a particularly low attendance of children at our service, Dwight made the remark that several were saying the "*maestra*" had told the children that she would spank them if they didn't come to her service on Sunday.

Having been expecting such a thing, I was ready. First I asked several adults and children if it was true. They said yes and that everyone in the *pueblo* was talking about it.

I said, "Let's go and see what the teacher has to say about it."

I went straight to her house, gathering quite a following as I proceeded. She, her husband and a porch full of idlers were sitting talking as I approached.

"Hello, Pastor, how are you today?" they all clamored sweetly.

Without the usual Latin way of leading up to the subject, I plunged right into the matter at hand. I told them what I had heard.

"Lies, all lies!" the teacher and her husband chorused.

"You did not say you would spank the children?"

"*Absolutamente no!*"

"But," I insisted, "some of these standing here heard you say"  
"I gestured toward the amused onlookers.

"Which ones will say they heard me say it," she was glaring, red faced, at the Indians. She knew that in the past the Chiquitanos would not cross a non-Indian.

Several of them simply said, "I heard you say it, Senora."

I then delivered a lecture on how that had better never happen again. I said we could each carry on our work and let there be free choice among the people as to the direction they wanted to go.

At that point, Hugo, the *maestra's* husband, sprang forward and exclaimed, "Pastor, I was just telling them the difference in the Catholic Bible and the *evangelico* Bible."

He went on, "Our Bible tells us to worship Mary and yours doesn't, and things like that."

"Hugo, do you have a Catholic Bible here in your house?"

"*Claro, como no!*" said he, full of love and piety.

"Good, now get it and show all of us exactly the difference in

the two Bibles.”

He turned pale and looked at his wife helplessly. She began to shout, “No, no, I left it in San Ignacio!”

“Well,” I was grinning — in fact nearly everyone was grinning except Hugo and the Senora — “I don’t see how you can have a church service without a Bible, but it doesn’t matter as I have several at my house. I use one just like yours all the time.”

It was true. I did use a Catholic Bible quite often. In fact, nearly every missionary I knew in South America used the so-called “Catholic Bible,” because other than being a different translation than the King James and having the Apocrypha in it, it was the same Bible.

I dispatched a boy to my house to get one and when he returned, I handed it to the two of them to verify that it was indeed the same kind of Bible that the Catholics used. Then all of us searched through it to find “that place” where it said that Mary was to be worshipped. But we could not find that or any of the other of the things that Hugo had told them was in there.

It was a great opportunity to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I gave it my best shot.



## OLD "P"

If Mary Ann were writing this book, she would have much to say about horses. Of the three of us, she enjoyed our beasts the most. We owned four or five of them at all times, and they were indispensable to our work. Mary Ann's was a palomino which she named Ross, shortened for the name of the horse upon which Don Quixote rode when he was about, tilting at wind mills.

Old Ross was "*bein sillinaro*" (rocking chair easy) to hear her tell it. I suppose he was, but he was also lily-livered through and through. Any rock, fence, plant or tree might give him the wrong impression at any moment, no matter if he had passed that very object 15 times in the past week.

When one of these scary spells was flung upon him he would commence to whinny nervously, followed shortly by a terrible trembling and a breaking out in a cold sweat. Upon these bizarre occasions his owner, forgetting all his good characteristics, would begin to malign him in an extraordinary way.

Dwight, too, was fond of horses, owning and trading a series of mares, colts and stallions, each of which was better or worse



*Mary Ann became an accomplished rider. "Old Ross" once rolled in the river with Mary Ann trying to get off.*

than the last one, depending on whether he was telling the story or I was.

I owned only one beast — a mediocre specimen of horsehood that I merely called "Horse." I acquired him as a stallion. Try not to picture an animal such as you may have seen the Lone Ranger ride. Yes, I know his also was a stallion, but there are stallions and then there are stallions.

Old Horse had only one real love in life. He did not love the long trail, or evenings spent under the stars, or the smell of leather, the sight of guns, or even the call of the hounds. He did not even love me. I'm not sure he even recognized me. His love was the life of romance and intrigue. His constant thought seemed to be the employment of some scheme whereby he might escape and be off for a rendezvous with a member of the opposite sex. I viewed his outlook on life as a very poor attitude for a missionary's horse. In fact, it proved his undoing, for it forced me to have him de-stallionized.

His surgery nearly killed him. Perhaps the vampire bats got to him overly much during that time. Once they start getting blood from an animal, they will come back night after night until it is

possible that they might kill, unless drastic steps are taken against them. There are areas in Bolivia where cattle cannot be kept because of these bats. It was the worse time for mosquitoes, too, and they may have been draining him. Or maybe he was just grieving over what could never again be — I don't know. Whatever it was, he lost 150 pounds and nearly died. I renamed him "Deathwhinny," a name he wore with no apparent pride.

But I did not go to talk about horses. I merely pointed out that if Mary Ann were writing this book she would most certainly talk about them a lot.

But not I.

Now Dwight, if he were writing, would tell you about hunting. That was what he loved to do more than anything. He brought in a lot of game which helped our larder considerably.

What can I say about horses and hunting? I rode horses a lot and did quite a bit of hunting, however I can't say I was greatly enthused about either.

Still and however, there was one personality in our menagerie that I must expose. There is risk even now of revealing some of the things he did. I am not entirely confident that I will not yet be drawn into court over some of his antics.

Old Piloto was a strange one — black as a moonless night, teeth gleaming like ivory, evil, yellow, wolfish eyes slanting in his short, broad head — and as crazy as a wombat. Born of a mother who was just like him, out on the Mamore River, he came to Santa Cruz in an airplane to live with us. That's where he got his name, Piloto (Pilot).

The first of many atrocities perpetuated by this brute-occurred in Santa Cruz when he was just a pup. One morning I heard Mary Ann practically screaming for me to come outside. She had gone out to board the bus that took her and Dwight to school. Old P (that's what we called him mostly) had run up behind her and grabbed the tail of her poncho in his teeth and started pulling her backwards. By the time I got out there he had pulled her into the gate, closing it with her outside and him inside.

She was reclining against the gate in a none too dignified



*"Old P" sometimes seemed to be demon possessed.*

fashion and Old P was tugging and growling mightily. Dwight, the bus driver, and several children were shouting at him, but they were out there and he was safe inside. They couldn't get the gate open because Mary Ann was against it. She seemed very upset. I was, after a bit, able to beat the lunatic off and restore order. Old P loved it.

When we moved among the Indians he soon gained a reputation, best summed up by Gomercindo — "Whooo, every one thinks Piloto is crazy!"

He began his sojourn in San Simon by whipping every dog in the village. Not one at a time — he whipped them enmasse. They all jumped on him the first day and at the same time.

We had not been there long when Piloto accompanied me on a little expedition that kept us out until after dark. It occasioned

that our path led past an abandoned hut under the front porch of which were camping a number of cowboys who were returning from a cattle drive. They had a fire going and were lounging about it. Several dogs were also relaxing amongst them.

As we approached the hut their dogs became aware of our presence and began barking. Before I could realize anything, Piloto was off like a streak, and had bounded in upon them. The *vaqueros* had placed their saddles and other riding gear over the railing around the porch. When P went sailing over the railing, saddles were sent flying, and he landed among the dogs, thrashing them unmercifully.

The cowboys, relaxing so innocently around their fire, had no warning that judgment was upon them. The dogs got in the fire and sparks were flying everywhere. Such a hullabaloo as you have never heard came from under that porch. The whole thing didn't last 15 seconds. Piloto finished with the dogs and was gone in a flash.

I was running as hard as I could down the path away from them, when Old P shot past me. Now please don't midjudge me, but I'm nearly sure I heard him chuckle as he sped by.

You see, it was almost impossible to keep him home. He ran with the horses. He ran with the motorcycle. He ran with the Jeep — it made no difference, 10, 15 or 25 miles. I gave him to a fellow in San Ignacio, 75 miles away. He scared the man's pet jaguar half to death and ran all the way back to San Simon.

Usually when one left in a motor vehicle Old P would be shut in the house until it was safe to let him out. One day I cycled over to El Valle and Dwight let him out too soon. He heard the motor, and here he went. I had stopped to talk to someone in the trail and while I was still there Old P came lumbering up with his tongue hanging out about a foot. He flopped down under a bush and I just kneeled down there and tied him to it, expecting to untie him when I passed back by

As I neared El Valle I glanced down another little-used trail and saw three men bringing a herd of about 20 or 30 half-wild cows. I thought they were probably taking them to El Valle. I went on to the house of the Old Ones and forgot all about the cattle.

In a couple of hours as I was once again nearing the spot where I had tied Piloto, I ran onto one of the three cowboys. He was jerking his horse around in an irritable way. The horse was covered from end to end with lather.

I still had not connected it with Old P.

"*Que paso?*" I asked, "*Donde los vacas* (cows)?"

He smiled bleakly. "Senor," he exclaimed, "you see that bush there?" He pointed to where you know who had been tied. "Well, there was black panther lying under that bush, and he jumped up with a roar, and scattered our cattle all over the world. We've been trying to get them back together again for two hours."

"Are you sure it was a panther?" I asked warily.

"*Absolutamente!* I was no further than ten *metros*. I fired at him and scored a hit. No doubt he is lying dead out there somewhere even now."

"Well," I thought, "we can hope on that." But he was lying on the porch when I returned.

Even though Old P was mean and devilish, in some ways he was gentle and kind. All the children loved him and would lay on him, sit on him or just hang on him. He never offered to bite anyone, not even the burgler back in Santa Cruz who broke into our house right in his very presence.

The people of the area began to look on Piloto as an institution and actually took pride in his gross insanity. No stranger had "done" our part of the country until he had seen the *perro grande*.

I never tried to protect him from disaster. Occasionally he would push his luck too far and someone would threaten to kill him. I always said, "Go ahead, he's your dog."

But they never would.

I'll give an example of the way people felt about the brute. Several of us came riding our horses into San Pablo. Old P had been calm and normal out on the trail when we met people and stopped at a house or two along the way. When we entered San Pablo the people were gathered waiting on us. Suddenly Piloto bounded forward and running up to a teenaged girl he lifted his leg and soaked her thoroughly. Her squeals had hardly died, until he knocked an old fellow off a log backwards.

The old man was senile and always sat on that same log. Piloto actually just pushed him over backwards and he lay on the ground in the same position in which he had been sitting with his hands on his knees and his feet up in the air. We ran to help the old guy to his feet, which when he had regained he just stood pointing at P.

Gomercindo said, "Whooo, he don't know what to think!"

We apologized profusely to the people, but they would have none of it.

They shrieked and pounded one another on the back, insisting that no one in the world had ever had as much fun as they were having. The girl and the old man joined in the merriment, too. But because of this type of thing Piloto was privileged to attend few services in other *pueblos*.

It would take a book to tell of Old P's many strange feats, but I expect you have already heard more than you can stand.



## RON & GENE

Finally the day arrived that the three of us had been looking forward to for so long — the coming of Gene Gambill and Ron Mitchell. I can't tell you why their visit meant so much, because I don't know why for sure; but it was more than just kinfolks coming. It encouraged us greatly.

Marvin picked me up in San Ignacio with the plane on Tuesday. I had driven the Jeep in there in order to bring out a barrel of gas. We flew on into Santa Cruz and got a room so that we would be ready to meet their plane on Wednesday.

So uncertain is life in Bolivia that we half expected for them not to be on the jet when it landed, but they were. As they came strolling from the plane, I noticed what looked like a small holster on Ron's belt. At the same time the police noticed it, too, and zeroed in on him in a way that was a bit unsettling. It turned out to be a pipe holder, for Ron was a smoker of pipes.

As the police rushed in on him, pointing at the holster and shouting — I don't remember what — old Ron grabbed it, exclaiming "*me pipa, me pipa.*" It is a miracle the police didn't mistake his grab for a draw and shoot him down right in front of us all.

It seems that he had the same experience in La Paz when they had landed there. That's where he had learned to say, "*me pipa, me pipa.*" We persuaded him to take that thing off.

Marvin and I were more or less used to pandemonium, but the incident may have startled Ron and Gene.

In the afternoon Marvin had to make a flight out to the Chapare River where Missionary M.S. Arrington lived and since he had considerable cargo, both of the fellows could not go. A flip of the coin designated Gene as the lucky one, so he and Marvin flew on out there.

Ron and I shopped around over town, coming at last to the main plaza where we sat eating an ice cream cone. We were tranquil, the incident of the pipe-holster forgotten. A mellow mood was upon us.

Suddenly there appeared before us a stout gentleman with a very sour face. "Show me your credentials," he demanded.

It was not my custom to whip out my credentials to just any and every one who had a desire to see them, having learned that Bolivia was full of "authorities" who had no authority at all.

My refusal to show papers until he identified himself irritated him considerably. But he showed his badge which proclaimed him to be a member of INTERPOL (International Police). I suppose that is Bolivia's counterpart of our FBI or CIA, I don't know. But it was pretty certain that he was a bonafide authority.

He stood glaring at us.

"Why does he have on that hat?" he scowled, pointing to Ron's derby which had a camouflage design.

I could see his mind at work: camouflage - guerrilla; guerrilla -terrorist; terrorist - Che Guevara; Che Guevara - Fidel Castro; Fidel Castro - Communist.

I don't know why I said it, I was a little irritated, too. I said, "I guess to cover his head."

Well, that did it. We were hauled off to headquarters and then from office to office and questioned with many insinuations of stern intrigue. They were, as the saying goes, leaving no stone unturned.

I pretended to be very grave, but inwardly I was enjoying it immensely for Ron's sake, for he kept muttering how he couldn't believe this was happening to him.

"Well," I said, "Ron, you are just like the early Christians. They turned the world upside down, too."

INTERPOL sent two detectives to our rooms with us where they searched through all our things. Just before they released us one of them revealed that they had killed two guerrillas and arrested a number of other foreigners the night before in La Paz and that was the reason for their caution.

Early on Thursday Ron and Marvin flew on out to San Ignacio in the Cessna 182. Gene and I caught the regular Loyd Boliviano DC-3 flight out. Every seat on the old plane was occupied and the crew put more and more cargo in. I felt sure the plane was being overloaded.

We taxied out onto the runway and came lumbering against the wind — it wouldn't begin to lift off.

Gene said, "My lands," and looked around nervously.

Back to the terminal and some of the cargo was unloaded.

On the runway again we got a lobe instead of a lumber, but wouldn't fly.

Gene said, "Jurl, this is crazy."

"Yeah," I agreed, "this is Bolivia."

More cargo was put off and we taxied out to the runway all then out into the field and turned around right against the east fence.

Throttle to the floor, brakes locked, and the old dog vibrated so much it made you itch — passengers uneasy.

Brakes released, the DC-3 rolled heavily over the rough field, picking up speed on the pavement and eating up the runway. Three quarters down the wheels lifted off and slowly munched back down. The pilot was determined to do or die.

Down near the end of the runway the wheels lifted off again and the west fence dropped under us close enough to see the barbs on the wire. Everybody on the plane laughed loudly and the men slapped their legs.

Gene managed a grin and said again that it was crazy.

It was late afternoon by the time we pulled out of San Ignacio

in the Jeep. I'm sure there is no way that I can appreciate how the 75 miles from San Ignacio seemed to those two men fresh from the USA. It was at the end of the rainy season and much of the road was still under water and full of mud holes.

Gene declared that he doubted ever seeing home again.

At 11:00 we pulled into our yard and the fellows had a good reunion with Mary Ann and Dwight.

They had brought different things, among which was a mandolin and a ukelele. We already had two guitars and several harmonicas. So we livened up the services while they were there with our singing and playing.

The first Sunday that Ron and Gene were there, they gave short sermonettes which I interpreted for them. Two were saved that Sunday, too.

As we left the morning service and made our way around the upper end of the lagoon, Ron, who was in the lead said, "Jurl, there are some women up ahead and I think they are taking a bath."

"They probably are," I agreed.

"Well, what are we going to do? They don't have on any clothes."

This was a problem that took some getting used to. While the people did not generally go about naked, their custom was to bathe anywhere it was convenient. If there was any embarrassment on their part when they were happened upon on these occasions, I never detected it.

I had disciplined myself to act natural when confronted with this, and to exchange pleasantries with the bathers as I passed on by. Even Mary Ann had more or less gotten the hang of it, but was still somewhat mortified when facing it.

On this occasion Ron quickly dropped to the rear with Gene, and Mary Ann led the way as we bore down upon the bathers.

"*Ola, Senoras, como estan?*" Mary Ann and I chorused.

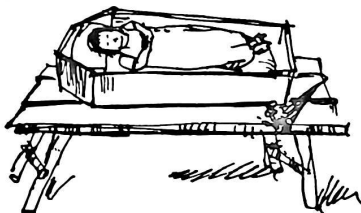
"*Bein, no mas. Como estan ustedes, Pastor y Dona Maria?*"

I couldn't resist waving toward the two neon signs in the rear and saying "*Mis hermanos de los Estados Unidos*" (my brothers from the United States). Many pleasantries then followed which were directed toward Gene and Ron as we

moved on up the path to the house. Gene was heard to say from the rear that if he ever got home, he would never complain again.

We thoroughly enjoyed the visit of these two men. They encouraged us greatly. Gene went back ahead of Ron, who stayed nearly a month. During that time he entered into our work with an enthusiasm that only he can muster. The people and especially the children took to him at once.

It was very empty and sad for us when their visit was over and they returned to the States.



## LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

It was Saturday, July 1, and my 38th birthday. A beautiful day, not too hot or muggy for a change. We three were sitting on the high front porch enjoying the freshness of the morning. The air was filled with the sweet odor of nearby trees which were covered with bright orange blossoms. The parrots were giving their usual raucous serenade down by the lagoon.

The atmosphere was very clear — so much so that we could see the blue haze that were the mountains that marked the Brazilian border 40 miles to the east.

Our conversation was bittersweet. The sweet part was the beauty of the morning and the mellowness of our mood. The bitter was occasioned because we had made up our minds while sitting there that Dwight must return to the States in the fall.

His trying to get his schooling through correspondence had not worked out well, mostly due to the lack of dependability of the mail service in South America. Several lessons had been lost. He was falling further and further behind.

As we sat discussing this decision Juana, our wash woman, was coming up the path. With her were her children, Juancito, Margarita, Pablina and Fati. Each of them had an egg which

they presented to me because it was my birthday. Three children also came running from the *pueblo* and stood in front of me, out of breath, declaring that since it was my birthday, they would sing a "special" for me. They proceeded to sing "*Solamente En Christo*" (Only In Christ).

When all of these had departed, Delia Pokibiki and several other women were passing by out on the road. When they were directly in front of the house, they stopped and had a conference. They had containers sitting on top of their heads. They kept looking toward us on the porch.

At last, here came Delia (the only believer in the group) and she wanted to know if maybe the Pastor would want to take them over to Juan Cochamani's ranch where their husbands were working, because they had so much stuff and it was so far. They were going over there to cook dinner for their men.

That Delia, she was a corker — thought she had more pull than the President.

One of the ladies shouted, "Pastor, if you will, we'll give you many, many thanks. Not to the Savior, but just to you."

"No." I returned, "We do everything in the name of the Savior. You must thank Him for every blessing."

"Well, we do thank Him too, then, but mostly, today, we just want to thank you, yourself."

Women are the same all over the world — they get what they want. I sent Dwight to take them.

They had not been gone long until we noticed a parade of people coming around the path at the head of the lagoon. Mary Ann thought it must be a delegation coming to wish me a happy birthday. As they got closer we saw that they were all women and were very saddened. Hesitantly they entered the yard and went through the cloud of pleasantries that were dictated by custom.

"*Buenas dias, Pastor.*"

"*Senoras.*"

"*Buenas dias, Dona Anna Maria.*"

"*Buenas dias. Como estan ustedes?*" Mary Ann inquired.

When all states of health were satisfactorily given and other items of chitchat gotten done, Cecilia stepped forward, ner-

vously twisting a piece of cloth in her fingers.

“Pastor, Julian’s baby is dying and he is out on the trail at *Jesus* working with the men. We know that he has caused you much trouble here, and some say you will not go out and get him, but I told them you have taught us to love our enemies. Will you go?”

Julian had indeed caused us much trouble. When a believer was beaten he would always figure in on it somewhere. If there was alcohol, he would be involved somehow. He was the chief man in the village, the law. He made no bones about not liking us or our work and he was the main man of Old Sal, the priest.

We followed the women back to the house of Julian. The baby really did look dead. They had the door shut tight and smoke was thick from a fire built in the middle of the room. Sweat was pouring from the little fellow because they had him wrapped so tightly in rags. His head was covered with cotton and a little cap was pulled down tightly over that and tied under his chin. He was breathing heavily.

Mary Ann gave him a shot of anti-biotic and rubbed his chest and throat with Vicks hoping that it would unstop him a bit.

When Dwight returned with the Jeep, we went out about eight miles and got Julian, along with six others who were out there without their horses. I expected the baby to be dead by the time we returned, but the Vicks had opened him up a little and Mary Ann had persuaded them to take off some of the garments and let some fresh air into the room.

Julian went in, and kneeling down beside the hammock, he lifted the baby in his arms. As he looked into the face of his little son, tears rolled down his cheeks.

*“Pastor, mi hijo se va morir.”*

I said yes, his son was probably going to die.

He looked down at his son again. Tears dropped onto the child’s gown. All pretensions gone now — the very essence of humility — he turned his face back to me. “Pastor, I am a poor man and I have no one to help me save, you and God.”

“What do you want me to do, Julian?”

Tears streamed down his face. “Take my baby to the hospital in San Ignacio,” he pleaded.

There was not a sound from the group that had crowded into the hut or from those gathered under the porch on the outside. Every eye was upon me. They all knew Julian had led the people against me from the very beginning.

Of all the times I did not want to start out over the long trail to San Ignacio, it was now. Tomorrow was Sunday and there was much to be done then. Besides I had reason to believe that there was no gas to be had in San Ignacio and had not been for several days. I was nearly certain the baby would die immediately. Besides, I didn't owe Julian anything.

The eyes of some of the believers burned into mine.

When I said, "Alright, let's go," several of the people pushed out their lips and nodded their heads like I had seen them do when something pleased them very much.

It was a strange feeling having Julian, of all people, to ask for help. He was about the only one in the whole village who had never asked for anything — not even an aspirin or a 22-shell. He was our enemy, and now we were his benefactor. I felt the Lord was in it somehow.

We were off within the hour — Julian, his wife, her mother, the baby and the school teacher. They threw in two live chickens, a small pig and a bag of rice to sustain themselves while in the pueblo.

The baby's mother, who had probably never ridden in a motor vehicle in her life, became car sick almost immediately and remained so for the next eight hours that it took to reach San Ignacio.

We went straight to the Catholic hospital where we found that of the three town doctors, two were gone to Santa Cruz and the remaining one was very drunk. The nun nurses gave the baby another shot and said that we would just have to wait until the doctor sobered up enough to look at him. I could not help but wonder what the outcome would have been if the same situation had existed when we brought Dwight in with his ruptured appendix.

As the nurse was giving the baby the shot, she ran her hand over his chest and smelled. "Who put this on his chest?"

I thought she meant the Vicks and told her my wife did, but it

turned out that the women had mixed kerosene, tobacco and sand and had spread it on the baby's chest. I thought that a little odd, but the head nurse assured me it was a home remedy that was practiced regularly among the Chiquitanos.

I left Julian and his family standing there in the hospital lobby and went to find a room at the Carlos Mayser Hotel. Poor Julian — out in San Simon, he was somebody, the head man, the law; but in San Ignacio, he was just another barefooted Indian with patched britches.

When morning came I went back to the hospital where the head nun told me the baby had died. She said, "The terrible thing is, they kill their own babies with their weird customs."

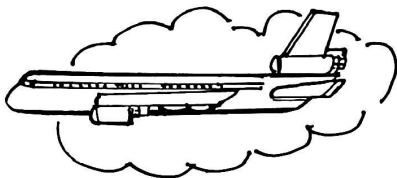
Mary Ann and I had a little "Peter Pan" type nun friend named Lottie, and she came along about that time. Before I could protest enough, she had ushered me into a large dining hall in the hospital and seated me in the midst of about 50 high school girls. There were also 20 Austrian teachers there who were *Senoritas*, too.

I don't know if the fantastic breakfast I got was worth it or not. With Lottie leading the way, those 70 females nearly wore me out with questions about everything.

While I was there, the doctor came in, saying he had been looking for me to tell me that he certainly was not drunk last night. I'm afraid his face denied his denial, but the poor little baby was doomed from the start anyway.

Julian told me he was going to remain in San Ignacio a few days and bury his baby there, so I drove on back out to San Simon alone. As I entered the village, several men and boys flagged me down to ask about how things had gone. When I told them the baby had died, they whooped and shouted, pounding one another on the back as they thought of the time and trouble I had gone to for nothing.

I drove on up to the house with a very heavy heart.



## **DWIGHT RETURNS**

The time came for Dwight to return to the States. It had been arranged for him to stay with Ron and Mic in Arkansas. We invited all who wanted to come and say goodbye to Dwight to come on Tuesday evening. Nearly everyone in San Simon came, plus some from other places. I guess there must have been over 100 people there.

I felt as Paul must have felt after his Mars Hill lecture, when he later said he was “determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” because I had meant to preach a little to the group. However, I failed to get it done due to the unweildiness of such a mixed multitude.

Leaving Gomercindo in charge of the homestead, we left early on Wednesday in the Jeep for San Ignacio. Ademar, the school teacher, was in the front with Mary Ann and me. Trinidad was in the back with her two younguns’ and Gaisa was on the other side in back. In between them was a mountain of luggage that kept burying them as we bounced and jolted over the rough trail.

Dwight and Juan Cochamani were riding ahead on their motorcycles. Dwight was taking his in to sell it. Juan had bor-

rowed a coil from me that I had extra for the Jeep because his coil had played out on his cycle. I wanted to shout that it wouldn't work, but wisely remained silent, knowing that what wouldn't work for a North American will nearly always work for a Bolivian. Things like homemade car batteries, with seven to ten volts — made when they added cells to them, or tie rods tied up with ropes and driven indefinitely. Or after running a wheel off, coming on in on a skid pole. One fellow I knew had never had anything but a gravity flow fuel system fed from a jerry can he had fastened to the top of his pickup cab.

We came on in to San Ignacio (Juan on the Jeep coil) and got a room. As we were going to eat supper, we found a very large coral snake lying dead in the street. As we pointed it out to passers by, they also thought it was a big one but did not seem to be alarmed that such a dangerous thing had been crawling about amongst them. When we brought it to our friend, whose hotel we were occupying, she said yes, the children had killed it last night. She said the kids play with them not realizing that they are poison, and that there were many of them in the town. She figured they were about like the yopi in poison.

Of course the coral is our most poison snake in the U.S., and many times more lethal than the yopi which is about like our copperhead in poison. The thought of coral snakes crawling around in San Ignacio where nearly everyone goes barefooted or wears sandals troubled us considerably.

We spent some time trying to convince those around us how dangerous the situation was, but all they would do was grin and say "*seguro*" (really). Fortunately the snakes are not aggressive and have very small mouths and do not strike. About the only way one would bite would be if it were stepped on.

Well, excuse me for getting so excited, but my lands!

We three caught the next morning plane to Santa Cruz where we found that our regular hotel was filled up. So we took a taxi over to a mission home, a place operated by a group to provide a resting place for their many missionaries who came and went often. I was well acquainted with the manager, who I'll call Don.

Old Don told us we were welcome to stay there, but that we

must not chew gum as his kids picked it up in the yard where it was sometimes thrown and chewed it. We also must understand that no chewing of tobacco, smoking, or foul language would be tolerated.

As darkness descended on Santa Cruz, we walked to a nearby park and sat, trying to assure one another that we'd all be fine.

"Sure, Dwight, you'll do fine in the States without us," Mary Ann and I said.

"I just hope you and Mama will do fine down here without me," he replied glumly.

Painful is the only word for the feelings each of us had. How we wished that it was not necessary for him to go away from us, but we felt surely that the Lord would protect us until we could be together again.

Early the next morning I told Don to holler when it was time to eat. "The bell has rung about six times already, and that means eat, man," he said enthusiastically.

Just what bell he had in mind, I was afraid to ask. Old Don was peculiar. He was from some outlandish place in the North-eastern United States.

Anyway we gathered to eat — Don, his wife and about six kids at one end of the long table and all us guests at the other end. Everyone was very silent and stiff and he introduced us in his blunt fashion. The tension was terrific! I loved it!

He then tore loose on "Have You Any Room For Jesus." Mary Ann joined him for a few bars before she petered out into the embarrassed silence of the rest. At the end of his solo he reprimanded us sharply for failing to join him in singing the hymn.

From that Don plunged into a prayer that sounded exactly as he did when he gave his twice daily broadcasts on his two-way radio. After the prayer he scolded an elderly couple for using the "blue bathroom" instead of some other colored one.

Bye and bye it all ended and we rushed back to our room determined to escape from there as soon as possible. This we were able to do later in the day when a room became available in our regular downtown hotel. The Loyds were already in that hotel, too, for they were also sending their kids back to the



*Dwight compares an ostrich egg with a hen egg.*

States.

The next morning we took a taxi out to the airport to see our kids off. Randy and Jill were crying softly. Mary Ann and Helen were crying, too. Dwight lent some confidence to the scene as he strode out to the plane with his newly acquired "rolling gait of the athlete," as he called it.

Sadness is standing and watching your younguns sail away on a big jet, on a 6,000 mile journey and knowing it will be many months before you will see them again. The Loyds, Mary Ann and I strained our eyes while that airplane, carrying its precious cargo, became a speck and finally disappeared into the setting sun over the Andes Mountains.

"It's too late to back out now," Marvin pointed out.

But there are some things you can't back out of anyway. We had tried correspondence study and it was an impossible thing due to the isolation of our field. As a result of faulty communication between us and the University of Nebraska, Dwight

had lost half of his ninth grade year.

That night in the hotel we were pretty depressed. There was a terrible weight in my stomach to realize that Dwight was gone from us after 15 years. His leaving San Simon was a loss to us not only as his parents, but as his fellow workers in Christ, for he had done much to help us in the mission work among the Chiquitanos.

Mary Ann and I returned to San Simon and plunged into our work as hard as we could in order to not miss Dwight as much.



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## THE VIRGIN VISITS

As we passed through San Ignacio on the way home from Santa Cruz, we found in the mail a letter from my folks. Mom had sent several tracts in Spanish she had gotten somewhere. One of them used the three little pigs to illustrate how important it is to have a strong house to stand against the enemy.

Mary Ann made a chart on the three little pigs story and I preached it on the following Sunday. I almost got a standing ovation from the Indians over my huffing and puffing. In fact, they were so delighted with my antics that I felt nearly sure they had missed the whole point — that Christ is the only house that will stand.

But things are not always as they seem. Mary Ann was out at the hen house. (We had four hens sitting on eggs and they were constantly fussing about whose eggs were whose. So Mary Ann rushed out there several times a day to separate them and judge their cases. I told her to follow Solomon's example and start cutting the eggs in four parts, then she'd find out in a hurry whose eggs they really were.)

Anyway, she was out there when Pablina came sidling up.

“Senora, you know when the Pastor was preaching on the

wolf blowing down the pig's house?"

"Si."

"Well, I want a strong house that Satan can't blow down. I want to come up in the next *culto* and give the hand."

"Giving the hand" was how they described making a public confession of Christ.

Pablina was not the only one who saw in the "Three Little Pigs" story the more important truth of Christ being our refuge against the "roaring lion" who is always on the lookout for those he may devour. Several came to know Jesus in quick succession.

The more that were saved, the harder the devil's crowd worked against us. One evil thing followed another. Only the grace of God and a sense of the ludicrous kept us on an even keel emotionally. This was a place where we really missed Dwight. He could just about always see the joke.

The priests in San Ignacio were going all out to hinder our work and win the people to themselves. It seemed to us that they were more interested in thwarting us than in helping the people.

For some time word had been coming out from San Ignacio that Old Sal was going to bring out their best idol, the virgin Mary, and each and all were to be permitted to kiss it and confess sins before it. In view of this, Mary Ann and I made hundreds of little cards with a number of scriptures on them teaching against idolatry and image worship. These we placed in every trail coming into San Simon. Since no scrap of paper was ever seen on the ground, people were quick to pick them up and read the scriptures, which were Exodus 20:4, 5; Psalm 115:4-8; and Matthew 23:9.

I also instructed one of our young men to mingle with the crowd when the priests arrived and discreetly drop the little cards. They were brightly colored and drew quick attention.

He took some in the night and put them near the Catholic chapel. When the few came out, they at once began to find them. His telling of it was humorous. He said they were chasing the cards which were blowing in the wind, spotting them with their flash lights.

The next morning several of the believers came, telling of the

cards being found and how the pueblo was in an uproar about it. Of course, no one ever knew for sure where the cards came from except us two and the young man who helped us. Even Don Agapito came bearing one, and suggesting, "God in heaven has sent them down."

Gomercindo thought, "Whooo, there are millions of them, it may be the end of the world."

At any rate, by the time Old Sal and his Virgin arrived, the scriptures were well planted in the people's minds.

At noon, we were seated on the porch, when we heard a vehicle coming from the direction of San Pablo. We knew that the priests were over there with their idol and so figured that the truck coming was them.

The pickup came on up the hill and stopped out in front of our house on the road. The idol could be seen standing in back with just her mannequin-looking head peering over the sideboards. Four nuns towered head and shoulders over it.

Mary Ann said, "Now let's frown disapprovingly."

But, alas, just as we had gotten our brows puckered about right for a disapproving frown, the nuns began to wave congenially and so we had to smile and wave, too.

Many of the pueblo came running and formed a parade behind the two men carrying the idol, and away they marched to the plaza.

"Now Old Sal is faced with the task of getting the Indians to bow down, kiss the idol's feet and confess their sins," Mary Ann chortled.

I, too, rejoiced in the fact that if he was going to convince those Chiquitanos to do that, he would be one tired man when it was over.

In the evening all the Christians came to Bible study at our house. They informed me that the priests were going to show a film about the life and death of Christ. Something seemed to tell me that I should dismiss class and allow our believers to go and see the film. I told them we would discuss it after we had seen it.

So we all went over to the plaza where there must have been 200 people gathered.

The film was as beautiful and as accurate as anyone could

ever hope to see. Mary Ann and I were deeply moved by it. It was two hours long and showed the life of Christ from the birth of John until Jesus was cleansing the Temple. I was very thankful that the believers got to see it.

At the end of the film the main priest told everyone to come back tomorrow night and see the end of the story. Then he began to pray not only in the name of Jesus but also in the names of Mary and Joseph.

I sure do not understand Catholics. The film did not in any way glorify Mary, but presented her exactly as the Bible does.

There was a lot of activity over in the plaza the next day, what with virgin Mary making her way from house to house and marching round and round. Old Sal peered at me uneasily. The main priest always made sure his back was to me.

I told them their film was very good and that it showed that the only way to heaven was through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Someone observed, "But Pastor, I guess the story of the film was a lot different than your Bible, right?"

The two priests got very busy. "No," I said, way too loud, "actually I use the same Bible the Catholics do. It's all the same. It says Jesus is the only hope of the world."

When I returned to the house, I found several of the nuns were visiting and having a good time with Mary Ann.

That night we saw the second half of the film. It was a heart-rending portrayal of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. And again it conformed right down the line. Both Mary Ann and I shed many tears. I wondered if the Indians were moved by it. I know they looked very solemn.

How I would have liked to have given an invitation for people to receive Christ publicly. But all the priest had to offer at the end of it was a long, dry, monotone, memorized, useless prayer to Mary.

What manner of men are Catholic priests that they cannot see any clearer than they do? How ironic that the very men that brought out such a beautiful film should so utterly fail to embrace the Christ it preached!

As we sat on the porch later that evening the moon came rising slowly up out of Brazil to claim the night. The lagoon was

filled with the melancholy voices of the thousands of frogs that lived there. From across over in the village, the sounds told us that the priests and crew were loading up to go to the next village. The sound of their engine had scarcely faded away when a drum and flute had given a tentative note.

Soon the pounding drums and wailing flutes were being joined by the drunken shouts of the Indians.

We prayed that the Lord would put a hedge around our believing Chiquitanos.

## **EPILOGUE**

After about 18 months among the Chiquitanos, the work was fairly well established. We had in all, counting those in all the places where we preached, at least 45 believers. In San Simon there were 30 people who had made a definite commitment to the Lord. Several of the men were speaking of a feeling that maybe the Lord wanted them to begin to preach.

Our church building was completely finished, even to the large sign in front that proclaimed it to be the Baptist Church of Sam Simon.

The priests had put increasing pressure on the Indians both to not cooperate with us and to go with them. Attendance in our services had fallen off sharply. Where in the beginning we had had 75 to 100, by the last six months we were running 45 to 55 most of the time.

The Indians had rather untidy minds and it was very difficult for them to choose a position and stay with it. There was a great deal of vacillating between standing with the "*evangelicos*" and "*los sacerdotes*" (the priests).

I do not mean to imply that very many in the area were hostile to us. Actually any opposition we encountered would usually

evaporate in a cloud of pleasantries the moment we came into contact with it. But then the opposition would rush back in the moment our presence was withdrawn, in the manner of water filling a hole caused by a withdrawn finger.

At the end of 18 months, we had reached a stalemate. Under the tutelage of the priests, the Chiquitanos were taking us and our services too much for granted.

Moreover and finally, drunkenness had become a problem of elephantine proportion. This, I must lay squarely at the feet of the priests, as one of their methods of combat was to see to it that alcohol was always in abundance. This, they were reported to be saying, would cause us to leave. It had more effect on our dusky brethren than I like to admit.

For this reason I never baptized any of them, though they often brought it up and wanted to be baptized. I told them when they could leave alcohol alone for a long period of time, then they could be baptized. One missionary rebuked me for this, saying it was a mistake not to baptize them. He pointed out that the Great Commission was on this wise: 1. Make disciples. 2. Baptize them. 3. Then teach them. He said I was putting number three ahead of number two.

Perhaps he was exactly right. The Indians had never known anything but drinking and drunkenness since their tribe had had the dubious fortune to become "civilized." We never doubted the sincerity of those who made professions, as it was often costly for them to maintain their allegiance to Christ.

I guess the main difficulty I had with the situation was that I grew up in Missouri where churches were very strict and there was no way for me to be tolerant toward drinking. I could be sympathetic, but never tolerant.

Of course we had several among the women and youngsters who never drank, at least to our knowledge. But among the grown men, it was ever a terrible temptation. Sometimes they might go several months without succumbing and then one day they would fail.

But still, no doubt I would have baptized several of the believers, had not our work taken an abrupt turn.

The Loyds were experiencing the same problems we were hav-

ing in their work with the Chiquitanos further to the north. The time had come for them to return to the States for their furlough. At the same time our church in Santa Cruz was in a very low state. They had no pastor and the attendance had fallen away to nearly nothing.

Between us and the Loyds it was agreed that both families should pull out simultaneously — they to return to the States for furlough and Mary Ann and I would go to Santa Cruz for several months to help get the church there back on her feet.

We felt that a complete pullout would give the area a psychological jolt that might work to our benefit when we returned. All this must sound as if we were rather conniving. Well, it was no small thing for an area that had been pretty much abandoned to suddenly have medicine, churches, doctors and dentists, an airplane, a Jeep with fairly constant trips in and out of San Ignacio as well as Santa Cruz, to just suddenly have it taken away. The pressure on the priests was considerable, as they received the blame for it.

We also wanted to see how our believers would hold up without us. Of course, we could not leave them entirely alone. It happened that one of our young preachers from Santa Cruz had come out to visit us and the Loyds, and had been smitten by the love bug over a non-Indian maiden whose father was the manager of a ranch over near where the Loyds lived. These two were soon married and the young preacher wanted to continue to live there.

So we put him on salary and entrusted the work into his hands for a while. It was with a healthy reluctance that it was done, as he was quite immature. But it worked out pretty well in the long run.

And so we moved to Santa Cruz, where we spent the next eight months building up the church there. The Lord blessed with additions of people, another building on the church property and finally a new pastor, who is still pastoring there.

As time passed, Mary Ann and I were building up more and more physical maladies. I can only attribute this to the stress we were usually under. I'm sure that the observant reader would get pretty fed up if I poured on the agony unduly; so I've tried not

to do that and do not intend to start now.

Suffice it to say, we had about had it. I know that there are missionaries who stay on foreign fields year after year, on and on. I can tell you that either they have made peace with those fields or they will not live to be old.

I think, perhaps, my greatest point of stress was my inability to adjust to the ingrained Latin habit of procrastination. I understood it alright, and even made allowances for it. I learned the value of resignation, the psychology of resignation, everything but resignation itself. To the end I continued to resist procrastination, doing everything in my power to avoid delay. I never succeeded. A man in a hurry in Bolivia will either wise up or get sick.

Mary Ann was able to adjust to the easy-going life of South American with appalling cheerfulness, but there were other stresses that undermined her health.

Finally we turned homeward to the States, with the rich hope that we had at least advanced the cause of Christ somewhat. But at the time we had slim confidence that our efforts had amounted to very much.

In a few months, the Loyds returned to Bolivia and made their home in San Simon. In time the work spread pretty well all over the area, stretching from San Ignacio, 225 miles north to Piso Firme. Most of those saved during our stay in San Simon were eventually baptized.

At this writing, the Loyds live in San Ignacio where they have both a church and a school. Marvin has a plane of his own which he uses to stay in contact with the several groups of Chiquitano Christians along the trail to Piso Firme.

God has and is blessing the preaching of the gospel among the Chiquitanos. It is not our business to make anyone accept the gospel — it is our business to see that they get it. It is not our duty to prove the Word of God — it is our duty to preach it.

