

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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## Ecuador Journey

It had been thirty-one years since my missionary work in Ecuador had ended, and I so wanted my husband Lars to get a glimpse of that beautiful country and the tribal people with whom I had worked. Last May my hope was realized. Gene Jordan, whom I had known when he was a baby, flew Lars and me in the Mission Aviation plane to the eastern jungle. Once again the glory of the high Andes, though partly swathed in cloud (and *pollution*—something new), the velvet mountainsides and green valleys, the great canyon of the roaring Pastaza River, sweet memories of the vast privileges I'd had, overwhelmed me. We landed in Toñampade, a settlement on the Curaray River where a number of Aucas (now known as Waorani) live. It was pouring rain, but dozens of Indians, soaked and muddy, waited at the airstrip to greet us. Dayuma was the only one I recognized. My Auca is much rustier than my Quichua, so I was glad for the help of an Auca woman married to a Quichua, who speaks both languages. She led the way to the river. It took a bit of persuading to get Lars to take off shoes and socks and roll up his trousers. I don't believe he'd ever done that in his life, but neither had he slogged through *that* kind of mud before. Of course he had things like snakes and fire ants and scorpions in mind.

Our guide pointed out where "Palm Beach" used to be, where my husband Jim and four others were killed in 1956. Because the course of jungle rivers changes so drastically, the bodies of the men were long since washed downriver, but shortly before we made our visit the Indians had found parts of Nate Saint's plane, uncovered after all these years by those capricious currents. I had found a piece of it in 1959 when two of the men who had done the spearing took Valerie and me to the beach. They told me at that time that the graves were gone. A bronze plaque, placed years later by visitors from the U.S. on what was supposed to be Palm Beach, has been washed away. A replacement now stands far from the river.

Everything was different, totally different from what it had been in Tiwaenu, many hours' travel from there and inaccessible by plane, where Valerie and I had

lived. There are Christians in Toñampade. The New Testament has been translated and there is a church building, also electricity, a spigot with running water, short wave radios, houses with walls, floors, and aluminum roofs. With the introduction of paper, plastic, cans and bottles, the people have learned to litter. Population has exploded. Oil companies have built school buildings. Aucas are working for the companies, learning Spanish, organizing themselves, protesting to the government for property rights, and a delegation was sent to Washington D.C. a few months ago, hoping to speak to the president (not available).

The next day we were *driven* to Shandia. Yes, what used to be our airstrip is now a road. We made a stop in Pano en route, where a church service was in progress. I was asked to give "a little word," and there were tears and testimonies of Jim's influence. Venancio, the godly man who was the strongest of the Christians, our school teacher and first pastor of the Shandia church, now lives in Pano. He was not there that day, but I had a letter from him telling of his huge disappointment in not knowing we would be passing through. He was preaching in a nearby town that day. "My wife Ana and I could not stop crying. If only we had known! I always remember Shandia, and we have continued to work without ceasing for the Lord, encouraging the believers. But Satan has entered and has caused the fall of many, making divisions, a very sad thing.... In November I and my pupils went to lay a floral offering at the grave of the five brothers. I cried much, thinking to myself, Don Jaimie and Don Eduardo and Don Pedro taught me the Bible."

At last we reached Shandia, the Quichua station where Jim and Pete Fleming worked before either was married. Word had been sent that we were coming, and twenty or thirty people waited in pouring rain in front of the Jim Elliot School, using banana leaves for umbrellas. A loud, warm welcome, everyone talking at once, some doing the death wail (the custom when one sees someone he hasn't seen since a loved one died). Then to a nearby house where a man had a badly swollen foot, pierced by a palm thorn. We left our shoes there, waded down the trail toward the Atun Yacu (Big River) and through the forest to the house Jim built.

The Grifas, a large extended family, moved in when the last missionaries moved out. An earthquake has



### The Shephard Family

Back row: Valerie, Walt Jr., Walter III 17.

Middle row: Elisabeth 15, and Sarah 1, who is about to burst into tears, Christiana 12.

Front row: Theo 2, Colleen 8, Evangeline 5, Jim 10.

Elisabeth's description of prayer time when homeschooling begins each morning: Everyone except Sarah, who has to be dragged, comes to the coffee table. Theo is told to kneel. "Did, Mom," he says. No, Theo, you are to *stay* kneeling. Now close your eyes. "Did!" says he. Evangeline and Colleen squirm, Jim and Christiana might argue or say, "Come on, let's pray!" and I say, "Everyone, *be quiet!*" Mama calmly begins. Another schoolday has started.

damaged our beautiful stone fireplace, so the Indians cook in a lean-to outdoors now. All the furniture except two beds is gone, screens torn, doors and drawers of kitchen built-ins gone, bathroom sink and toilet smashed, and everything filthy, but never mind — the Grifas were grateful for a good roof, wood walls and a cement floor. Lars wanted to know about everything — the room where I had written *Shadow of the Almighty*, the place where we dispensed worm medicine and injected penicillin, Valerie's bedroom, the shelf where the short-wave radio was when I got word that Jim was missing, the front door Jim went out for the last time (and when he slammed it, I had wondered if the thought crossed his mind that he might not be back). I had continued to live there from 1956 to 1963, except for two years with the Aucas. Could I *ever* have imagined I would come back with a *third* husband?

The jungle has grown up so that the park-like surroundings of our house, its pineapple, coffee, and cocoa plantations, its palm, banana, avocado, and grapefruit trees, and the sweeping view of the Atun Yacu, are all obliterated.

While everybody stood (there was nothing to sit on) in the living room I was treated to a long, impassioned speech by Shilvi, head of the clan, about all the things that had happened since I left, most of it very sorrowful and confusing — feuds among the clans, contention in church and school, deaths, changes of all

kinds. The words of a hymn came to mind, "Change and decay in all around I see — O Thou who changest not, abide with me."

Suddenly there was a terrible scream followed by a crash. A woman had collapsed. Three men dived to grab her, and held her down. I was told she has seizures when she's emotionally upset. It was a strange, almost surreal, scene—dark thunder clouds, the roar of the rain on the aluminum, the distress on the faces that surrounded me, hands touching me, earnest pleas for Lars and me to come back and stay, promises that everything would then be fixed. This was a strong tug at my heart. How I loved Shandia, that house, those dear people. Wouldn't it be lovely for Lars and me simply to pull up stakes and go there to stay?

When, in the early 1960s, it began to appear to me that the Shepherd was perhaps about to terminate what I had surely thought was a life's calling to Bible

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translation work I found it hard to accept. Was this a notion of the enemy to persuade me to look back when I had put hand to plough? Questions tormented me for a while. The lesson of trust and patient waiting on God is hard, at least for one who loves to plan ahead, make decisions and stick with them. But the Shepherd *does* know how to show His sheep those paths of righteousness, and is far more interested in our getting where He wants us to be than we are in getting there. He does not discuss things with us. He *leads* us, faithfully and plainly as we trust Him and simply do the next thing.

### *Just a Housewife*

Hello, Mrs. Jones, I've just called to say  
I'm sorry I cried when you phoned today.  
No, I didn't get angry when your call came at four—  
Just as eight cub scouts burst through the door;  
It's just that I had such a really full day.  
I'd baked eight pies for the PTA.  
And washing and ironing and scrubbing the floor  
Were chores I had finished not too long before.  
The reason I cried and gave that big yelp  
Was not 'cause you phoned just to ask for my help.  
The comment that just about drove me berserk  
Was, "I'm sure you'll have time  
because you don't work."

Sign me a HAPPY HOMEMAKER

(from an anonymous newspaper clipping, given to me by my faithful typist, Shirley Welt, who seems to share my views on just about everything — bless her heart!)

### *Department of Amplification*

In the July/August Newsletter I asked for confirmation of the source of "An African Martyr's Testimony." Such a variety of claims were sent to me that I am at a loss to choose one. Will the real author please stand up?

### *Recommended Reading*

Mary Wilder Tileston: *Daily Strength for Daily Needs*, first published in 1884. Scripture, poetry, and meditations for every day. Published by Putnam, cloth, \$6.95. Kregel of Grand Rapids, Michigan produces a large print edition, \$10.99. I love this little book. Perhaps this excerpt, which I need to review frequently, will show you why:

I think I find most help in trying to look on all interruptions and hindrances to work that one has planned out for oneself as discipline, trials sent by God to help one against getting selfish over one's

work. Then one can feel that perhaps one's true work—one's work for God consists in doing some trifling haphazard thing that has been thrown into one's day. It is not waste of time, as one is tempted to think, it is the most important part of the work of the day—the part one can best offer to God. After such a hindrance, do not rush after the planned work; trust the time to finish it will be given sometime, and keep a quiet heart about it.

—Annie Keary, 1825-1879

### *Note from Lars*

Has '94 slipped by? Afraid so. Recently a publisher said of a certain manuscript that they were trying to get a "handle" on it to "maximize the book's potential." At a loss as to what to do they tried to "massage the material into a series of vignettes."

I'm not known for clarity but do hope that the few things I want to pass on will be more understandable and not quite as serious.

It was a good year for the Newsletter. We had a lot of additions to the mailing list due to requests from Elisabeth's radio program *Gateway to Joy*. There was some thought that this would put a financial strain on the organization but not so. We appreciate your good response to renewal offers whether it be a book or tape series. So both of us say *tusen takk*, that's a thousand thanks in Norwegian. I would also add that Servant Publications does a wonderful job in putting the letter together for mailing.

As you know lots of folks' Christmas letters give a rundown of the previous year's ailments. Not to disappoint anyone I'll give you the good news about my glaucoma as some of you have asked. I can still see about the same as I did eight or nine years ago when I got the verdict. I've had four or five laser treatments — about seventy-seven holes popped into the mesh (whatever that is) of each eye. I'm surprised there's any mesh left. My doctor is great. He says just keep taking the medicine. Eight different drops a day plus a couple of pills. At times when I wake up at night, open my eyes, and see the ceiling I just say "Thank you, Lord, that I can still see." Not only that but drive, do my work, and meet a lot of you folks when we travel — much to thank God for.

That's it on the medical front for the two of us. The Lord has blessed us with good health and we're thankful. Of course for some reason I take a daily dose of cider vinegar and water, capsules of cod liver oil, vitamin C, and a couple of garlic pills. Whether or not it does any good, who knows?

In response to letters to us many of you have received a card from me. Elisabeth reads the mail, but it's now impossible for her to answer all of it. With

your help, the Newsletter is now being sent to 13,000 people, including 66 foreign countries. We do appreciate it, but the load increases and it's still just the two of us—we're not building an organization here in Magnolia.

If you want to stay on the mailing list, it would help at annual renewal time if you would return the *first* notice you receive, rather than waiting for the second. Makes bookkeeping easier for the staff at Servant. Some of you may have been inconvenienced last year when a new computer system was installed. We trust that all is well now.

### *Prayer*

Please pray for the Shandia Indians, that God will restore fellowship among the believers. Pray for Venancio, the pastor mentioned above. The Aucas and Colorados whom we also visited need prayer, especially now that the world makes such inroads materially and spiritually.

### Keep in Touch

Are you moving? Getting married? Leaving school? *Don't forget to send us your change of address.* The post office DOES NOT FORWARD third class mail like the Newsletter. *Please remove your address label below and send it with your new address to:* The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, Post Office Box 7711, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7711.

## *Travel Schedule* *January - March 1995*

- January 11-12** Naples, FL; Mrs. Edie Rudolph, 719 Willowhead Dr., (813) 262-5826.
- January 13** Clearwater FL; Actions Sixties TV, (813) 535-5622.
- January 14** Pasadena, CA; Pasadena Community Church, (800) 759-4569.
- January 15** Sarasota, FL; The Tabernacle, (813) 355-8858.
- January 27** Dahlonge, GA; Baptist Student Union, (706) 864-6402.
- January 28** Atlanta; Mt. Paran Church of God, (404) 261-0720.
- February 3** Chicago; Moody Bible Institute, (312) 329-4000.
- February 4** Ava, IL; radio station WXAN, (618) 426-3308.
- February 9-10** Denver; Christian Ministries Convention, Dennis Williams, (303) 761-8060.
- February 14** Nashville; National Religious Broadcasters Convention, David Keith, (703) 330-7000.
- February 23** Phoenix (meeting by invitation only).
- February 24-25** Mesa, AZ; Church of the Redeemer, Pam Davis, (602) 833-7500.
- March 9** Springdale, AR; First Baptist Church, Dollie Havens, (501) 751-4523.
- March 10-11** Houston, TX; First Baptist Church, Bonnie BeMent, (713) 520-5200.
- March 18** Los Angeles; Africa Inland Mission banquet, Glenn Peterson, (914) 735-4014.
- March 18** Pasadena, CA; First Church of the Nazarene Women's Seminar, Miss Ruth Dix, 8321 LaSierra Ave., Whittier, CA, 90603.

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