

Shandia, Ecuador

Jan. 6, 1956

Dearest Mother:

I know that if you have gotten my other letters about Jim's trip, you are on pins and needles to know what is going on. I don't know very much myself, because Rachel is here and they can't tell me much on the radio, but the plane came in Wed. and brought me a note saying that the landing beach they had picked out for the fellows was fine, Nate took them all in on Tues. and all the stuff, without any mishaps. The tree they picked out to build a house in was just perfect, and everything was going fine. On Wed., when everything was set up for "receiving visitors" Nate flew over the Auca houses with Pete, who spoke to them in a loud speaker from the plane, inviting them to go over to the beach. Later in the day they flew over again, and few Aucas were to be seen, so they assumed some of them must have set out for the beach. However, as of this morning no one had showed up yet (Friday), so I haven't heard what the next step will be. It may be that they will decide the Aquas are not ready for contact yet, and will simply return. On the other hand, if Jim can persuade them, I am sure they will go on over on foot to the Auca houses. Nate was dead set against this idea, as he says he is "yellow." Ed was on the fence, having a baby arriving in a couple of weeks, plus two kids and a wife in Arajuno, but Jim was all for going all the way, as is typical of his spirit, and of course, I am with him in this. If God leads that way, I think they should definitely go too. But I suppose they are just sitting in the tree house, hour after hour, studying their Auca vocabulary, etc., waiting "for something to turn up." That is all I know up to now.

I have told Jim, incidentally, that you know about this venture, so if you want to mention it in letters to us from now on it will be o.k. He has not told his folks, however, so don't write them. McCully's folks both know, but Saints do not, mainly because of the danger of Rachel's finding out, I guess. So you are really on the inside! By all means, tell no one else yet, even the family.

I have been quite at peace since Jim left, more so even than on some other occasions, not nearly so "dangerous" from the human standpoint.

Valerie has learned to climb stairs now, all the way to the top, which is a hazard. I picture her falling ~~her~~ from the balcony of the stairs straight down onto the cement floor. I have barricaded [sic] the stairway, but twice she has crawled over or through the barrier. So I have to watch her constantly, as she has the run of the whole house these days. I took her to the Talac River yesterday, with Stevie Saint, who has been here for two days. She had the time of her life, crawling along on the sand in shallow water, and she neatly floated twice, with me holding her head. She ate quantities of sand and pebbles, but seems to be none the worse today. My, she is cute!!,

Got to stop now – have only three girls in school today because of bean planting, but I've got to keep them busy

Much much love,

Betty

[Postscript handwritten in green ink]

Carmela Chimbau [?] who is here in school asks me to salute you in her name  
“She is my beloved old mother. Happily, I salute you, praying to God for you.”