

May 10, 1958

Shandia

Dearest Four:

I will try to make this short – Marj and Barb will have seen one another and will have talked over everything – Marilou is so busy with moving that I doubt if she has time to read her mail.

I just got back to Shandia from 17 days away – first in Shell, working with Mel Arnold on the biography, then a trip to Guayaquil with Mardelle and M & M and Val. I felt that the two Aucas should see something of what the “world” is like, in case they should take it into their heads to run home someday. Their reactions were as I expected: mild. The most thrilling sight to them was the fish market. Their eyes bulged, and of course I let them pick what they wanted. They took enough to keep them happy for the last two days we were there, so Mardelle and I could go shopping, etc., leaving them happily munching crab claws, or scaling fish in the back patio of the Tallman’s home, where we stayed. We traveled by bus, jeep, train, ferry, and Mercedes-Benz, so they’ve just about “had it,” I guess, as far as transportation goes. They were both happy to get home again, to their fire and their river. But civilization has made little impression so far – yesterday afternoon (mind you, they’ve been with me for six months) Mankamu came up from the river again with only a blouse on, much to the delight of the Indian boys present.

Letters from Barb, Olive, and Marj are before me. Thanks, all three. Barb, I have not gotten the pix you asked for, but will try. Hope your trip home was uneventful. Olive, how’s that thumb? One piece again? You asked about Tremblay: he has now established himself below Palm Beach on the Curaray. Completely alone, he says he will stay several more months. Plans to “dope” the Aucas if they appear friendly, shoot them if not. Marj, thanks so much for your lengthy account of trip, etc. Will write separately about the biography of Nate.

I would like to register here my dissatisfaction with the treatment Ken Anderson proposes for the Auca film. I am very happy with his attitude. (What a contrast to the spirit evidenced in Dick Ross’s last letter to Sam!) The words which really stopped me were: “Sprightly presentation, paced (ugh) to give a military effect...intensely spiritual.” Then that “drum roll...teeming hinterlands...history shall this day be written...five wives anxiously await radio communications...etc.

Will you tell me, please, HOW WE COULD HAVE MADE OURSELVES CLEARER on the matter of strict documentation? This is the same old story we had with Hollywood and Ross. Please, please, please let’s can the heart-rending “five Wives” scenes, the Testimonials from friends, testimonies from wives, mothers discussing with the children the beauty of heaven, etc. Do you agree with me?????

Well, I see by later letter that Ken will be in Ecuador on May 24th. I trust some of these will be clearly understood by then.

Much love to each of you,
Betty

[Handwritten postscript] Olive, you haven't answered my question about publishing Pete's letters????