

Christian Life

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Interpretative News and Business Magazine for Evangelical Christians

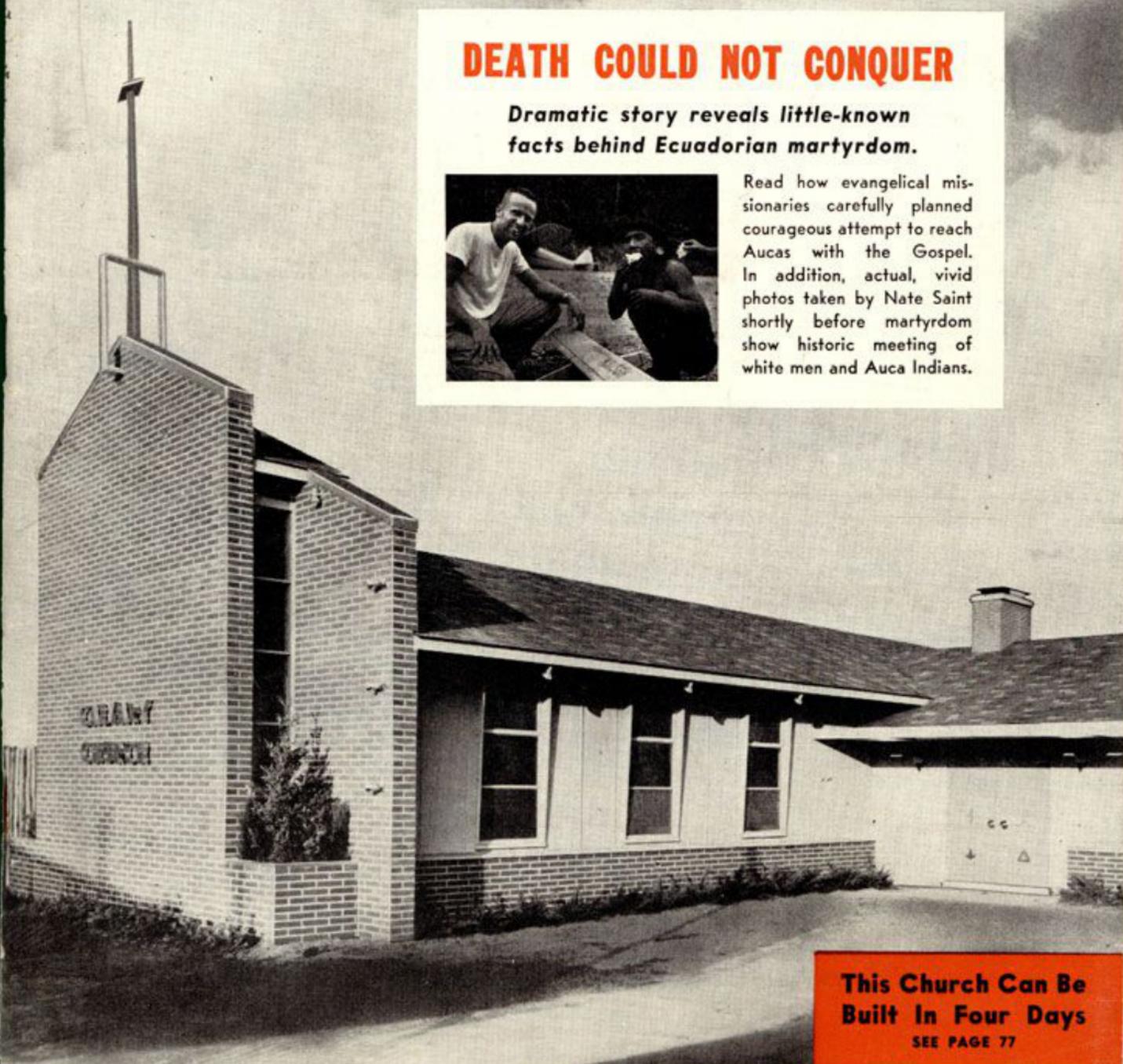
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DEATH COULD NOT CONQUER

Dramatic story reveals little-known facts behind Ecuadorian martyrdom.



Read how evangelical missionaries carefully planned courageous attempt to reach Auca with the Gospel. In addition, actual, vivid photos taken by Nate Saint shortly before martyrdom show historic meeting of white men and Auca Indians.



This Church Can Be
Built In Four Days

SEE PAGE 77



Cornell Capa photo by courtesy of LIFE Magazine

Widows with children attend memorial service for their husbands on Sunday after martyrdom. Left to right, Barbara Youderian, Marge Saint, Marilou McCully, Olive Fleming, Betty Elliot.

Company came around 3—this time a band of Auca warriors. They, too, waded the river. But their mission was to kill.

At 4:35 missionaries at the base camp waited in vain for their comrades' message.

Five days later their bodies were found floating in the Curaray River, pierced by lances and mutilated by machetes.

Martyred were Nathaniel Saint, 32, of Huntingdon Valley, Pa.; T. Edward McCully, Jr., 28, of Milwaukee, Wis.; James Elliot, 28, of Portland, Ore.; Peter Fleming, 27, of Seattle, Wash.; and Roger Youderian, 31, of Sumatra, Mont.

They had succeeded in reaching one of the fiercest uncivilized tribes in existence—but they gave their lives in the attempt.

And all over the world Christians were wondering, "Why?"

There's more to the story than just the fool-hardy courage of five young adventurers on a spur-of-the-moment escapade.

Few know it, but the story begins back nearly ten years ago.

It starts when strapping Ed McCully, son of a Milwaukee bakery executive, met Jim Elliot while they were students at Wheaton (Ill.) College. Both were Plymouth Brethren. Jim was interested in the mission field. But Ed—a letterman in track and football, class president, winner of the Hearst Newspapers Tournament of Orators—had other plans. He intended to study law.

Death Could Not Conquer

- Five missionaries die on a remote Ecuadorian beachhead.
- And all over the world Christians wonder, "Why?"

THE FIVE men on the sun-drenched Ecuadorian beach looked intently at the matted jungle wall across the river. They slapped at the cloud of tiny flies swarming around them, wiped off the sweat beading their bodies, restlessly paced off the minutes.

They were expecting visitors.

Two days before, two women and a young man of the savage Auca tribe had waded across the river. They seemed friendly. The man had shouted

with delight when one of the missionaries took him up in their four-passenger Piper Family Cruiser. It was encouraging. For the first time, the Auca tribe had been contacted by missionaries.

But yesterday—Saturday—nothing had happened.

Then on a Sunday morning flight one of the men spotted Aucas coming toward their beach camp.

They got ready for their guests. They cooked beans, arranged a "sand table." No one came. They ate lunch and held a song and prayer service. Then Pilot Nate Saint radioed his wife at the base camp.

"We are hoping for visitors by 2:30," he said. "I'll call you again at 4:35."



U.S. Army Photograph by SFC W. L. Paulson
Searchers dredge Curaray River for bodies.

After his graduation in 1949 he entered Marquette University Law School. Then one night he knocked on the door of his dad's study (McCullly now is executive secretary of Christian Business Men's Committee International).

"I've been battling with the Lord," Ed told his father, "but last night I told Him I'd do what He wants me to do. I think He wants me on the mission field."

The elder McCullly wanted to make sure. "Ed, the Lord can use a good Christian lawyer."

"I know He can," Ed answered

quietly, "but I think He has something else in mind for me."

That's all McCullly wanted to know. He promised to stand by Ed while he was seeking God's will for his life.

So Ed dropped out of law school. He got in touch with his friend Jim Elliot. He found him still interested in missions. As a sort of trial run they pioneered evangelical work in Chester, Ill., from the fall of '50 to the spring of '51.

Later that year, back in his hometown of Portland, Elliot heard a furloughing missionary tell of work with

the Indians of Ecuador. Talks with the missionary clinched Jim's decision. In the spring of 1952 he sailed for Ecuador with Pete Fleming (another Plymouth Brethren boy). In the meantime Ed McCullly had enrolled in the medical missionary course at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles.

Soon Ed and his bride Marilou followed Elliot and Fleming to a Plymouth Brethren mission school in the sweltering wilds of northeastern Ecuador.

It was natural that the Plymouth Brethren missionaries should meet up with Nate Saint. All missionaries knew

A Stirred Public Responds

WITHIN a week after his son was martyred in Ecuador, T. E. McCullly received an urgent letter. It came from a 20-year-old pre-ministerial student at Kent State University in Ohio.

He told McCullly he was dropping out of school to go to Ecuador. He wanted to take up where the murdered men left off. While such a rash decision may have been foolhardy, it demonstrates the impact of the news on all America.

That's only one link in a chain of events started by the seemingly tragic death of five evangelical missionaries at the hands of bloodthirsty Auca Indians.

Here are other consequences:

- Two Christian Quechua-speaking Indians at the mission station where McCullly, Elliot and Fleming labored dedicated their lives to converting the Aucas. Other Indians accepted Christ for the first time as Savior.
- Quito's Protestant churches were jammed on the Sunday following the martyrdom. Officials of the Ecuadorian gov-

ernment and members of the U.S. embassy staff attended.

- At a chapel service at Northwestern College in Minneapolis (where Youderian studied) 500 young people consecrated their lives to missions.

- Memorial rallies and youth meetings across the country resulted in hundreds of similar decisions. At a Chicago rally where T. E. McCullly testified, 30 made their decision public.

- Thousands of dollars poured in for a "Five Missionary Martyrs Fund" set up to aid the widows and children of the slain men. Gifts came from all over the U.S. as well as foreign countries. Dr. V. Raymond Edman, president of Wheaton (Ill.) College, is fund chairman. Address is Box 385, Washington, D.C.

- Sixty-five missionary volunteers were reaped at a service conducted in Spokane's First Presbyterian Church by W. Cameron Townsend, general director of the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

- During a service at the Bible Protestant Church in Moorestown, N.J., where James Elliot's wife once was a member, 20 persons yielded to Christ after a sermon on the missionaries' sacrifice. Similar reports are coming from other churches.

- Until well after a week after the incident McCullly was receiving 80 to 100 letters a day. Many of them showed a deeply stirred interest in missions. Others associated with the martyrdom also received heavy mail.

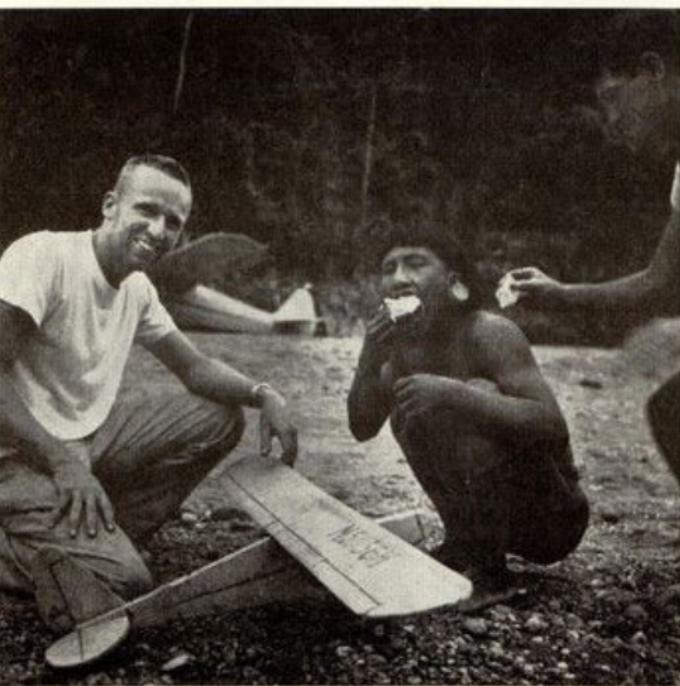
Mission executives believe the incident will have a long-term effect on missions.

Says Charles J. Mellis, Jr., of Missionary Aviation Fellowship (with which Saint was associated): "It is spurring contributions, candidates and prayer. Plenty of evidence every day. Our earnest prayer is that this will not turn out to be mere emotions, but stirred convictions—convictions that will continue to benefit the whole evangelical missionary effort. I've heard some people ask, 'Does someone have to die before we get stirred?'"

Signs are that mission boards will intensify efforts to reach the Aucas—as well as the some 1,800 or more yet-to-be-contacted tribes. Major areas of need are Dutch New Guinea, the Philippines, Indo-China, the Amazon Valley and North Central Africa.

Dr. Edman, himself a missionary in Ecuador for five years, told *CHRISTIAN LIFE*: "I am confident that some of the first Auca Indians to be saved will be the murderers of those five boys."

The martyrdom of the five men is not a defeat for the Gospel. It is proving again that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."



Nate Saint photo by courtesy of LIFE Magazine

Never-before-published photo shows Saint, Auca visitor, Youderian.

Saint, the jungle hopping pilot for Missionary Aviation Fellowship. He had been working around Shell Mera since 1947, survived a plane crash that put him in a cast from neck to thighs for months.

Another young missionary in the area was Roger Youderian, a World War II paratrooper and former student at Northwestern Schools in Minneapolis. He had gone to Ecuador in 1952 for the Gospel Missionary Union. His mission: to reach the Jivaro Indians (Auca neighbors who shrink heads).

For years missionaries in Ecuador had been burdened for the Aucas, described by one scientist as "the worst people on earth." A few years ago a party had ventured into Auca country. They narrowly escaped death when their boat was ambushed from the river bank. It looked pretty impossible.

But recently prospects brightened. Four Auca women fled their tribe. From one woman, especially, McCully and the others learned a small vocabulary of Auca words.

Then on Sept. 29, 1955, Nate Saint sighted an Auca village from the air. Later other groups were spotted.

So one night last October a handful of missionaries got together at Shell Mera and voiced what was on their hearts.

Nate Saint wrote later, "We decided it was the Lord's time to try to contact the Aucas."

In the next three months the missionaries made 12 flights over the Auca village they named "Terminal City." They lowered gifts from the plane in a bucket. The Aucas cut down trees to make a clearing for the plane, built a 20-foot high platform to get at the bucket, made a crude airplane model on a rooftop.

Six times the Aucas sent back gifts in the bucket—a parrot, a large black bird and foodstuff.

Encouraged, the missionaries picked out a 200-foot strip of beach as a likely



Nate Saint photo by courtesy of LIFE Magazine

Nate Saint snapped this photo of Auca woman and girl on visit two days before attack.

spot for a camp. First landing was on January 2. Equipment was flown in, a tree house built.

On January 6, when all five missionaries were on the strip, came the climax of their mission.

Two Auca women and a man stepped out on the bank opposite their camp. As the missionaries yelled Auca phrases Elliot waded into the river. He caught the nearly naked Indians by the hand and led them across. The man showed interest in the plane, so Saint took him for a ride.

Then the Aucas melted back into the jungle. Whether they were spies sent out to "soften" the missionaries for the kill or were actually friendly natives who may serve as an opening wedge for the Gospel, may never be known.

Fleming noted in his diary: "We can earnestly pray that the others will come over and invite us to go to their place. This fellow has seemed reluctant whenever we mentioned the subject, or it may be that he lacks the authority to invite us on his own."

That was the last diary entry. What happened later was pieced together from jottings in Saint's waterlogged notebook recovered from his body.

When the 4:35 contact failed, Pilot John Keenan, another MAF flyer in on the project, flew over the site. He saw only the stripped plane.

A group of missionaries, guides and soldiers started overland to the site. A

U.S.A.F. Air Rescue Service helicopter flew in.

Four bodies were recovered in the river. Several pages of a Testament were wrapped around a spear piercing one of the bodies. The fifth body, that of McCully, was found by Indians but disappeared into the river.

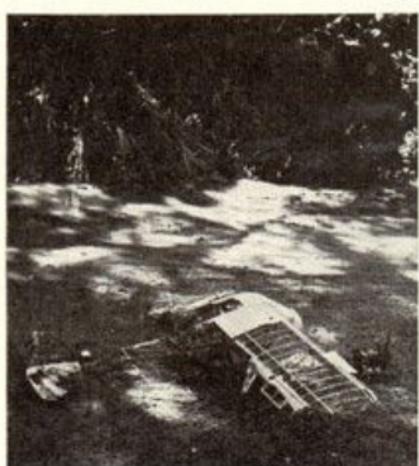
The bodies were buried in a common grave at the foot of the tree house in a three-minute ceremony.

On the morning of January 14 an Army plane flew the widows over the site. It was only a pinpoint in the vast tractless expanse of jungle. But to the women it shone as a steady light in the darkness. To them as to other Christians the world over it would ever be a witness to the power of the Christian faith which makes men willing to follow God's leading even unto death.

As the plane flew low the women conducted their own service. They read II Corinthians 5. It contains the verse: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The plane banked to fly back to Shell Mera. Marj Saint looked out the window and said, "That's the most beautiful little cemetery in all the world."

And as the plane headed west, leaving for the last time the spot where her husband and his friends became "more than conquerors" she added, "They lost the battle, but they won the victory."



U.S. Army Photograph

Plane remains as monument to martyrs.