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January 3, 1962      Shandia

Dearest Folks: The seventh annual New Years Conference in Shandia has just closed today. The first was also the last that Jim, Ed, and Pete attended. It ended the day before they left to go to Paul Beach. I was marvelling [sic] today at all that the Lord has done since then in this place. The Indians managed, planned, and executed the entire thing themselves, from inviting speakers and delegates to making out a roaster for cooks and song leaders. Over three hundred were in attendance at some of the meetings, and five were baptized today, including one woman who has been hard as nails for years. She wept as she gave her testimony, telling what a liar, thief, and drunkard she has been. Last night in the evening meeting one of the best known witch doctors in the north jungle testified. He is from Limon Cocha, where Gervacio is now professor and pastor, and it was through G's testimony that the witch doctor came to know the Lord, as well as through a series of remarkable visions which God gave him to convince him that not all power was given to him. The Quichuas have three degrees of witch doctors. This man was the highest rank, and this means that he now loses a great deal of money by refusing to practice any longer. His testimony thrilled everyone. Ordinarily at the end of the meetings, the babies are all shrieking and the dogs fighting, benches are scraping, and children whispering. Last night, though he spoke after the message, there was rapt attention and complete silence. Gervacio came to me yesterday and said "I do not forget all that you taught me. I want to thank you. If you had not taught me, I would not be serving the Lord now. I am very grateful. God has taught me much." It was Jim, of course, who taught him from the first, but he says he really "woke up" when Jim died. I cannot express the happiness I have felt in being back here in Shandia with these dear Indians whom I love so very much. There are some real gems among them. Pray that I may know how to help them and lead them on. I hope to start on the translation of I and II Corinthians and also on the revision of the hymnal.

Val, Stevie Saint and I left Quito last Friday by colectivo (a species of bus). I had invited Philip Saint to come, since it's Christmas vacation, but he backed out when he found that his mother was not coming, and Steve asked to come in his place, but I am afraid he wished he hadn't, as there has not been much for him to do here. We warned him about that ahead of time, but he said he took every change he ever got to go to the jungle. He left this afternoon, and Mary Skinner leaves tomorrow for two weeks in Quito, so it will be quiet here once more.

The Readers Digest has bought the rights on Savage and will be using it in a future issue of the magazine as a book condensation. They had been considering it last May, but I thought had dropped the idea (after paying \$300 for the option) so was most surprised by Mel's cable.



Three people drowned in the big river this morning. They were crossing in a canoe, which was heavily loaded, and the current was very swift due to hard rain all night. A woman rocked the boat, they all plunged in, and three got to shore. A man, woman, and child were swept away and the bodies have not been found. It happened just upriver from my house, within sight of our place, but we were all in the meeting.

Mother, your letter of Dec. 22 arrived just before I left Quito. I was glad to know Sam "understood" the situation, but I wonder how he could or where he heard the news? I thought of you as you headed for Florida, and imagined your weekend at HDA. Will be eager to hear about it. Hope you're enjoying your time there. How long will you be there? Supper, Mary says, so I will be going. She and Phyllis (who is visiting her) invited me over there since it's their last night before going to Quito... Supper is over. Three men just came in to bid me goodbye. Tomorrow they head downriver by canoe. They had come up for the conference... Thom's small discourse on the possibility of leprechauns was most startling. I remember a report given by a girl in Henry School on how her father had set a movie camera in the...

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... xxxxxx garden, and tiny figures had appeared on the prints! I was deeply impressed by the teacher's statement that she could not discredit the story... Ginny, I am surely glad you enough vacation [sic]. I know what you mean. I felt the same after this last trip to Quito. Christmas up there is a frenetic series of parties, with charades, scrabble, rhythm, and all sorts of foolishness and fruit cake (I hate fruit cake). The jungle seems tranquil and wholly to be preferred.

For a surprise for Val when we returned here after Christmas I had the Indians build her a playhouse. It was all done when we got back, and she was so thrilled she just shouted! It is something I wanted all through childhood but was of course out of the question. This one would have cost me about \$4, but Mary paid for it. It is of bamboo with aluminum roof, board floor. Has two little rooms, in one of which she has the other big gift I gave her for Christmas--a darling little set of upholstered wicker chairs, sofa, and table to match which I got in Quito for \$5. They are just Val's size, and she got all sorts of tea things and pots and pans from others for Christmas, a beautiful doll straight from the U.S. from the Springers, another one from Marj, toy iron, etc. etc. so she spends a lot of time in the house. Mary is going to buy her paint for her birthday so she can paint things in the house! That ought to keep her busy!

Must quit now. The insects are dropping into the typewriter and onto the papers and desk. One can endure this only so long. Much love to each one,

Betty