

Missionary Kid

By
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Chapter 1 – “33rd Street”

My earliest memories are of the house we lived in on 33rd street in Tampa Florida. My grandfather, my dad's dad, lived next door to us in a house that he had built, as well as having built the house that we lived in. Behind the two houses there was a small lake, maybe about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre in size. We were never allowed to play back there. Mom was afraid we'd fall in, or worse yet, get bitten by some poisonous snake like a Water Moccasin. (Sometimes called a Cotton-mouth) The road out front was paved with clam shells. In Florida, it's what they use in place of gravel, because it's easier to get. One side of the lake was completely covered with cattails. Tall and slender, swaying in the wind, they seemed dark and foreboding to us. My brother Rob and I used to pull the heads off the cattails we could reach and scatter the fuzz all over the yard, and each other. Of course, we would get in trouble for playing down by the lake, because Mom knew it was the only place we could get cattails. Grandpa had made a boat ramp of sorts at the back of our yards, out of sand and dirt so he could fish the lake from his small six-foot john-boat. We would sneak down to the ramp to play with the tadpoles. To young boys, they were fascinating. We would poke at them with sticks, make little dams in the sand and trap them, or just hold them in our hands and watch them wiggle.



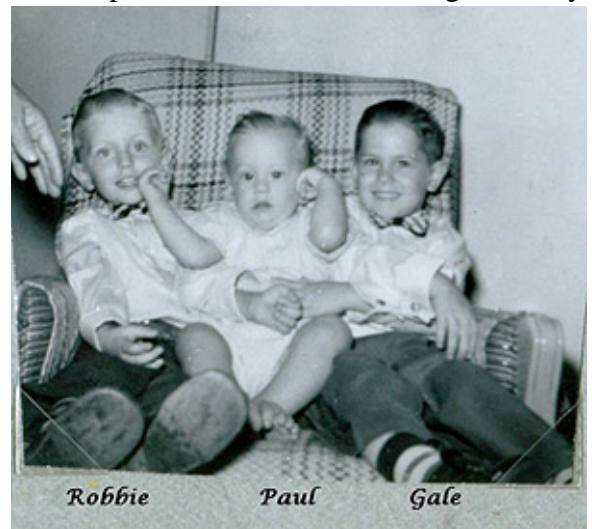
I never will forget the day my brother Robin, fell into the lake. He was leaning out just a little bit too far, trying to catch a big tadpole, when he simply tipped over and fell face first into the shallow water. It was the funniest thing I ever saw! His face was under water with arms and legs flailing wildly. He just kept lying there kicking and gurgling. At first I froze. Then, I managed to grab his kicking feet and start pulling him out. It didn't work too well. I only shoved his face further into the mud. Finally he got his hands under him, regained his balance, and stood up muddy, choking, and dripping wet. He glared at me as if I had been the one who pushed him. We had both gotten pretty muddy and wet in the process, and now...we had to

explain it to Mom! We finally got around to going up to the house, only after Mom had called us three or four times. We didn't have a clue what to say. She was already upset that we hadn't come when she called us the first time. We just stood there in front of her dripping wet and looking at the ground. Mom took one look at us and yelled, "I told you guys not to play with the hose! Now, get inside and clean up and change your clothes! You're gonna really get it when Dad gets home!" Of course, that didn't stop her from administering a little swift justice of her own, right then! Boy was she upset! It kind of made us wonder what to expect from Dad. Well... at least we weren't in trouble for playing in the lake!

My grandparents loved to fish, so my grandfather had built a large garage next to his house for his boat and fishing gear. He was a general contractor, so it was also his workshop and warehouse. The garage smelled of pine, motor oil, gasoline, and fish. I used to sneak in there, when we played hide-and-go-seek. My brothers were too chicken to go in. It seemed Grandpa wasn't very fond of children. He consistently disappeared whenever we came for a visit. I used to sneak in just to watch him work. He was always busy doing something fascinating! If he wasn't building something, he was repairing a fishing rod or reel, or tying flies. Sometimes he worked on his outboard motor. Once, I even got to watch him build a fishing boat. I used to stop just inside the door and crouch down quietly. For some reason he would never run me off. I think it was because I stayed still and didn't ask a bunch of questions, or get in the way. Sometimes he would even explain things to me. If my brothers tried to come in, he would chase them out with a "hick'ry (persimmon) switch," and holler for Mom to come and get her "little hellions!" Mom and Grandpa didn't get along too well. He even took me fishing once! The fish I caught was as big as me! I think maybe Grandpa helped me a little! I don't think he hated kids, I think he just hated noise, and my brothers were noisy!

Talking about noise... Dad and I were out in the front yard, one day, throwing a football back and forth. My brothers were trying to horn in on the action, and so we were all jumping around and running, trying to catch the football. In an effort to get it past my brothers, Dad overthrew the ball and it landed right in the middle of mom's hibiscus bush. Trying to beat my brothers to the ball, I dove in. Success! It was short lived, however. My nose suddenly felt like someone had shoved a red hot needle into it! My face had apparently covered one of the hibiscus blooms, cutting off the retreat of a giant bumblebee. I screamed, blinded by the pain! Mom and Dad instantly ran over to help me! Everything they did made it just made it hurt more! The ice packs didn't feel too good, either. I looked like "*Bozo the Clown*" for a week!

My grandparents had a fishing worm bed in their backyard underneath a persimmon tree. It was eight feet by eight feet and about 3ft. high and it was built around the trunk of the persimmon tree. Let me tell you something. You have not lived until you have eaten a green persimmon! Seriously! A green persimmon must be pure alum! It will pucker your mouth up so bad you can't even open it to get a drink! We used to dare each other to eat one. The ripe ones tasted good enough to risk an occasional bout with one that just looked ripe. We stood on our tiptoes to see over the top of the bed, and peak under the leaves that covered it, looking for "ripe" persimmons. We poked sticks at the big night crawlers underneath until Granny would



run us off. We'd either head for our sandbox, or if Mom wasn't outside hanging up clothes and we felt brave, we'd head for the boat ramp. Rob and I were "Best Buds" until "Paul" (#3 son) came along.

Mom and Dad had trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior just before I was born. They dedicated me to God as the firstborn newborn. They attended church faithfully, and, also served in the church. We were taught to memorize scripture at an early age. I can't remember a time when we didn't have family devotions. We got a TV once for about a week. Then, a tent revival came to town, and everybody started taking their TV's down to



the big tent and smashing them. They wouldn't let the kids play, though! I remember huge piles of smashed TV sets around the platform. I don't remember exactly when Paul came along, but I think I was about 4 years old. All of a sudden I was the "big brother," and had to be avoided, because now I was the "babysitter" and Mom's administrator. She even made it worse by bragging on me! Oh, well! *Life happens to you if you're not careful!* That's when our lives really started to change in many ways! God called Dad to be a missionary to the Yagua Indians in the Amazon Basin, and off we went to Oviedo, Florida, for

"Missionary Training." More adventures!

2. Boot Camp

Missionary "Boot Camp" was out in the middle of some Florida woods, covered with palmetto scrub – prime rattlesnake real estate! Big ones! I think it was run by an outfit called "New Tribes Missions." A guy came by the cabin once, with a 7ft. rattlesnake draped over his rake. Thirteen rattles! He sold the rattles to Dad, and boy, did Dad have fun! He would walk up behind the men while they were working around the woodpile, and he would shake those things. You never saw grown men scatter so fast! Of course, I never saw Dad run so fast either, after they figured out what he was doing. It didn't seem to stop him, though. Everybody would have a good laugh when it was over!



The camp consisted of ramshackle wooden cabins scattered around the woods with dirt roads leading up to each one. Dad was called to go to the jungles of Peru, South America. The camp was supposedly a way to train us to

live in the jungle. Not even close! Camp living was hard, but jungle living proved to be next to impossible by comparison. There were plenty of trees (live oaks) to climb, woods to explore, and a giant woodpile to climb. Did I say woodpile? All the heat in the cabins was provided by one wood burning cook-stove. One room would stay unbearably hot, while you froze to death in all the others. Dad and the other men would often spend half a day chopping and splitting wood for the winter. It's a good thing it was Florida! Food was scarce, and we learned what depending on God really meant! Many times we would leave the cabin to go to church and there wouldn't be a scrap in the pantry, only to come home, and find ten bags of groceries sitting on the porch. I vividly remember holding hands while Dad prayed and thanked God. Mom cried, and we kids would just stand there freezing, hoping he wouldn't pray too long and get the stove going. I guess that was the training that was intended, learning to depend upon God, and wait for Dad to finish praying.

Oh, by the way, we now had a little sister, Ruthie. She had come along just before we left for "Boot Camp." I will say, she held her own pretty well, considering she had three brothers at this time. Of course, she had help. She was Dad's favorite. (Ya think?) The way he laughed whenever he tried to spank her gave him away. Of course, she was pretty funny! She looked like a monkey scrambling for peanuts! Under the table, out the other side, over the chair, Dad swinging the belt at her the whole time, and missing! She would do anything to keep something between her and Dad! For some strange reason he never laughed when he spanked us boys. We would run or squirm, and he just got madder! Hmm! eventually, my sister's discipline



became the Mom's responsibility. Mom could catch her! I guess it was because Mom wasn't laughing, and she understood her better, being a girl and all that. It wasn't that she didn't understand guys. Mom wasn't always hard on my sister. One time when she was little, my sister went outside and picked Mom's prize hibiscus off of the bush and instead of punishing her, Mom ran inside and grabbed the camera. Mom hated flies, and she always carried a fly swatter in her hand. You know, one of those made out of coat hanger wire, twisted in the middle with a loop for a handle, and a little plastic screen at the other end? She could switch ends, and get you four

times with that wire handle before you saw it coming! *Mama Mia!* It didn't warp any of us mentally; though, as some would say, it just taught us to watch out for Mom when she had that fly swatter! I guess you could say she improved our eyesight! As for Dad, you just prayed that he would be really tired when it came time for a

“whippin’.” Dad didn’t “wear you out,” he “wore himself out,” on your behind! He could switch hands, and never miss a lick!

Boot Camp is kind of a blur in my memory. I do remember there wasn’t any grass. Plenty of Florida “sugar sand.” That’s a mixture of black dust and fine “sugar” sand. We didn’t mind, we were kids! Dirt was fun! I attended second grade at the local elementary school. I was often made the butt of jokes after they found out I was a “missionary kid.” We couldn’t afford school lunches, so I always had “baloney” sandwiches. Mom called it “round steak.” With mayo, without mayo, with mustard, without mustard, and sometimes Mom would change it up with peanut butter and jelly. I would have a dime for carton of milk, if I didn’t get beat up for it at recess. I never told Mom about it, and I can’t really remember why. I think it was because I was afraid of more teasing. I held my own most of the time. As I recall, it usually took three or four guys to take my dime. I finally learned to keep it in my lunch bag in the classroom where the teacher was. I let her know about the money, so she would keep an eye on it. When the bullies would demand my money, I would say, “It’s in the classroom in my lunch bag. Go and get it if you want it!” Of course that stopped them right in their tracks. After that, they tried to waylay me first thing in the morning, but I would go straight to the classroom from the car. Fortunately, the door to the room was visible from the car, and I knew they wouldn’t do anything to me as long as Mom was watching. After Mom found out the teacher made fun of me in front of the class, there was a new respect for missionaries in that school! I just remember that no one bothered me after that, even the bullies! I guess Mom must have been a special kind of person to be able to command that kind of respect, and never even raise her voice. I wonder, “What did she say?”

3. Heading South

After boot camp, it was back to Tampa. Dad started making arrangements to move our whole family to Peru, South America. Did you know that’s another country? Yep! Gotta get **shots**! I think we made twelve trips to the county health department. They didn’t tell us till we got there what was going to happen. Not nice! I don’t remember what all the shots were, but I remember one in particular. It was the shot for typhoid fever. They injected a little bubble of liquid just under the skin of my arm, and it burned like liquid fire for several hours, and then I got sick! We got shots for malaria, diphtheria, smallpox, *big-pox*, *medium-pox*, I felt like a pin cushion! My arms were so sore I could barely lift them. The weeks that followed



were full of preparation and excitement. The next thing I knew, the whole family was headed for Miami. Miami?!

It took a day to get there! It wasn't so much the length of the trip as it was the number of pit-stops we had to make. I learned another definition for "*pecan*" on that trip, southern pronunciation, of course! It was all very exciting to a seven year old boy. We had visited the Tampa Airport once, to watch the planes, before it became an international port, but nothing prepared me for what I was about to experience. Miami International Airport was probably one of the biggest, busiest places I had ever been in my life. Tampa airport was nothing by comparison! From the time we got out of the car, until we got on the airplane, all we did was walk, walk and walk! Miles of walking! Man! Finally we sat down at the boarding gate! I didn't know it then, but there was going to be a lot of walking in my life from then on. God was just getting me ready.

My first plane ride! You could see the airplanes and the runway from the big glass window that overlooked the tarmac. I stood mesmerized, watching giant aircraft take off and land. Watching one right in front of me, I saw men scurry about underneath it as they loaded baggage, put in fuel, and all kinds of other things! I could see the pilots in the cockpit as they checked their instruments. Neat! Electronics always fascinated me, and it seemed there were more lights and knobs in that cockpit than I had ever imagined! Little red and green flashing lights, levers and knobs and buttons galore were all over the place! Boy! Would I love to get my hands on those! It was probably the last thing I would ever put my hands on considering the circumstances. It would probably be the last thing for a lot of people!



I wasn't quite prepared for the noise level that greeted my ears as we left the building to walk towards the plane. People's lips were moving, but nothing was coming out! It was great! It was a lot quieter when we entered the plane, relatively speaking. There was an atmosphere of hushed voices and excitement. I looked out the little window next to me, and I could see the big glass window where I had been standing moments before. I was seated just behind the wing on the right side (starboard) of the plane. Perfect! I watched the two giant engines sputter and smoke to life! The propellers disappeared! At first, I thought they had fallen off. The plane felt like one big vibrating chair. We started to move, and I could hardly contain myself! I watched, fascinated, as the terminal disappeared into the darkness. Then, all I could see were little blinking red, green and blue lights. We stopped moving like someone had put on the brakes. Then the engines suddenly revved up so loud I thought they were going to explode and fall off the wing! We lurched forward, moving faster and faster! Suddenly, it felt like the plane dropped about 3ft. and I thought, "Oh no! We're going to crash!" Exciting! The plane's tail

dropped, and the nose lifted, and for about five minutes I felt like I was sitting in a recliner, going almost straight up! Fantastic! That's when I realized, "I love this flying stuff!"

Hours later, I started to change my mind about flying. I wasn't feeling so good! I think it had something to do with turbulence. We had to land in Panama City, Panama, for emergency repairs. I'm not sure exactly what broke, but I do remember all of the passengers were herded into a small room with no air conditioning and no windows. Everyone except my little sister, because she was still asleep in her chair. Mom left her on the plane under the watchful eye of one of the stewardesses. Sixty or seventy adults and children crammed in a small Customs waiting room for almost two hours. There was so much cigarette smoke in the air you couldn't see. Breathing was next to impossible! Add to that, the fact that the temperature was probably close to 90° outside, and...well, you can guess the rest! I was really glad to start flying again! When we got back to the plane, my sister was sitting on the top step of the boarding stairs crying her eyes out. She thought we had deserted her!

We were back in the air! I immediately fell asleep. I awoke hours later as dawn began to break. I witnessed a spectacular site! Sunrise in the clouds! I'll never forget it! The clouds provided a surreal landscape with each curve of the cottony whiteness glowing with pure gold, as rays of sun began filtering up through the clouds, and suddenly, there was the sun! It was so bright we had to pull the shade down on the window! Wow! Now, I know a little bit of how God felt on the first day! Many passengers were standing and looking out the windows on our side of the plane. I was surprised that the plane didn't tip over. I didn't realize it then, but all those pretty clouds were raining torrents on the jungle below. Later, as I stared at the seemingly everlasting gray of the underside, amid the endless drizzle of the rainforest, I would recall the beauty of that morning atop the gold rimmed clouds. Without water, the jungle would become a desert. Without the clouds, there would be no water. Without the sun's golden rays, the water would never fall. You knew if it was raining, that the sun was radiantly shining just the other side of all that gray!

We began descending in preparation for landing in Lima, Peru'. Lima sits on a strip of land between the foot of the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. In contrast to the rainforest on the other side, it hardly ever rains in Lima. It has something to do with the air currents from the sea, and the height of the mountains behind the city. Many of the poor live in houses constructed from cardboard on the outskirts of the city. The fluffy whiteness of the clouds morphed into the glistening snow covered slopes of the Andes Mountains, and as I looked below, I could see the sprawling rooftops below me getting closer and closer. It seemed like we were going to land on



the rooftops! Then they disappeared, and there was a jerk and the squeal as the tires hit the runway. After about two hours of standing in line after line, we finally got through Customs. The ride from the airport was memorable. There was some kind of a funny law in Lima, that you couldn't blow the horn on your car. All of the drivers would hold their arm out of the car window and beat on the side of the car, while yelling at the other drivers. Traffic was horrible! The driver's language sounded worse! (It was probably a good thing that I didn't speak Spanish yet!) We stayed in Lima for about a week, seeing the sights, and getting used to "no English." Riding in the taxicab was the best! As exciting as it was, Lima was just a stopover on our way to Iquitos.

4. *"Welcome to Iquitos?"*

Iquitos is an island city located on the Amazon River. No, it's not surrounded by water, but by jungle. There are only two ways to get there. You can either fly in, or you can take a three month, 2600 mile ocean freighter trip up the Amazon River, beginning where the Amazon River empties into the Atlantic Ocean on the eastern side of the continent of South America to where Iquitos is located inland on the western side. Hmmm! Let's



see...four kids and 500+lbs. of luggage, not to mention the heat and humidity. Yep! You guessed it! We flew! Over the Andes Mountains in a C47 twin-engine World War II jump plane! It still had the aluminum bucket seats down each side where paratroopers used to sit. They weren't too

comfortable. Until the plane took off we were all sitting on a slant, tipped toward the rear of the plane.

Oh, did I mention that we were seated in the luggage compartment? Or was it that the luggage was in the passenger compartment? I'm not sure. All I know it's every bit of the luggage was strapped to the floor in the middle of the aisle with a big green cargo net lashed over it. I guess it was the passenger compartment because I don't think they have windows in the luggage department. The engines coughed and sputtered one by one as they started. As each engine started the plane shook just a little bit more. Soon, the engines were roaring at full throttle. We started to taxi. I guess I was wrong about the engines being at full throttle. When we got to the end of the runway the pilot really started to rev them up. I thought the plane was going to fall apart! Then we started to move. I think the pilot hit every pothole in that runway!



Once airborne, it became frigid. The cabin of the aircraft was not pressurized, or insulated. It seemed like the engines were inside the cabin with us. You could barely hear yourself talk. My ears kept popping and plugging up as we tried to gain altitude to get over the Andes. My stomach was doing somersaults! It seemed like we weren't going to make it. Little oxygen hoses hung from the ceiling and the steward opened the little plastic bags and showed the passengers how to breathe from the tubes. As the mountaintops passed by, it seemed you could almost reach out and touch the glistening snow. Pretty close! I don't remember too much, but Mom said we made six attempts to get through the mountains before we finally gained enough altitude to do so. I bet our guardian angels were pretty tired after that!

My ears started popping and plugging up again as we began our decent to the jungle. White turned to gray, and then to green, an ocean of green! The jungle! As far as you could see it was nothing but trees. I thought, "Iquitos is just ahead!" Yeah, right! *Six hours ahead!* It was getting warmer in the airplane. "That's better!" I



thought. A few hours later we began roasting as our plane turned into a sauna! The tropics! Yuck! I could hardly breathe! I bet you're thinking, "You could use those little oxygen hoses." Fat chance! Those little hoses ran out of oxygen as soon as we got over the mountains. Now, they just hung there bouncing in the air reminding us that breathing was actually possible!

As hot as it was in the plane, it was cool compared to the heat that hit us in the face as we stepped out into the brilliant midday sun. Sometimes the temperature would get up to 120 degrees. We were all dressed up in suits and ties, too! That didn't last long! Four sweaty kids and a three hour ordeal going through customs in a "not" air conditioned, dimly lit, grimy airport terminal were not conducive to good temperaments, Mom included.

Probably a good thing she didn't have a fly swatter yet! What I remember most were the smells. Everything smells in the jungle, including you! With heat like that, everything just becomes naturally *aromatic*. Good smells smelled better, and bad smells, well, you get the picture! As I watched the ceiling fans lazily spinning overhead, I thought, "***Welcome to Iquitos!***"



5. “Lobo”



I have devoted a chapter, however short, to this “gentleman,” because he is one of my most unforgettable characters. I felt that he somehow deserved special mention, not only because he was one of the first natives of Iquitos we encountered, but also, one of the most animated. The Airport was only the beginning. Initiation was not going to be as easy as all that. No! We needed to find a ride into town about six or seven miles away. There was no way we were going to walk! The missionary friend

that greeted us at the airport had ridden a bicycle to get there. We soon learned that bicycles along with small Honda scooters were the primary means of transport in Iquitos. The city was primitive along the edges, and civilized downtown. (Well, sort of) Enter Lobo “*The Wolf*.” Lobo, around 50 years old, was quite the character. Our first encounter was more than memorable! Lobo was the proud owner of the 1954 dark green Mercury. When we first saw it we thought it looked rather dilapidated. We soon discovered, however, it was one of the best taxis in the whole town. Lobo was all “smiles” as he greeted us outside the Airport. There wasn’t a single tooth in his mouth! It seemed he could not help us enough. He was about as lively an old man as I had ever met. He moved like a teenager! It seemed like in no time at all he had our entire collection of luggage and the six of us crammed into that old Mercury and headed for town.



We soon discovered why they had nicknamed him “Lobo.” He whistled at every girl he saw on the way to town, and he saw *every* one of them! Not to mention that he would suddenly put on the brakes for a better look! Of course, he didn’t just whistle. Every whistle was accompanied by animated banging and pounding on the side of the cab, horn blowing, and a few choice shouts! What an entrance! It took us 30 minutes to go six miles! By the time we got to where we were going the whole city knew that there were some new “gringos” in town. We had arrived in style, “Lobo Style!” Oh yeah, we soon learned that the word “gringo” was not necessarily a term of endearment. We learned a lot of our Spanish the hard way. I will say, however, whenever we needed a taxi, Lobo was always Johnny-on-the-spot. I don’t know if it was because Dad was a good tipper, or he just liked us. Dad eventually calmed him down a bit. I say, “A bit.” Mom told Dad she wasn’t going anywhere ever again with, “That man!” After Dad relayed this message, he reduced his antics to whistling, so Mom would ride. Even then she would say something to him when he did. He’d flash those pearly “gums” and apologize, but it never seemed to deter him from doing it. At any rate, when we needed to carry supplies down

to the river for loading the boat, he was always available. He would appear to be downright offended if we didn't call him! Lobo was, "Da Man!"

6. A Houseful



Napo Street was not paved. It was situated about a half a block from the main square. Napo was one of the streets that made up the perimeter of the square. Our block was defined by the main square on one side and the intersection where the First Baptist Church of Iquitos was located on that corner. The main square was a park with benches and trees that made up a full city block, and it was a local custom for families to take a stroll



around the square in each evening. I will say, it was a nice way to cool off after the heat of the day. Sometimes Dad would buy us ice cream. All of the houses were like the row homes we have here in the U.S. only they were not constructed of brick. It was some kind of Adobe cement stucco mixture plastered over sun-dried bricks. The house we lived in was one room wide and about seven rooms deep. When you first came into the house you entered into the main room/living room, which stretched to the entire width of the house about 30ft. Directly across from the front door as you entered, was a high arch leading into a long patio. The patio was nothing more than an open air hallway about 10ft. wide running the entire length of the house to the kitchen. The bedrooms opened onto this patio like little bungalows. On the other side of the patio running the entire length, was a high wall with

broken glass cemented into the top of it as a deterrent to thieves. It was the South American version of barbed wire. At the end of the patio was another great room used as a dining room. Behind that was the kitchen. Behind the kitchen was an open air courtyard with a shower and bathroom. In some of the larger houses, the courtyard also contained the maid's quarters.

There were about four or five bedrooms, which was really a good thing considering at the time there were two missionary families and six children altogether. Charles and Virginia Higgs and family were kind enough to allow us to stay with them while we looked for a place of our own. A short time later we were joined



by another family, the Mullings, who also had two children. We kids had a ball playing with one another. I'm not so sure the adults felt the same way. After all, it was the tropics, and all we had for air conditioning were a few small rotating fans. It's probably a good thing they were missionaries! Seriously though, the adults did fellowship around the Word of God. They often were an encouragement to one another.



I would be remiss if I did not recount our first introduction to intestinal parasites. Hepatitis is rampant, hygiene is nonexistent, and everybody gets them. We could not buy lettuce or greens of any kind, because human feces was often used as fertilizer. To minimize the risk, we purchased potassium permanganate, a purple crystal that we dissolved in a bucket of water. The water would turn a dark coffee colored brown, and we would soak the fruits for about three minutes to remove microbes etc. About once every six months, we would have to take an intestinal purge, to rid ourselves of any parasite that might have gotten past our precautions. We would have to fast for twelve hours and then swallow a pill that was designed to kill the parasites. That wasn't so bad. What was bad was the laxative of choice that Dad made you take six hours later. Dad dissolved Epsom salts in water and we would have to drink about 8oz. You really should try it! It will change your life, not to mention your palate. The liquid is so bitter that it gags you! Now, you can understand why I have to have sugar in my coffee.

We all lived together for a while, and then the house next door became available to rent and the Mullings moved next door. A short time later a house across the street became available and we moved into it. It was kind of nice that we didn't have to move too far apart. I know all of us kids were pretty grateful considering we didn't speak Spanish and we were the only English speaking children that we knew. Shortly after we moved into the house across the street our baby brother, Jack Jr., was born.

I don't remember much about learning to speak Spanish. I just know that eventually I learned to communicate. I think it was more a matter of survival than anything else. As I recall, I didn't take formal Spanish until I was in high school at the Wycliffe Bible Translator's base in Yarina Cocha, Peru'. Mr. Smith started all of us MK's in fourth year Spanish with an occasional backtrack into earlier lessons for formal grammar. The local kids hated Americans and were not shy about expressing it. They even went so far as to shoot at us with homemade slingshots and sun-dried clay balls for ammunition. I gotta tell you, those smarted a bit!

7. Living in the City



All the missionary kids in town looked forward to Sunday afternoons. That was when we would all gather together at the ABWE Bible Institute just outside of town on the road that we first traveled when we entered the city in the “Lobo-mobile.” “Uncle Bud” Kramer and his family were responsible for the oversight of the Institute. “Aunt Clara,” who was Uncle Bud’s older sister, would hold English Sunday School classes every Sunday afternoon for all the missionary kids in town. Those were happy times for us, because as the kids would sit in Sunday School with Aunt Clara upstairs on a larger open air veranda, all

the adults would gather downstairs for fellowship. A good time was had by all! Later on, as we became more familiar with the town, Dad would let us ride our bikes out to the Institute during the week to play. It had a seven foot concrete wall topped with some of that South American barbed wire I mentioned earlier. It enclosed about two and a half acres including the Institute and a soccer field. The wall was a small measure of protection for the Baptist seminary students from the outright hatred of the Catholic population on the other side of that wall. You only had to look at the graffiti on the other side of the wall to realize the intensity of that hatred. There were often death threats and occasionally one of the local Catholic priests would incite a crowd to burn down one of the local evangelical meeting places. Persecution was very real, but God is mightier than any insane crowd or priest could ever be. The Institute was a safe place for us MK’s to play outside while in the city. Riding our bikes out to the Institute every day or so, we became familiar with all the shortcuts.

As children, we didn’t quite understand what we had done to merit the utter hatred of U.S. citizens held by those less fortunate. All we knew was that you better ride your bike fast in certain parts of town! Rocks were thrown at us, we were called names we couldn’t even pronounce, and at times even the dogs were turned on us. We became quite adept at peddling our bikes as fast as we could while at the same time kicking at the dogs that were trying to bite our legs. The owners just laughed and encouraged them, while shouting expletives at us.

There were four of us kids and we would ride to the Institute together. It was about a 20 minute ride, and we traveled to the Institute at random times, days, and routes to prevent ambushes from being set. I always would bring up the rear as a measure of protection for my siblings. Being the eldest, I was always held responsible for the care of the others which I took very seriously. There was a good reason for that. Dad could be a lot rougher on me than a few dogs and rocks. Though I got my fair share of dog bites, cuts, and bruises, I have no regrets.

We were hated for two reasons. We were American, and we were Baptists! This is not to say that we didn't have any friends! There were a few good folks here and there who treated us courteously.

8. The Boat

The city of Iquitos was not our primary place of residence. Even though we rented a house, we were never there for the full year. The city was used primarily for correspondence, banking, and supplies. About once a year, Dad would dry dock the boat for maintenance. It was usually quite an undertaking, because the boat weighed about 40 tons. I don't remember much about the first boat, except that the roof was made of thatched leaves. After a few test runs, the mosquitoes in the Amazon, convinced Dad that, it was better to have a fully enclosed upper deck. We all agreed with him. The name of the first boat was, "*El Embajador*," which means "*The Ambassador*," in Spanish. Our 2nd boat was dubbed, "*Vu-je`te Ta-mur`in-e*," which is roughly a Yagua phrase for, "*The Messenger*." The boat became just as much "home" to us as any of our houses. One thing you learned quickly as a missionary kid, "*Where you are, and where you're going*" isn't nearly as important as "*Who you are, and what you're doing!*"

Before I begin, let me explain a couple of nautical terms, "Port & Starboard" Running lights, also, have to be a particular color for night running, "Red & Green" Dad taught me an easy way to remember their meaning. Examine the number of letters in each word. The short words all go together and the long words all go together. Example: Port—Red—Left go together, and Starboard—Green—Right go together. You face forward to

determine right or left. White lights go on the mast above the vessel centerline and at least a meter above the highest point on the vessel. In Peru' you had to display one white light on the mast for the main vessel, and another if you had other vessels in tow. The river "buses" would sometimes allow canoes to hitch a tow, for a fee, of course. I've seen as many as thirty or forty strung together in a single tow.



Our boat had 5 coats of navy marine grey on the hull, inside and out. We acquired this from the same supplier that supplied the local Peruvian Navy. Everything was grey! Above the water line, it had a topcoat of marine green. From the gunwales up, it was painted white with the same green trim. The bow was sealed and covered with ¼" steel plating. Under the plating was 2" thick cedar planking. The inside deck was one inch cedar planking. The wooden hull was two inch thick cedar with three by four inch cedar ribs. There were six, twelve inch wide cedar planks overlapped from the bottom upward on each side. Every joint on the boat was held

together with 3/8" case-hardened carriage bolts every six inches. Before two pieces went together they were sealed, and every bolt hole filled, with a local resin pitch before each bolt was tightened. Each bolt had a 2" washer on either end, and was double-nutted on the inside. The hull appeared to be riveted together. The gunwales were two by twelve inch curved cedar planks upon which the superstructure rested.

On the bow there was a heavy steel ringbolt for the mooring chain. The bow-piece extended up from the deck about 10 inches. It extended downward and curved until it joined and protected the first foot of the hull. It was made of a single piece of tapered ironwood and was about 10 inches square, and the way it was mounted gave it a diamond shape. Under the deck, in the bow cavity, we stored the heavy chains and 3/4" nylon mooring lines. You couldn't leave anything of value on deck, or it would be stolen. Thievery was a common lifestyle. The bow extended five feet forward from the steering and control cabin. Two sets hatches swung open and latched back for good weather travel and the inner set could be closed watertight for severe weather.

When the forward hatch was open, an opening, about 5x5 feet, was revealed. Behind the starboard (right) set of hatch doors was a ladder to the roof, for quick access to the fuel tanks, and pole setting when we docked. The outer hatch doors were heavy for security. The inner hatch doors were see-through for navigation in inclement weather. If the wind was blowing right we would have to tie up for an hour or so, because the waves would be too high for the second boat. It only takes a few seconds fill a boat with water when you've got heavy rain and 4-foot waves breaking over the bow. The control cabin extended aft about three feet, and ran the width of the boat with a sliding hatch aft on the port (left) side that opened to the inner deck. The steering and the controls for the engines were on the starboard side. The bench seat also extended the width of the boat to serve as a step down from the main hatch. The sliding hatch could be shut for night or late evening running. This prevented the swarms of blood-sucking mosquitoes from filling up the interior. I've seen them in clouds so thick they would dim the setting sun.



The boat was built native style. It was shaped like a giant canoe about 48 feet long with an eleven foot beam (width), and a 4 foot draft (depth). The hull actually was a huge canoe. Dad designed and built the boat with the help of a local carpenter and boat builder. Dad knew quite a lot about boats, having served in the Merchant Marines and Naval Reserves during World War II. His father, a master carpenter and general contractor, had taught him carpentry. Grandpa, also, had built small boats for fishing.

Everyone was always impressed with Dad's ingenuity. Not one inch of space was wasted. Every cubic foot had a purpose. Along the sides, where the boat's hull sloped down and inward, Dad had built storage bins. These

were filled with supplies. The aft bins doubled as work benches when the outboards needed repair or maintenance. About 10' from the bow and stern of the launch, on both sides, the walls of the boat were designed to open up into 8' wide by 5' high loading bays. You had to duck down a bit to enter, and then, just inside each hatch, past the gunwale of the boat, about 10 inches down, were large storage bins. These were approximately 4' long by 18" deep. The tops served as raised platforms to step down on when we were loading. Dad used these four bins to store all of the spare parts and tools he needed for working on the various motors and engines we had. It was also where we stored all the axes and machetes that we used for clearing the jungle, and the guns and ammo we used for hunting. That's right! There wasn't one chainsaw among the lot. I guess five kids do come in handy once in a while!

I wonder...You don't think...Nah! I don't think Dad thought that far ahead! God did, though!

*I'm reminded here, of a humorous anecdote. I had a Spanish teacher in high school, Mr. Smith, who also doubled as the movie projectionist. Usually, after a particularly boring film, before the lights came on, he would get up and ask for a show of hands of who among us thought the movie was really boring. As we all raised our hands, he had pre-arranged for someone to turn on the light. As the lights came on He would grin slyly and say slowly, "Confucius saay, '**Many hands make light work**'!" Then everybody would groan and boo! I wonder, "Who really said that?"*

Just aft of the front loading doors was the galley (kitchen). On the port side, there was a stove counter with underneath storage. The starboard side had a sink and counter with storage. On one side of the sink, Dad rigged a new bilge pump with an outside hose, so we could pump water into the sink from the river. Running water! The drain ran right back out the side from the sink. Hmm! The pump inlet hose did run under the boat to the other side to prevent the drain water from being pumped back in when we were docked. We learned to pump all the water we needed before opening the drain! We always had to let river water stand for about an hour to allow the sand to settle out. We would then filter it a few times through tightly woven cloth to get rid of the fine silt. Drinking water had to be boiled for about ten minutes to purify it. We never pumped water for drinking unless we were running out in the middle of the river, because *everything* eventually ended up in the river. When possible we would steer into the mouth of a tributary river to get drinking water. These were normally cleaner and clearer than the Amazon. After a while, you got used to drinking *tinted* water.

Directly aft of the galley was the "mess." The table, which seated seven, (*3 each side fore and aft & one at the port side end*) was located half-way back on the starboard side, adjacent and aft of the sink counter. The table extended out about six feet. It latched securely to the starboard side, and a single leg at one end folded down and latched to the deck. The top could be dropped down at night to the level of the benches on either side to

form a bed for Mom & Dad. The benches had backs on them which doubled as a footboard and headboard at night. Their mattress consisted of two cloth-covered, 6 inch thick foam-rubber pieces that were laid side by side to form a queen-size bed. They were rolled up and stored during the day in the benches. Each of our “racks” (*Navy term for a bed*) had a similar piece of foam. These mattresses doubled as our jungle mattresses when we arrived at our home there. They were really quite portable and comfortable. On the port side opposite the table was a rack with a storage bin beneath. There was an aisle in between about three feet wide. I think the term “mess” was an appropriate one for what generally occurred at that table, especially with five kids around it.

Running the entire length of the inside deck, were 12” wide center boards that could be lifted out for bilge maintenance. Dad had built the boat so well, that we seldom if ever had wet bilges. He used to brag a bit by saying, “We pump our bilges with a sponge!” It was true! We really did use a sponge to wipe the bilges. When we did “sponge the bilges,” it was usually after a fierce storm blew rain into an open hatch. Even after a 100-foot long submerged tree came up underneath, and hit the hull so hard it literally lifted us out of the water, the bilges remained dry! We were all grabbing for the nearest handhold! That was a really scary incident! I remember that Dad immediately headed for shore! After inspecting the hull, we could do nothing, but praise our Creator for His watch care and protection!

Along each side, aft of the “mess” were two more storage bins, approximately 30” deep and 6’ long. Above each of the bins was another “rack.” These were made of canvas stretched over a rectangular 1” galvanized pipe frame. They hung down from the wall with pieces of chain that were attached to the wall at a 45 degree angle. The racks were hinged at the wall, along the back edge, so they could be lifted up and latched to the wall out of the way when we needed to access the storage bins beneath. There were several windows down each side approximately two foot by two foot, about six inches down from the ceiling. These were covered inside with a double layer of fine mesh fiberglass screening and a double layer of ¼ inch mesh hardware cloth outside. You had to offset and double all screening, because the mosquitoes would actually wriggle through the mesh of a single layer. Inside were heavy wooden shutters that hinged at the top. These could be swung up and latched to the ceiling during the day, and closed and securely latched at night, or when the boat was in port. The roof beams were ever-so-slightly arched to allow run-off, but not so high as to prevent walking on the roof while running. The roof was really just a waterproof “Upper Deck,” much like the deck of a ship with no rails. If you fell off it was “In the drink!” as Dad would put it. It was pretty much a floating “fort.”

Extending 10 feet aft from the 4 inch thick transom, level with the gunwales, was a raised deck. It was divided in half, with the front half serving as a motor well and dry dock storage for the outboards, and the back half as the bathroom and shower. Dad had rigged a large funnel which could be lowered into the water while we were running. The opening of the funnel would face the bow, and water would be forced up a hose to a showerhead,



running water! On the roof was a black 55gl. open drum to collect rainwater for showering when not running. During the day the sun (when it wasn't raining) would heat the water and we could have a nice warm shower. Of course, with seven of us, it had to be a "quick" shower. The last one, usually Dad or I, sometimes would have to use the river. Fifty five gallons doesn't last long! All of the ceiling lights indoors, and the outside running lights, were 12 volts DC. These ran off of a second battery that was kept charged for that purpose. We had all the comforts of home, and the sibling rivalry, as well! I remember that I

did a lot of reading.

For travel on the Amazon River, a second boat, a bit smaller than the main one, was used to add stability to both. The second boat had no cover and was completely open. If it were enclosed it would have been nearly impossible to load. The boats were lashed together tightly with doubled $\frac{3}{4}$ " nylon rope, bow and stern, with buffers amidships. We would then twist the ropes tightly with a stout pole to align the two boats. This allowed both boats to rock independently of each other, while keeping both aligned in the same direction. It worked similar to an outrigger on a canoe. The second boat was used to transport all the fuel we needed. It was usually loaded with about a dozen 55 gallon drums, five or six 15 gallon drums, and assorted six gallon outboard fuel tanks. In the center of the roof of the main boat, there were three 55 gallon drums lying on their side as fuel tanks. These were connected to a main fuel line which ran down to the two 25/horse Johnson outboard engines below. The second boat had a 35/horse Evinrude mounted on the stern as an emergency auxiliary engine. The speed boat, given to us later, was usually tethered in the space behind and between the two main boats.

Fully loaded, the main boat weighed about 40-50 tons, and had about a four foot draft. You really didn't want to run 40 tons aground on a sandbar, so we usually tried to do most of the traveling in high water. That also meant rain every day, almost all day. Where do you think all that water in the Amazon River comes from, anyway? They don't call it a "Rainforest" for nothing! It was my job to keep an eye on the bilges of the other



boat from inside the main boat whenever it started to rain. Then I would open the front port side loading hatch, and lay down a plank to the other boat, about four feet away. I had to be careful, because the plank was slippery and I didn't want to disappear into the muddy water rushing past between the two boats. I had the dubious honor of pumping the bilges. Most of the time, we were running in the rain. We had to keep the extra weight of the rain water out, not only to keep from sinking, but also to conserve fuel. It rained so hard sometimes I couldn't keep up. Then Dad would grab a bucket to help me while Mom steered. The second boat was about 40' long and 36" deep with a 10" beam. It would get full in less than an hour in a hard rain if you didn't pump and bail like crazy. Sometimes we bailed for hours. We couldn't get plastic tarps in the early 60's in Iquitos for covers, but we finally acquired a big canvas tarpaulin which helped tremendously. The tarp turned out to be another job for me. It had to be cleaned, dried, and waterproofed at the end of each trip, so it wouldn't rot. Getting it dry was not easy with 90 to 100% humidity all the time. That was O.K. with me! I'd much rather take care of a tarp than sit for hours on the side of a boat pumping bilges in pouring rain! Oh, did I mention I was about eleven when I all this started? And, I was the oldest of five.

9. The Voyage



My Dad would often say with a grin, "*Missionary work requires 99% perspiration, and 1% inspiration!*" All I remember is 100% of the perspiration! The banks of any given river were slippery, muddy, and anywhere from five to forty feet high. The Amazon rises and falls approximately 80 feet from high to low water. The port at Iquitos is the deepest freshwater port in the world. Ocean freighters can steam upriver, 2500 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to reach this jungle port. Going up and down those river banks,

carrying 50 to 75 pounds of supplies every time was not much in the way of inspiration as far as I was concerned. Being the oldest child, I also had the responsibility of overseeing a mutinous crew of 4 siblings, three brothers and a sister. Of course, they never mutinied whenever the "admiral" or "first-mate" was around. We knew that every pound of supplies we loaded into the launch had to be off-loaded when we reached our destination. So, another river-bank had to be climbed! I think one thing that may have kept us going was looking at the food being loaded and anticipating the eating of it later.



The task of purchasing supplies and getting them down to the launch, would generally take from one week to a month. A lot depended on how long we had been in the forest, how long we planned to stay, the availability of what we needed, and how much support money had come in to purchase supplies while we were in the jungle. Missionary work in the Amazon Rainforest was a lot like being a pioneer in the early days of our nation. There were no hospitals, stores, or telephones. We were it! The boat could carry enough fuel and supplies to last approximately six months. Fuel was the main issue in any trip. It was also the biggest expense. We would generally take a barrel (55gl) or two of kerosene, one of white gas, and the rest regular gasoline. Altogether we're talking about 600 to 700 gallons of assorted fuels. At that time, in the U.S. fuel was averaging around 15 cents a gallon. We had to pay as much as 65 cents a gallon at times for gasoline. Just do a little math and stack it up against about \$400/mo. average support and you start getting the picture. The cheaper the fuel the longer we could stay in the jungle bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Yagua Indians. Then, of course, with five children there was always the need to buy plenty of food. (Mostly canned) Canned cream, evaporated milk, was a must have for Mom! She refused to give up cream and sugar in her coffee! Dad refused to give up coffee! Between the two, I became a coffee drinker, and to this day, I put cream in my coffee in memory of my Mom. Dad would only let me put sugar in it. (I can't stand it black, but I've already told you that story.) A family of seven can consume quite a bit in six months.

We could, and did live off the land as much as possible. We hunted, fished, and even planted. We hunted and ate everything from monkey to caiman (Amazon gators). We caught "peacock" bass and piranhas. We swam with them, also! We grew sugar cane, bananas, plantains, yucca, and papayas. We carried everything from scalpels to band aids, and penicillin to anti-venom. The medicine chest was a small, locked, well stocked, wooden trunk about 30" long, 15" wide, and 12" deep. Dad even purchased some surgical manuals and textbooks. I was taught how to give injections and even do minor surgery. I even managed to do a few "unscheduled" surgeries on myself with a machete, and once an axe. That's when I quickly learned the art of bandaging. You can't be "too prepared," when you're 300 miles from even the nearest Army Outpost Hospital!

The start of every river trip was exciting. You never knew from one high water to the next what the mighty Amazon would throw in your way. There were whirlpools sometimes as large as 40 feet in diameter, floating half-submerged trees, and high-wind thunderstorms that came without



warning and reduced visibility to almost zero. There were times the wind would almost run us into the bank. The Amazon would create and destroy whole islands from one rainy season to the next. We would try to schedule supply trips for a high water stage to reduce the risk of running aground on some new silt island. That way, if we did run aground the river would float us off over night. Dad tried to get the latest aerial maps for navigating the river season to season, but they were often inaccurate to a high degree. Dad navigated most of the time by the seat-of-his-pants. He knew the river, well, but even that was not enough sometimes. We prayed every day for God's protection. At any given moment there were a myriad of things that could endanger us. Wild animals, falling trees, the River itself, mooring lines coming loose in the night, sudden violent storms, and sometimes Dad would have to sit up at night with a rifle to watch for river pirates. Oh, did I mention the headhunters? They lived *south* of the Amazon which is why we usually tied up for the night on the *north* bank. It was just an "*ounce of prevention*," you might say. The Amazon averages a mile in width, so we were generally safe from attack.

We usually traveled anywhere from four to seven days at a time, depending on whether we were going upstream or down. We didn't run at night unless we had an extreme emergency. It was just, too dangerous. It was about 300 miles from Iquitos to the mouth of the Atacuari River, and then we would snake another 100 or so miles up river to our house. About 50 miles of the mouth of the Atacuari was the border between Peru and Colombia. We would have to dock and show our papers to both army outposts there. We could run twelve to fourteen hours on one of the 55 gallon tanks on the roof. Each tank had a cut off valve which allowed it to be turned on or off independently of the other two. No pump was required, because the 8ft. drop to the engines and gravity provided quite enough fuel pressure. When one would empty, I, once again, would man a hand-pump and fill it from one of the barrels in the lower boat. We could run on one engine if we had to, but not upstream.

The Amazon River flows at approximately four knots, and we needed both of our engines to go up river against the current. With both engines running we could travel around six or seven knots. When we were in port, the engines would be pulled up out of the water with a block and tackle and placed on racks inside. A cover would then be placed over the opening and secured. While traveling, we would simply cover the engines with a mosquito net and an old US Army poncho. Sometimes small anacondas would crawl up out of the water, take shelter under them at night, and we would have a little excitement to start the following day. We had several ponchos, and they came in handy for a lot of things. Having two engines also provided us with a measure of safety should we lose power from one in the middle of the river.



I often jumped off the launch onto an unknown bank looking frantically for any stump or tree close by I could wrap the 40 pounds of galvanized chain around to secure the moving 40 tons of boat against the river current. Once I had done so, Dad would ram the bow into bank, and swing the stern of the boat upriver until the boat was at 90 degrees to the bank. He would then, feather the throttles to hold the boat in that position while he ran up on the roof of the launch to put poles into the river bottom to

hold us in that position. If the river was too deep for the poles, we would have to secure the boat with an upriver mooring line. The launch had to then be backed out into the river 10-20 feet from the bank. The reason we did this was because you never knew from one night to the next whether the river was going to rise or fall, which it did regularly as much as 12 feet at times.

Sometimes we got stuck in the mud anyway, and spend hours getting “unstuck.” It was God’s care and providence that kept us from harm. Once, Dad and I had to make quick re-supply run in the speed boat to Pevas, which was about halfway to Iquitos. We were so anxious to get back to Mom and the others, that we did some night running. The reason we decided to do so was because God had provided us with a beautiful huge moon, and it was almost like daytime. Funny thing about wet mud in moonlight, it looks just like water! Especially when it’s covered by an inch or so of water! We ran aground at 25 miles per hour! It took the better part of the night and next morning to unload, push, rock, and drag the speed boat 50’ back to the water, and reload all of the supplies, sinking up to our knees in mud the whole time. It might have taken longer, but mercifully, the river was rising. We decided against “*night running*” after that!

10. The Atacuari

It seemed like the trip would never end. We had just spent four days on the Amazon River and now we turned and started upriver into the mouth of a northern tributary, the Atacuari River. I thought, “Were finally here!” Right! There was no getting around stopping at the Peruvian and Colombian Army outposts, which took the better part of a day. The mouth of the Atacuari is the border between the two countries for about fifty miles or so. If you don’t stop, they shoot your boat out from under you with big guns! Then they ask questions!



When people found out why my Dad was there, they mentioned that there were some Yagua Indians nearby. It turns out that “nearby” was five hours of walking one way. Remember I’d told you that God was getting us ready for the jungle? We were so tired when we got back to the boat that evening we were falling asleep as Mom cleaned us. Dad had met the local witch doctor, and in the process had acquired some beads. It turned out later on, when we got back to town, that those beads were possessed. Several nights in a row the rocking chair in the living room began rocking all by itself after we had all gone to bed. My Dad thought it was us kids until I finally got up to check. We were puzzled at first, but then Dad remembered that we had hung the witch doctor beads on the wall. He decided that the only thing to do was to have an exorcism. He took the beads down from off the wall and laid them on the coffee table. He knelt down with my mother and they prayed and asked God to drive away the evil spirits. I guess we had learned our lesson about buying things from witch doctors. The rocking chair remained silent after that.

It seemed like the trip upriver would never end! We went around so many bends in that river, it seemed like we were going in circles. The Amazon basin is so flat; the rivers do not run a generally straight course. They wind and turn just like a giant snake. Often, the turns of the river get so close to one another that the river runs through and creates an oxbow lake. (Good fishing!) We had to be extra-careful, because this was uncharted water. You didn’t know where the underwater hazards were. The river was also getting narrower as we traveled upriver. After three days of endless turning, when the river had narrowed considerably, Dad finally slowed the engines. We all raced to the front of the boat. We started turning towards the bank. We were excited! We’re stopping! We can finally get out of here! “No one gets out of here until Dad checks everything out,” said Mom. We were crushed! Just about the time we thought we were free, the prison door slammed shut! Grateful for the responsibility, I jumped out to help Dad tie up, and then I dutifully ducked back inside. Our faces jammed



against the screens, we tried to catch a glimpse of what Dad and Mom were doing on the bank. After what seemed like forever, Dad climbed back in the boat with a big smile on his face, and we all turned our screen-waffled faces toward him with great anticipation. “I really think this is the right place!” Dad proclaimed.

We didn’t know it then, but God had directed us to that exact spot. We discovered later that it was the trailhead for every trail the Yagua Indians used whenever they came to the river to go downstream and trade. Later on we discovered that across the river was a nice big sandbar. It was under water at this time because the river was still high. The spot the Lord had directed my Dad to, was on the outside of the river bend, and as it turned out, we could stand on our front porch and look upriver and downriver at the same time. I would say that there was about a mile and a half of good visibility. Nobody could sneak up on us.

It was also the highest point on the riverbank for miles, which was especially useful in high water. There were two small clear-water creeks that ran into the Atacuari about 300 feet apart on either side of the site. The Lord had provided us with good drinking (and wash) water. We later dammed up the larger creek to form a small pond where we could dip up fresh water. It was about 200-300 feet uphill to the house site from there, but that's another chapter.

"Now, can we get out? We pleaded. Mom let us get out of the boat, and stretch our legs for a little bit. Free at last! Well, not that free. "You stay on the bank where I can see you!" We weren't going to argue with her, at least not until we were out. It was fast becoming twilight, and in the jungle, it only takes about a half an hour for the sun to fall below the horizon. We spent the next twenty minutes securing the boat for the night, while at the same time absorbing every minute nuance of the surroundings. "OK everybody! Let's get in the boat before it fills up with mosquitoes!" Dad yelled. When Dad spoke you did not hesitate to move. As a matter of fact, as soon as he opened his mouth you started moving, looking, and listening at the same time. You could change direction as you went! If he ever had to come find you, you could rest assured that he would bring his belt with him or worse yet, a nice limber switch! I have tripped to the "light fantastic" many a time for not responding quickly enough. Of course, you really couldn't blame him. When you have a wife and four children in the middle of the Amazon jungle, there is no room for error. We learned pretty quickly, when Dad said "Frog!" you didn't just jump, you asked, "How high?" Your life might depend on it! We spent the night, and the next day. Dad did a little surveying, and then we packed up to go back to the mouth to hire help for clearing the jungle.

11. Clearing the Land

It took about a week to line up all the help we needed. Dad talked to a man at the mouth of the Atacuari named Raul Olivera. He was a large landowner and he was in charge of doing quite a bit of logging in the area. Most of the men of his stature were called "Patron." (*pa-TROAN*) Many people depended on him for supplies such as guns and ammunition machetes and the like, and like many others of his kind he used the people around him to make money. It was the "old company store" syndrome. He would give them things on credit and then he would make them work it off, which of course they never could, because he paid them so little. In spite of all that, he was the man to see if you wanted anything done that required any large amount of labor, and Boy, did we have a lot of things that needed to be done!

Clearing four acres of jungle is not an easy task even when you have fifteen men and many others besides working on it. All the trees had to be cut down with hand tools. My Dad was quite popular among the woodcutters because of his ability to put a nice edge on all the cutting tools. When he wasn't helping cut down

trees, he was sharpening the tools. Every evening would find him sitting on the bow of the boat with his file in his hand, with all the workmen standing around watching him sharpen their tools. Some would sharpen their own tools on a large sandstone that we had lying on the ground, but they ultimately gave in and brought their tools to my Dad. The sandstone still remained quite popular for refinishing the edges during the day. Of course, we would furnish the grub throughout the day and every evening. The way the men would eat you would think they never ate before! Before starting work the men had built several makeshift shelters to sleep in at night. Those of us children that were old enough would help with clearing the small stuff and the others would stay in the boat. Guess who the babysitter was? You got it, yours truly! I spent most of the day taking care of my younger brother and sister and fishing out of the boat window when I can get the chance. Boring! Sometimes Mom would relieve me and I would nearly break my neck getting to the top of the hill.

The method used to clear the jungle was a time tested method. First you would pick out the amount of land to clear, and then everybody would go through and cut down anything smaller than 6in. in diameter and lay it down. You would then move on up to larger trees. In the jungle most trees are interconnected with a network of large vines that intertwine and tangle the tops of all the trees. Believe it or not, this made it easier to clear the land of large trees faster. After determining which way the trees were going to fall naturally, they would start cutting through all the trees on the side where they were going to fall. They would cut them almost all the way through and then move to the next until they got to the back of the group. Most of the large trees were at least 2ft. or more in diameter where they were cut, and as tall as 150ft. Some were as thick as 6ft. Since the ground water is so readily available in the jungle most of the trees do not have a tap root. Instead, they have flanges that extend out from the bottom of each tree ten or 12ft. from the center of the trunk like giant props, and upward sometimes as high as seven to 8ft. To cut down one of these giants sometimes a platform had to be built for the cutters to stand on while they chopped. When all of the forward trees had been cut through about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way, they would go to the rear of the stack, and began cutting through the rear trees. These were cut all the way through. When twelve or thirteen trees of this size hit the ground, it resembles a small earthquake. It begins with wood cracking and splitting, and ends with the ground shaking! This was only the beginning. After the trees were cut down, they would have to be cut up. It took the better part of the next three years to rid the land of the fallen trees, and I don't think we ever really got rid of all of them. Stumps were another matter altogether. The common method for getting rid of stumps was to burn them up under piles of wood stacked around them from the fallen trees that had been cut up near by.

The land where the house was going to be put was cleared first. Mom insisted that two or three royal palms be left standing. The house was placed about 100yds. from the edge of the bank that went down to the river. The drop to the river was approximately 70ft. in low water. At the time we were clearing the land it was about a 50' drop. I remember cutting steps into the bank and placing split logs flat side up for steps, driving stakes into the

ground at the front of each log to hold them in place. There were about 32 steps from the first landing to the top of the bank. There were about ten steps from the landing down to the boat. This was significant, because later on, eight or ten ironwood logs had to be carried up from the river to the top of the bank. The wood is aptly named. It does not float, and each log had to be supported with several large balsa wood logs on either side to be floated down river to our place before being carried up the hill. All of the poles were cut from a single tree, which had been split into several smaller pieces. Each piece was approximately 12in. in diameter, about 16ft. long, and a deep maroon color. It took four strong men to carry each piece because of the extreme weight. These poles were used for the uprights, because they did not rot, nor did termites ever bother them. The wood is almost indestructible.

Believe it or not it only took about one week to get all the trees cut down. It took, however, almost three more weeks to clear walkways and build the house. It was the beginning of the dry season and rain had been holding off as much as rain holds off in the jungle. It only rained about every other day. The river was dropping and time was of the essence. As we cut up the trees, the wood would be piled in large heaps around the different stumps. Later on, at the height of the dry season, the wood would be dry enough to start burning it. You could only burn about once a year because of the extreme amount of rainfall (80"/yr) we received. Even then, each pile would have to be started with about five gallons of kerosene. This would allow enough heat to get the center of the pile burning good. Once started, the heat from the fire would continue to dry the rest of the wood so it would burn. In the jungle there is no topsoil, so the pile of ashes left behind was good for planting. Otherwise, farming was futile. Cutting down the jungle is just the first step. Keeping it back is an everyday job. It only takes about three months for the jungle to swallow a clearing. Once cut down you have to keep cutting it down. That's what the jungle does best, grow. The men split up into teams of two and began cutting the trees into sections. These sections would be hauled over to stumps, so that they could be burned later on. After the section for the house was cleared, several men began working on the house. By the time the pathways had been cleared to the riverbank, most of the men were concentrating on building the house.

If an animal dared peek out from the jungle, it would become the evening meal. We used a lot of rice that trip. Plantains were plentiful and so was yucca. Bananas were cheap and the papayas were always available. Yucca is a starchy root much like a potato. I became quite fond of French fried yucca. Ripe plantains are also very good when sliced thin and fried. We would decorate them with sugar and cinnamon, and have them for breakfast with eggs and caiman tail nuggets. Yum! Green plantains could be sliced thin and deep fried like a potato chip. They were quite tasty when you put a little salt on them. Whenever a large animal was killed, a smokehouse would be built. The animal would be sectioned and placed on racks inside. This not only cooked the meat, but preserved it over a long period of time as well. What was not smoked, was salted, and laid in the sun to dry. Enough about food, I'm starting to get hungry.

12. The House



In the jungle, where our house was located, the sun comes up at six AM and it sets at six PM. We were about 4° south of the equator. Sunup never varied more than ½ an hour the entire year. It would be about 110° during the day and it would drop down to about 70° at night or lower. You generally needed a blanket to sleep under. Under the jungle canopy, the temperature remained a constant 75 to

80°. The humidity was generally around 100%. You could get dehydrated very quickly, because in that high humidity your perspiration did not evaporate, so your body just kept producing and producing, but you never cooled off. The only way you could cool off was to take a dip in the river, or find some shade. As I mentioned earlier, God had worked it out so that the spot where our house was, was directly across from a nice sandbar.

During high water, the river was about 80 yards wide, and the sandbar would disappear. As the river would drop, more and more of the beach would appear. One year, the river dropped so low it was only about 40ft. wide. We would paddle a canoe across the river to the sandbar, and after shuffling our feet on the bottom to make sure all the stingrays were gone we would have a lot of fun. Stingrays are generally docile and they will not sting you unless you step directly on them. Shuffling your feet would give them a gentle nudge so that they would move on downriver.

Pirhana's were not the problem you might think. Like any other fish they will run away from any disturbance in the water. You just didn't want to go into the water with an open cut because they could smell blood a mile away. Most of them were about the size of your hand. There are three kinds of



piranhas, white, red, and black. The white ones were like big minnows generally about 3in. long. The red ones were the most common, and they could get as big as two of your hands put together, but generally they did not get much bigger than your hand. The black ones were the most vicious, but they were only found in the lakes and still water. I've seen them as big as 10lbs. They are loners for the most part, and do not school like the others.

The caimans (alligators) were pretty skittish, and were not really any worry at all. The slightest noise would send them scampering away. Believe it or not, in the eight plus years that I was in South America, I only saw two poisonous snakes, and one of them was stuffed in a museum. We did, however, see quite a few anacondas ranging from 3ft. to 40ft. As I have mentioned, when we traveled on the river sometimes they would crawl up around the outboard engines under the covers for warmth, and we would discover them in the morning. Fun! Of course, they were as glad to escape as we were eager for them to do so. It was not a good idea to let small children play at the river's edge, or dogs either for that matter. If an anaconda thinks he can swallow something, he will attack it. Small children and dogs are always at risk, because the anaconda is a good swimmer, and generally likes to attack from the water.

Building the house took about one week. It started with the men hauling the uprights up from the riverbank where they had floated them from upriver. As I mentioned earlier, it was quite a task to haul the poles up the river bank, because of their extreme weight. The jungle is full of building materials. All you have to do is go and get it. Although, getting it can be pretty hard work sometimes. All the floor joists and rafters were joined with vines. Nothing is wasted. The leaves from the vines were used to make the shingled layers of roofing material. The upright poles were notched to receive the ends the rafters and joists. They were then lashed tightly together. The vine would last a long time. As it dried it would shrink slightly tightening up all the joints. It retained its strength even after it dried, so there was never in any danger of it coming apart. It was also termite resistant. I think it had something to do with the sap.

The flooring was made from a local palm tree known as a belly palm. About halfway up the trunk for about 30ft. the trunk would swell outward to a little more than twice the original diameter. This swelled portion of the palm would be cut out of the tree and split open. All the pith would be removed leaving an outer shell of about one and a half inches thick. This would be cracked lengthwise with an axe, and laid out flat. The outer shell of a palm tree is quite hard and brittle, and serves quite well as planking for the floor. I will say it was a bit springy to walk on, but it was very sturdy, nonetheless.

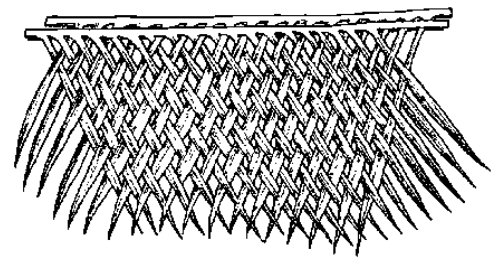
The floor joists and rafters were made from a different kind of hardwood. It looked like birch, but inside it was mustard yellow and it was so hard you could barely cut it with an ax. It, too, was termite resistant. The uprights were ten to 12in. in diameter, and the floor joists and rafters were just a bit smaller. The roof poles went from the rafters to the peak, and were about 30ft. long. Most of the trees in the jungle grow straight up to the sunlight. Finding straight poles for the roof was not as hard as you might think. They tapered from about 4in. at the rafter, to about 2in. at the peak. The roof pitch was quite steep to allow the rainwater to run off more rapidly during the



heavy downpours. I guess in terms of carpentry, the pitch of the roof was about 16:12.

The leaves from the vine were quite large and had three blades extending from the branch outward in a 90° fan. Each leaf tapered to a point about 2ft. from the stem. At the middle of each leaf, it was about 8in. wide. Each stem was about 10in. long, which was plenty to lash each leaf side by side down an 8ft. pole

about 1in. apart. The poles were made from palm bark. They were about 1in. square. After the leaves were lashed to the pole, it would create an 8ft. shingle. These shingles were lashed to the roof poles at 6in. intervals all the way up to the ridge. The shingles for the peak of the roof were made from a different leaf. It was a palm leaf. Three fronds would be laid its side by side on the ground and the leaves would be braided together. The leaves were spaced about 1in. apart down the length of each palm frond. Three sets of these would be offset and lashed together to form a single shingle. They would be laid from one end of the peak to the other. This kind of roof would last about ten years and was very watertight, even though sometimes the rain would come down so hard you couldn't see 6ft. in front of you. We could put a 55 gallon drum out in the yard and it would fill up in less than an hour, but the roof never leaked a drop!



The house was large. It was about 50ft. long and 30ft. wide. The house faced the river, (west) and was built on a slope so that water would not collect underneath. You could step down off the back of the house, but the front of the house was about 5ft. off the ground. The south end of the house was just a huge porch. It was about 1/3 of the total floor space. Dad wanted to make sure that travelers had a place to stay when they visited. Sometimes we had as many as twenty people sleeping on the porch. The rest



of the house was walled off with a half wall and fiberglass screen. We built a full wall on the back (east) for

privacy. Dad finished off part of the attic with a floor made from real wood planks. We used this room as a loft bedroom for us kids. There was a ladder that went from the floor to the loft. At that time we needed four beds, so Dad had them made in a modular style so we could transport them more easily on the boat. There was plenty of room above the rafters for another bedroom. Dad completely enclosed the upstairs loft with light white linen netting that was generally used for mosquito nets. The mosquitoes were so small they could wriggle through the fiberglass screen, so we still had to use mosquito nets. Mom and Dad slept downstairs in the northwest corner of the house. We would bring the mattresses up from the boat for our beds when we were in the jungle. We each had a good army surplus wool blanket to sleep under. Oh yeah, we each had our own mosquito net. We would usually spend five or ten minutes each evening with our flashlights looking for intruders. There is nothing more annoying than one mosquito!

The house was perched on the highest point for miles, on the outside bend of the river, so we could look up river and downriver at the same time. We were privileged to view beautiful sunsets every evening with Mom's royal palms silhouetted against the ever darkening sky. Each evening, hundreds of little yellow-breasted gnatcatchers would gather on the branches side by side and sing an evening song to their Creator as they readied themselves for the night. Every once in awhile, we would watch the distinctive flight of a toucan as it headed for home. About a half a mile back in the jungle from the other side of the riverbank there was a great big umbrella tree. Each evening we would watch as the parrots would congregate in the branches. If you need a quiet place to sleep, the jungle is not a very good place to go. The night comes alive with a cacophony of sound! There must be a thousand different crickets in the jungle, and don't even get me started on the frogs! Some mornings we would be awakened with the monkey choir. Howler monkeys would sometimes howl for almost an hour. After a while, we learned to identify the animals by the calls that they made.

Did I mention the outhouse? No running water in the jungle except the river, and when you "ran" down to it to get a bucket full. It was rather puzzling to the Indians to watch as we dug a hole 6ft. deep by 6ft. long by 3ft. wide. They couldn't figure out what we were doing. We built a small shelter twice as big as we needed with a wall separating 1/2 from the other. The back half of the shed was used for the generator, and half was completely closed, and used for the outhouse. We hung a shower curtain on the door. Many times, curious Indians would peek in on us. I guess they never figured it out. We seldom used the generator, because fuel was a precious commodity. We would only use it when we had a lot of company and Dad wanted to preach at night. We quickly learned, "Use the bathroom before going to bed."

By the time the house was mostly constructed, it was time to start thinking about going back to the big city. Dad had already put together a list of things we needed to bring back. Ammunition for the rifles and shotguns, a kerosene refrigerator, and a gasoline washing machine were just some of the things on the list. I didn't know it

then, but that washing machine was going to get the best of me. Hauling water up and down that hill in three gallon buckets made a man out of me at an early age. The washing machine held twenty gallons of water, and there were two ten gallon tubs, also. You can do the math. Wash day was not a very pleasant day for me. Rain was generally music to my ears, because it meant that I didn't have to haul water on wash day. 55 gallon drums would fill up rather quickly when placed under the edge of the roof. Altogether, we had spent about four months out in the jungle and our food and fuel supplies were running low. We thought we had enough for about six months, but I guess we didn't count on fifteen hungry workmen. Considering the amount of danger involved clearing four acres of jungle with hand tools, and building a jungle house from scratch, God protected us and the workmen from all injury. Not one accident of any consequence that I can recall happened during the entire time. It was absolutely amazing Grace!

13. Perils of Babysitting

I hauled water from a little creek down at the bottom of the hill that ran into the river on the south end of the property. We had dammed it up, so the water would get deep enough to fill a bucket. The water was very clear and was very good for our wash water, as well as the drinking water after we boiled it, of course. God has given us an old gasoline Maytag wringer washing machine. Washday was usually pretty loud. It held about 20 gallons and Mom had two 10 gallon rinse tubs which she was kind enough to reuse as wash water so I would only have to fill the rinse tubs after each load. I appreciated that. Three gallon buckets get pretty heavy when you have to walk all the way down the hill then all the way back up to the house. I guess the distance was about 50 yards. Each 6 gallons I carried was uphill. Sometimes Rob and Paul would be asked to carry a load but they usually whined and complained so badly that they ended up not doing it at all. I'd just grab the buckets and go. I guess it was part of what made me strong. Three gallons of water weighs quite a bit and if you carry two of them long enough you get strong enough to carry just about anything, which I did. Like I mentioned in the previous chapter, I love the sound of rain. 55 gallon drums would fill up pretty quick when placed under the edge of the roof. It's a lot easier to dip a bucket in a 55 gallon drum and carry it three steps, than to run up and down a 50yd. hill. If it hadn't rained as often as it did, I would probably look like Popeye, minus the pipe, of course.

What does this have to do with babysitting? I'm glad you asked. Hauling water was about the only way I can get out of babysitting. Sometimes, if I got up early enough, I could sneak out and go hunting or fishing. I would usually try to go with Dad every morning that he went out.

Since I was the oldest of five children, I was usually assigned the task as the babysitter. The two youngest children, Ruth and Jack junior, were usually pretty good for me, but I still hated doing it. It was just the idea that

Rob and Paul had very few responsibilities, and were allowed to do pretty much as they pleased, as long as they stayed on the property. It irked me to no end.

Once, when we were clearing the property, I was watching my sister in the boat, (Jack had not arrived yet) when Mom came in and said that Dad needed some help getting the tools down the hill. I scrambled out of the boat, glad for the reprieve. Somehow, my sister escaped with me, unnoticed by Mom. I got to the top of the hill, and there was a huge pile of axes and machetes that needed to be brought down to the boat. Trying to be efficient, instead of carrying each load separately, I started tossing the tools down the hill to the landing one at a time. I was almost done, and I was tossing the last tool, an ax, when my sister's head popped up. I had already let go of the ax. I guess the slight hesitation, when I saw my sister, caused the ax to spin in the air, end over end. It was headed straight at my sister's head! I was horrified! I know her Guardian angel was working overtime that day. There's just no other explanation. The back of the ax hit her, of course, but not in the head. It struck the top of her right shoulder, and continued on harmlessly down the bank. It didn't even break her collarbone. I was hysterical! I thought for sure I had split her head wide open! I ran down the steps, almost falling headlong in my hurry to get to the bottom. I was screaming, "I've killed her!" Mom slapped me to calm me down. A brief examination of my now crying sister, revealed only a bad bruise. My sister was pretty stunned by the whole thing, not realizing what had happened. I never threw anything down the bank after that.

There is a beetle that bores holes into the side of palm trees to lay its eggs. The larva eats the pith of the palm tree until it grows big enough to eat its way out. The larva is about 1/2in. long, and about 3/8in. in diameter. The natives eat them raw. I prefer them dry roasted. They taste something like crisp bacon, and are actually quite good. The only way to get them is to find a palm tree that has fallen down, cut into it, and extract the larva. One of the ways to do this is to tease the larva up to the top of the hole with a small twig. As soon as you see that larva, you cut behind him with your machete, so he cannot back down into the hole again. Then using the twig, you extract him. Fish cannot resist this delicacy. I decided to take my sister fishing, so we trotted off into the jungle to find some of this excellent bait. As we were digging around in the palm log, I started pushing the larva up to the top from the inside of the log. My sister was extracting them and placing them in a jar. All of a sudden she squealed, "I've got one!" I suddenly felt a searing pain in my right index finger. She had mistaken the tip of my finger for a larva, and had swiftly blocked its escape with a deft cut of the machete. However, there was no larva and the only escape she blocked was mine. She's still didn't realize that it was my finger. I yelled at her to pull out the machete. I extracted my bleeding finger to expose a gash that ran from the base of my finger all the way to the tip. It was to the bone! I guess it was get even time for the ax. I cut off part of the bottom of my tee shirt, and she helped me tie it tightly around my finger. She looked really worried, but I knew we had a long walk ahead of us back to the house. I knew we better get started. I reassured her that I was OK, and off we went. The only thing that bothered me about the whole incident was the fact that I could not go swimming as long as

my finger was healing. We were never allowed to go swimming with any kind of cut. It was a great incentive for us to stay safe.



Jack junior was in trouble almost from the minute he arrived. When he was still in diapers toddling around on the property, he stumbled and fell. A sharp stake on the ground pierced through his testicle sac. Mom and Dad were extremely worried! We were 350 miles by speedboat from any medical help whatsoever. We had a well stocked medicine chest, though. We had everything from anti-venom to penicillin. God was merciful, and with many diaper changes and constant care, the wound healed completely.

Jack wasn't done yet. Later on, when we were clearing the land, we had built a huge bonfire at the bottom of the hill leading to the creek on the south side of the property. Jack decided to help put wood on the fire. He went running down the hill with a stick in his hand, and fell right into the hottest part of the fire! I was hard on his heels, but I wasn't quick enough. I dragged him out of the fire screaming! He had received severe third degree burns to his right elbow and knee and the back of his left ear. This time we all got in the boat and made a trip to the nearest army post with a medical facility and a doctor. It took the better part of a day and a half to get there. We spent the day on the boat while Mom and Dad took Junior up to see the doctor. The doctor was very kind and gave us two or three tubes of yellow salve to treat Jack's burns. Because of the high humidity, things do not heal quickly in the jungle. God's grace certainly intervened on our behalf. I don't remember any of our wounds ever taking an extra long time to heal. The burns healed so completely that the only scarring visible was slight scarring behind the left ear, and you had to bend the ear forward to see it. I have never seen third degree burns heal so completely. It had to be the hand of God.

Sometime later, when he was about five years old, Jack and I were sitting on a log facing each other. Enter the babysitter. Since he was too young to actually have a machete, Dad had made him a toy one from an old butcher knife. He had purposely ground the edge flat and sanded it smooth so that he would not get hurt. Well, guess what? He didn't get hurt. I did! He was chopping on the log with his "dull machete," when he looked up at me and said, "If you don't move your leg I'm going to cut you." I really didn't pay any attention to him. All of a sudden my right knee was stinging! I looked down, and sure enough, he had cut my leg right through my jeans! The cut was about 3in. long. I was furious! It was bad enough I had to babysit, but now this? I smacked him so hard he fell off the log. He immediately started crying and Dad rushed over to see what the problem was. At first he thought Junior just fell off the log, and started in on me about being more careful. But then he noticed

the cut on my knee. He asked me what happened. I'd told him. I think Jack Jr. was more concerned about losing his "machete" than the cut he had inflicted on his older brother. I don't think he much cared what he did to me. I was the babysitter. You know how that goes. Rob and Paul, # 2 and #3 son, were pretty much free to do as they chose. I never saw much of them until they got bored. Then they would come around and bug me. Not only did Jack lose his machete, but he got a good paddling on top of it. Finally, justice had been served! Now, I had to wait two weeks before I could go swimming again! Nuts!

14. Jungle Living

Living in the jungle is an experience I will never forget. For me, the jungle was my escape. It was a place I could go, and be totally on my own away from everyone. I would grab my machete and my rifle and my little survival bag, and off I would go.

The Indians had a unique way of making string. They would take the bud leaves of a particular palm tree, and extract two leaf fibers from each side. They would dry these in the sun. After drying, the fibers remained very strong and pliable. Using the palm of their hand and the top of their thigh, they would twist the fibers together to make string. If they needed something stronger, they would use the same method to twist the string together to make rope. The string was used for everything, from hammocks to fishing line. My survival bag was made from the string. The tight fishnet weave would expand to receive just about anything. A single strand of the string could not be broken with your hands. It was a very strong.



I would carry a hammock and a mosquito net, along with fishing line, hooks, and sinker. A pop bottle with a wooden cork contained the kerosene I would need if I had to start a fire. The jungle is so wet you cannot start a fire without kerosene. I carried an army surplus waterproof matchbox that also contained flint and steel. Just as a precaution, I would also carry two boxes, each containing 50 rounds of ammunition, for my 22 rifle. The rifle that I used was a Remington semiautomatic. There was a tube clip under the barrel which held approximately fifteen rounds of ammunition. We used hollow points, which we would put in x on the tip of before loading. This effectively turned one round of ammunition into four. With a semiautomatic rifle under my left arm, a machete in my right hand, and my survival pack slung over my shoulder, I was prepared for anything. A machete is your best survival tool if you get lost in the jungle. I don't remember ever being afraid of being alone in the jungle.

Day to day life could be a bit hard. The food supplies that we brought were all dry goods. Flour and sugar had to be sealed in tall watertight containers. The containers were square and stood about 3ft. tall. The metal containers were about 1ft. wide and a foot and a half deep. The lids were like paint can lids. They would have to be pried off with a screwdriver or table knife. Bread was practically nonexistent unless a Mom happened to get in a baking mood. We ate a lot of plantains, bananas, and yucca. We would have to go into the jungle and hunt for fresh meat. Our best source was the river, and the fish we pulled out of it. About once a week, we would start paddling upriver about twilight. We would paddle for about three or four hours, and then sit and wait till about midnight. We would then begin to drift down river silently in our canoes. We had battery operated headlamps, which we used to scan the riverbank as we drifted. Caimans were about the only thing that we could spot readily. Finding a large one was difficult. There is not much meat on a caiman except for the tail, and on the larger ones, the hind legs. We generally had to settle for the smaller ones, but even that was welcome.



*Platano
& suti larvae. Mmmmm!*

We could buy fresh eggs from the local farmers, and my Dad was the best biscuit maker I ever knew. He was also the consummate woodsman, and I don't ever remember a time when we didn't have some kind of fresh meat or fish on our table. God knew what he was doing when he called my Dad to be a missionary in the jungle. Sometimes, Dad would buy two or 300lbs. of potatoes, which had to be sorted about once a month. They would go bad in the high humidity rapidly. A rotten potato is quite easy to find, just follow your nose. Yuck! We used large airtight 55 gallon barrels to store the dry box goods. Even books had to be stored in airtight containers to



keep the pages from becoming mildewed. We planted plantains, bananas, yucca, and papayas. We tried to grow little corn, but it didn't do so well. Sugar cane grew like grass, so we were never without something sweet to chew. Papayas had to be planted in pairs, a male and a female for cross fertilization. The female plants bore the fruit, but without a male plant there was none. You can live pretty well in the jungle.

We managed to collect quite a menagerie of animals. Woolly monkeys, parrots, toucans, ocelot kittens, otters, and one time even a little gray fox. When Freddy came to us someone had kicked him in the side and broken one of his ribs. We nursed him back to health, and he would follow us around like a little puppy dog. He was very smart. Dad decided the best way to feed him was to kill a few of the gnatcatchers that gathered every evening in the palm trees out front. The first time Dad fired his rifle, Freddy ran away. The second time he sat and watched. The third time he saw Dad get the rifle, he ran out and sat under the palm tree and waited for the birds to fall. The ocelot kitten was named, Tootsie. We kept her for about two months. She loved to go swimming with us. One day we had to leave her alone, so we locked her up in the boat. Dad forgot about the smoked meat that was hanging in the boat. By the time we got back, the meat was gone. She was so full she could hardly walk. My Dad was pretty angry.

My encounter with the one poisonous snake I saw was both dangerous and humorous. My brother and I had gone into the jungle to try and find some fresh game. I was in the lead, and after about three hours of walking very quietly, we had found nothing. All of a sudden Rob whispered, "Stand still!" I thought he had spotted something, so I froze. All of a sudden, a machete comes whizzing down past my right leg. Thunk! What in the world was he doing! I looked down to see the machete sticking in the ground. The severed head of a snake was lying in the



pathway. I guess when I had stopped to listen; I had stopped right on top of this snake. It was a very pretty snake. It was mostly white with beautiful red black and orange markings. We picked it up, put it in our sack, and headed back to the house. When we arrived at the house, there were several Indians sitting around on the porch. We were waving the snake around proudly, and as we would approach, the Indians would scatter. We thought it was funny. Later on, we discovered that it was a coral snake, one of the most deadly. God had again protected me. When I had stepped on the snake, I had pinned him to the ground just behind the head. My brother's quick thinking had kept me from moving, or I would surely have been bitten.

Dad really loved frog legs. After discovering that the average size of a river frog was about 10in. high, he decided to do something about it. He took 3, 12in. long nails, and fashioned them into barbed spear points. He then attached them with stainless steel wire to the end of a 6ft. cedar pole. It was the finest frog gig I ever saw. A couple of nights later, we decided to go night hunting. We took two canoes, and my brother Rob rode in the larger one with my Dad. For some reason the gig ended up in my canoe. As we drifted down river I was in the lead canoe. I was around twelve years old at the time. I decided to paddle into a rather large backwater and look around. Sure enough, at the very end of the backwater I spotted a huge caiman. I was excited! Fresh meat! I

quietly got the canoe heading in a straight line and slid the paddle behind me. I slowly raised my rifle and took aim, letting the canoe glide silently through the water. When I was about 3ft. from hitting the mud, I squeezed the trigger, and the glowing red orb of his eye disappeared. "I got him!" I thought.

Let me pause here a moment and explain. When you fire a rifle that close to anything, it generally runs, unless



you kill it. A caiman's hide is so tough that unless you shoot them directly in the eye, the bullet will just glance off. You can understand why I thought I had hit him. When the bullet hit his head, he must have shut his eye.

He was still quite a ways away up on the mud. I didn't want to get out of the canoe, because I knew that mud was going to be about 3ft. deep. He had not budged since I pulled the trigger. I

started looking around the canoe and the beam from my headlamp shone upon Dad's new gig. I grabbed it and stood up carefully in the bow of the canoe. The softest part was the skin just below the eye and behind the head. I took aim and shoved the barbs as deep as I could into the neck. Guess what? He wasn't dead! The bullet must have glanced off of his head just above the eye knocking him out cold. When those cold steel barbs went into his neck, he woke up. Into the mud I went! I managed to get both hands down tight on the head of the spear, trying to pull it out. I didn't dare lose it. It was not going to happen! I was right about the mud. It was about 3ft. deep. My legs sank into it on either side of the monster just behind his front legs. I never rode a bucking bronco, but I can imagine what it is like. He wanted to get into the water in the worst kind of way. My legs were so stuck in the mud neither of us was going to go anywhere as long as I held onto that gig, and I certainly wasn't going to let go of it.

My biggest fear at that point was losing that gig. The alligator didn't scare me. Being stuck in the mud up to my thighs in the middle of a jungle night without a light did not scare me. I don't know where my headlamp had gone. Losing my Dad's new gig put the fear of God into me! I started yelling, "Dad! Dad! Help! Help!" As he paddled into the backwater, he yelled, "Be quiet you're going to scare away the game!" Never mind that I was straddling an 8ft. alligator in 3ft. of mud. He nosed his canoe into the mud, and quickly assessed the situation. "Hold him still so I can shoot him," he said as he unholstered his pistol. Right! What did he think I was trying to do? I did the best I could, and Dad finally dispatched the monster with two shots. He could not get the gig to come out of the alligator either! The next morning when he was skinning the animal, he had to actually cut the spear from the animal's neck. The final measurement on the beast was about 11ft. I guess carrying those three gallon buckets up and down the hill had finally paid off.



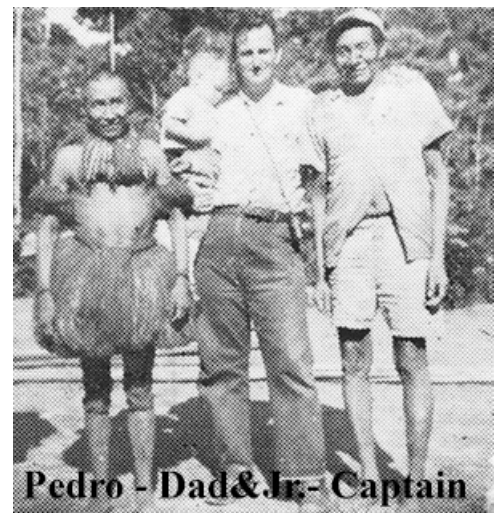
The jungle backwaters and lakes are a fisherman's dream. Almost every time you cast your lure into the water, you hooked something. We used Zebco rods and reels. Sometimes Dad would use a broken-minnow lure, but we mostly just used half oz. spinners. The fish in those lakes had never seen an artificial lure. The Indians could not understand how we got so many fish with just a few hours of work. They thought we had magic fishing poles. In a few hours we could practically fill up the

canoe. The only thing we kept of what we caught was the peacock bass. The bass would range anywhere from two to 10lbs. We gave everything else away to the Indians, and they were always eager to receive them. Every once in awhile, we would set a line out at night for catfish. Some would be as large as 100lbs. I remember sitting in the drizzle four hours over the sandbar while I tried to hook a catfish. I don't know if I was a patient fisherman, or just glad not to be babysitting.

The river had dropped so low that year, it was only about 40ft. wide. By that time, two native families had decided to move next door. The "*Capitan*" built a house on the north side, and his son-in-law built a house on the south side. We had become quite the little village.

Game had been a little scarce, so the men decided to get a hunting party together. They asked my Dad if he could take them upriver, so they could hunt game as they came back down river. We had a small boat that was about 15ft. long and about 3ft. wide. It was basically just a very large canoe. There was a five horse Johnson engine mounted on the back, and about three bench seats in the middle. We loaded up all the hunting equipment and supplies, tied on two canoes, and began the two day trip upriver. I think there were about six men plus my Dad and me.

We stopped about a half an hour before dark to allow time to construct shelters for the night. I helped build ours while the men constructed several others. The jungle is full of building materials, and you can put up a lean-to in about fifteen minutes. We started a fire and put up our hammocks and mosquito nets just as the night began to fall. We spread an army poncho over our roof for added protection. The mosquito nets that are made to accommodate hammocks have a 2ft. sleeve in each end. These are closed securely around the hammock strings. Between the mosquito net and the tree, we tied kerosene soaked rags to discourage insects from crawling into our hammocks during the night.



Pedro - Dad & Jr. - Captain

We were up before daybreak the next morning. By the time the sun had decided to come up, we had already been traveling about a half an hour. We went as far as the river would allow us to go, and stopped. We loaded all the supplies for the hunting party into the two canoes we had towed up river. We said goodbye to the men and started back down river. It was around 3:00 PM, so we had some good travel time left before we would have to stop for the night. As we traveled down river I sat in the bow of the boat with my shotgun across my knees waiting for dinner to show its head. We managed to kill a small river duck, and then we found a nice large sandbar to set up camp. That duck tasted awful good! There's just something about food cooked over an open fire!

The next day turned into a very sunny, hot, and boring day. As I sat in the bow of the boat, scanning the shoreline, I was in a daze. As we went around one bend of the river, there was a large sandbar. Across the top of the sand bar near the tree line was a big funny looking log. As it disappeared behind us, it suddenly dawned on me, "That's not a log!" I turned and yelled to my dad, "Dad! That was a snake!" We argued about it for about three minutes, and to prove me wrong Dad turned the boat around. As we approached the sandbar, you could see about 10ft. of his tail sliding into the water. This "log" had stretched to the entire length of a 50ft. sandbar. It had been about 2ft. in diameter. Since it was quite a bit bigger than us and the boat put together, we decided to beat a hasty retreat. No sense taking any chances, even though it had probably already eaten. That would explain why it was lying in the sun. Anacondas will lie in the sun to help digest their meals. They only eat about once a month, but we were not going to take any chances. Mama Mia! We arrived home late that evening weary and glad to be home. After four days in a soggy jungle, my bed never felt so good!

15. Hunting



I know I've mentioned hunting several times before, but I haven't covered all of our adventures. Sometimes we would take a guide with us. Antonio was probably the best hunter in the whole tribe. He always came back with a large game animal, and sometimes two. He was very proficient with a blowgun or shotgun. He had two hunting dogs that he cared for like children. The most plentiful game animal was a white lipped peccary. (Wild hog) There was another type called a white collared peccary, which was generally only found in pairs or alone. It was a much smaller animal than the first. The first animal,

the white lipped peccary, would run in herds of 30 to 100. Their body weight would sometimes exceed 200lbs.

They were quite noisy and smelly, and were not that hard to track. The trick to finding them was knowing where the food source was. Antonio knew where the food sources were. We would often enlist his help in finding these food sources. He seemed to have a knack for finding fresh meat. One thing for sure, if you went hunting with him, you had better stay right on his heels. He never used a trail, but walked through the jungle as if it was his own backyard. I guess, come to think of it, it probably was his backyard.



During our first furlough, someone had given my father a Marlin 30.06 lever action saddle rifle. It held six rounds of ammunition with one in the chamber making a total of seven. Dad purchased 1000 rounds of ammunition to take back to Peru with us, because you could not purchase ammunition of that kind in Iquitos. It's probably a good thing that my dad made friends easily. In the six years prior to our furlough, he had made it a point to get to know all of the local officials and make them his friend. Friendship can get a bit strained, though, when you try to bring in a rifle through customs with 1000 rounds of ammunition. The first official that examined our luggage did not know my father. I guess he thought we were going to try and start a revolution or something. Things got a bit sticky until our customs agent happened to notice the fuss and walked over. He vouched for my dad, and since he was a man of some importance in the town, the agent let my dad go through. Yes, you heard me right. Sometimes, in third world countries, you have to hire a customs agent to get your stuff out of customs. You cannot do it yourself. There are a lot of transactions going on under the table. Anyway, we got the rifle through customs along with the ammunition. I must correct something I said earlier. A 30.06 is not really a rifle, it is a carbine. It has something to do with the trajectory of the bullet as it leaves the gun muzzle. The rounds of ammunition were about 3in. long. The lead was copper jacketed hollow point, and was about 1/2in. long. It was a very powerful weapon.

Dad was itching to try out his new toy. After three months of buying supplies, and getting the boat ready to travel after a year in dry dock, we headed back down river. A couple of weeks after we got there, Dad got together with Antonio, and planned a hunting trip. He decided it was time for my brother and me to learn how to hunt. We were invited to go along. I had gotten a brand new sixteen gauge single action Savage shotgun for my thirteenth birthday. I had been practicing for weeks, popping out the shells and reloading. I was ready! A

sixteen gauge shotgun packs quite a wallop, especially if it's a full choke like mine. We were using .00 buck shot. Rob was carrying a 410. Dad was carrying the 30.06, and the Remington semiautomatic 22. He carried the rifle on his back with a strap. We paddled upriver for about an hour and a half, when Antonio indicated that we should stop. We walked for about an hour when I started smelling something stinky. Then I began hearing this dull roar. Antonio indicated that we should be quieter as we walked, because we were getting closer to the animals. He said we should wait there while he went around the other side to run them to us. So we waited. After about twenty minutes we heard a lot of crashing, and the sound of hoofs. All of a sudden, they were coming right at us! Rob got so scared he started looking for something to climb. Unfortunately, my Dad was the closest thing to him. I remember seeing Dad trying to get off a shot with Rob climbing up his back. He got to the top just as Dad squeezed the trigger. Blam! It took about a week for Rob to get the hearing back in his left ear. It took about two weeks for the burn from the hot casing to heal.

All I could see was a black stream going by me so fast you couldn't distinguish one animal from another. I took aim and fired. I don't know if I hit anything or not. Dad managed to kill one of the younger animals after he got my brother off of his back. I estimate that there were probably about 70 animals in that herd. Herds of that size have been known to attack hunters. We field dressed the animal and divided it into four different loads. I guess each piece weighed about 40lbs. or more. I noticed that my brother and I got the smaller ones. The day had been a success!

I guess it's an unwritten law that all successful hunters must share their spoil with the village. It didn't take long for that wild hog to be divided up. I think we ended up with a hind quarter. One of the shoulders had completely disappeared when the round of ammunition exited the animal. After that, Dad decided that the carbine was just a little bit too powerful for the kind of hunting we had to do. It was also very loud. It sounded like a small cannon when it went off. After firing that weapon, you could forget about hunting anything else the rest of the day. A 22 rifle, on the other hand, goes relatively unnoticed in the jungle. It sounds a lot like a tree branch breaking, and doesn't frighten away the game. It doesn't seem to me like Dad ever used the carbine again.



Another time we went hunting for monkeys. The Indians usually hunt them with a poison dart and a blowgun. They'd twirl the dart in a set of piranha teeth to form a notch just below the curare poison tip. This is done so that when the animal pulls out the dart the tip will break off and remain inside the animal. Curare takes about twenty minutes to work, so they will dart two or three, and wait for them to fall out of the tree. Monkeys are quite clever.

Two or three will remain low in the canopy as scouts, and sound the alarm if there are any intruders. *You have to be vewy, vewy quiet!* The troupe can move through the treetops at about 30mph. It doesn't take long for them to disappear after the alarm has been sounded. I had the good fortune of wounding a rather large squirrel monkey. He was about 3ft. long, but not quite dead. We had been lectured for hours about the importance of conserving ammunition. So rather than waste another round of ammunition, I decided to use the butt of my weapon as a club. I dispatched the monkey, but in the process I broke the stock clean off of the rifle. Oh, No! Needless to say, my Dad was pretty upset. "You, Jughead!" he said as he smacked me in the back of the head. (Ex Navy-His version of "Jarhead") After a week of "fixin," and a little bit of black tape, it was as good as new. I was glad that the only thing that happened to me was a smack in the back of the head. It could've been a lot worse!

16. Briggs & Stratton

"It's OK to work hard, but it's better to work smart," my Dad always said. I was constantly looking for ways to ease the load and still get the same amount of work done. The hardest thing I had to do was to carry the water up the hill on washday. Somehow we acquired two old Briggs and Stratton engines that did not run. One had a vertical shaft, and the other a horizontal. Dad said I could have them to play around with, so I began disassembling them. There wasn't much difference in the parts. As a matter of fact, most were identical. The only difference was in the housing. The carburetors were a little different, but since they were both three horse, my thought was that I could make one good engine from the parts of both. I went to work.

It was my first foray into the inner workings of the internal combustion engine. I was fascinated. The first lesson I learned was not to take things apart very quickly. There might be small springs and ball bearings hidden inside ready to pop out at the first sign of pressure release. I spent the better part of an hour looking for a small half inch spring that decided to take its leave. I managed to see which direction it went, and was able to watch as it disappeared in a crack of the floor. I thought it had dropped all the way through. After a half an hour of searching the ground beneath the house, it suddenly dawned on me that it might be stuck in the crack. Sure enough, there it was! It had been dangling right above my head the whole time. I retrieved it and went back up onto the porch. After that I took things apart very slowly and carefully. I also spread an old blanket out under where I was working, just in case something else decided to fly away.

My Dad seemed slightly amused as he watched me, but apart from offering a bit of advice here and there and answering a question or two, he did not interfere. I don't think that he thought I would succeed, but he was willing to let me try. He knew that I would learn a lot from the experience, which would prove invaluable to me later on. Dad could fix anything, which was a good thing, because there was always something to fix. He would

become extremely frustrated after he had worked on something for hours if it did not work. One time he got so angry after working on a little five horse Johnson engine for most of a day trying to get it running, that he picked it up and threw it in the river. It'll probably never run now!

Two days later I was ready to start assembling. After a half a day of work, I managed to get an engine going. It was smoking a little bit, but it ran smoothly after I adjusted the carburetor a little bit. I was elated! Now, what was I going to do with it? Maybe I could pump some water with it! We carried all kinds of parts for everything we had, and we happened to have a spare pump for the washing machine. I asked my Dad if I could use it, and then started looking around for some water hose. I had to build a frame for the motor and pump. I managed to get enough wood and nails to construct the frame. I spent the rest of the day fine tuning the apparatus.

Dad suggested that I ought to test the pump before I went to too much more trouble. It turned out to be a very good suggestion. I set my apparatus near one of the rain barrels, and put one of Mom's washtubs nearby. I attached the hoses to the pump, and excitedly started cranking the engine. After two or three pulls on the starter rope, the engine came to life. I waited, watching the hoses closely. Nothing was happening! Dad said I needed to prime the pump. Prime the pump? He explained that I needed to get water in the system for the pump to work properly. I got a tin can, and began pouring water into one end of the hose until it started running out the other. I restarted the engine, and waited, fully expecting to see a gushing stream of water coming out of the end of the hose. The engine started to labor and then shut down. What? It would run fine with no load, but the slightest amount of load would cause it to sputter and quit. I learned about something called "compression" that day. Dad explained that the piston rings were probably no good, and since we could not get any more at that time, the only thing I was going to get out of that engine was a good lesson in mechanics.

It didn't seem like it at that time, but the four days I spent working on that pump and engine taught me some of the most valuable lessons I have ever learned. Life is full of disappointments. It's what you do with those disappointments that make the difference. You can't get depressed and pout or you can learn from your mistakes and go on. Sometimes, you have to abandon your plans, because they just won't work. I decided that it was time to go fishing. It was a good decision! I got in my canoe and headed across the river to my favorite fishing spot. It turned out to be a good plan. The afternoon yielded four nice catfish. Supper tasted pretty good! Life was still good!

17. School

You've probably been wondering, "Did these kids ever go to school?" When we first got to the mission field, we used Calvert Study Course. During the course of our term on the field, we completed all of our lessons early. We were about one year ahead of ourselves. Mom decided we would take a year off, and resume our studies when we got back to the United States on our first furlough. As it turned out, we actually had two years off. It took a whole extra year for us to collect enough funds to take our first furlough. When we got back to the U.S., we were actually one year behind. The placement tests I took put me in the seventh grade. That was OK by me. The last grade that I completed was grade five. I never went through sixth grade. Yeah! I completed seventh grade at Temple Heights Baptist Christian School. I actually was able to participate with the football team. Bill Guthrie and I were the second string. I think we each got in for one play the whole season. Needless to say, we did not have a winning season.



After we got back to Peru, Dad decided that we should go away to a better school. He made arrangements for us to attend the SAIM Academy in Pucallpa, Peru. The city sits about 70 miles from the foot of the Andes at the edge of the jungle. The Ucayali, one of the two main tributaries of the Amazon, runs by the town. The academy was a boarding school set up for the South American Indian Mission. We had obtained permission to attend. The entire property covered about six acres. The main highway that went over the mountains to Lima ran in front of the school. The property was about 100 yards wide and was entirely fenced in with four strands of barbed wire and a big gate at the front.

The first building on the right contained the dining hall and kitchen and a couple of small classrooms at the back. The building across from it contained all the other classrooms except for four. The other four classrooms were located in the front room of each dormitory building. There were two on the right and two on the left. The driveway stopped at the kitchen. The dormitories were placed about 10yds. off of the fence line on either side. The boy's dormitory was on the left and the girl's was on the right. A grassy field separated the two rows. There was a smaller building in front of the boy's dormitory that housed the staff and their families. And the front of each dormitory there were living quarters for a dorm family. We called them the "dorm parents." The larger buildings were about 30ft. wide and 70ft. long. They were wood construction and were raised about 2ft. from the ground. The girl's dormitory had indoor plumbing, but the boys had to walk to the back of the property to an

outhouse. That was the year I learned how to do a little plumbing. I helped one of the missionary men as he installed 4in. drain pipes using molten lead as a sealer. Most of what I know how to do, I learned by watching others do it.

The school only went through eighth grade, so I was one of the upperclassmen. My good friend Don Storm and I would often get in trouble for playing chess late at night under our blankets with flashlights. It wasn't the only thing that would get us in trouble. It was just one of many. Later that year at a sporting event, Don was hit in the abdomen with a softball and it ruptured his spleen. He almost died. Fortunately for us, there was a small local clinic in the area that had a very prominent German surgeon visiting. Emergency surgery was performed, and his life was spared. He was never quite the same after that. He was still recuperating when I had to finally say goodbye. I won the school trophy that year for the best all around athlete. It was one of the high points of my athletic career.

I guess I was a good helper, because one of the local Mennonite missionaries, Mr. Leroy, would let me mow the fields with a walk behind a 42in. Gravely tractor mower. All of the buildings sat back from the road about a 100yds. So I had well over three football fields of mowing to do. We had a big Bluebird bus that we used whenever we had to go to town or the local Wycliff Bible translator base to go swimming or for sports events. Saturday was usually the day for these events, and unless I was participating in a sporting event, that was when I usually did the mowing. It's probably a good thing that I did it when everyone was gone. There was one incident when I was mowing the field between the dormitories. I was at the edge of the field and I tipped the front of the mower up to spin it around. As I did so, the blade detached itself from the mower and flew about 70yds. It landed safely in the dirt ahead of me. The blade was basically just a piece of steel bar about 4in. wide and 40in. long and 1/2in. thick. If it had hit someone it would have killed them. As I look back, I can see God's hand of protection throughout my life. When Mr. Leroy examined the mower, it was clear that the 1in. steel shaft had twisted completely in two, and had been ready to break for some time. It was Providence that allowed it to break when it did.

The following year I was allowed to attend the Wycliff Bible translator's high school. I didn't know it then, but it was the last year that I would spend south of the equator. Mr. Leroy liked me and he said it was OK for me to live with them while I attended the school. A fellow named Andy Large was my bunk mate. His parents were with the ABWE mission board. We slept in a building that Mr. Leroy had once used as a hen house. It had a dirt floor and he had replaced the chicken wire with screen wire. We slept on a set of bunk beds, and Andy decided that I would be on top. We each had a bicycle which we rode the ten miles back and forth to school every day. We would leave early in the morning about 6:30 AM, and sometimes, we would not return until 6:00 PM. It wasn't too bad in the dry season, but when it started raining it was pretty sloppy! The red clay mud would cling

to the tires of your bicycle, and we had to rig special scraping devices on the fenders so that we could keep going. On rainy days we would pack our school clothes in a separate bag and change when we got to school, and then change again we got ready to go home.

I trained to be a lifeguard, and spent most of my afternoons down at the lake. Later that year, I moved onto the base into the local children's home. It was a place for the missionary children to stay when their parents had to go work in the bush. Mr. Price and his wife were the house parents. He was an odd sort of fellow, and he did not like children much. I kept wondering how he ever got the job. He reminded me a lot of my grandfather. As long as you kept your mouth shut, and stayed out of his way he didn't mind if you watched him. On his 50th birthday he rode his bicycle over the Andes to Lima. Wow! At the time I was there, he was in the process of building a catamaran. I found out that a couple years later, he sailed down the Amazon, out into the Atlantic, went through the Panama Canal, and sailed up to San Francisco where he finally sold it. Did I mention that he did this by himself? He developed all of his own film and the shop classroom was one of the most fascinating places I ever visited. He did everything from watch repair to lapidary. He was also an accomplished gymnast. Mr. Smith was the gym teacher and one of the most fun things that we did was when we worked out on the trampoline. We played a lot of ragtag football, and in general had a good time.

Almost every weekend we made a trip out to the farm. There were hogs and chickens and a huge cashew orchard. There was also a 30 acre field of pineapples. There were also 4 beehives that were responsible for pollinating the orchard. Did you know that a cashew is an apple? The product you buy in stores is actually the seed. It hangs on the bottom of the apple in a pod that has to be opened to extract of the seed, which is then roasted for sale. The apples are bit tart, but quite palatable. Their appearances a lot like a yellow squash in color. The fruit is bell shaped and has indentations in the side much like a pumpkin. The bell is about 2in. across with the seed pod hanging below it. The fruit itself is about 6in. long. Working with the beehives was a little scary at first, but I learned the procedures, and it became another one of those fascinating jobs. We were working the hives one day when they decided to swarm. Mr Leroy told me that when bees have two queens that the new queen leaves and takes some of the hive with her. He grabbed two garbage can lids and began banging them together. He told me to lay down flat on the ground. As I lay there looking up through the swarm of bees I noticed that the flight paths were forming perfect hexagons. That was really interesting! He said the noise would make the queen light sooner. Sure enough, the swarm started collecting on a branch of one of the cashew trees nearby. I brought over the smoker, and after we had calmed the bees down, he carefully started raking them off into a new beehive that we had prepared. The next time we came out to the farm, it was business as usual.



Mr. Leroy also ran the earthmoving machines for Mr. R.J. Letourneau. He was a wealthy Christian businessman who had vowed to give God 90% of his income. Needless to say, you cannot outgive God. Most of his time and energy had been spent helping missionaries. Mr Letourneau had pioneered what was known as the electric digger. The Caterpillar engine in the machine ran a large electric generator. There was no hydraulics. Each wheel had its own giant electric motor. Each moving part was operated with an electric motor

and a giant gear. There were no levers in the control booth, only toggle switches. There was this crank looking thing with a handle that was used for controlling the speed and direction. On the front of the machine was a huge bulldozer blade with another one in the back facing the same direction. The center of the machine was a huge bottom loader. I was told that this machine could move 30 tons of earth in an hour. The control cage set high above everything and Mr Leroy let me accompany him as he worked the machine. It was quite a ride since the control cage was at least 25ft. off of the ground.

He took me to another place and showed me a machine called a tree crusher. It also ran completely on electric motors. Instead of rubber tires, the front wheels were huge metal drums about 9ft. in diameter, and about 15ft. long. One was in the rear, and positioned so that it would cover the area between the two front wheels. It was also used for steering the machine. On the outside of the drums were steel blades about 6in. high that spiraled from one end of the drum to the other. In the very front a large boom rose up and extended outward in front of the machine. The top of the boom was about 40ft. off of the ground and about 25ft. from the control cage, and had a large notch in the end of it. About halfway down there was a large 15ft. steel bar running parallel to the ground. I noticed that the control cage had double screen wire surrounding it. He said it was protection against stinging insects. It made a lot of sense to me! I watched as he used the machine to pulverize the jungle. It rode up and over the trees like a ship on high seas. It only took about an hour to clear about four acres of jungle. I thought, "We sure could have used this on the



Atacuari!" I guess the trick would have been getting it there. It only weighed about 70 tons.

Of all the years that I spent going to school, that year was the most enjoyable one I ever had. Dad made arrangements for us to attend a boarding school in Asheville, North Carolina. The name of the school was, Ben Lippen. This is Scottish for, “Mountain of trust.” The school perched on the top of a mountain north of Asheville. Rob and I spent two years here before joining my parents in Saint Petersburg, Florida to continue and finish our education. I guess you could say we had a well-rounded education, because let me tell you, we had sure been around! Soccer was the big sport, and I played first string for two years. The position that I played was left halfback. I was one of the few people on the team who could kick with my left foot. Our coach was pretty hard, but it paid off in the long run. When I left the team my junior year the team had an eight year record of no losses and no ties. One of the minimum requirements for staying on the team was that you had to run one mile every day under five minutes. I would generally squeak in at 4:58. Once, I actually ran a mile in four minutes and 39 seconds. I have short legs, and I would generally pace the first three and a half laps. Then I would start speeding up and sprint the last 200yds. Coach Hathaway would usually grin at me and shake his head as he clicked the stopwatch. “I don’t know how you do it, but you always manage to squeak in! Where do you get the energy to sprint that last 200yds?” and he would walk away still shaking his head. I guess it was all that nonstop jungle walking that I used to do. I really enjoyed being on the team!

My high school career ended at Northeast High School in Saint Petersburg, Florida. It was my senior year, and since I had just moved, I was ineligible for sports. The year proved to be rather uneventful and I was just one of over 450 graduating students. I got my first car that year. It was a 1962, stick shift, Galaxy 500. It was white, very clean, with a blue interior. I paid a whopping \$300.00 for it at a local car lot! I got a job at a local supermarket to help pay the expenses. And I thought school was hard!

18. Peace At Last!

Let me preface this last chapter by saying that this is the most important chapter in the whole book. This is the story of how I finally found peace with God. I spent my whole life watching as others found peace and watched in wonder as it transformed their lives. I was extremely jealous, but I was not going to let on that I could not figure it out. As the years passed by, I became more bewildered and confused. I was doing everything that I was supposed to be doing, and yet for some reason I had no joy. This chapter explains in detail what happened.

We went to church every Sunday, and I believed the Bible was true. When I was about 6 years old, I was riding in the back of the car, and we were listening to a Christian radio broadcast. I think the preacher’s

name was Dr. Vernon McGee. He was preaching on the subject of hell. The Preacher said, "Everyone is a sinner, and sinners are bound for hell, but if you believe in The Lord Jesus, you can be saved". I tugged on Mom's sleeve. "Mama, I don't want to go to Hell! I want to be saved!" Dad pulled over, stopped, and both explained a lot of verses and asked questions. They helped me to pray. I did everything they told me to do and said everything they told me to say. I certainly did not want to go to "Hell!" Mom was crying in Dad was smiling, and both of them seemed very pleased. I thought, "If they're happy, then I must be alright."

I was told that since I had made a profession of faith that I needed to make it public. That meant I had to walk down to the front of the church on Sunday, and let everyone know. Next Sunday evening as we were singing the invitation hymn, Mom nudged me. I was scared to death. I know it's hard to believe, but at that time of my life I was extremely bashful. I did not want to walk down the aisle to the front of the church. I hesitated and Mom nudged me again. I stumbled to the front. The Pastor's wife met me and we sat down on the front pew. She asked a couple of questions and, read some verses to which I nodded, not really hearing or seeing much. She prayed with me and the hymn ended. The Pastor called me to the front, said something, "Yes, Sir!" I nodded, and finally it was over! I thought. It seemed like everybody in the church wanted to shake my hand. Mom and Dad were the last in line. Dad shook my hand, and Mom hugged me. The next Sunday I was baptized, and I thought, "Well, I must be 'saved', now!"

As the years passed, I watched God do miracles in the lives of my parents and others. I longed to have my prayers answered, also, but God seemed deaf! Many nights I stood under the jungle stars, begging God to hear me! What was wrong with me? My heart turned bitter and rebellious. I became depressed and resented anyone who seemed to know God intimately, and yet at the same time I longed for the same kind of relationship. I felt that God had deserted me!

For years I just went through the motions of being a Christian. I didn't really know why God had not answered any of my prayers, but I figured He had his reasons. When my parents came back to the United States for their third furlough, I joined them in Saint Petersburg Florida. I began my senior year at Northeast High School. Our family was living at the D & D mission homes on 58th avenue north. I bought my first car, landed my first job, and began to get a taste of what it was like to be an adult. I convinced myself that I could do better on my own, so shortly after my eighteenth birthday I left home! I didn't look back. I was on my own and liked it!

Later on, I married, had four children, and totally forgot about God. Over ten years passed. One night I had a dream. I dreamed there were people around me muttering and shouting angrily. At first I couldn't

figure out what was going on. Then I looked up. I was standing under three crosses! Where the heck was I? It all seemed so real! I stared at one of the figures hanging there! His body was torn and bleeding! I couldn't recognize his face! It dawned on me, "This man is being crucified!"! Unexplainable sorrow suddenly overwhelmed me. I began weeping uncontrollably! As I wept, I awoke. I set up on the edge of the bed, tears still running down my face! Feeling deeply sorrowful, puzzled, and troubled, I dressed, and left for work.

Weeks passed, but the dream still haunted me! Why can't I forget it? Is God trying to tell me something? I had not been going to church at all. I announced, to my family's surprise, that we were going to start attending church again. I felt better. I thought, "This must be what God was trying to tell me!" I ushered, led singing, taught Sunday School, and even preached occasionally. However, when I did pause to think, my heart was still restless. "What more could I do? What did God still want from me?"

I grew miserable, and at the end of my rope, I began contemplating suicide. I couldn't handle life anymore! Life was drudgery, God seemed deaf, and I was bitter and deeply depressed! Heaven seemed made of solid brass! When I was about 38 years old, late on a Friday evening, I sat at my desk. Everyone was in bed. I felt really, really alone! My shoulders sagged, under an invisible weight. "God," I said, "if you don't help me tonight.....I'm ending it all! Please talk to me! Do something for me! I beg, You!" The thought came, "If God is going to talk to me it will probably be through His Word, The Bible. But, where do I begin?" John 3:16 came to mind and so I began reading.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I read other passages and came to John 14:27. Jesus, just hours before His death said,

"Peace I leave with you, My Peace give I unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

I thought, "That's it! I don't have peace...but...if I don't have peace...I don't have Christ!"...then deeply troubled..."Without Christ, I can't be saved!"...then confused..."Wait! I got saved as child...I think...but...God doesn't lie! He can't, because the Bible is true!"

I kept reading. Verse after verse confirmed my fear and added to my confusion! Weeks prior, I had attended a course for those wanting to help others to know Christ. A key verse was Romans 10:13. In the

margin, I had written a question, thinking, “What if someone reads this and doesn’t know what to do?” so I had written in the margin, “Have you called?” That night, I read this,

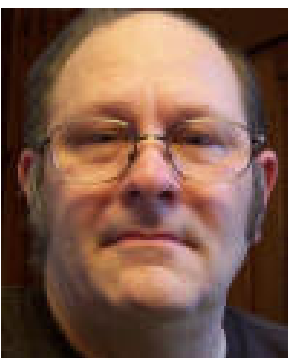
“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD, shall be saved.”

Have you called? My eyes fell on that question in the margin. It hit my consciousness like thunder! It was so quick and powerful, it stunned me! In the silence that followed, the question echoed through my mind demanding a reply. Finally, my mind began drifting back to my childhood experience, and the details became sharp and clear. However, try as I might, I could not remember calling to God for mercy! Suddenly, it was very clear! I had believed and prayed a prayer, but I had not trusted and called! The Voice then demanded,

“WHAT WILL YOU DO?”

Again stunned, I humbly bowed before what I then knew to be the presence of the very God of the universe, and cried brokenly, “OH GOD! PLEASE FORGIVE ME!” My heart lifted, and the great weight that had been pressing on my heart rolled away! Tears of despair turned to tears of Joy! My heart sang! ***“Peace! PEACE AT LAST! OH PRAISE THE LORD!”***

For the last twenty plus years, I have known beyond a shadow of a doubt that I have a home in heaven. I have a peace that *“passeth all understanding.”* I do not fear death, because for me it’s just a doorway to heaven. You see, it wasn’t that I didn’t believe in God and the Bible, it’s just that I had never really sincerely called and asked His forgiveness. I had just said a prayer and gone through a ritual. I really believe that a lot of people sitting in church pews can relate to my experience. God is real! He wants to have a personal relationship with each of his children, and the joy of that relationship is above and beyond anything this earth has to offer!



Dear Reader,

Are you troubled? Are you deeply depressed? Is life just too much? Does it seem like heaven is made of brass? All you need to do is ask. Cry out to Jesus! He loves you! He died for you! He waits to save you from your despair and sin! His Peace, for the asking! Don’t let fear, pride, or doubt stand in your way! Jesus is waiting patiently, NOW!

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD, shall be saved.” ***Have you called?***

“WHAT WILL YOU DO?”

Epilogue

I have decided to include my younger sister's testimony in the hope that it might help in understanding some of the spiritual troubles and struggles that ministry children have. We are sometimes neglected, because it is assumed that we already know. The truth is that more often than not, we just learned how to behave like Christians, and never really become a Christian. I know, because I was one of those children, and so was my sister. Let me quickly add, I do not blame my parents or the church. As a warning to other people in the ministry, let me say, "Your family is your first ministry obligation!" You may be able to convert the whole world, but if your children remained unconverted, you have failed. Now, in her own words, my sister's testimony.

Reformed, Not Revived



My older brother Gale Palmer encouraged me to write this down and share it while still fresh in my memory in the hope that it would be a blessing to someone else and a witness to God's infinite Grace, love and mercy. As the daughter of Baptist Missionaries I grew up believing that God was real, that Jesus was his son, that He was born of a virgin, suffered and died on the cross of Calvary for my sins and the sins of the world, was resurrected on the third day, and went back to heaven. I don't think there was ever a time when I did not believe this. I even made a profession of faith at the age of 13 or 14 and was baptized.

Soon after I graduated high school, I left the church completely, went out in the world, and led a very immoral and sinful life. I knew full well what I was doing was wrong, but I was not overly worried or convicted about my life style. I was married in 1987 to my husband and we attended a Protestant church sporadically. Once the children were born, I even joined a church because quite a few of my husband's family attended there. They never once asked me if I was saved, redeemed, or born again. Plus, I knew I was not living the life I knew a Christian should live.

My mom and dad sent the children Bible storybooks which I read to them. I had the knowledge to answer their questions, but it left me under great conviction. My words rang hollow as I was teaching them scriptural truths, because I knew I had not been living them. About two years before my father passed away in April of 1998 I began looking for an Independent Baptist Bible Believing church. Shortly after his passing I found and united upon letter of transfer to Grace Baptist. I was to see both of my children and husband saved and baptized there.

When an opening came up in the Sunday School Dept., I was asked to teach a Sunday school class which I did. I had the doctrinal and Bible knowledge to do the job, but it brought me no joy. I was just doing what was expected of me. After all as a Baptist Missionary's daughter I knew how to walk the walk and talk the talk, but I knew I had no real testimony of salvation in my heart and life. I didn't sense any power in my prayers or the lessons I taught. I could see the joy in others and thought, maybe I just needed to read my Bible and pray more, after all I told myself, I was living a good "Christian" life now, I had "come back" to God, had even called and made amends to folks I had wronged in the past, I was a "reformed" person.

After attending Grace Baptist Church for a few years and hearing the word of God taught three times weekly as well as studying for Sunday School lessons, I began to question whether or not I was truly born again as the Scripture says you must be in order to enter heaven. I struggled for over a year with the question of my salvation; I went to the altar during the invitation time after time under deep conviction unable to be honest with myself, praying for understanding, asking God to forgive me and to soften my heart that had become hardened by my years of living a sinful life. Many times no words would come, just tears. I know when we can't find the words to speak that God knows our hearts, Praise the LORD he knew mine.

Then one Sunday the pastor preached on Ezekiel chapter 37 and the valley of dry bones, he talked about how even after Ezekiel prophesied (preached the word of God) and the dry bones came back together and the flesh and sinew was on them they were re-formed but they still had no LIFE in them. He talked about how hearing the word of God can certainly bring about reformation, because it shows you what you need to do to live a good life, but reformed is not "resurrected", those bones with flesh and sinew could not come alive until God breathed on them and gave them life!

WOW! That hit me like a ton of bricks! "That's me"! I had been put back together (re-formed) was foolishly trying to live a "Christian" life. (Because, of all people, I knew how!) Beyond studying for a Sunday school or Vacation Bible School lesson, I had no joy or desire to get into the scripture to see what God had for me. I knew deep down this was not the way it should be. For about 3-4 weeks after hearing that message, I couldn't get it out of my head; "re-formed not resurrected" was all I could think about! I could no longer say I was saved or born again, I now knew better. Still I kept putting it off not wanting to admit it, especially not publicly, "What would people think?!"

Finally the night of Dec 9, 2002 I could put it off no longer. I went to bed but God would not let me sleep until I got things settled. I got out of bed, went downstairs knelt beside the couch in the living room and prayed. I confessed to God that I was a wicked sinner, unable to save myself, unable to live a Christian life without Him and unworthy of His forgiveness. I ask Him to forgive me and told Him that I wanted to know Him personally, and please give me the desire for Him and His word. I wanted the joy I saw in others. I asked

Him to **SAVE** me and come into my life as my LORD and Savior. I know I didn't use those exact words but God knew my heart! I cannot describe the burden that was lifted off my shoulders that night, I still had to face my family, my church and my pastor and ask for their forgiveness, but I was no longer fearful. I was **SAVED**! Born Again a new creature in Christ! GLORY!

Praise God! I now know I am truly **SAVED** by his power divine, **SAVED** to new life sublime" I have the witness within that speaks to me and says welcome home you are a "Child of the King"!

"...and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know (not guess or hope but KNOW, emphasis mine) that ye have eternal life". I John 5:11-13.

I can sing with the writer of the song "Whosoever Meaneth Me,"

"I am happy today and the sun shines bright, the clouds have been rolled away,

For the Savior said whosoever will can come with me to stay!"

Praise the LORD! Thank you Jesus!

Friend,

If you read this and you are like those dry bones, trusting in you own self-made reformation, I urge you to repent and turn to the Savior like I did so you can know Jesus as your Lord, Savior and Friend! Just tell him that you believe Jesus is His son, that He was born of a virgin, suffered and died for your sins, and was resurrected on the third day and that you realize there is nothing you can do to save yourself, that you are turning from your sin to Him as your Lord and Savior. Then go and tell others about his wondrous salvation. ~ Virginia Bahs - Dec. 2002