



Founded

THE HERITAGE OF
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By Rosie Cochran



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Founded in 1942 as New Tribes Mission

THE THREAT OF WAR

World War II had not yet begun, but the threat of it was already being felt. And in the Malayan jungle, a different kind of war was waging, and a tall, young missionary was rapidly becoming a casualty. For three years Paul Fleming had fought an onslaught of malaria attacks. His once strong body was weakened by the fevers, his strength slowly fading away, and it looked as though he were beaten.



Paul Fleming with driver in Malaysia from 16mm film circa 1938

“One night I awoke in a feverish sweat,” Paul wrote. “Quickly, in an effort to check the rising fever, I took quinine. Several hours passed, but the pain was becoming more intense. The fever seemed to swell through my whole body. Morning found me in a critical condition. By

that time, I had tried all the available medicine we had for malaria. The next day I was experiencing the most horrible attack I had ever had.”

Paul’s wife, Cherrill, was there when a doctor was called in and insisted Paul be rushed to the hospital, though rushed is a relative word when the nearest hospital involves an 85-mile trip over steep, twisting jungle roads. Cherrill and a friend helped him into their old Ford and the journey began. It proved to be a trying trip, both physically and spiritually.

As they bounced along the winding road, his fever-racked body feeling each jostle and jolt, Paul was convinced he was dying. He was sure this was his last ride. He already envisioned Cherrill and their young son back in America alone. Depression hung like a heavy shroud over him as a spiritual battle raged within.



He was reminded of a plaque that hung on their bedroom wall. It read: “In everything, give thanks.” If he had read it once, he had read it a million times. In that moment, he didn’t want the reminder.

How can I give thanks for this?
Paul thought bitterly. *Haven’t*

I given my life to reach these tribespeople? Look at what the Lord has allowed me to have. This disease is going to kill me. I never had a brilliant mind, but I did have a strong body. Look at it now! Give thanks for this? How unreasonable of God.

He closed his eyes in a futile attempt to block out the words, but they continued to echo in his mind, “In everything, give thanks. ... In everything, give thanks. ... In everything, give thanks.”

He knew he had a choice to make. He could choose to wallow in self-pity at the loss of his health and the probability of imminent death, or he could choose to be thankful for the many wonderful opportunities the Lord had given them.

An argument with God ensued. But God won. He breached the bitterness of Paul’s crushed dreams and won Paul’s heart.

“God showed me that He didn’t need my strong back or my weak mind, but what He needed was a channel through which He could work,” Paul wrote.



“God showed me that He didn’t need my strong back or my weak mind, but what He needed was a channel through which He could work.”

It was a life-changer for Paul. God didn’t need *his* strengths. He didn’t need *his* abilities. God just wanted him to be available to be used in whatever way best fitted *His* purposes, for *His* glory.

“God plus nothing.” That became Paul’s motto. And as he made the conscious choice to be thankful for the many opportunities God had given them, the thought went through his mind: *What if I had missed all this?*

And he might have—as well as his future work of starting New Tribes Mission—if not for the prayers of his godly mother.



Martin and Ermma Fleming (Paul Fleming's parents)

A MOTHER'S PRAYER

It was in the early hours of the morning when Paul arrived home. He practically tiptoed in. He'd been out with the guys and didn't particularly want his mother knowing how late his night had been. He knew she wouldn't approve. He slipped into bed and was soon asleep, convinced his mother would never be the wiser.

He wasn't sure how long he'd been asleep before something woke him. Had it been a sound? And if so, what? It was as he lay there, listening and waiting for his eyes to adjust to the darkness, that he saw her. His mother. She was kneeling by his bed praying for him.

It was a moment of truth for Paul—and a moment he would not soon forget. It was obvious that his mother hadn't slept but had waited up, spending the night in prayer for her wayward son. It was a sobering realization, and even though he wasn't yet ready or willing to change his ways, his mother's love pierced his rebellious heart.

Though Paul made a profession of faith when he was 10 or 11 years old, he had drifted far from God, and this weighed heavily on his mother's heart. She desperately wanted her son to live a God-honoring life, but she knew she could not force him to do so.

But she could pray. And that's what she did.

Answers to her prayers may not have come quickly, but she never quit believing that God could get hold of Paul's life. Though it

wouldn't be until he was nearly 25 years old that he would finally dedicate his life to God, his mother prayed faithfully for him during those interim years.

Years later Paul wrote, "I regretted all the years I had caused her to worry. Because I wouldn't turn to Christ, my mother was heartbroken.

"She was a living testimony to me, and the reality of her salvation was sufficient proof to me that there must be a God. However, I still wasn't willing to serve Him.

"She would try to talk to me about the Lord, but I wouldn't listen. When everything else failed, she kept on praying."

And those prayers were answered.

**He finally grasped
the liberating truth
that salvation was
by grace alone.
No works required.
It was a turning
point in Paul's life.**

God used Paul Rader to get his attention. Paul Rader was a great football player and heavyweight prizefighter. A man's man. And now he was a preacher. Preacher or not, with his impressive background in athletics, Paul was curious as to what he had to say. So, when Mr. Rader came to Los Angeles to speak, Paul went to hear him. The message wasn't like anything Paul had heard before.

"When the Lord comes into your heart, He makes Himself real," Mr. Rader told the crowd. "When you're really born again, He gives you a new nature. Nothing will ever change that condition."

The message in its entirety removed the blinders from Paul's eyes. The light came on. He finally grasped the liberating truth that salvation was by grace alone, no works required. It was a turning point in Paul's life.

"I went down that night to dedicate my life. I realized that, now that I belonged to Christ, it was my business to follow Him," Paul said.

“Later I went up and shook hands with Mr. Rader. I told him, ‘I’m going to be a preacher.’ In a rather abrupt way, he just said, ‘Go ahead.’”

There was no real encouragement.

There was no response such as, “I’ll help you.”

There was just, “Go ahead.”

It wasn’t the response Paul expected. What he really wanted was a man to lean on and a man to help him. But God, in His infinite wisdom, knew Paul’s real need. Paul needed to learn to lean on God alone. At that moment, Mr. Rader was but the catalyst God wanted to use in Paul’s life to get him moving in the right direction.

Though Paul knew he was going to serve God, a big question remained: How was that going to play out? Figuring that out would take a bit longer.

Sometime later, while Paul was still trying to figure out the *how*, Mr. Rader invited him to join the ministry in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It was the perfect next step in Paul’s maturing process. Under the guidance of Mr. Rader, Paul continued to grow spiritually.

It was there, attending the great missionary conferences at the Fort Wayne Gospel Temple, that Paul was exposed to world evangelism. Each time a



Paul Rader

missionary gave the challenge, Paul stood to his feet, ready to go. He kept standing up in response to the challenge—but he wasn't going.

“I was available anytime the Lord wanted me,” Paul wrote. “I was willing. But I have learned since, that one gets to a place a lot quicker when he wants to go, than when he is just willing. . . . I am sure I couldn't have been in a place where there was greater emphasis on world evangelization. And yet, in my own thinking, I was becoming less concerned. I was perfectly satisfied with the idea that I should become a minister.”

Though being a minister is a worthy occupation, God had different plans for Paul. However, in order for those plans to come to fruition, God needed him to do more than just stand up and say, “I'm willing.” He needed Paul to actively pursue going. A refining process was needed to get Paul to that point.

On an interesting note, most of the men on New Tribes Mission's early Executive Committee were touched by Paul Rader's ministry: Lance Latham, Bill Dillon, Bob Williams, Mervin Rosell, Roy Oestreicher, and, of course, Paul Fleming.

INTO THE REFINERY

The refining process continued but not in the manner Paul expected. He was working the swing shift at the factory. It was far from his dream job, but there he was night after night. In the midst of the monotony, discouragement pushed its ugly head to the surface. This was not where Paul wanted to be. Sure, God-ordained events had brought him back to Los Angeles, California, but it was supposed to be a *temporary* change. Paul's plan had always been to return to the ministry he loved in Fort Wayne, but it wasn't happening. He couldn't understand why God had taken him out of Christian ministry, out of a ministry he loved, and into a job he didn't even like. Discouragement ruled.

Despite the fact that his plans had changed, it should have been a happy time for Paul. He was engaged, his fiancé had a teaching job at a school in Woodland, California, and really, the job in a refinery was a decent job.

But there was no joy. No peace. No happiness.

He wasn't where *he* wanted to be, and therefore, he was unhappy. And not simply unhappy; he was miserable. He lived alone, worked the swing shift at the refinery, and wasn't even excited about getting married. Something was desperately wrong, but Paul couldn't place what that something was.

"Sometimes it would be nighttime or the early hours of morning, and as I turned those valves and waited, I prayed that God would lift that burden or whatever it was from my heart. I wasn't happy, and I knew it," Paul wrote.

“The months passed by, and it seemed that the more I prayed, the less it helped. I went to missions or wherever they had a prayer meeting, with the hope that something would happen in my heart. I didn’t find help anywhere.”

Paul was to learn that life lessons from God could come at the most unexpected times in the most unexpected places.

One night while working the graveyard shift, he was cleaning out the filter press. Oil mixed with clay and soot would be agitated and then run through the press under pressure. The clay, soot and other contaminants would remain in the press and the refined oils went on through.

I certainly am going through some kind of refining process myself, Paul thought often enough. The correlation seemed so evident.

**“I didn’t have a nickel to my name,
but I knew I was going to leave
the country within a year.”**

But on this particular night, his attention was drawn to the old man working across from him. He was about 75 years old, had been working in the refinery on and off for many years, and had nothing to show to for it. His reputation as a “no-account” followed him all over the refinery.

Watching the old man brought back memories of something his mother had said to him years earlier. In one of her attempts to get through to his rebellious heart, she had pointed to an old derelict and said, “Paul, if you don’t let the Lord have your life, you’ll be just like that fellow.”

Looking across the sludge on the filter at the old man, the message was suddenly so real and so clear.

This old man is the perfect picture of the way I’m going to turn out. I’m dissatisfied and I seem to have nothing to live for, Paul thought soberly to himself. It jarred him to the core. *I can’t be like this man. I just can’t. I’m going to let the Lord have my life.*

So it was while cleaning out a dirty filter in the middle of the night alongside a man with the reputation of a no-account tramp that Paul

got serious with God. His *willingness* to go to the mission field was replaced with a *promise* to go.

“That night I told the Lord I was going to get out of the United States and preach the gospel somewhere before a year went by,” Paul wrote later. “I hadn’t been listening to any missionary sermons, nor had I been thinking about it; but it seemed that when desperation gripped my heart, that was the thing I would have to do.”

The uneasiness that had troubled him for months disappeared, replaced with a peace and determination that could only have come from God.

“I didn’t have a nickel to my name,” Paul said, “but I knew I was going to leave the country within a year. I never worried about whether or not anyone would help me. That night, and the days that followed, I was possessed with the confidence that God was able to do the impossible.

“I had stood up many times in missionary services and was willing, but I learned that it wasn’t up to the Lord alone—He wanted me to act. I hadn’t received any special ‘call.’ I never thought about it. I didn’t have any ‘revelation,’ nor did I have any ‘dreams.’”

Paul just knew it was time to act.

Later, as he drove along San Francisco Bay with his fiancée, he pointed toward the Golden Gate Bridge. “Before the year is out, we will be sailing through that Golden Gate,” he told her.



Paul and Cherrill Fleming

WHO IS YOUR PROVIDER?

Wedding bells would soon ring. As plans were made for a June wedding, Paul shared with Pastor William B. Hogg of the Country Church of Hollywood that he and Cherrill were headed to the mission field. He wasn't sure what type of response to expect.

“Paul, we have just been waiting for the Holy Spirit to work it out,” Pastor Hogg told him. “We want to stand behind you when you get to the mission field.” Pastor Hogg went as far as to promise that the church would be responsible for the Flemings' financial support.

“That afternoon in his living room, I didn't know whether to cry or shout. This was the first indication that the Lord had touched anyone else's heart. When I walked out of his home, I was walking on air,” Paul wrote. “I was so thrilled that the Lord had spoken to someone else. I didn't realize then that one of the greatest tests of this missionary venture was yet to come.”

Wedding bells did ring. Paul and Cherrill were married at the Country Church of Hollywood, California, in June 1936. This was to be the beginning of many firsts for the Flemings—and of a fair share of challenges.

It had been about 11 months since Paul's encounter at the refinery. Much had taken place. They were married and had plans to sail through the Golden Gates and beyond.

But then, just as things seemed to be falling into place, word came that Pastor Hogg was seriously ill. Paul's first thought when he heard the news was, *If he should die, who will support us then?*

It was a convicting moment.

Am I really trusting the Lord? Paul wondered. If so, why should I be so upset?

Recognizing their misplaced confidence, Paul and Cherrill turned to the Lord in prayer. And they kept praying. They prayed until they felt the same gripping confidence the Lord had given Paul that night in the refinery.

As they sought Him, God did a work in their hearts. So much so, that when Pastor Hogg passed away and the promised support fell through, they were not devastated. God had prepared them for this eventuality. He gave them the confidence that, just as easily as He could direct them to go to the field, He could and would supply their every need.

But the tests weren't over. Paul and Cherrill were to learn that the tests of their faith could come from well-meaning sources. And it came sooner than later.

It was on a Sunday that Paul's parents invited a well-known Christian leader to their home for dinner. After eating, the man asked Paul to go for a walk with him.

"I hear you are planning to go to the mission field," he said to Paul.

"That's right," Paul replied.

"Paul, there are some things you can do, but going to the mission field is not one of them. You are not cut out to be a missionary," he said. Then he asked, "Do you have a guarantee of support?"

"No, I don't think anyone will guarantee us."

"You need to have a guarantee that you will receive so much a month. Missionaries have starved to death," the man said as he continued to undermine Paul's decision. "You have no support now. You'll get out there and get into financial trouble and have to write your poor parents for help. They are old and unable to help you. It will be a hardship on them. Paul, you shouldn't go."

Paul didn't respond hastily. He thought a while before saying, "God told us to go, so we'll go. If God doesn't take care of us and we have to come home, we can always say we tried and God failed."



REDIRECTION

There are times when God gets us moving—and then redirects us. That was the case with Paul and Cherrill Fleming. On February 7, 1937, they sailed for Singapore, en route to Sumatra. Or so they thought. Even the prayer cards they had printed and handed out read “Missionaries to Sumatra.” But that was not where they ended up.

Some might say it was a chance meeting that Paul had with Dr. Robert A. Jaffray that changed everything. Paul would have called it a God-appointed encounter.

The elderly missionary statesman with the Christian and Missionary Alliance sparked Paul’s interest in British Malaya and the vast surrounding territory. Dr. Jaffray’s vision of that region as the gateway to one of the greatest unevangelized fields of the world resonated with Paul’s desire to reach those untouched by the gospel message, which came straight from Scripture: *“And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another’s man’s foundation”* (Romans 15:20).

Nowadays we speak of people group assessments. We send teams to evaluate where the needs are greatest. But Paul didn’t know our modern terms, and he didn’t have a team. Nor did he have years of experience behind him to aid in his decision-making. What he did know was to ask questions and listen to those who knew the area best. He soon realized that British Malaya was *less reached* than Sumatra. And as all believers, Paul had the Holy Spirit within him to guide him.

As Paul found God redirecting him, he changed his plans. No longer was he moving south to Sumatra. He was eager to head into the areas of British Malaya that had never been touched by the gospel.

“I found out later,” Paul wrote, “that the Apostle Paul didn’t know where he was going either. He thought he was going to Asia, but the Lord changed his course.” That realization was an encouragement to Paul as they headed north to British Malaya.

There was an urgency to the task of reaching the lost. Wanting to reach the most people in the shortest time frame, Paul and Cherrill joined with Mr. and Mrs. Paul Lenn, Bill Glacier and four students-in-training to start tent meetings. Initially, these tent meetings were held in the 80-plus towns with populations of over 5,000. Most of these had no gospel witness.

“Shop owners, school teachers, students, young medical men, nurses from the government hospital, Hindus, Buddhists, and Mohammedans, people from all walks of life turned to Christ as the tent meetings have begun in British Malaya,” Paul wrote. “Night and day, men are seeking the true God.

“Such meetings have never before been held in Malaya. Every night more are coming to Christ, and the meetings are going on from town to town, spending a month or more in each place. . . . I believe that all over the eastern side of Malaya, small churches will go up and give out still further the way of Life.”



There are times when God gets us moving —
and then redirects us.



GOING INTERIOR

With churches sprouting up in the towns, Paul switched his focus to the unreached in the interior regions. Wanting to evangelize the Orang Asli people group, a river trip began. If the initial part of the river trip lulled them into thinking that it was going to be an easy trip, the latter part convinced them otherwise.

Navigating the rapids in the headwaters was dangerous. Whirlpools added another dimension of difficulty to the mix. Paul Lenn wrote of his brush with death as they encountered one of the whirlpools.

“We passed the edge of a great whirlpool and came to a narrow rapid,” Paul Lenn wrote. “The current was so strong that four of us had to get out of the boat and let the guides take the boat over. The boat moved slowly ahead. But, suddenly, it stood still right in the middle of the rapid, even with the full strength of the 22-horsepower engine.

“One guide tried to push with a bamboo pole, but he couldn’t help a bit. The current was swiftly pushing the boat back toward the rock where the four of us were watching. We got ready to push the boat so that it wouldn’t dash against the rock. The boat was saved, but I slipped into the water and was sucked down to the bottom of the big whirlpool.

“I leaped like a frog when I touched the sand bottom. When my head came above water, I saw a small treetop and grabbed it quickly to steady myself. I looked for the rock where we had been.

“Finally, I spotted what looked like three pygmies sitting on a tiny rock way upstream. I gripped tree after tree, half pulling and half swimming until I reached the back of the rock.

“[When] I said, ‘Hello!’ the three turned and looked at me. They were shocked. It took quite a while for them to realize that I was alive. Paul Fleming said, ‘I thought you were surely gone.’

“The Lord had pulled me out of the water.”

“Men were born into these jungles.
They lived their whole lives through
and died without one chance to know
Jesus and His saving power.”

Surviving the river trip to the headwaters was only the beginning. Next came the difficult task of making contact with the Orang Asli people. In time, contact was made and the work began.

Paul vividly remembered witnessing his first Orang Asli burial. “This man they were burying never had a chance to accept or reject Jesus Christ,” Paul wrote. “The full realization of it startled me.... Men were born into these jungles. They lived their whole lives through and died without one chance to know Jesus and His saving power.

“Shocking was the realization—a Christless grave before my very eyes. And far too often this was happening the world over because the message of salvation came too late.”

The urgency of the task gripped Paul’s heart. The burden to reach the “last tribe” became a driving force in his life. And despite declining health, he pressed on.

BROKEN BODY

It was during a rough trip through the jungles en route to a distant Orang Asli settlement when Paul's health bottomed out. Multiple malaria attacks had taken their toll, and though Paul thought he still had it in him, he didn't. The trip proved to be more taxing than anticipated. By the time Paul arrived at the Orang Asli settlement, he was literally crawling on his hands and knees. His feet were in no shape to walk on. His body was badly scratched and bruised and covered with leeches.

Paul lay there in his hammock for several days before he was physically capable of making the trip back to the mission base. Once home, malaria struck again—worse than ever before. With a raging fever and crippled by the intense pain, Paul tried any treatment he could get his hands on to counteract the malaria. Nothing worked.

This brings us back to where our story began. Paul's body was groaning from the impact of each jarring bounce as they made the 85-mile trip to the government hospital. That they were driving through a tropical rainstorm wasn't helping matters.

God was using his broken body and deteriorating health to show Paul that his strong back wasn't needed to accomplish God's mission. God just wanted a willing channel. God desired him to accept however He chose to use him, knowing it would be for His glory.

At the hospital, the doctors determined that Paul's body had been poisoned from all the malaria medications he had taken, but they weren't able to pinpoint what was causing the current fever. Expecting the worst, they advised Cherrill to take her husband home to America to die.



Paul Fleming in British Malaya

But then, for no apparent reason, Paul started getting better. Hope stirred within Paul, but it was short-lived. The doctors still insisted that he would have to leave the tropical climate in order to regain his strength.

As the reality sank in, Paul thought back on a recurring nightmare he'd had on hot tropical nights. In those nightmares, he would think he was back in America—and it was a terrible feeling to him. Relief would flood over him when he'd awoken to the strange jungle noises and realize that he was still in Malaya. But now, it wasn't a nightmare. It was a reality. With a broken body, he was headed back to America.

"I was disappointed," Paul wrote. "I couldn't feel right about leaving.

"For several months I had looked forward to going up among the new tribes—tribes along the border of Burma [Myanmar] that had never been reached with the gospel.

“The human desire was to stay ... but this was hopeless now that my strength was gone. ... I felt the Lord should have vindicated the earnestness of our effort. The Lord had put such a hope in my heart, and it seemed now that those hopes were being smashed. I wanted God to reveal His power to those who said it couldn’t be done.

“Oh, how thankful I am that God doesn’t take the time just to vindicate men, but He does vindicate His Word just at the time when it will accomplish the most for His honor and glory.”

“It seemed like a defeat as we headed back to America. Little did I realize that the Lord was using this severe illness to change the course of my life from that which I had planned for myself.”

Money hadn’t been set aside for an emergency such as this, but the unbelievable manner in which their return passage was provided had God written all over it. And God was glorified.

“We didn’t leave the Malayan Peninsula in a blaze of glory,” Paul wrote. “We headed out of the tropics while the threat of war seemed to be at the very gates of that great tropical country. We were heading back to America, but the thought of it didn’t thrill me very much. ... It was all I could do to muster the strength to get ready for the trip to the Peninsula, and then head for home. ... There was no crowd to see us off at the boat.

“It seemed like a defeat as we headed back to America. Little did I realize that the Lord was using this severe illness to change the course of my life from that which I had planned for myself.”

God was fashioning His instrument, preparing him for a greater task.

A CHANNEL NEEDED

Paul didn't settle for the status quo. Back in the USA, he got his foot in the door at churches through his ahead-of-the-times use of missionary videos with sound. His body may have taken a beating, but as Paul said, "God kept something burning inside."



And it was contagious.

Through his words he communicated with people on an intellectual level. But it was his burning passion for reaching the lost people groups of the world that made the greatest impact on people. His heart ached for the lost peoples of the world. It showed, and it was powerful.



Paul, Cherrill and Paul Jr. Fleming

Unfortunately, Paul saw a pattern beginning to emerge. He found that though he could challenge people into missions, channeling them to the mission field proved to be quite another thing.

All too often, Paul found men and women who were ready to give their lives to serve the Lord on the foreign field facing rejection by the mission boards of the day. “The missionary boards which were evangelistic and pioneering as well as fundamental already had more missionary candidates than they were able to send,” Paul said.

Rejection came in many forms: “You’re not married.” ... “You have too many children.” ... “You do not have enough education.” ... “You are too old.” ... “You’re not physically fit.” ... “You do not have enough promised support.” ... The reasons went on and on.

“God kept something burning inside.” And it was contagious.

Paul couldn’t help but wonder: *Did Jesus really say, “Go ye into all the world—if you are under 30 years old or if you have no more than two children?”*

How did these rejections line up with the Great Commission itself? It was becoming all too evident that many mission organizations were refusing people based on a list of criteria that had nothing to do with the potential missionaries’ spiritual qualifications.

And where did 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 fit into the picture? *“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are*

not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

Though he did not discourage education, Paul challenged potential missionaries to be sure their confidence was in God and not in how much they knew or what their abilities were.

A search began for an existing mission organization through which these new missionaries could serve—a mission board whose criteria for service didn’t disqualify the average potential missionary but would send him or her to people groups who still did not have God’s Word written in their language.

Time passed. Opportunities that seemed perfect fell apart. But through it all God was orchestrating a master plan. He was bringing together a group of men whose hearts were ready to serve.



BACK ON COURSE

One of these men was Cecil A. Dye. Raised in a Christian home, Cecil attended Bible school and then a Christian university. He had plans to enter the ministry. But after graduation and while living in the bustling city of Detroit, Cecil found himself caught up with the business world. Thoughts of ministry faded into the background as his life became consumed by these interests.

And then a near-fatal rupture of his appendix landed Cecil in the hospital. It was there that Cecil crossed paths again with Dorothy Gray, who was assigned as his nurse. He had met her once before at a friend's house.

During the night, as Cecil's fever raged, he wondered if he would be alive when the morning light shone through the window. Turning to his nurse, he asked, "Dorothy, would you care to read the Bible to me?"

"Where would you like me to read?" Dorothy replied as she picked up the Bible from the bedside table. If reading the Bible would calm him in his pain, she was more than willing to do that.

"Start at the third verse of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah."

It took Dorothy a while to find the book of Isaiah as she was not too familiar with the Bible, but when she did, she began reading through

the passage: *“He is despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*

As she finished reading verse six, Cecil interrupted her. “Please read that again,” he requested. “This is what I have done.”

As she read verse six, he recited it along with her. *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”* It was a sobering moment.

Cecil asked that she read several other Scripture portions from the New Testament; then he prayed silently and slept.

By morning the crisis has passed, but the experience of the night before was not forgotten.

“You know I wasn’t really ready to face God,” Cecil confided to Dorothy. “I haven’t been living as a Christian ought to live. If I were doing what I should, I’d be on the mission field today. But I’ve backslidden.”

Nor did Cecil forget about Dorothy who nursed him back from the brink of death. After his recovery, they continued to spend time together. A few weeks later, when Dorothy professed belief in the redemptive act of Christ on the cross, their relationship deepened.

As time passed, Cecil grew restless. The life he’d been living now seemed flat and purposeless. He knew God had other things for him. Knowing he was headed to the mission field and not willing to risk veering from the course again, Cecil sat down and had a heart-to-heart talk with Dorothy. He loved this woman and was ready to propose, but he needed to know she was willing to be a missionary right alongside him before he could take the relationship to the next level.

He didn’t have anything to be worried about. Dorothy was ready to say “yes” on both counts: to going to the mission field and also to marrying Cecil. The two were married and began the journey into missions together.

CLOUD CLUBS

Cecil and Dorothy didn't know God's timing. They didn't know the *how* or the *when*. They just knew that they were going into missions. In the meantime, as they worked through the details, Cecil pastored a church that had grown out of a Bible study group.

One mission board turned them down. Another one accepted them, but would not send them into pioneer missions; however, it was pioneer missions that was heavy on their hearts. Cecil was deeply impressed that the gospel must be preached "*as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come*" (Matthew 24:14). They took that response from the mission board as a "no" from God and withdrew their application.

Cecil kept busy while they waited on God's perfect timing. Besides his regular church services, he started small groups with young people that met separately from the church. He called them *Cloud Clubs*. Their number one objective—like Cecil's life objective—was missions.

Each week these young people, all under the age of 25, were given the opportunity to share with the group. Each one in the circle had to share something. It could be their testimony, a witnessing experience, or a victory or failure in their life. The only criterion was that it had to be current. It had to have taken place during the previous week.

The *Cloud Clubs* caught on. Soon they sprang up in other cities throughout Michigan. A board was formed with Cecil Dye as the director.

Several of the first *Cloud Club* members headed off to Bible school to prepare for foreign missions, but when it came time to apply to a mission board, they weren't sure where to turn. It's easy to see where their thoughts could go: *Isn't our own Pastor Dye much more qualified than we are to be a missionary? And he was turned down! If he was turned down, what mission board will accept us?*

They had some legitimate concerns. And these became Cecil's concerns. How to funnel these prospective missionaries to the foreign field was becoming a problem.

During this time, Cecil's brother Bob was attending Bible school but living with Cecil and Dorothy on the weekends. On one of those weekends, his eyes were alive when he reached their house.

"You should have heard the guy who spoke to us last week at Bible school," Bob said. "He's been in Malaya. He got a bad case of malaria which left him pretty much skin and bones. But, boy! Did he set us on fire!"

"Who is he?" Cecil asked.

"His name is Paul Fleming," Bob replied, and then added, "Listen, why don't you get Paul to speak to the church and the *Cloud Club*?"

And Cecil did. He invited Paul to speak. Paul accepted. The two bonded instantly. When Paul shared of how he had gone to Malaya "by faith," without the backing of a mission board and without the promise of sufficient financial support, this inspired and challenged those who had begun to doubt there was a mission board in existence that would send them. They began to have hope that they too could go to the mission field.

THE FORMING OF A TEAM

Cecil and Paul shared not only a mutual determination to give their lives unreservedly for world evangelization but a mutual desire to see others become effective channels in God's hands. The link between them was strong.

For some time, Paul had been fighting against the idea of starting yet another mission board. But as time went on, what had begun as a growing impression that there could be a need for a new channel for getting missionaries to the foreign field was fast becoming a conviction.

It was early in 1942 that Paul and Cecil came to a mutual understanding and agreement that a new channel was definitely needed. Not only that, they both recognized that this was something that God wanted them to be a part of.

Even as they began to prayerfully seek out godly men to join them as a team in the effort, they weren't quite ready to say they were forming another mission. Yet the more time they spent in prayer, the more they sensed there was no way around it. Starting a new mission board was what God would have them to do.

Lance "Doc" Latham was the next man drawn into the team. It was in the spring of 1942 when Paul was invited to speak at the North

Side Gospel Center of Chicago. Lance (Doc) Latham was the pastor at the time.

The two men were immediately drawn to each other. Lance was drawn to the urgency of Paul's message, while Paul deeply appreciated Lance's clear teaching on God's grace.

As they fellowshiped together, Paul shared his burden of finding a way to channel missionaries out to the unreached tribes. Lance immediately promised to help in whatever way he could.

The next man to join the team was Robert (Bob) Williams. Bob had been a missionary in Borneo before World War II, working with the same mission group as one of Cecil Dye's sisters. Bob had been influenced by Dr. Robert A. Jaffray, just as Paul had been. In his travels across the USA on meetings, Bob had seen the need for a new channel to funnel missionaries to the field.

Paul, Cecil and Bob spent many hours in prayer in Cecil's front room. If not there, they met in the woods nearby. They prayed. They fasted. And they sought God's face in how to proceed in forming a committee that would lead and guide those ready to give their lives to serve on the mission field.

While they prayed, eight of the young people from Cecil's church dedicated their lives to reach unreached tribes. These prospective missionaries were ready to go as soon as God opened the door. And that door was about to be opened.



Bob Williams



Lance "Doc" Latham



1942: NEW TRIBES BECOMES A REALITY

It was in the spring of 1942 when New Tribes Mission began.

“It seemed that the Lord had pushed us into something, and we were confident that no man started New Tribes Mission,” wrote Paul Fleming. “The Lord brought it into existence in spite of us.

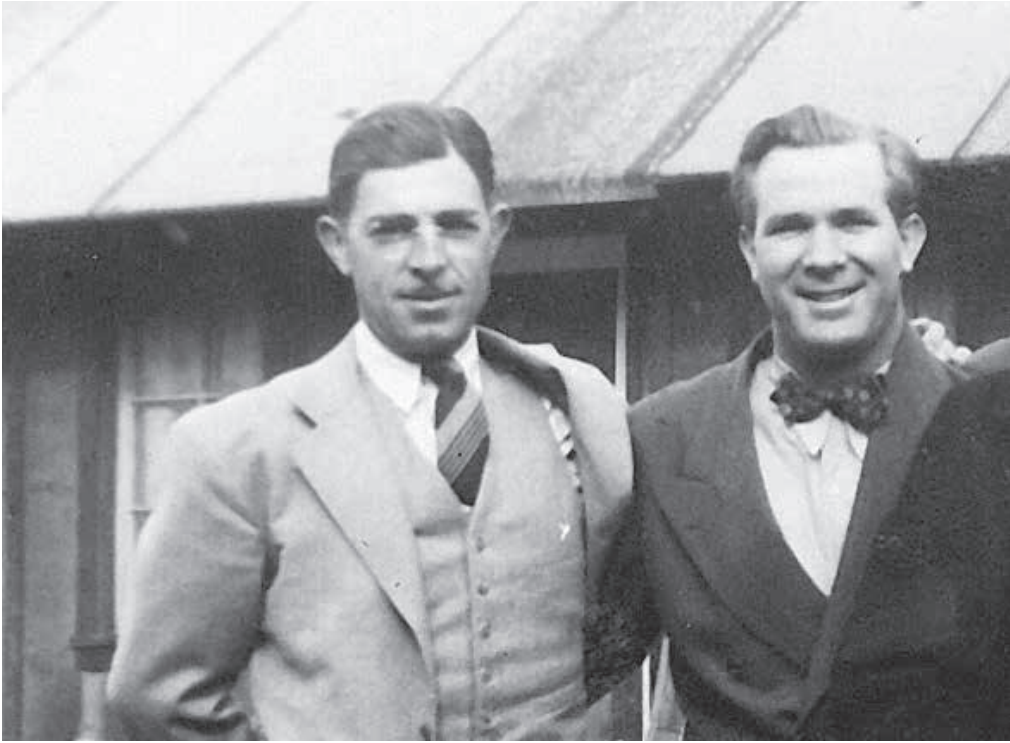
“We had no funds, no organization behind us. We were just a group of fellows who desired honestly to give our lives for Jesus Christ. We learned, all too soon, that no one is interested in a new movement.

“We were a group of young men with nothing but faith.”

As the new mission began, they knew they needed some basic principles to guide them. Paul Fleming, Robert Williams, Cecil Dye and Lance Latham met together to write the following:

New Tribes Mission shall encourage, rather than discourage, potential candidates for foreign missionary service. They shall be chosen, not necessarily on scholastic acquirements, but upon evidence that they have a consistent passion for souls, are soul-winners at home, and have a firm grasp of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God.

New Tribes Mission’s efforts shall be directed toward those fields where no other missionary effort is being made and where no witness of the gospel has yet reached.



Self-propagation of the native churches shall be encouraged. Every means at our disposal shall be employed to bring the churches to a self-sustaining basis. Native workers shall be encouraged and trained to become effective Christian leaders, and the responsibility of the work shall be passed on to them as quickly as possible.

New Tribes Mission shall not raise monies by high pressure methods.

And then things began to happen.

By June of 1942, they sent nine young people, including Cecil Dye's wife, Dorothy, to the Summer Institute of Linguistics at Norman, Oklahoma. As the other students got to know them, they were surprised to learn that this group of young people was actually heading to the mission field *with* their pastor. *People* were challenged out of churches to go to the mission; *pastors* were to stay and pastor. But this? A pastor *and* a group of young people from his congregation all heading to the mission field? This was something new. This was something unheard of. And it made an impact.



Ken Johnston, Paul Fleming, Lance Latham and Bob Williams

One of these “other students” was Jean Playfair (Jean Dye Johnson). “I happened to be at Norman myself that summer studying linguistics with the idea of going to be a missionary to some unreached tribe,” Jean wrote. “It was at Norman that I became friendly with the dedicated missionary band. . . . At Norman, I also met Bob Dye.” Jean marveled at how their paths crossed that summer and at the oneness of their spiritual ideals. The relationship continued by correspondence, blossoming into a romance and an official engagement.

On July 17, 1942, the first official meeting of the New Tribes Mission Executive Committee took place at Camp Michawana in Michigan. Paul Fleming, Cecil Dye, Lance Latham and Bob Williams were present. These dedicated men united in heart around one objective: to take the gospel to the last tribe.

Officers were selected at that time: Paul Fleming as director, Cecil Dye as chairman, Lance Latham as treasurer, and Bill Dillon as secretary.

During this first meeting, Lance Latham generously offered space at the North Side Gospel Center to establish an office for New Tribes Mission. Since the mission “office” was still in the Fleming’s dining room at that point, the committee was quick to accept the offer.

New Tribes Mission’s efforts shall be directed toward those fields where no other missionary effort is being made and where no witness of the gospel has yet reached.

During the next meeting on July 29, 1942, Roy Oestreicher, a young Chicago businessman, was added as a member of the Executive Committee. Roy came on board as the business manager of the fledgling mission.

During that same meeting, the Executive Committee made the decision to send the first group of missionaries to Bolivia by that winter. At the time of the decision, these missionaries were still immersed in studying linguistics.

Shortly after the meeting, Cecil wired his wife, Dorothy, one those still studying linguistics at the University of Oklahoma: “Have resigned my church. Will be in Bolivia by end of year.” Being 100 percent behind Cecil, Dorothy rejoiced when she received the wire.

Events continued to move quickly.

NEXT STOP, BOLIVIA

With winter nearly upon them, in October 1942, the Executive Committee knew they needed to finalize plans for the first group that was headed to Bolivia. With finances in short supply, the committee met to decide whether they should send two or three men ahead of the group—or if they should send all ten adults and six children together.

As they prayed over the decision to be made, they all came to the same conclusion: “We will believe God to provide for the whole party.”

It was a gigantic step of faith. At the time, the mission had only \$400 toward the boat fares to Bolivia, but by faith they made reservations for the entire group of 16 to sail within several months. Relying on their own resources, they could not do this. Only the Lord could make this come to pass.

As if their faith were not already being stretched, a few days after the reservations were made, the mission received word that the Chilean government had requisitioned the boat they had planned to sail on. The only other boat available would leave within a month.

Just the thought of it was daunting. How could the whole group of 16 be ready to sail in one month’s time? The obstacles were significant and the time frame impossible.

From a financial perspective, they still needed over \$3,000 for fares. Add to that, there was the cost of equipment they had yet to purchase. In one month.

There was also the issue of paperwork. With the USA at war, was it even possible to get all the military draft releases in that short of a

time frame? Besides that, they still needed to get passports and apply for the required visas.

“It was the greatest step that we had ever taken,” wrote Paul Fleming, “for it was the unanimous vote of the committee to trust the Lord to make possible the way in one month’s time.”

And it wasn’t just the Executive Committee that felt compelled by God to take this step of faith. The missionaries that were heading out were just as convinced. They believed that if they obeyed God and took this step of faith, He would provide not only their daily needs but passage to Bolivia and their continuing expenses while there.



The first group ready to sail to Bolivia

Together they took that step of faith—or maybe it would have been better called a *leap* of faith.

“We came up to the last week before sailing time,” wrote Paul Fleming. “A thousand dollars was still needed, and as yet we had no passports, without which we could not sail.

“It was time to pack and have everything down to the boat in New Orleans. I watched the busy work of packing there at Cecil Dye’s home. Finally the Railway Express trucks came and hauled away the last boxes. They were sent C.O.D. to New Orleans.

“There was no word yet about the passports; we would have to continue as before and go on just as far as possible. Several times I thought, ‘It isn’t so bad to make a fool of myself, but is it right to let all these other folks go ahead like this?’”

But Paul could rest assured that these missionaries were not going because of him; they were going because of a God-given conviction. God alone could see them through. God alone could provide.

“News reached us that the chance for young men to leave our country was pretty slim,” Paul wrote. “Some folks asked me if I had not gone a little too far, because, after all, the passports weren’t in yet. It all seemed so foolish, they thought. We had sent the freight to New Orleans, and it would take several hundred dollars to get it back, to say nothing of what people would say—and many of them were waiting for the chance to say, ‘I told you so!’”

The fledgling mission needed God’s intervention on all levels. Nothing seemed humanly possible. The date loomed near—and the passports still had not arrived. They prayed and believed the God of the impossible.

“I had just returned to Chicago from some of the last meetings we held before sailing time,” Paul wrote. “Over and over again I was reminded that when those passports came through, it would be a miracle. Not much time was left. ... A few hours would prove whether God would open the way or not. I wasn’t positively sure if it would work out. I didn’t think much about great faith. It was a case of, ‘Lord, we will go as far as we can.’”

“Late that night the telephone rang. What I heard was enough to transform me from a weary, downhearted individual to one who felt like shouting my lungs out. *The passports were on their way!* Tired as I was, I wanted to stay up all night and just praise the Lord. My faith seemed to soar upward; God could do anything. Oh, it was thrilling to be in His service.”

The first New Tribes Mission missionaries bound for Bolivia boarded the boat to sail on November 10, 1942. The team consisted of ten

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mission needed
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adults with six children: Cecil and Dorothy Dye with their three children, Betty, Kathryn and Paul; Bob Dye (Cecil's younger brother); Dave Bacon and his wife, Audrey; Joe Moreno with his three children, Mary, Tom and Rose; George Hosbach; Eldon Hunter; Clyde Collins and Wally Wright. Bob Dye's fiancée, Jean Playfair, joined them in April 1943. She and Bob were married May 10, 1943.

"The Lord worked real miracles on our behalf," Paul said as the gangplank was pulled up. More miracles would be needed as these pioneer missionaries headed off.

They were
missionaries
wherever God
placed them at
a given moment.
They gave
their testimony
continually.

They were not "en route" to be missionaries in Bolivia; they were missionaries wherever God placed them at a given moment. They gave their testimony continually: to those on the boat, at the various ports along the way, in the towns and villages as they traversed the barren slopes of the Andes, and anyone in their path as they traveled jungle highways to Roboré. By the time they reached their final destination of Roboré, the place where they were going to "be missionaries," they had already led 100 people to the Lord. What a testimony!

Arriving at Roboré, they found themselves in a small railroad town far interior in Bolivia. They were miles upon miles from their homeland and all that was familiar, but they knew they were not forgotten. They were being bathed in the prayers of those who remained behind. And they felt it.

While the missionaries in Roboré made plans for a friendly contact with the Ayoré tribal people, back home more potential missionaries were knocking at the door of New Tribes Mission. They were exciting times. Plans were set in motion for a training course for future missionaries. And this was only the beginning.

YOU WON'T COME BACK ALIVE

Little was known about the Ayoré people, and what was known would not put your mind at ease. Their only encounters with outsiders had been negative. Some Ayorés had been hunted and killed; others were captured and sold as slaves. And their violence against the national Bolivians wasn't helping matters. Add to that, their nomadic way of life complicated every effort at making a friendly contact—if one were even possible.

“You won't come back alive,” the missionaries were warned. “If at all, you'll be carried out on stretchers.”

But this did not deter them.

Convinced that this was indeed God's will for their lives and with preparations made in June 1943 the team headed out on the first expedition to make contact with the Ayorés.

The team consisted of Cecil Dye, Bob Dye, Eldon Hunter, Dave Bacon, George Hosbach, Wally Wright and Clyde Collins. Roberto Zebers, a Latvian Christian surveyor who worked for the Bolivian government, joined them as their guide.

As the team left the last outpost of civilization to reach the Ayorés, the people of the village watched with undisguised curiosity. Their

questioning looks and voices echoed what the team had heard from many others, probably too many times: “Why go out there and risk your lives? They are not worth going out after.”

The answer was simple: “It is because the glorious name of Jesus is not known here, *and must be made known at any cost, ...* that we are going.” Cecil Dye explained.

And so they went.

Initially, they used an ox cart to carry their supplies, following a rough road until it went no farther. At that point, the ox cart became useless to them, and the trip became progressively more difficult.

Loading their supplies onto the backs of the oxen, they pushed on down a mountain trail to a stream. It was here that the trail ended, making even the oxen of no use to them. The oxen were sent back to Roboré and replaced by two donkeys.

**“Why go out there
and risk your lives?”**

A base camp was set up and the real work began.

“We are pushing into wild, uncharted territory to find where these Ayorés live,” wrote one of the men as they started cutting a trail due north. They were headed toward the Sunsa Hills to the west of Santo Corazón, a region where villagers had encountered Ayorés in the past.

Hacking a trail through the jungle was slow and arduous work, especially since they had to make the trail wide enough for the donkeys to carry water to them from their base camp at the river. The jungle was thick with trees, vines and brush. They encountered cacti that stood up to 20 feet high and wild pineapple plants spiked with heavy thorns.

“In five days, we have made less than four miles through semi-desert jungles,” Cecil wrote at one point.

The work was exhausting. Insects pestered them, and thorns cut at their clothing, both leaving sores behind to fester. Blood blisters and water blisters eventually turned to callouses as the days progressed. There was malaria and pneumonia to contend with, but they pressed on. They were determined: even if it cost them their lives, they wanted the Ayoré people to have the opportunity to hear of God’s great love.



The answer was simple: “It is because the glorious name of Jesus is not known here, and must be made known at any cost.”



As progress was made, they moved the basecamp farther up into the jungle. This made for a shorter return trip each night to their camp.

It wasn't until October of that year that the team finally reached another small stream, the first since the Tucavaca River. A small stream may not sound like much, but to those pioneer missionaries it meant everything. It meant there would be no more long trips with the donkeys to wash clothes or carry water.

More importantly, they were convinced that the Ayorés would have to come to get water somewhere along that stream. They were not far now from the Sunsa Hills. Contact was now highly possible.

They decided to follow the stream. They reasoned that it would make traveling easier, and if they didn't come upon the Ayorés, they would eventually come out at Santo Corazón where Bob and Dave's wives were waiting.

Recognizing that they could very well be in Ayoré territory, they agreed that now was the time to send the firearms, the musical instruments, and all excess baggage back to Roboré with Wally and Clyde. Roberto Zebers had already returned, as he refused to face the Ayorés unarmed. A 16mm colored motion picture film of their journey thus far was sent out for processing. Cecil Dye, Bob Dye, Dave Bacon, George Hosbach and Eldon Hunter remained.

Carrying the barest of essentials in backpacks, the five started out on what they thought was their final thrust into the jungle. They were unarmed now because of a covenant they had made with God not to use guns to defend themselves from the Ayorés. They said they would rather die than send unreached men to hell in that way.

The five men followed the river, anticipating contact with the Ayorés at any time.

Cecil's final words to Clyde and Wally were, "If you don't hear anything inside a month, you can come and make a search for us."

THE SEARCH IS ON

A month passed. A long month. And no word. Wally and Clyde headed into the jungle to look for their co-workers, but the five men were not to be found.

About a week later, on December 22, 1943, Clyde Collins and Wally Wright teamed up with a missionary from another mission, along with four Bolivians. The search party followed the men's trail until they crossed one made by the Ayorés. They followed it to an Ayoré camp.

From the cover of the jungle, they watched the Ayorés until they were certain that the five men were not there. Only then did they run towards them, shouting loudly.

The Ayorés were completely taken off guard and fled into the thick jungle, leaving the search party to look around their camp. Though the five men weren't there, there was overwhelming evidence that they had been: a cracked camera lens, a sock, a towel, a poncho, a knife and even a machete. *But where were the men?*

Night was setting in. The search party set up camp for the night with plans to continue looking in the morning.

Wally headed down to the nearby stream to wash up, oblivious to the fact that the Ayorés were watching from the jungle's edge. That is, until he felt an arrow pierce his back—an arrow that seemed to come from nowhere. Though the wound was not fatal, the pain could not be ignored. Neither could they ignore the precariousness of their situation.

An immediate re-evaluation took place. With their safety now in question, food supplies low, and the rivers rising due to heavy rains, they left the area to arrange for a larger, better-equipped rescue effort.

In January of 1944, a second search party headed out, independent of New Tribes Mission. They were determined to find the five men—or at least evidence of their death. The missionaries declined to join in on this search, recognizing that the search party held a different view of the Ayorés than they did. They knew the history of violent encounters between the nationals and the Ayoré people would influence the search teams' actions and reactions. Though the group promised to shoot only in self-defense, the temptation to shoot would be great. The missionaries did not want to risk being part of a group that could possibly shoot any Ayorés, a people group to whom they wanted to show God's love.

“Just below the surface of much of our conversation was the question, ‘Are our husbands still alive?’”

Back in Roboré, the wives waited. “Just below the surface of much of our conversation was the question, ‘Are our husbands still alive?’” wrote Jean, Bob Dye's wife. “We were full of conjectures. But there was nothing we could do but wait for the results of the second search party. The suspense was killing. It would be good to *know*. The days dragged on. ... The waiting became unbearable.”

And then one hot afternoon a man showed up at the missionaries' door. He introduced himself as the representative of the search party.

“I am here to give you our report,” he told the missionaries.

The three wives (Dorothy Dye, Audrey Bacon and Jean Dye) and Joe Moreno gathered in the front room. Not wanting any interruptions, they closed the shutters on the windows and shut the doors. Time stood still as they sat there waiting. Minutes felt like an eternity as the man nervously fingered the brown paper parcel he had brought with him. But his attention turned from the parcel to the report at hand.

He told them how the search party followed the trail of the five missionaries to an Ayoré garden, but then the trail went cold. A few hundred yards beyond the garden, they came upon a large area

where everything was charred and blackened. Since new blades of green grass were already surfacing, it fit the timeline as having been burned about the time that the first search party had gone out. The men immediately began searching the clearing for any sign of graves.

“My heart contracted when I heard the word ‘graves,’” wrote Jean Dye. “The next moment my hopes rose again when he said they had found none.” Vacillating between hope of the men being found alive and the dread of hearing they had been killed was becoming the norm.

It took a while for the search party to figure out which way the Ayorés went after abandoning the village, because the Ayorés had piled brush high and wide around the perimeter, making it nearly impossible to find the exits and entrances. But the search party was determined. And in the end, they discovered the Ayorés’ trail.



Dorothy, Betty, Paul and Kathryn Dye



Jean Dye



Audrey and Avis Bacon

Not far down that trail, they had an unexpected encounter with three Ayoré men. It wasn't a good encounter. Fear on both sides resulted in arrows and bullets being exchanged. After the confrontation, the members of the search party were even more convinced that the five missionaries must have been killed. But proof was still lacking.

As the representative finished up the report, his attention returned to the parcel on the table. To the wives anxiously waiting to see what it contained, it appeared that he was unwrapping it in slow motion. And then he laid the contents on the table before them: a strap from George's knapsack, a section of Dave's boot and a page from his diary, and parts of Cecil's movie camera.

Jean sat there in a daze, while Audrey reached for the page from the diary. Her hands trembled as she read it.

"It's old," she said as she finished up. It contained no news from after the men went missing. Her hopes were dashed once again.

That was the hardest part, not knowing whether their husbands were dead or alive. The wives and loved ones learned to accept God's peace in the midst of uncertainty, but that didn't mean there weren't days of heartache and grief.

Jean recounts one night in particular. She was heading to her room for the night when she caught herself thinking, "I just want to indulge in a good cry!" But even as the thought was formed, she found herself questioning her right to "indulge" in a good cry.

"No," she argued with herself, "Jesus wept. There's nothing wrong with crying."

Kneeling on the rough brick floor beside her bed, she poured out her heart to God. The good. The bad. And even the ugly complaints.

"Dorothy has her three children. Audrey will be having her child. I have nothing by which to remember Bob!" she cried. And as the words came out of her mouth, realization dawned. "My grief is selfish! My tears are tears of self-pity!"

Later Jean would write about that moment. "The word *self-pity* seared me as deeply as the word *indulge*," she wrote. "At last I saw my problem. God did not want me to pine my life away feeling sorry for myself. My only solution lay in a renewed dedication to Him. ... That ended the tears and gave me fresh courage. The days that followed found me relieved of my burden. I was free to serve others. A new era in my life had begun."



DEAD OR ALIVE?

On January 12, 1944, after the second search party returned, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article on the missing men. News reached the New Tribes Mission headquarters by cable. Cecil Dye, George Hosbach, Eldon Hunter, Robert Dye and David Bacon were missing! The news swept the nation. Two questions were consistently asked. One had an answer; the other did not.

“Are they dead or alive?” was the question no one could answer. Only time would reveal the true facts.

It was inevitably followed by, “If these men are dead, what will you do now?”

This was a question that could have brought great uncertainty. Instead, it caused those in the fledgling mission to pause and reflect on what God had already done for them. And they had much to reflect on.

Had it not just been in the spring of 1942 that the mission was founded, and later that year the executive committee had been formed and the first missionaries had sailed to Bolivia? Then in May 1943, the first issue of the *Brown Gold* magazine, the official publication of New Tribes Mission, came hot off the press. Three thousand copies were sent out across the country and lives were challenged.

By July 1943, the Lord had paved the way for New Tribes Mission to purchase the old Hi-Hat Club in the heart of Chicago. Can you imagine it? A former nightclub converted into a mission's headquarters and training center. God works in mysterious ways.

And all the while, God was preparing the hearts of more candidates to go to the field. By the end of 1943, many were challenged into missions, and the work was growing.

“What will you do?”—That was man's question. But God's command remained the same: “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mk. 16:15).

In response to the question, Paul Fleming wrote:

When one is abandoned to the Lord Jesus—not to a ‘cause’ or ‘program,’ but simply to the Lord Himself—then to that individual it matters not whether he be placed in a wheelchair, a hospital bed or prison cell, in a darkened corner where men never see him, or whether he be set on a pedestal where he may preach Christ before the multitudes. It becomes simply a matter of being a ‘bond slave’ to the Lord Jesus. Whatever may bring the most glory to Him becomes the consuming passion of his life.

We believe that the purpose of the Lord is that from every tribe and language must come those who are to complete the body of Christ. They must then hear if they are to believe. We know then that it is His will that we go with the message. We *must* go!

A great general once said, when someone warned him that to cross a certain body of water would mean death: “I do not have to live. I do have to go.”

These men that went out from us believed that. We here at New Tribes believe that. ... God is not dependent on any *organization* to complete His purposes. He has voluntarily made Himself dependent on *individuals*. New Tribes Mission is simply a channel through which a group of individuals who feel that way may work. We know that His work will not fail, and we desire simply to get in on His program.

Soon after word of the missing men reached the USA, the mission's magazine published excerpts from a letter written earlier by Cecil Dye. It was so fitting.

I don't believe we care so much whether this expedition is a failure so far as our lives are concerned, but we want God to get the most possible glory from everything that happens. . . . It would seem that it would be a real testimony to the Lord's power to make the expedition successful. Then again, perhaps more Christians at home would become more aware of their responsibility to lost men and less concerned over the material things of this life if the expedition failed and we lost our lives. Maybe they would pray more for the next group who went out to the same tribe; and maybe there would be more "all-out" volunteers so that every tribe would be reached in this our generation. I believe the real attitude of every fellow in this group is that they want, at any cost, that which will glorify God the most.

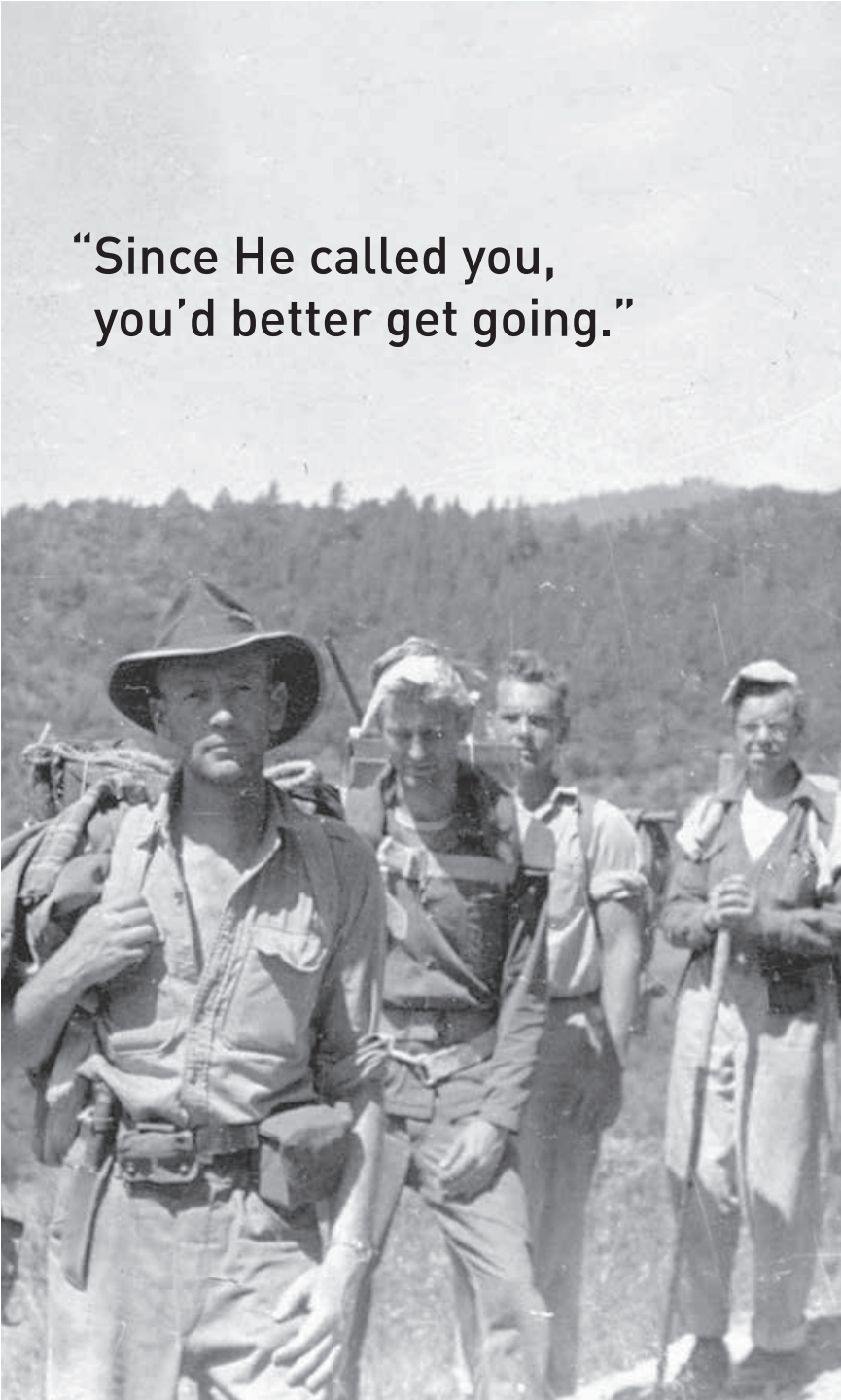
Cecil's words expressed a dedication that profoundly affected the lives of those who read them. Many who had never considered becoming missionaries were challenged by those words and went out under various mission boards "to take the place of the five."

The five men had one objective when they left the shores of the United States: that God be glorified in their lives. Their hearts echoed the message from Philippians 1:20: *"According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."*

"I don't believe we care so much whether this expedition is a failure so far as our lives are concerned, but we want God to get the most possible glory from everything that happens."

Though days turned into weeks, months and years before the truth would be known of the missing men, the remaining missionaries were determined to win the souls of the Ayorés to Christ. Their loss was great, but their outlook unchanged. They picked up the torch laid down by the five men.

**“Since He called you,
you’d better get going.”**



BEGINNINGS

This was only the beginning. New Tribes Mission was expanding across the globe. Frank Johnson became New Tribes Mission's first missionary to Africa, where he began a work in Liberia. The Don Erdman family, followed by other candidates, moved across the border to Mexico. Their goal was to learn Spanish before moving to South American countries to reach unreached tribes.

Dean Pitman and his wife moved to Mexico to learn Spanish, but with a different motive in mind. They wanted to gain experience in linguistics in order to effectively teach in the mission's preparatory course.

As more missionary candidates signed on, it became evident that the facility for their preparatory course lacked space and a country atmosphere that would more closely simulate the primitive and isolated locations where candidates would ultimately serve. They began to pray. They also presented the need in the April 1944 issue of *Brown Gold*, as the excerpt below shows:

Any information that would help us to locate a suitable place for our missionary 'boot camp' would be greatly appreciated...

The first introduction a young man gets to the Army is the basic training; to the man in the Navy, it is the boot camp. Men from all walks of civilian life are put through the paces.... They must be physically fit.

Seldom do people realize how closely missionary work parallels that of one of Uncle Sam's jungle fighters.... A missionary... needs to be prepared physically to stand up

under the hardships of pioneering in the rawest jungle country. He must know how to maintain himself and be able to combat the many natural barriers that will confront him.

In September 1943, when we started our Missionary Preparatory Course, we were giving mechanics, jungle craft, missionary economics, field methods, as well as other phases of practical missionary preparation. But since our headquarters is located near the heart of downtown Chicago, we are definitely limited.

For many months we have been praying that the Lord would provide a place out in the country where we could carry on a more practical missionary preparatory course.

Since the whole effort of the New Tribes Mission is to penetrate new territories, to fill in the gaps, to go where the gospel has never gone, it is going to mean penetrating the most rugged country. A little advance preparation will save our missionaries countless hardships.

Ken Johnston would prove to be instrumental in locating a suitable place. Ken first heard Paul Fleming speak back in 1941 at a pastors' conference in Oakland, California. It was several months after Paul's return from British Malaya. Paul was weak, thin and still recovering from his severe bouts with malaria. He came and went without even shaking hands or greeting the pastors. But when he spoke, there was no doubting that there was something different about this man.

"I vividly recall how my heart was touched and challenged," Ken Johnston would write later. "I remember saying to myself that he was not the usual missionary. There was something different about him. He had a burning heart."

Back home, Ken didn't hear more about Paul Fleming until his mother wrote to him about "an unusual missionary" who had spoken at her church. It had been Paul. She strongly recommended that Ken invite him to speak at his church, and Ken took his mother's advice.

When Paul Fleming came and spoke at Ken's church, God moved hearts and several young people responded. Ken was thrilled and said as much to Paul.

Unimpressed, Paul challenged him, "How about you?"

Shocked, Ken replied, "Me?" All he could think was: *Here I am in full-time service as a pastor. Was that not a legitimate reason to not go?*

“Yes, you,” Paul replied, not easily deterred.

“I can’t.”

“What do you mean, you can’t?” Paul pressed Ken for a reason.

“I tried once and was turned down,” Ken gave his reasonable explanation.

“So the Lord *has* called you about going to the mission field,” Paul stated it as a fact, and then he asked, “Who called you? The mission board? Or the Lord?”

Ken felt cornered by his own answers. Paul was erasing his excuses faster than he could come up with them.

“I guess the Lord,” he finally replied.

“Since *He* called you,” Paul was quick to say, “you’d better get going. God never tells you to do something that is impossible for you to do. . . . If He called you, then He’s still calling you, because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. God never changes His mind.”

“I realized he was right,” Ken would later say. “I found that I had not come in contact with any ordinary missionary. My pat answers did not stop him as they did most of them. In fact, they did not even slow him down. He believed the world must be reached with the gospel in this generation by Christians who make up the church. Paul was a man who was desperate regarding world evangelization.”

Ken Johnston couldn’t say “no” any longer, but he continued to pastor in the interim as he waited on God’s timing. And then he read the article about the need for a more suitable location for the missionary “boot camp.” His thoughts immediately went to an abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps Camp in the Mendocino National Forest of California. Besides having done missionary work in that area, Ken had hunted and fished there. He wrote to Paul Fleming, suggesting that the abandoned camp could be the perfect location.

Ken’s first clue that Paul liked the idea was when Paul and Bob Williams showed up unannounced on his doorstep in Santa Ana, California. Using his “C” gas ration stamps, Ken drove the two men up to the deserted Civilian Conservation Corps Camp, known as Fouts Springs. It was tucked away in the Coastal Range Mountains and was part of the Mendocino National Forest.

They drove up a long, twisting Forest Service road that opened into a lonely valley. The three men looked at the 640 acres of wild country



Fouts Springs

in front of them, at the six dilapidated buildings dotting the slopes on one side of the valley, and recognized that the possibilities were endless. It was perfect.

They walked into the first narrow building and got to their knees. “If it be Your will, Lord, may this site be ours for our new missionary boot camp.”

They prayed and then took the necessary steps. Since the Forestry Department of the United States Government had jurisdiction over the site, they filed an application with the District Office in Willows, California, requesting the use of the buildings and the land for their training camp. Then they kept praying as they waited.

While they prayed and waited, God made it clear to Ken Johnston that now was His timing for Ken to move into missions. Ken resigned his pastorate and moved his family to Chicago. They arrived on June 1, 1944. Their initial plan was to head to Brazil as missionaries, but at the request of the mission, Ken began to serve in the capacity of business manager, a position which had been vacated a short time before when Roy Oestreicher was drafted into the war.



Mel and Connie Wyma

REQUEST GRANTED!

The day finally came. Paul walked into Ken's office with a letter in his hands from the Willows Forest Service. Their request had not only been granted, but they were granted the use of the property without cost. And the good news didn't stop there. The buildings were *given* to the mission. In the dilapidated state that they were, some may not have considered that a blessing, but to the fledgling mission, those dilapidated buildings were a beginning point and a blessing. They took time to thank and praise the Lord for His provision.

With their prayers answered, the work began. The first boot camp was scheduled to start in six months, and the buildings still needed to be made livable. The executive committee began formulating a plan of action.

Phase one was for Melvin and Connie Wyma, along with the others who had finished the preparatory course, to leave for California almost immediately. Their objective was to get provisions ready for those who would follow. Arriving in the middle of the harvest season, the group spent nearly six weeks in the nearby town of Woodland canning tomatoes and peaches among other things.

Phase two was for Ken and Lilly Johnston, who had lived in the area before, to head out with a second group in the middle of August 1944. Their objective was to get the place ready for the arrival of the students.



Ken and Lilly Johnston

After five days and nights of hard travel, the weary group of passengers arrived at the new boot camp site. It was after nine at night when they pulled in. With no electric lights, they settled in for the night by the headlights of the cars.

“Our bedding had been shipped from Chicago by railroad freight and had not arrived yet,” Ken wrote of that first night. “So we piled old newspapers on the wooden floors as mattresses and used more newspapers for covers. A sense of humor helps a lot under such circumstances!”

In the morning, they got their first good look around. There was no electricity, no running water, no furniture and no appliances. An old 55-gallon metal drum became an improvised stove. Smoke billowed out of it as the women attempted to make pancakes for breakfast. Later, wood stoves would be purchased from a secondhand store in Willows, just 50 miles from the camp.

Those were primitive days. Everyone was involved in the task of cleaning up the camp and making the buildings livable. Water was carried from a nearby creek. Meals were eaten together in a public dining room.

One of the first projects was to put heavy tar paper on the barracks’ roofs. Sheets and blankets were hung as temporary partitions to divide the 175-foot-long barracks into living quarters for the families. Gradually, these improvised partitions were replaced with wooden ones constructed out of lumber salvaged from an old wood-frame bathhouse that was falling down. The partitions were about seven feet tall, and there was a wide-open space between these partitions and the ceiling joists for the full length of the building. Privacy was non-existent—unless one managed to speak in barely a whisper.

Water for the camp came through a narrow pipe from Trout Creek, nearly a mile away. The water system was in terrible disrepair when they arrived, and the redwood holding tank needed rebuilding.

Much sweat and hard work went into making the camp suitable for the first students to arrive in January 1945. It was a large group since there had been over 100 in the fall preparatory course.

Ken Johnston became the first boot camp director as well as teacher of Bible and several practical courses; Dean Pittman moved from Chicago to teach linguistics and related subjects; Clara Ford, a second-generation missionary who had been raised in Kenya, taught field medicine; and Ken's father, James Johnston, soon responded to the need and arrived to teach other Bible subjects. "Uncle Jim," as he was affectionately called, loved to counsel with the candidates. And though Paul Fleming didn't live at the camp, he would teach classes during his periodic visits.

Many other subjects were included: photography, haircutting, soap making, butchering, canning, bread making, hiking, survival, swimming, boating, carpentry, mechanics and learning to make do with whatever was available.

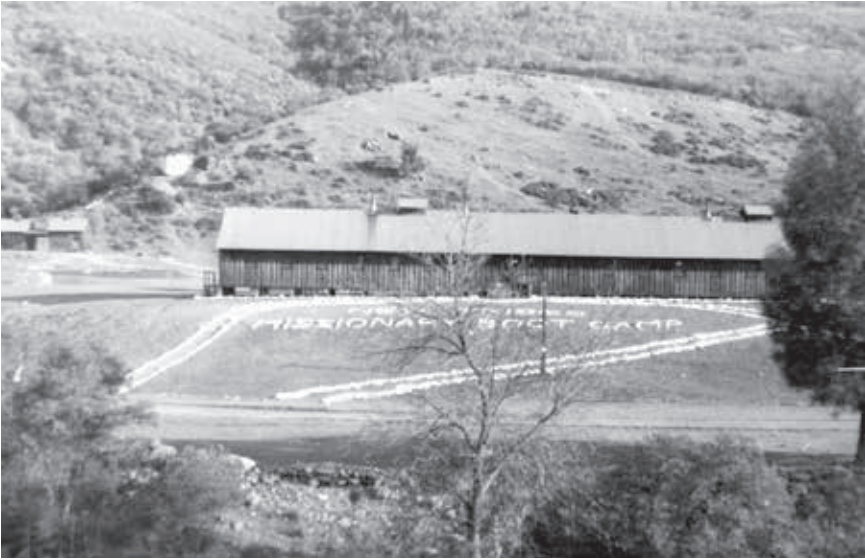
Every effort was made to portray what life on the field could be like.

Initially, some candidates didn't even know how to drive a nail into a board, to use a shovel, plant a garden, make bread—or many of the thousand and one things they would need to know to function and survive in the jungles. This practical six-month boot camp course exposed the candidates to these and many other practical skills.

Some had more to learn than others, like one couple that Ken Johnston showed to their cabin when they arrived. "[Their cabin] was furnished with simple furniture and a wood stove for heating and cooking," Ken wrote. "Shortly after, they came back to me. It looked as if they had been crying. They had never before made a wood fire and said they could not get it going. I went with them back to their cabin and found that they had tried to build the fire in the oven instead of the firebox."

Every effort was made to portray what life on the field could be like. Though they could not create the experience of living in a culture and climate different from their own, they were able to establish an environment with obstacles and challenges similar to what a new missionary would face.

At the Fouts Springs Boot Camp, potential missionaries faced the physical hardships they might encounter on the mission field: the inconvenience of not having a local drug store or restaurant; the lack of electricity; and the isolation from friends, loved ones and their church family.



In many ways, the boot camp program was on-the-job training. It was also a full-time occupation to take the boot camp course, and as such, students were not permitted to hold outside jobs. This became an exercise in faith for most of the students. Each student had to either save up funds before entering the course or look to the Lord to supply his needs as he went through it. Candidates had to rethink their finances and quickly learned to budget. All this brought potential missionaries to a point where they could realistically evaluate their commitment to the Lord and to the task. They found that “God is able!”

“We really learned to cope with the primitive conditions,” said Ann Golias, one of the six girls from New Jersey who was part of the first boot camp course. “We learned that there are lots of things we think we need in our culture that we can quite easily do without. We soon got the idea that there is a way to tackle difficulties. This helped me through many years of missionary service in Venezuela and Brazil. By God’s grace, I found no difficulty insurmountable as I banked on Him for resources and resourcefulness.”

That was the goal of the training course. If a missionary candidate was going to get discouraged by primitive conditions, it was better that he experience this in the training rather than on the field.

TRAGEDY STRIKES

“Fire! There’s a fire in the dormitory!” The cry rang loud and clear through the dining hall that cold night of January 28, 1946, at the Fouts Springs Boot Camp.

The evening meal was forgotten. The dining hall was emptied in mere minutes as every able body hurried outside, grabbed buckets and headed for the nearby creek. Within minutes, a bucket brigade was formed and a constant supply of water being thrown at the blaze, which was ravenously consuming the large dormitory next to the dining hall. This building housed about a dozen apartments.

Duffy Denelsbeck was among the first to reach to the fire, only 50 feet from where they were dining. The fire itself meant nothing to him in those moments. His mind was consumed by the fact that their eight-month-old baby girl, Ruth Elaine, was still asleep in their apartment. She was his priority. He smashed the window to their apartment with his fist — but flames shot out. He rushed to the door on the other side. Flames burst through the open doorway, forcing him back as he tried to enter. He didn’t want to admit it, but he had to: There was no way into the apartment. There was no way to save his baby girl.



The Denelsbecks

With heavy hearts, attention was turned to saving the building, but it soon became evident that that too was impossible. A strong wind fanned the flames and the heat was intense. Within minutes the entire dormitory was consumed.

But it didn't end there. Long flames, fanned by the wind, were already scorching a second building 35 feet away. Soon, flames engulfed the second building. The growing blaze lit the sky for miles around.

“Suddenly we realized that we were fighting for the whole camp,” wrote Ken Johnston. “We turned our attention to the building containing the dining hall, chapel and classrooms. If the wind shifted toward this building, it would be gone in seconds, and the rest of the buildings would follow.

“A bucket of water would sizzle and steam as it hit the side of the hot building, now completely scorched by the fire. We threw water until it seemed we could hardly lift another pail full. But we worked on, fighting for the camp and praying for the Lord's help.

“Gradually the flames subsided. The crisis had passed.

But no one was talking about what they had lost. The only concern that night was that God would give grace and comfort to the Denelsbecks who had lost their only child.

“In just over 30 minutes, the living quarters of over 60 people had been completely burned down. The material loss was great—equipment for the field, clothing for children. Everything was gone.

“But no one was talking about what they had lost. The only concern that night was that God would give grace and comfort to the Denelsbecks who had lost their only child.

“As the night wore on, singing could be heard. Forest Service men from nearby Stoneyford, who had come to help, shook their heads in wonder. ‘How can these folks sing, when they have lost so much?’”

CONTACT!

Years passed by, and still there was no word on the missing men. Joe Moreno wanted to believe that his former pastor, Cecil Dye, was still alive, along with the other men. But the ministry couldn't be put on hold. Joe knew that Cecil would want him to continue to reach out to the Ayorés.

That's how the weight of responsibility for making a friendly contact with the Ayorés came to fall squarely on the shoulders of Joe Moreno. To Joe, it seemed an unlikely fit. To say he felt unqualified was putting it mildly. He had joined the mission, convinced that his lack of education disqualified him from *real* missionary work but figuring he could at least “carry the suitcases” for the real missionaries. But here Joe was shouldering the responsibility for reaching the Ayoré people.

Joe may not have *felt* like a real missionary, but God clearly used him. It took years of tracking the Ayorés, leaving gifts along the trails they frequented, and persuading the Bolivians not to shoot on sight, before signs of a friendly contact were finally made. During those interim years, Joe spent much time with the Bolivian nationals. He led many of them to the Lord, and he taught them their personal responsibility to reach the lost.



Joe Moreno

And then the day finally came, the day when the Ayorés took Joe’s gifts—and left gifts in return. It may have seemed a small thing to the casual observer, but it was a monumental moment for those who had worked, prayed and persevered for so long. It was a clear gesture of friendship on the part of the Ayorés.

Then the day finally came ...
when the Ayorés took Joe’s
gifts — and left gifts in return.

But another day was coming. That day was August 12, 1947, when the Ayorés took a stronger step towards friendship. Leaving their weapons behind, they showed up close to

a large workers’ camp along the railway. God orchestrated the events of the day, and the workers did not react in fear. They didn’t shoot any of the Ayorés, and the first friendly contact was made. This was huge.

“For nearly four years now we had been praying for this moment,” wrote Jean Dye. “Were we at last to be permitted to see a friendship established with these people, and to see them brought under the sound of the gospel? Were we to see fruit at last—a harvesting of the souls that we and our husbands had come to Bolivia to reach?”

Several more brief encounters took place, some tense before becoming friendly. In the end, the Ayorés’ hearts softened to the missionaries, mostly due to Jean Dye and her striking blonde hair.

“That one who gave us things ... the very white one with the very white hair, where does she come from?” the Ayorés asked amongst themselves. “Who are her ancestors?” They had never seen a woman like her before.

Ejene, one of the Ayoré men, had made up his mind about her. “She is Corabe’s descendent,” he answered them with an air of authority. “She and her companions are the offspring of White Butterfly.”

This brought about a stunned silence. In Ayoré folklore, there was a fair-skinned Ayoré named White Butterfly who was held in high esteem. To them, she was the essence of loveliness in body and spirit. Her fair skin stood out in contrast to her bobbed black hair, and though she and her friends prettied their bodies with charcoal designs, White Butterfly never left herself painted for long. She didn’t particularly like getting painted up. And why did it matter? She was the most sought-after bachelorette in the tribe with or without it.

Every eligible young man in her tribe had already pled with White Butterfly to choose him. But as was the tradition among her people, the choice was White Butterfly's—and she wasn't quite ready to settle down and get married.

As fights broke out among her would-be suitors, White Butterfly felt pressured to make a choice. But how could she when she didn't know “how her insides went”? How should she choose a husband?

And then it came to her. She climbed to the top of a slippery tree in the jungle. And like a night owl calls for its mate, she called out a challenge through a friend to her would-be suitors.

Soon the village was buzzing with White Butterfly's unorthodox manner in choosing a husband: “Corabe will be the wife of the one who climbs the slippery tree and reaches her first!”

Young warriors searched the jungles, peering through the foliage to the tops of each tree in search of the desirable White Butterfly. And then they found her.

One after another, the young warriors attempted to climb the slippery tree. The crowd below swelled in numbers as relatives cheered on the would-be bridegrooms. But one after another they failed to reach the top. White Butterfly alternately taunted them—and then cheered them on.

“Remember, whoever reaches the top first will be my husband. It doesn't matter whether he is young, an inexperienced hunter or even if he's not handsome. Whoever reaches me first shall have me!”

And then Little Lizard pushed his way through the crowd. He was inexperienced, short, squat and far from handsome. But he didn't let that stop him. White Butterfly had said, “Whoever reaches me first shall have me.” That included him.

“Get out of my way so I can have a chance to shinny up that tree!” he cried out. “I think I am going to make it.”

“*You* make it?” the crowd jeered. “Where all the valiant ones fail, what makes you think *you'll* succeed?” But they made way for him to approach the tree.

Little Lizard began to climb. Slowly. Steadily. But with a firm grip.

The jeering faded as the crowd watched him disappear into the upper branches.

“He made it!” the crowd cried. And true to her word, White Butterfly claimed him as her husband.

But that was not the end of it. Many of her would-be bridegrooms were consumed with jealousy. They began to continually find fault with Little Lizard, which in Ayoré culture was a threat. And threats led to the intent to kill.

Fleeing was their only option. They fled north, farther north than any other Ayoré had ever ventured, and that was the last they were seen.

And now here were people from the north with fair skin, fair-skinned like their ancestor White Butterfly. Did it not stand to reason that these fair-skinned people could be descendants of White Butterfly?



The mission continued seeking a friendly contact with the Ayorés.

God used this thought process to instill in the Ayorés a desire to become friends with the missionaries — and eventually brothers and sisters in Christ.

But one question always remained: What had happened to the five men?

It wasn't until 1950, after a friendly contact was established with a neighboring clan, that the truth came out. One of the men had been there. He knew what had happened. And he was willing to talk.

He shared that though the Ayorés were alarmed when the five white men walked into their village, they didn't shoot on sight. But they did keep a vigilant eye on the men placing gifts in the center of the clearing.

“It was worth my husband's death
to see you come to know Jesus Christ.”

At first, all went well. Gifts were a good thing. But an hour into the contact, trouble brewed. One of the warriors got upset, believing he deserved a bigger gift. And out of that greed, the five men were killed.

Later, when the chief returned and learned what had happened, he was upset with the warriors. “You shouldn't have killed them,” he said. “I would not have killed them.”

He noticed what his warriors had missed. The white men had not brought guns. They had come in peace.

But it was too late. The men were dead. They were buried in an Ayoré garden.

But God brought beauty from the ashes of the widows' mourning. An Ayoré church was born. As time passed, even the family of those who'd killed the first five men became part of the family of God.

It was a bittersweet moment when those relatives, accepting the blame as their own, told Audrey Bacon, “We're sorry we killed your husband. We didn't know better.” And then they waited for a response.

Can you imagine begin Audrey? How does one respond to that? In and of ourselves, it would be hard to come up with a good response. But God turned the widows' ashes of grief to something beautiful, to hearts focused on Him.

“It was worth my husband's death to see you come to know Jesus Christ,” Audrey reassured them, speaking from the heart for each of the widows.

It was worth it. Do you hear the sacrifice behind those words? Do you hear the challenge behind those words? What is it worth to us, today, to see others reached for Christ?



ON TO VENEZUELA

Another friendly contact was soon to take place. It was late in 1948 when two Venezuelan believers accompanied Harold Carlson and Mr. and Mrs. Buck Northrup with their children as they headed up the Orinoco River.

Their goal: to make friendly contact with the Yanomamö people.

After a week traveling upriver, with the jungle encroaching on the riverbank on either side, they came upon a vine bridge that stretched across the width of the river. Faces fell as they realized it completely obstructed their way.

As they contemplated a solution to the dilemma at hand, a large group of Yanomamö appeared on the bank with bows and arrows drawn. The missionaries watched from their boat as the Yanomamö chattered away in an unintelligible language.

This is what they had been praying for. This was why they had spent days traveling on the river. And now they were actually making contact with the Yanomamö people. But what would the outcome be?

Finally two of the Yanomamö laid down their bows and arrows. Jumping up and down and pounding on their chests, they raised their arms in the air as though to indicate friendship. Taking that as a good sign, the missionaries pointed their boat toward the shore.

After the missionaries and guides disembarked at the shore, the Yanomamö literally picked up Mr. Northrup and the two Venezuelan believers and carried them down the trail to their village. This was no small feat. The men being carried were large men—and the Yanomamö were a people of small stature.

After some time they arrived in the center of the village and the mood changed drastically. Tension filled the air as the Yanomamö surrounded them with drawn bows. They appeared to be waiting for a signal to shoot.

It felt like hours as the missionaries waited to know their fate. In reality, it was closer to ten minutes. Then suddenly a command was given. The bows and arrows were lowered and the “visiting” men were fed bananas plus a roll of tobacco from someone’s mouth.

The crisis had passed. The first friendly contact was made.

Three days later the missionaries returned to town with the good news of a friendly contact. Even the governor of the area stopped by to congratulate the missionaries and to offer any help he could. More friendly visits were made with the Yanomamö before the missionaries actually moved in to live among the people.

A wooden leg wasn’t about to stop her.

Over the years there are many stories that have come out of the Yanomamö work. One of these stories is about Granny Troxel. Granny was a retiree who had taken the mission training despite having a wooden leg. She was a determined woman, and a wooden leg wasn’t about to stop her.

Already knowing Spanish, Granny headed off alone to find passage to the mission base. This was no small undertaking. Her passage involved a 150-mile trip being paddled in a canoe up the Orinoco River.

After arriving at the mission base, the Yanomamö were quite intrigued with Granny’s wooden leg. When they took it from her, Granny had to do some quick persuasive talking to convince them to return it to her.

Though she visited the Yanomamö, Granny’s work was with the Guariquenas. She loved singing with the children, and she translated many choruses for them.

It turns out that while the Yanomamö were the first danger to Granny’s wooden leg, they weren’t the last. Termites proved to be an even greater one. But Granny wasn’t about to give up. When termites started to eat her wooden leg, Granny had someone whittle her a new one. Granny’s life was a continual challenge to new missionaries.

MOVING FROM HORSE AND BUGGY

In order to have new missionaries, new candidates were needed. Actually, getting candidates into the training was the easy part; finding passage to get to them to the field during wartime was nearly impossible. Seats came on a priority basis, requiring months of waiting; boat and airline fares were rising rapidly; and shipping strikes and poor connections added to the problem at hand.

“Missionary work ... is often [still] in the horse and buggy stage.”

“Missionary work,” Paul Fleming wrote, “which should be the most aggressive, most forceful and determined effort of the Church of Jesus Christ, is often in the horse and buggy stage just because we do not have the courage to use what is available in our day to hasten the advance of the gospel in the remote, untouched parts of the world.”

Paul was a progressive thinker and eager to use any reasonable means to further the missionary cause. *What if the mission had its own aircraft?* he wondered.

The idea was planted, and as they looked over the logistics, they, too, were solid. If they had their own plane that was large enough to take missionaries directly to their fields of service, the transportation problem would be solved. But the cost was prohibitive. With prices ranging from \$25,000 to \$60,000, the idea of purchasing their own plane seemed a hopeless dream.

That is, until early in 1949, when American Airlines decided to sell its fleet of DC-3s and convert to newer, larger and faster aircraft. News reached the NTM Executive Committee that these DC-3s were to be sold for \$8,500 each. There were over 15 planes being sold, and they were told to “take your pick.”

A careful investigation took place. The advantages and disadvantages were weighed. They poured their hearts out to God for wisdom and direction. Though the asking price was but a fraction of the value of the plane, the cost still far exceeded the financial capabilities of the mission. Ideas were tossed around. *How can we make this happen?*

And then someone did some simple math.

The average fare per person to fly to South America was approximately \$600. The cost of passage for 21 people, which was the capacity of the DC-3, would amount to \$12,600—nearly 1½ times the purchase price of the American Airlines plane. By common consent, the missionaries en route to the field chose to invest their passage



money towards the purchase of the aircraft. It was an investment, not only for their passage to the field, but for countless others.

Seeing their oneness of heart and mind, Paul Fleming wrote, “I believe the unity with which the Lord has enabled us to work together has been the secret of real advancement and blessing ever since we started in the work of New Tribes Mission.”

In April 1949, the dream became a reality when a Douglas DC-3 was purchased.

“The aircraft was of regular airlines configuration, equipped with restrooms and galley, and had 21 passenger seats. It had only been out of service for two months when we purchased it,” wrote Ken Johnston. “The plane was the former American Airlines Flagship Maryland and was now to be dignified with the name *Tribesman*.”

The airplane was thoroughly gone over by the Sparton Aircraft Company, a certified airplane overhaul station in Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Aside from a few minor repairs, adjustments and cleaning up, the aircraft was in perfect condition.

New Tribes Mission's home office was suddenly buzzing with activity. Visas were applied for, permits acquired for the plane to fly in foreign air space and contacts were made for gasoline purchases and weather reports. The first flight was being planned!

God not only provided the plane but capable pilots to fly it. Bill Post, a former Army pilot and already a member of the mission, became the first pilot. He also came on board as a certified mechanic and flight instructor. Ben Wetherald, a young man interested in joining NTM, became the second pilot. He too had been an Army pilot who flew DC-3s in the war. Ken Finney's experience as a navigator in the Army rounded out the team and proved useful on the maiden voyage. Ken and his wife had just completed the training at Fouts Springs and were already to be passengers on the first flight.

Pre-flight rallies were conducted in churches across the United States. And then on June 17, 1949, the *Tribesman* lifted off from the Chico Airport on its first flight. There was something compelling about seeing such a large group of missionaries eagerly leaving the comfort of all they had ever known for the unknown in faraway countries. It awakened a deep interest wherever they stopped—in Chicago, Mobile and Miami.

Can you imagine necks craning towards the small windows on the plane to catch a first glimpse of South America's northern coastline? That happened about one o'clock on the afternoon of June 24, 1949. Shortly thereafter, the *Tribesman* landed safely in Maracaibo, Venezuela. The missionaries breathed a prayer of thanksgiving for the Lord's guidance and protection. Their next stop was the interior town of San Fernando de Atabapo.

Paul Fleming, who accompanied the first flight, wrote: "We were all thrilled with the sight this jungle country held for us. . . . The Orinoco wound and twisted its way through the endless densely wooded country ahead of us. We were now flying close to the river. . . . We could see the rapids, which made boating an impossibility. . . . The same trip that took our missionaries days was taking us minutes."

More flights followed. In less than a year, the *Tribesman* transported over 160 missionaries to their fields of service in South America. And while the *Tribesman* was delivering missionaries to different South American countries, Chuck Driver was opening up the field of New Guinea.

MISSING IN FLIGHT

Paul and Cherrill Fleming had every intention of being on the eighth flight of the *Tribesman* to Venezuela. But it didn't happen. A clerical error delayed the flight. And as the Flemings waited with the rest of the disappointed missionaries, an unanticipated phone call rang through. One of their sons was seriously ill, and their presence was needed in California as soon as possible. The *Tribesman* took off without them.

The flight took off from Miami, Florida, at 11 a.m. on Friday, June 9, 1950, with plans to be back in Miami by Sunday or Monday and in California by Tuesday.

Thursday arrived—and still no plane. Though at times the pilot would stay an extra day or so before returning, this was longer than normal. The plane should have been back by then or at least word from the pilots. There was reason for concern.

Inquiries were made. Paul called Miami to check on the plane's whereabouts, while Donna Wetherald, the pilot's wife, sent out cables to the airfields where the DC-3 was likely to have landed. It wasn't until Saturday, June 15, that they received the news that the plane had never reached Maracaibo, Venezuela.

An investigation revealed that the *Tribesman* had landed and refueled in Kingston, Jamaica. At 3:35 p.m., the pilot filed a flight plan to Maracaibo, Venezuela. In the air again, he maintained radio communication with Kingston and Balboa, Panama. The last official communication took place at 6:52 p.m., at which time the pilot reported that the *Tribesman* was over the coastline of Colombia at 5,000 feet and descending. They were to arrive in Maracaibo within



Pilots Dave Kimbell and Ben Wetherald

25 minutes. Sometime during that 25-minute period, the plane crashed and its occupants entered the presence of their Lord.

None of it made sense. The flight plans filed at Kingston had been passed onto the Maracaibo airport, clearly showing that the *Tribesman* was headed to them. Even though it was known that they were en route, the Maracaibo airfield closed down at sunset — a full 30 minutes before the *Tribesman's* estimated time of arrival. Worse yet, the airport also shut down their radio facilities. Without the radios up and running, it was impossible for the *Tribesman* to “home-in” on the airport.

To complicate matters, though responsibility fell to both the Kingston and Maracaibo airfields to institute a sea-and-air search if a plane were 1½ to 2 hours overdue, no steps were taken to find out why the *Tribesman* never arrived. The flight plan simply remained open on the books.

It was a full ten days after the plane went missing before the search finally began. On June 19, 1950, the United States Coast Guard, in cooperation with Venezuelan and Colombian military aircraft, searched the area where the *Tribesman* most likely had gone down. Though they put in some 250 flight hours, it was to no avail. Eventually the official search was discontinued.

Paul Fleming went to Venezuela to assist in another search. “Those first few days as we searched the mountains [from the plane], we were on our knees looking out the window and, at the same time, praying that God would give us eyes to see, and that He would direct us.”

A blanket of clouds covered the mountains, offering only brief glimpses through them to the rugged mountain terrain below. Little could be seen.

When the search by air offered nothing, Bob Shaylor and Carlton Hilker headed to Fonseca, Colombia. Missionaries Roy True and Norwood Hunter took them by jeep to the small tribal villages in the vicinity where the plane should have passed over. In village after village, they asked the tribal people if they had heard or seen the plane overhead.

In each village, the story was the same. They had seen a plane flying overhead around 7 or 7:30 that night. Their descriptions of the plane matched. It had five lights. Some were white, some red and some green. After the plane passed, they all heard a crash. Piecing together what each village along the way told them, the missionaries had a fairly good idea of the direction in which they should be searching for the plane.

They headed back to Fonseca to make another aerial search. On Thursday, July 6, the missionaries took off for an early flight over the mountains. With a more clear direction of where to search, they were hopeful that now they would be able to locate the plane.

The pilot that day was Bob Shaylor. Roy and Carlton went along as observers. Though they weren't covering new territory, they knew the *Tribesman* should be there. But it wasn't the ideal day. The mountains were covered with clouds.

After about an hour of flying, Bob made plans to turn back and wait for another day. But at that moment, Carlton caught a glimpse of something through a hole in the clouds. Circling down through the clouds with renewed hope, they saw what remained of the *Tribesman*. There were two noticeable spots on the top of the mountain where the plane had struck the trees. About a thousand feet over the mountain ridge, they saw where the plane came to rest on the ground.

The clouds were beginning to close in on them as they circled to establish their landmarks and directions. Getting what they needed, they climbed up through the clouds to clear the mountains and head back to Fonseca.

Two unsuccessful attempts were made by foot to reach the crash site, leaving the men worse for wear. It was early morning on Tuesday, July 11, when the third attempt was made.

The terrain was rugged and the trails worse than anything imagined. They were climbing over, around, under and between rocks with ropes to secure them. Sometimes they climbed by crawling from one vine to another on hands and knees. Supplies were passed from hand to hand while holding onto ropes.

The search team suffered from blistered feet. Their ankles and legs were swollen, skinned and bruised. Some couldn't carry on.

The nights were cold. Sometimes the team was cold and dry; other nights they were cold and wet. But always, they were cold. Sleep didn't come well under those conditions.

It was three in the afternoon when they arrived at the spot where the plane first hit the mountain. It was evident that the initial point of impact was about 15 feet above ground level — but not above the tree line. They could see where the left wing hit a tree and was torn off next to the engine. On the other side, the right wing hit another tree and was also torn off. The plane continued to propel forward through the jungle for nearly 1000 feet. The force of the impact was such that trees up to two feet in diameter were mowed down and uprooted.

Following the path of destruction as they climbed down the mountain, they found airplane parts scattered here and there. Cutting through jungle growth, they made their way to where the *Tribesman* lay. It had crashed upside down.

Most of what they found as they searched through the wreckage was melted engines and ashes. About eight feet of the tail did remain more or less intact and had not melted. There was just enough of the tail and its markings to allow the plane to be identified.

No one survived the crash. Ushered into the Lord's presence on that day were pilots Ben Wetherald and Dave Kimbell, along with Dave's wife, Hazel; Mr. and Mrs. William Hoffman and their two children; Mrs. Betty Hilker and her three children; Harold Mills; Clyde Snow; Mrs. Mildred Garber and John Greiner.

Later Paul Fleming wrote: "There were no bodies to bury, no equipment to salvage, but the Lord has allowed us to know what has happened to our missing DC-3. The first radio contact with the DC-3 revealed they were at 5,000 feet. It appears that if they had remained at 5,000 feet instead of dropping down to 4,800 feet, they could have safely cleared the mountain.

"In South America, as well as many other parts of the world, tucked away in dense jungle country, even in the very range where the plane went down, there are thousands bound by heathen darkness. They do not die just a physical death, but they die the eternal death of the doomed, simply because there is no spiritual beacon, no spiritual lighthouse through which the Lord can pour His message of eternal hope to men.

"The 15 aboard the big plane have finished their job, but hasn't God allowed this to happen to remind us of the solemn responsibility we have of bringing the way of life to these multiplied millions who die so desperately without Christ? We must live and live wholeheartedly to fulfill that responsibility."

THE TRIBESMAN II

Those were difficult days. Crucial days. Criticism was rampant—but so were words of encouragement. Almost at once a letter came in the mail with a thousand-dollar check toward a new plane. And this was before the mission had even yet anticipated the purchase of an aircraft to replace the *Tribesman*.

“It would take a miracle to replace that plane,” Paul Fleming wrote, “but we have seen the Lord perform miracles on our behalf before.”

And he was right. It would be God or nothing.

Three months later, God’s awesome provision was displayed in a large photo stretching across the center page of *Brown Gold*. At the top of the picture, in bold capitals, it read: Great Is Thy Faithfulness.

In the article that followed, Paul Fleming wrote, “Words cannot begin to express the gracious and wonderful way in which the Lord has dealt with us. On September 12, through one of the most spontaneous responses we have ever known in the history of New Tribes, the balance of \$28,000 needed to purchase the plane was in. The bulk of this amount came in just fifteen days. To us, it is a token of God’s overwhelming faithfulness.”

Paul’s wife, Cherrill, was equally moved by God’s provision. She wrote, “The astounding way in which God supplied the \$28,000 ... simply stunned us. We had no answer except God! He will always honor a trust when it comes in childlike manner.”

The new plane only had 1000 hours of flying time on it. It was a C-47, the cargo version of the DC-3, so the mission refurbished the aircraft,

converting it into an airliner with 21 passenger seats. It was painted in the New Tribes Mission's colors of brown and gold and named the *Tribesman II*. Three former army pilots made the more-than-competent flight crew. Their qualifications were first class.

Heavy fog delayed the aircraft's departure from Chico, California, for several days. November 21, 1950, was the last possible day the aircraft could leave and still complete its scheduled itinerary of preflight rallies across the USA. That day the fog cleared to reveal a beautiful blue sky.

"You know, when the Lord does something, He always does it right!" Paul Fleming said as he left the office to board the plane.

The crew checked last-minute details. Luggage was carried aboard. Friends gave farewell hugs.

Mrs. Donna Wetherald stepped through the open doorway with her seven-month-old son, Mark, in her arms. Her husband had been a pilot of the first *Tribesman* when it crashed in the jungles of Venezuela. Not deterred, she was on her way to teach missionary children in Brazil.



Edna Griener and Donna Wetherald with their children, ready to board the Tribesman II

Another widow, Mrs. Edna Greiner, climbed aboard with her five children. Four months earlier her husband, John Greiner, had also lost his life in the crash of the *Tribesman*. Well-meaning individuals

tried to discourage her from going to the mission field, listing reasons why they felt she shouldn't go. But Edna was determined to go.

A photographer snapped pictures as Edna handed each of her children up into the plane. As she handed off the youngest, little Johnny, she said, "And that's the fifth reason people tell me I shouldn't go to the mission field."

Other passengers boarded the plane: Jack Beach, Robert Cook, Arthur Eltrich Jr., Harold Freeman, Hazel Hansen, and Robert and Barbara Judge with their two children, Dianna and Ruth. Paul Fleming wandered through the crowd, quietly saying his good-byes, before he also boarded the *Tribesman II*.

Lance Latham led in prayer, committing the plane, crew and passengers to the Lord. Then the *Tribesman II* taxied down the runway and was off. Destination: Billings, Montana. The first rally en route was scheduled to take place there.

Those were the days before weather satellites and accurate weather forecasts. It was enough that the skies were clear. They had no way of knowing that the storm had merely shifted to the east of the Rocky Mountains where they would cross paths with the powerful storm once more.

At 3:39 p.m., as the plane flew over Idaho, they made radio contact the Pocatello Airport. At 3:48 p.m. they made radio contact with Idaho Falls. And then radio contact ceased.

At 5:50 p.m., in Grand Teton National Park, Ranger Elt Davis heard an aircraft flying overhead. Stepping into the yard, he saw a plane circling just below the heavy clouds. What was odd was that the plane was running without lights, which made it impossible for Ranger Davis to distinguish its markings in the dark. But he kept watching.

It circled some more, and then, apparently satisfied as to its whereabouts, it began a spiral climb up above the clouds to 12,000 feet. Not far away, the snow-covered peak of Mount Moran towered majestically, hidden in the heavy cloud cover at 12,500 feet. An excerpt from page 78 of *History of New Tribes Mission* paints a picture of what may have been happening inside the plane:

What were they doing inside the aircraft swirling through the mist which would surround them as they began to climb? Glimpses of the lake would be blotted out by the uniform gray of the clouds. It was probably warm and pleasantly lighted in the passenger cabin. The hum and vibration of the engines

would make those who were talking raise their voices a little in order to be heard.

One or two children probably would be wandering along the carpeted aisle between the comfortable seats. Perhaps one or two heads were resting back against the seats while their owners relaxed and dozed. Some would be chatting and others, perhaps, reading.

One can picture the hulking frame of Paul Fleming perhaps leaning forward, eagerly talking to one of the others, or else resting back in his seat, his eyes on the person next to him as they talked together of the things nearest their hearts. In each heart on board there would be the joy of going forward with the Lord and of actually being on the move.

Then, suddenly and without warning, they would be hurled violently forward from their seats and a tearing, grinding roar would fill their ears. For an instant it would seem as though the aircraft about them and the whole universe was disintegrating. Then, before they had time to realize what was happening all about them, the confusion and noise would give place to stillness and light—the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. On the mountain, too, after the roar and flash of light, there was stillness and peace.

A brilliant white pillar of fire was seen as the aircraft hit the northeast ridge of Mount Moran. Park rangers moved into action, organizing a rescue. But nothing could be done that night.

It would be daybreak before four seasoned mountaineers headed out. They knew they were skiing into the obscurity of a winter blizzard,

They knew they were
skiing into the obscurity
of a winter blizzard, but
time was of an essence.

but time was of an
essence. They were
desperate to reach the
crash site—but the
weather would not
cooperate.

Despite their best
efforts, they were
beaten by the blizzard.

After a long day out in the frozen elements, the exhausted men could say with certainty that “no one can stay alive on that mountain.”

Another experienced climber, Paul Petzoldt, offered to help. Not only had he climbed mountains all over the world, but he was also the

Grand Teton National Park's mountain climbing guide. And he knew Paul Fleming, having spoken to missionary candidates on climbing techniques at Paul's request several years earlier. So when he heard the plane was connected with New Tribes Mission, he was determined to reach the wreckage.

Though Paul Petzoldt knew Mount Moran better than anyone, even he had never attempted to climb it during the winter—and definitely not during a storm. But the weather wouldn't let up.

On Thanksgiving Day, November 23, the rescuers headed back out into the storm. Battling the elements, they fought their way through the snow and up the side of the mountain. By November 24, they reached a spot approximately 300 yards below the wreckage, but there they encountered a smooth, icy cliff. Exhausted, and with nightfall rapidly approaching, they reluctantly turned back.

The next day they battled through the deep snow once again until they reached the wreckage, most of which was strewn at the base of a massive 20-ton rock. The left wing was gone. Petzoldt presumed the right wing was torn and buried beneath the snow.

They found the fuselage split wide open with such force that all that was left was an empty aluminum shell. There was nothing inside. No seats. No luggage. And no bodies.

Somehow the tail section of the plane remained undamaged. It towered above the wreckage, the painted symbol of the *Tribesman II* clearly visible.

After surveying the wreck that cold winter night of November 25, 1950, Paul Petzoldt came down off the mountain with no good news to share. But that night the Good News came to him. Pastor Ivan Olsen of the Berean Fundamental Church in North Platte, Nebraska, who was a good friend of the mission, led Paul to the Lord that night.

An official investigating party would climb the mountain the following August. Clifford Martz and Ruskin Garber joined them. They found the crash site, for the most part, as the original search team described it, though some wreckage had been carried over the side of the cliff with the melting snow. Only seven bodies were found. Before the group climbed back down the mountain, Ruskin Garber held a simple memorial service.



NOT A ONE-MAN SHOW

Ken Johnston was in Detroit awaiting the arrival of the *Tribesman II* when he heard of the crash. His first thought was, “*What will people think?*” So he began to pray that the Lord’s name would not “suffer reproach” because of it.

With Paul’s unexpected death, Ken knew he needed to return to Chico immediately to meet with the remaining members of the Executive Committee. There were decisions to be made.

En route to Chico, he stopped at a gas station. As it would be, the owner was a Christian. When he learned that Ken was with New Tribes Mission, he asked, “What’s going to happen to your organization now that Paul Fleming is dead?”

“It will continue on,” Ken told him.

“I don’t think so,” the man protested. “Everyone knows that New Tribes Mission is a one-man organization.”

“That shows me how little you know about the mission,” Ken replied. “One thing Paul Fleming always said was ‘No man is indispensable.’ The motto of his life was ‘God plus nothing.’”

Ken believed this. It wasn’t a one-man mission. And he remembered something else that Paul used to say: “God does not want to make one man big with a lot of blessings, but He wants to bless a lot of little men by using their lives.”

After the crash, there were those who looked at what happened and said, “What a waste!” But others saw it in a different light. They saw

it from an eternal perspective. They knew that “*precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints*” (Psalm 116:15).

Still, the days that followed were hard ones. The leadership of New Tribes Mission had to deal with widespread criticism. But believing God still had a work for them to do, they pressed on. By faith they took one step at a time. And God proved faithful.

Almost immediately, God made His continued faithfulness clear. With the loss of the *Tribesman II*, the Executive Committee had to revisit how they would transport missionaries to the foreign field as quickly and economically as possible. Purchasing another plane was out of the question since the cost of aircraft had skyrocketed with the outbreak of the Korean Conflict. But God had another plan.

A reasonably priced patrol subchaser came up for sale in the Seattle, Washington, area. It was an answer to prayer. New Tribes Mission purchased the ship on February 19, 1951, for \$12,000. And God already had all the right people lined up for the task at hand.



Macon Hare, Sr., who had just finished NTM’s boot camp training at Fouts Springs, California, had experience overseeing the outfitting of new ships during World War II. With a crew of 11 students, he set out to make the ship seaworthy. Captain Kelly, a Christian man, joined them, piloting the ship from Lake Washington into the San Francisco Bay.

The men spent several months scraping, painting, welding, shipfitting, installing lifeboats and so forth. At last, the ship was physically ready for her first voyage to the mission field. She was named *M.V. (Motor Vessel) Tribesman*.

Then the red tape began. The first voyage was delayed as they meandered their way through the maze of red tape required to register the ship, but finally they were able to push away from the dock.

The crew was made up of volunteers of varied experience, a mixture of people from within the mission and friends of the mission. Many of the men had served on ships with the US Navy, some had experience in the Maritime Commission and shipping, while others had experience with diesel engine operation and maintenance. Captain W.A. Bagley, a Christian man who attended the same church that Macon Hare, Sr. attended in Mobile, Alabama, became the ship's captain. Macon was the chief mate.

The first voyage, with a final destination of Brazil, was a success. But when they returned to Mobile, Alabama, to pick up passengers and the cargo for a second voyage to Brazil, they met with a snag. One of the engineers was called home due to an illness in the family. They were one crewmember short—and the port captain required a replacement.

Where does one get a Christian engineer on short notice for an unpaid job that will take a number of weeks? The passengers and crew did the only thing they knew how. They prayed. And they asked others to pray. Macon Hare, Sr. tells the story of God's provision.

“On a Sunday night I attended services in my home church. Arriving a bit late, I sat toward the rear of the auditorium. The service was more than half over when the door opened, and a man walked in and sat near me. I realized I had seen this man someplace, but at first I could not remember where.

“Soon, the Lord brought to my remembrance that this man was a Christian engineer from England who had visited the New Tribes Mission ship in Alameda, California. He had been in many parts of the world and had signed on a ship at that time to go to Southeast Asia. Now, several months later, he was sitting a few feet from me in a church in Mobile—and we urgently needed an engineer.

“As soon as the preacher had said, ‘Amen,’ I went to this man and asked, ‘Do you remember me?’ At first he couldn't place me, but when I mentioned the mission's ship, he did remember.

“I asked him, ‘What are you doing in this part of the world?’

“He replied, ‘I really don’t know. I got off a ship in New York and caught a Greyhound bus to Mobile. A Christian I met gave me the name of this church and the name of a young lady who attends here.’

“I said to him, ‘I know why you are here. You are an answer to prayer. God sent you here to meet an urgent need.’

“I then told him the desperate need that the mission had for an engineer. I explained that the ship was loaded and ready to go, but we were waiting for the Lord to provide an engineer.

“At first, he seemed a bit shocked. It was overwhelming to see what God was doing.

“The next morning, this Christian engineer signed onto our crew and we were on our way.”

The trip was made without incident, and another 68 passengers, including cargo and personal effects, were transported to Belém, Brazil. From there, the missionary passengers scattered to various fields in South America.

Many had thought that New Tribes Mission, like the ship, would be docked after the death of Paul Fleming.

When the ship arrived back in Mobile, Alabama, there was no longer a backlog of missionaries waiting to go the field. By now the Korean Conflict threat had subsided, and public transportation was becoming more readily available. The mission decided to discontinue the use of the *M.V. Tribesman*. It was later sold to a shipyard in Florida.

Though many had thought that New Tribes Mission, like the ship, would be docked after the death of Paul Fleming, that just wasn’t the case. New Tribes Mission did not depend on the personality and forcefulness of Paul Fleming. It depended on God.

Men and women might have given their lives, but the vision remained. More importantly, God’s Spirit remained and the work continued. Paul and the others were greatly missed, but the vision was passed on to other men and women who had confidence in the ability of God to lead and direct them.

And He did just that.

As the missionaries continued to respond in faith at each juncture of the journey, God kept the fledgling mission's eyes on the goal: reaching the last unreached people group, whatever the cost.

NTM missionaries of old weren't a special brand of Christians. They didn't have an inside line to God that was unavailable to the rest of Christianity. They simply *believed* in God. They *responded* in faith. And they *met the needs* they saw.

And they were blessed, as we are today, with partners that did the same thing. Partners that simply *believed* in God, *responded* in faith, and *met the needs* they saw.

It's been 75 years since New Tribes Mission was founded. Much has changed since those early days: wars have come and gone, technological advances and methodology have changed how we communicate and minister, and even our name has changed.

But our vision has not wavered.

Join with us at Ethnos360 as we look to the future, a future inspired by the past and grounded in a deep commitment to and reliance upon God. Let's trust God together to see His vision of a thriving church for every people become a reality.



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Other Reading Material:

[*The Story of New Tribes Mission*](#) by Ken Johnston

[*God Planted Five Seeds*](#) by Jean Dye Johnson

[*When Things Seem Impossible*](#) by Jean Dye Johnson

[*Hostage*](#) by Nancy Mankins Hamm

[*In the Presence of My Enemies*](#) by Gracia Burnham

[*To Fly Again*](#) by Gracia Burnham

[*Our Witchdoctors Are too Weak*](#) by Davey and Marie Jank

About the Author



Welsh-born Rosie Cochran and her late husband, Matt, served as missionaries with Ethnos360, raising their four sons in a rustic tribal village in the jungles of Venezuela. Currently her position as a staff writer at the Ethnos360 home office in Sanford, FL, combines her love of missions with her love of writing. She has previously authored three novels: [*Betrayed*](#), [*Identity Revealed*](#) and [*A Murder Unseen*](#).

The Heritage of Ethnos360

World War II had not yet begun, but the threat of it was already being felt. And in the Malayan jungle, a different kind of war was waging, and a tall, young missionary was rapidly becoming a casualty. Malarial attacks weakened his once-strong body, and in defeat he headed back to the USA.

Paul Fleming's body may have taken a beating, but his burning passion for reaching the lost people groups of the world impacted all with whom he came in contact. Many responded to his challenge to serve as missionaries in the far-flung regions of the world, but finding channels through which to funnel these missionaries proved problematic.

And so it was that in 1942 New Tribes Mission began. The vision was clear: "By unflinching determination we hazard our lives and gamble all for Christ until we have reached the last tribe regardless of where that tribe might be."

Today, as Ethnos360, though we live in a changing world with changing methodologies, our vision remains the same.

