

[End of the Spear: Biography of James Elliot (page 2)]

In June, the first aerial search of the Oriente territory where the Shandia station and the Quichua and Huaorani tribes were located was made from the Mission Aviation Fellowship station at Shell Mera. Huaoranis had recently killed five persons in that area. Shell Mera had been abandoned by Shell Oil Company as too dangerous a location because of the Huaoranis' hostility and the killing of Shell personnel. Elliot and Fleming moved to Shandia in September 1952.

In February 1953, both Elliot and Elisabeth Howard came into Quito from their separate stations and agreed to marry. A flood had destroyed part of the Shandia station and the need to rebuild confirmed their decision. They were married on October 8, 1953, Jim's 26th birthday, in a civil ceremony in Quito. Their first home was a tent set up at a river junction called Puyupungu. There they set up a school for a family of Indian children. A new location for the airstrip at Shandia was selected, and a home completed. Elliots' daughter, Valerie, was born February 27, 1955, and in that month the Flemings, Elliots, and McCullys were together in Shandia for a conference for the Indians.

With the assistance of MAF pilot, Nathanael "Nate" Saint, Elliot and McCully located the first Huaorani huts in the jungle near Arajuno in September that year. The Huaoranis had recently killed a mother and two children in this area. This sighting firmed determination of the men to attempt contact, and weekly "drops" of gifts to the Huaoranis from the plane were begun in October. As plans developed, Roger Youderian, a missionary working in Jivaria, was asked to join the men. Pete Fleming was the fifth man of the group hoping to make contact with the tribe.

Using a battery-operated speaker, the men made thirteen trips over the area, broadcasting words of friendship in the Huaorani language and dropping such gifts as buttons, a kettle, a machete, and tinted photographs of each man. The Huaoranis responded by sending back a parrot and feathered head-dresses in the drop bucket. Encouraged by these responses, the men decided to find a suitable landing strip for the plane. They selected a sandy beach, which they named "Palm Beach", on the Curaray River and made a successful landing on January 2, 1956. After four trips to bring in a radio and other supplies, they built a tree shelter and began shouting Huaorani phrases into the jungle. Four days later, two Huaorani women and a young Huaorani man came out of the jungle. They appeared friendly, and "George" was given a brief ride in the airplane. The following day was spent quietly and without contacts.

On Sunday, January 8, after songs, prayers, and a service, the men radioed their wives at 12:30 p.m. that contacts were expected by mid-afternoon and they would radio again at 4:30 p.m. When there was no radio message at that hour, a search and rescue operation began. Flight over the area showed a damaged plane, and a ground search party left for the area. Planes and a helicopter from the Ecuadorian Air Force and the U. S. Army, Air Force, and Navy flew in for aerial search. The ground and air groups met on January 13 at Curaray Beach.

Jim Elliot's body was found downstream with three others. They had been killed by wooden lances and machetes, and the plane's fabric was ripped off and body damaged. Nate Saint's watch had stopped at 3:12 p.m. Because of the danger of another Huaorani attack, the burial service lasted only three minutes. The Army party came out by canoe or helicopter over a two-day period, spending one day trekking through Huaorani territory.

The deaths of the five men--Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, Nate Saint, and Roger Youderian--were reported world-wide, and they were regarded by many as twentieth-century martyrs. Elisabeth Elliot returned to Shandia and resumed the work of her husband. She subsequently wrote three books about the mission work and its consequences: *Through Gates of Splendor*, a biography of her husband, *Shadow of The Almighty*, and *The Savage My Kinsman*. She also edited *The Journals of Jim Elliot*. Elisabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint went to live with the Huaorani group in 1959. One of the Huaorani tribe members later explained to the missionaries that "George" had told them that the white men planned to eat them, and that they would not otherwise have killed the men.