

Mission to the Headhunters

Book Review by Benjamin Gribaudo - 2002

Do you like reading missionary stories? How about fascinating, adventuresome ones? *Mission to the Headhunters* is such a book. It's a remarkable story about God's love changing the bitter, fearful hearts of warring jungle enemies.

Revenge killings threatened to eliminate the headhunting, head shrinking Shuar Indians of Ecuador. Polygamy brought family disharmony. Poor nutrition and disease resulted in physical weaknesses. Witchdoctors possessed controlling power over these frightened people.

Seeking to reach these needy natives, missionaries faced loneliness—no radio communications, no aviation service and no telephones. Just to reach the mission station required a dangerous descent down the Andes and several days of trekking down long jungle trails.

Frank and Marie Drown began to minister to these jungle inhabitants in 1945. They sought to educate the children, relieve physical ailments and, most importantly, introduce these heathen to the love of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Spanning over 37 years of the Drowns' ministry, the entire book is exciting and very well written. To me, one of the most exciting and impressive stories came about because of a practical need. A generator powered the radio station at the mission. The cost of getting fuel into the brush was expensive. God impressed Frank with the idea of installing a hydroelectric plant. Frank located the necessary equipment at a retired facility in the U.S. The power company sold two sets of generators, governors and turbines for \$1 each after learning of Frank and Marie's wonderful work among some of the world's undeveloped people!

Getting heavy cargo into the jungle is challenging. No roads existed. Mission Aviation Fellowship's little planes couldn't do the job. A big airliner was needed. Alaska Airlines had a C-130 in Ecuador and agreed to do the job. Two flights were needed. The massive plane sunk into the dirt runway upon its first landing.

For the second trip, better preparations were made. As the airplane approached the landing strip, two crewmembers prepared to jump out carrying plywood. Their job was to place the wood under the wheels of the plane while it was rolling to a stop.

When the plane started to take off, it sunk into a hole, a propeller sheared off and the \$2 million dollar airframe caught on fire right beside the hydroelectric equipment it had just delivered. Would this be the end of the project?

Mission to the Headhunters (ISBN 1-85792-721-4) by Frank and Marie Drown has recently been revised and is \$12.99 if purchased directly from the authors (4845 E. Ridgely Rd., Edgerton, MO 64444; checks payable to GOSPEL MISSIONARY UNION). Shipping and handling is \$2 for the first book and \$0.50 for each additional copy. It may also be available from your local bookstore. All royalties and profits the Drowns receive will be given for the printing of the Shuar Bible.

"It's a page turner. Read it!" —Elizabeth Elliot