



Photo by George Gardner

Glenn Porter and a Colombian worker do routine spraying for ticks and other skin parasites on the animals at "Bonaire."

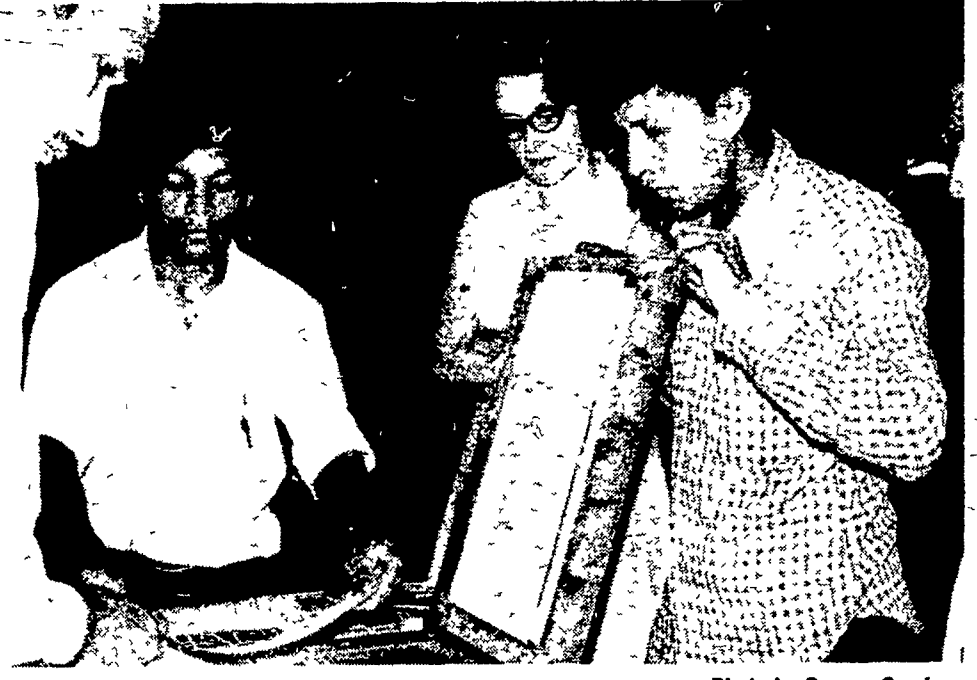


Photo by George Gardner

Lola Porter watches while tribesmen print stories on a flat bed mimeograph, during a bilingual course offered at the training center. This is part of the ongoing work of teaching key tribesmen to teach others.

New life in South America satisfying to former Lancaster County farmers

By SALLY BAIR
Staff correspondent

Six years ago Glenn Porter was a successful livestock farmer, working with his father Edgar at their Washington Boro R1, farm. His wife Lola was enjoying her work as an elementary school teacher at Creswell in Manor Township.

Today Glenn and Lola are living in Colombia, South America and Glenn is still farming - but the methods are different, as is the lifestyle. The Porters are "support" people for Wycliffe Bible Translators whose work it is to translate the Bible into tribal languages around the world. They feel at home in their tropical setting and are pleased with the change in their lives.

Glenn and Lola reflect on their new work at Glenn's parents' home just as they were completing a four month visit to Lancaster County and were busily preparing for a return to their chosen work. Lola said, "We liked what we were doing here at the time but we both felt a dissatisfaction. We felt the Lord was leading us in this direction. We were acquainted with Wycliffe through friends and Wycliffe had jobs which we were qualified to do. We definitely felt led to do something full time." Glenn is farming at "Finca Bonaire," a training center which is a part of the "Wycliffe base camp" at Lomalinda, Colombia, about a 10 to 12-hour bus trip south of Bogota, the capital of Colombia. The center provides training to Indians who come there from their home tribes and spend several weeks learning new methods of agriculture.

In explaining the necessity of training the Indian natives, Glenn said, "The primary method of farming used by many tribes has been 'slash and burn' which means the tribes would clear an area, stay for a period of time and then move on to a new area." The tribes lived off wild game, but both land resources and game resources are becoming scarce, and this scarcity is dictating a need for more progressive agricultural methods, so the tribes can remain in one location.

Glenn's primary job is to maintain the farm which has nearly 1000 acres. Because of swamps, however, a much smaller acreage is farmed. Glenn said, "I do anything a farmer does. We take care of the equipment, make what we need, and care for the animals." The center raises cattle, hogs, chickens and rabbits, which are very efficient meat producers. There are also a few horses to chase the cattle, Glenn said.

As the cold January winds gust around the farm house, Glenn says life in Colombia is definitely different from his life as a farmer here. "There is no winter - but it gets boring with no change in the weather."

Lola said that it is now "in the 90's" there, but said it cools down at night. Once, she recalls, it even got down to 59 degrees - a real cold wave!

The animals, Glenn said, are ac-

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Lola holds some beads she brought with her from Colombia, and shows some other mementoes she has collected while there.

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customed to the heat, but even so, the hogs do mind severe hot spells. The purpose of most of the cattle raised there is for breeding stock to supply the tribesmen who have attended the training program. The center will supply baby chicks, calves or pigs, and fly them to the tribes. There is also an Extension-type program, which follows up on the training and offers help as needed.

A few crops are raised on the farm to show the Indians methods of planting and harvesting. The main crops are not corn, soybeans, and wheat, but "plantano," a cooking banana, "yuca", a root crop, and "ramia" which is a leafy high protein plant. Glenn says there are currently vegetable experiments being carried out, but people generally prefer a high starch diet.

The farming equipment used there is familiar. Glenn says, "We have a tractor and a plow, and I borrow a disc harrow - from a Colombia farmer." The difficulty comes, however, in getting parts for the equipment. The nearest dealer is 80 miles from their farm - and not all parts are readily available.

He sums up the problems he encounters by saying, "Everything takes longer - it is just not as convenient as here."

Glenn explained that there are a lot of nutritional problems and disease problems with animals there. To feed grain "is out of the question - it is too expensive." Most of the farm is in pasture.

Trainees are invited from tribes with which translators are working. They come voluntarily, so Glenn says, "In most cases they are willing to accept what we teach."

Before the Porters were accepted into the program, they took extensive training, and then traveled to southern Mexico for jungle training, "to get used to more primitive conditions." They had extensive language training and still have a bit to learn." She said Glenn has learned faster because he works with Spanish-speaking people every day. When they first arrived Colombia, Lola's work was teaching other volunteers' children in the school, so she spoke predominately English. Now she is working with clerical duties at the training center and is more involved with Spanish.

When the Porters first arrived in South America, they lived at the base camp, Lomalinda, and Glenn traveled the three miles to the farm four times daily. Three miles is not far, but the trip was time-consuming because of road conditions and heat - and his method of traveling was a Honda motorcycle. Lola says she rides the Honda motorcycle. Lola says she rides the Honda regularly.

In their present home at the training center there is electricity and running water - but not hot water. However, Glenn laughingly said that cold running water in Colombia did not compare with the cold running water here in January.

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Glenn and Lola peruse some of the many books which have already been translated into Indian tribal language. Some are primers and some are books of the Bible.