

Plane Of Slain Missionaries Found In Ecuador

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National Geographic News
Service

TONAMPARE, Ecuador. — Five American missionaries flew into Ecuador's Amazon jungle 38 years ago in a yellow Piper. A week later they were all dead, speared by primitive Indians who believed they were cannibals.

The Huaorani Indians demolished the single-engine plane on a small landing strip on the Curaray River that the Protestant missionaries had code-named Palm Beach.

Days after the Jan. 8, 1956 killings, another missionary flying over the site saw no traces of the plane. Everyone assumed that violent tropical storms had washed it downriver. But this past June, amid the martyred missionaries' graves, two members of the clan that had done the killing stumbled on a piece of metal sticking out of the sand near Palm Beach. They uncovered the front lower fuselage of the Piper, which has been piloted by Nathanael Saint of Huntingdon Valley, Pa.

The discovery inspired a family crusade to recover the Piper, salvage as much of it as possible and piece it together as a memorial to honor the five dead men.

The Saints hope this tribute will encourage future missionaries and further understanding between two vastly disparate cultures. The number of American missionaries has declined world wide in; the past four decades. Some are still being martyred.

Saint's sister, Rachel 80 has

lived peacefully with the Huaorani since 1958, when she moved to Ecuador as a translator with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Wycliffe Bible Translators). "Ironically, the Indians are very excited about the find," she says. "It's important to them, because the event marks an end to their killing."

After the initial find, Nate Saint's son Stephen, 43, of Ocala, Fla., took charge of the search for the rest of the wreckage.

"The strange thing was that I had just met a pilot in Russia who told me his dream was to find and salvage Dad's plane," he tells National Geographic. "So when I heard, I got right on a plane to Ecuador."

Joining in the search are Steve's son Jaime, 17, and his brother, Philip, along with several Huaorani and William Clapp, a pilot for Mission Aviation Fellowship in Shell, Ecuador. Nate Saint piloted the plane for the fellowship.

The team is steadily recovering half-buried, scattered parts. Each recovery stirs memories of a mission that began with hope and ended in horror.

Discovery of the plane's fragments, says Steve Saint, is "almost as if God is saying, 'I want you to remember what happened here.'"

All five victims were young. Nate Saint was 32; James Elliot of Portland, Ore., 28; Edward McCully of Milwaukee, 28; Peter Fleming of Seattle, 27; and Roger Youderian of Lansing, Mich., 31.

For several months before the

landing at Palm Beach, the missionaries periodically flew from Shell over the Huaorani village in the Amazon rain forest, or Oriente.

To win the trust of the reclusive Indians, the men dropped gifts of machetes and aluminum kettles. In return, the Huaorani gave the Americans gifts, including a live parrot.

Most Huaorani are primitive, seminomadic hunters. They have fiercely guarded their territory for centuries, earning them a reputation for savagery.

The Christians were fully aware of the danger, and so they kept their mission a secret.

Their landing was uneventful. For four days, they saw no people. On the fifth day, three naked Huaorani, two women and a man, walked out of the jungle. Fist-size balsa wood ornaments hung in their distended earlobes.

Initially, the meeting was amicable. The missionaries cooked hamburgers for their visitors, shared insect repellent with them, even took them for rides over the dense green forest in the yellow Piper, which the Indians named the "wood bee."

The Americans showed the Huaorani a photograph of Dayuma, a woman from their tribe who had fled many years before, during a wave of intratribal killings.

The missionaries' friendly gestures didn't save their lives.

George, the Americans' nickname for the Huaorani man who had greeted them, told the tribe that the white men were cannibals who had attacked him.

This belief was reinforced by the photograph of Dayuma. George said the image proved that the missionaries had possession of her spirit.

Two days after the missionaries and the Huaorani met, six tribal warriors attacked Palm Beach. One by one, they slaughtered the missionaries with 9-foot spears. Although the missionaries were armed, they chose to fire their guns into the air instead of shooting the Indians.

In 1958, two Huaorani women told Rachel Saint and Elisabeth Elliot, James Elliot's widow, that the Indians had come to recognize that the killings were a mistake. For his lies, George was speared to death.

The Huaorani and American women returned with Dayuma to the tribe to finish the missionaries' work. Rachel Saint and Dayuma still live in the village of Tonampare, a muddy clearing ringed by tin-roofed shacks near Palm Beach.

Cook's Question

(Continued from Page B8)

ANSWER — Mrs. John Snyder Jr., Sunbury, wanted a recipe for cheese-filled jalapeno peppers. Thanks to Irene Greer, Richwood, W.V., who sent a recipe. She writes that she serves the peppers unchilled and uncooked. When you make the recipe, soften the cheese, stuff peppers and enjoy.

Stuffed Jalapeno Peppers

1 pint Jalapeno pepper halves, drained
8-ounces cream cheese, softened
6-ounces Monterey Jack cheese, grated
Mix together cheese and stuff peppers. Shape like whole jalapenos. Cover and put in refrigerator to chill overnight.
Next day: Make a batter of the following:

2 cups self-rising flour
1 can flat beer

Dip peppers in batter and shake in seasoned or plain bread crumbs. Deep fry until golden brown.

ANSWER — D. Newsom, Cooperstown, N.Y., would like a recipe for Black Walnut Chiffon Cake that tastes similar to Mrs. Smith's. Thanks to Vera Dietz, Port Trevorton, for sending a recipe.

Black Walnut Chiffon Cake

2 1/2 cups cake flour
1 1/2 cups sugar
3 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
Combine dry ingredients in mixing bowl and add:
1/2 cup salad oil
3/4 cup water
7 unbeaten egg yolks
2 teaspoons vanilla
Beat until smooth. Add 1/2 cup black walnuts, finely chopped
Beat until stiff:
7 egg whites
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
Fold egg whites very gently into the egg yolk mixture. Pour into ungreased tube pan. Bake at 325 degrees for one hour.

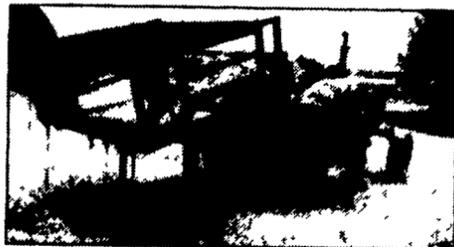
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