

CHAPTER 5 – FOREIGN MISSIONS

On January 8, 1956, an isolated tribe of native people in the jungle of South America murdered five men who were missionaries. Exploration for natural resources had been taking business interests into the deep recesses of the forests of the Amazon basin for many years. Contacts between the native people, who lived there, and workers from various companies had frequently turned violent, causing fear in the hearts of both groups. This fear was the basis for the slaughter of the five missionaries when they tried to make friends with one of the groups of people. It was a great shock to people back home in the churches of this country, and indeed to the whole world.

Any reader who would like to learn more about this event can read such books as *Through Gates of Splendor*, *Shadow of the Almighty*, and *The Savage My Kinsman* all by Elisabeth Elliot; and *Jungle Pilot* by Russell T. Hitt. There are now a book and a film, both titled “The End of the Spear”, which recap the events of 1956 and update what has happened since that time.

This event moved many Christian young people to seriously consider training to become missionaries to isolated people groups all over the world. Since contacts with outsiders would continue and even increase in the future, indigenous groups were going to need many things to equip them to move into the modern age. The Gospel message of peace in Christ was just one means of helping them be prepared to take their place in the modern world.

The imagination and heart of the young man who was my husband, had also been touched by this event. Roy had taken flying lessons during high school in Phoenix. He was also a ham radio operator, electronically inclined by nature. He seemed well suited to pursue the ideal of becoming a missionary pilot doing the same work as that described in the book *Jungle Pilot*. Toward that end, Roy was pursuing a course of study in Bible and Missions at Biola College with plans of further training in aviation.

When I arrived at Biola in 1961, I too had heard of this event and read some about it, but I had not envisioned myself as a missionary to such native peoples. However, after Roy and I got together, it began to look like I would one day find myself in a foreign country, on a remote mission station maintaining radio contact with Roy, during flights he would be making to transport supplies and people in and out of remote villages in a jungle somewhere.

Within a short time of our marriage, we began filling out what seemed like mountains of paperwork in application to join the missionary group known as Wycliffe Bible Translators. Part of the preparation to go as a missionary with Wycliffe was to attend two summers of intense linguistic training. This would prepare one to create a phonetic alphabet for a previously unwritten language. Once that was done a dictionary of words could be compiled. The language could be described technically and grammatically. Later primers, booklets for beginning readers, could be written. By these tools people could be taught to read the language of their hearts, their mother tongue. Once their language became a written one, it would be possible for the Bible and other literature to be translated into their language.

Can you imagine not having the Bible in your own language? Having no educational materials, no medical information, no ability to write a letter to someone you love?

Roy had attended Wycliffe’s first session of the two-part course of linguistic studies at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, OK during the summer of 1961 while I was in Washington having surgery. This summer series of courses is known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL).

Because Roy was aiming to be a pilot rather than a translator, he would not be trying to decipher an unwritten language. Hence, he was required to take only one summer at SIL. Instead he would need to take training in jungle aviation and maintenance of small aircraft. There is a training course for this at Waxhaw, NC called Jungle Aviation and Radio Service, better known as JAARS.

The essence of life here on this earth is change, or so I have come to believe based on my own experiences! Change comes by our own decisions as well as the decisions and needs of people around us.

GUATEMALA

What I am going to write now about the lovely country of Guatemala is written more than forty years after we were there. Much of that time I have forgotten. Friends mentioned in this chapter have answered questions for me in the effort to make this information correct. I am so grateful to each of them! It is possible that I still have not gotten everything right and I apologize for that in advance.

Sixteen months after Ruth's birth we began to pack up our small household for a move to Norman, OK. There I would take the summer course at SIL which was required for our application to Wycliffe. While we were preparing to move, an urgent plea for help came to KBBI from radio station TGN in the country of Guatemala. "Where's that?," we asked ourselves getting out the atlas to find that Guatemala is the Central American country directly south of Mexico.

Radio station TGN in Guatemala City, a ministry of the Central American Mission (CAM) was in desperate need of a technical person to help them on a short-term basis. The mission was contacting Christian radio stations asking if they knew of anyone who could help them out on very short notice. Ed Yoder, the technician who was currently at the station, had a very sick daughter urgently needing to be seen by specialists in the United States. The family hoped to be in the US for a short time, maybe about three months, and then return to Guatemala with some kind of solution to the medical problems. The broadcasting equipment at TGN was old, in need of constant attention to keep it on the air. It was mandatory that a technician be found as soon as possible to stand in for a few months for this man.

Days passed while inquiries were made by the CAM in an effort to find someone who could go to Guatemala. But no one was found who was able to travel to a foreign country on such short notice. Eventually, the station manager at KBBI, asked Roy if he could possibly go since we were already preparing to move. But wait, we were not headed south, we were headed east!

While we were packing, the situation continued to become more urgent for the Yoder family in Guatemala to get their daughter to medical help. After several more days, we contacted Wycliffe to find out if I could delay attending SIL for one year, while we detoured to Guatemala as temporary helpers for the Central American Mission. Such a change in plans would interrupt the schedule already laid out by WBT in our training for participation in the flying ministry. Wycliffe agreed we could delay our training for one year until the following summer of 1966.

Thus it was that our lives took a different turn from what we had planned! The Scriptures tell us that mankind lays his plans but God directs the steps of those who trust in Him. The Christian can be flexible with a sense of confidence when he understands that God is the one who is really in charge and that He sees a larger picture than we are able to see.

Immediately we set about getting a family passport, needed shots and immunizations, and purchasing a shower curtain. A shower curtain? There were several phone calls to Guatemala to the missionaries we would be working with there. Telephone connections between Guatemala and the United States at the time were via radio to Miami, Florida and then by telephone lines across the U.S. The voice connection was quite broken up and intermittent making it difficult to have a conversation. We kept asking them what things we should bring, which was very helpful, but one item we heard repeated several times was a shower curtain. We did not know why that was such an important item, but it sure sounded like it must be! We were to discover that the house we would be using had no bathtub, only a shower. A shower curtain was necessary but not easily available within the country at that time.

The usual procedure for working with a mission involves making application, being screened, attending training that the mission may have, language school and raising funds for personal support. A period of time speaking in churches to raise this support is part of what the missionary usually does before leaving for any place of missionary service.

Our participation in the ministry of CAM and TGN was unusual in that we were not members of the mission and had not gone through any preliminary screening or other preparations that the Central American Mission had for its members. Because of the urgent need in Guatemala, our fund raising preparation was very brief.

The next Sunday we spoke in one adult Sunday school class at a church in Los Angeles. The class had been financially supporting the radio station for some time, so had already been praying about the urgent technical need there. The class decided right then to contribute monthly to our financial support.

The next day, Monday, we drove our Rambler station wagon, packed to the brim full of our household goods, to Phoenix. We stayed with Roy's parents and spent Tuesday unloading our belongings from our car for storage in their garage. Their church had us speak on Wednesday evening during the mid-week service after which they said they would help us financially.

So it was that these two groups provided about \$300, half of our monthly income. The remaining \$350 or so that we needed each month was given to us from funds the mission had set aside for emergency situations. The plan was that we would be needed on a short-term basis, maybe three or four months, until the Yoder family could return from the States to their ministry in Guatemala.

So it was that after only about ten days notice, Roy and I and little Ruth, headed for Guatemala! We left Phoenix with our Rambler packed with only the household items that we felt we could not get along without such as clothes, kitchen items and baby equipment. There was a problem with only one item when crossing the border into Mexico at Nogales, Arizona. The customs officials wanted a large sum of money as an import fee for a certain radio, a Heath Kit AM/FM which Roy had built. Rather than pay the fee we returned to Phoenix leaving the radio in storage at the home of Roy's parents. This event delayed our travel schedule by one day.

The following day we headed out once again going to the border crossing at Lukeville, Arizona where no problems were encountered with the crossing. At last we were on our way south through the Mexican desert. We had car troubles in the afternoon, but were able to limp into the city of Hermosillo to a repair shop. I remember being very nervous while the car was being repaired. This was my first time out of the United States and here we were stuck way out in the hot desert among people I could not even talk to! Roy could speak some Spanish, which he had studied in high school but his abilities were limited.

After repairs were done we drove to the coastal town of Guaymas, where we were able to find a motel for the night. I do not remember anything of what the area was like. The next day we continued south to Mazatlan. Staying in places with these names probably sounds very romantic to the reader, but actually these towns had not yet become the tourist attractions that they are today. The next day we traveled inland, bypassing Guadalajara and continuing to Morelia, a lovely colonial city in the mountains where we stayed that night.

Our travels the following day took us through Mexico City and eastward to the city of Puebla, where we had been scheduled to stay over night at the home of a missionary couple. However, because of our delay crossing the border into Mexico, we arrived at a time when they had to go out of town so were unable to put us up for the night. We found a small motel instead.

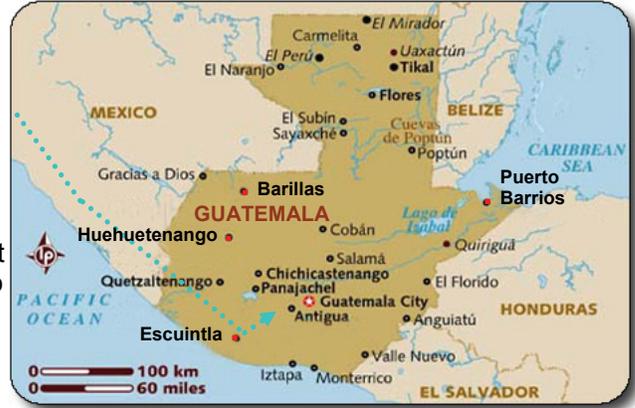
During that night I began to feel very sick, making travel the following day extremely unpleasant for me. I had all the symptoms of Montezuma's Revenge, which are much like having a bad case of stomach flu. Arriving at a small motel near Vera Cruz on the east coast, we decided to stay over a couple extra days at a small motel there so I could recover. I guess we had a room near the ocean but I was too sick to notice or care, so do not remember anything of the beach there. Two days of rest set me to rights enough that we could continue our travels.

Traveling from Vera Cruz south and west across the isthmus of Mexico, took us through our first sights of tropical vegetation and eventually to the border of Guatemala at the town of Tapachula. The building for the Guatemalan border station was off the highway a short way into the jungle. Because it was hot and humid we had our car windows open. Through the jungle we heard what sounded like music. It grew louder and louder as we drew closer to the station. Someone had a radio turned up full blast and the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah was filling the forest with magnificent music! Such was our introduction to the country of Guatemala. It made us feel welcome and excited to be in this place where God had sent us on such short notice and so far from home!

We were at the Guatemalan border station for several hours while our car was investigated. Roy had to telephone Don Rutledge, the station manager of TGN, in Guatemala City so Don could confirm to the border officials that we were indeed going to be working there with them and with the Central American Mission.

From the border the highway ran south to the city of Escuintla. (Our friend David Luna, grew up in Escuintla and was attending high school in Guatemala City at about the time of these events. However, it was to be about 13 years before we had the privilege of meeting David, his wife Marion and their family.)

At Escuintla we turned east and climbed up to 5,000 feet to Guatemala City. By now it was dark and had begun to rain in torrents so heavy the windshield wipers could not keep the window clear. We crept along in the blinding rain arriving on the western side of Guatemala City at the home of the Rutledge family at about 10 p.m.



Before I continue with telling about our home in Guatemala City, I want to tell you a few things about the lovely country of Guatemala, which is called The Land of Eternal Spring. There are two seasons in the year, wet and dry. Wet runs from May to October and dry runs from November to April. During the wet season it rains daily in torrents. Most people carry plastic ponchos or other protective clothing. Others just drip-dry after its over. The topography is from sea level to over 10,000 feet. There are at least 33 volcanoes that are considered active. Soccer is the national game, played by probably every boy often in his bare feet. The Pan American highway runs through the country on its transcontinental course from Alaska to Chile. This photo is of the St Francis Church and Police Headquarters in downtown Guatemala City. The grounds and road access is quite different today from when we were there but the buildings remain.



Tikal

The ancient Mayan Indians lived in what is now Guatemala, as well as in southern Mexico. There are many ruins of cities with temples, homes and even courts for playing a ball game, probably similar to soccer. The ruins have been slowly uncovered from the jungle growth that reclaimed them over the centuries until they are now a big draw for tourism.

Perhaps the most famous site of Mayan ruins in Guatemala is Tikal which is located in the eastern jungle far from Guatemala City. We never had the opportunity, or perhaps never took it, to visit Tikal.



**Resplendent Quetzal
national symbol of liberty**

A MISSIONARY HOUSE

We were so late in arriving at the Rutledge's home that they had begun to worry that we might have taken a wrong turn and become lost in the rain along the way. After our brief introductions to one another, they took us several blocks down the street to the house they had arranged for us to rent. It was a wonderful little place, but we were too tired to take much notice of it that first night!



What do you think of when you imagine the house of a missionary? The house that had been so graciously provided for us to rent was not what I had expected to live in on the mission field! Located in one of the earliest subdivisions built in Guatemala City, it was a single story with 3 bedrooms and a bath. The dining room was part of the living room. There was a small, but very nice kitchen and an enclosed patio. The furnishings provided for us belonged to the Yoder family, who were taking their daughter back to the United States for medical treatment.

Attached to the back of the house was a patio and fourth bedroom with a half bath, which were quarters for a maid. Her bathroom had only cold water even for the shower. On the patio was a deep sink called a "pila", which was used for washing clothes by hand. This too had only cold water. The house was connected to all the other houses on the block with the patios in back separated by high walls with pieces of broken glass imbedded in the tops. The roofs were flat so that a person could walk from house to house along all the roofs. All windows were covered by grillwork to discourage thieves.

Each house had a tiny front yard enclosed by a high metal fence that we padlocked at night. The short driveway was long enough for just one car. The house was constructed of cement block, covered with plaster and painted a light blue color. The floors were all cement tile. We had never yet had such a lovely place to live. We were thrilled with our new home!

The house next to ours on one side was a small store. It was possible to purchase exactly what one needed at the moment, such as one or two eggs, a cup of sugar, one banana, or a small measure of cooking oil. Down the street from us a short way we could purchase tortillas at meal times, hot off the griddle in just the number we needed for that meal. Most items cost a penny each, or five cents for an avocado, twenty cents for a large papaya and so on.

The other wives talked to me about hiring a young girl to help with housework and childcare, which they had all done. A maid? Who, me have a maid? No, I was sure I could get along on my own. After all I was now a missionary and shouldn't waste money on something I could do myself! I felt pretty certain about it and so the other ladies finally decided they had to let me try it out. A couple of weeks scrubbing Roy's work clothes and bed sheets by hand were enough to teach me that I did indeed need a maid's help! The other wives knew of a young girl named Rebecca, who was in need of such work.

SETTLING IN

Moving to another country was a real culture shock. So much was different. Having Rebecca working for me, I began to feel very wasteful. After a short time I noticed that she was very aware of things I threw away, such as plastic bags, but she never took them out of the trash. Suddenly I thought maybe she wished she could have them! I asked her if she would like some and she said she would, so after that I offered all of them to her.

There was a grocery store in the city, similar to a small super market, that had meats packaged in containers like what I was used to getting in the States. However, the heads and feet of the chickens were tucked into their empty belly cavities. Rebecca said she could put those in soup, so always after that heads and feet went home with her on the bus. Fish heads and fins went into soup at her house too.

We purchased water in 5 gallon bottles, which were delivered to our house by truck. We had to use this water for drinking, to brush teeth, for making ice cubes or gelatin dishes and to put into any recipe. I was taught to wash all fruits and vegetables in tap water mixed with a few drops of iodine. It must have been effective, because we never had another episode of Montezuma's Revenge.

Rebecca was used to doing the laundry in the pila, plus she was better than I at bargaining in the market place. When she came home from shopping her basket was loaded with wonderful fruits and vegetables, many of which were unfamiliar to us. She could cook which was a great help when I needed that. In addition to all this, Rebecca was a wonderful blessing for childcare because she loved our daughter Ruth.

Although Rebecca lived at home with her family, she would sometimes stay overnight to care for Ruth. It was necessary to arrange this a day ahead so she could bring her clothes for the night when she came to work the next morning. Using the maid's room was a real change for her since her home was a small hut with three generations of relatives living together. Rebecca rode the bus to and from work at 5 cents each way. We paid her \$15 a week plus bus fare, which we felt was too low and would gladly have paid her more.

But we were warned that if we did pay her more than the going rate, she would be in a bad way when we left. She would find it difficult to go back to the going wage. Neither Roy nor I had any practical preparation for life in a foreign country so were not prepared for the kinds of daily life things that would have to be decided. Our other missionary coworkers and friends became our tutors in this regard.

When we first went to Guatemala, Ruth was sixteen months old, just beginning to talk. As soon as Rebecca was hired to work for us, Ruth stopped talking completely. She did not say anything for I don't know how long! I was quite worried by this turn of events! I need not have worried, it did not last. When Ruth began talking again it was in a wonderful mix of both languages as if they were one. What a wonderful time of life to learn a new language. So much easier than when you are twenty- three years old, as I was!

During the early months we were in Guatemala, I attended an intensive study of Spanish at a school in the city center. Getting there meant a ride on the city bus each weekday. This study was interrupted when I became pregnant and had to spend three weeks on bed rest to try to prevent a miscarriage. Having a maid helping me daily with housework, cooking, shopping, and childcare made complete bed rest a possibility. Even so, the baby was lost, a sad second experience of this kind for us.

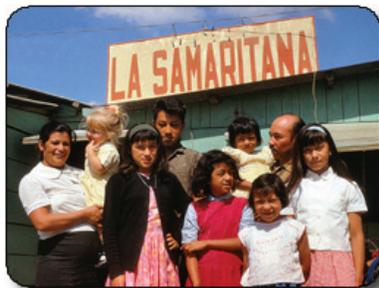
There was one doctor in particular who cared for those of us who were missionaries. Dr Rios made house calls to our home on several occasions and this event was one of them. Pat Rutledge was with me each time he came to act as interpreter even though he spoke good English, so there would be no misunderstanding between us about the medical discussion.

With our abilities in Spanish being limited, church attendance was something of a problem for us. During our time in the country, we attended three churches. We started out at Cinco Calles, the largest evangelical church in the city. Services were in Spanish and other missionaries attended there.

Then there was Union Church, an English language church for people more comfortable speaking English. There were people from many countries and many professions attending there. One couple was Mr. and Mrs. John Gordon Mein, the Ambassador from the United States. There were also missionaries associated with Wycliffe Bible Translators and other mission groups. Being among the folks from Wycliffe was a natural for us since we were making application to work with that mission.

A sad note here about Mr. Mein. Three years later on August 28, 1968 Mr. Mein became the first US Ambassador to be assassinated in a foreign country. He was killed during a kidnapping attempt by a rebel group when his official car was forced off a main boulevard in the capital and raked with gunfire.

As time passed, we became a bit better at Spanish and chose to fellowship mostly at Monte Carmelo, a small neighborhood church located next door to the home of Noe Reyes, who worked with Roy in the radio station work shop. It was a small one-room building. We went there probably the longest of any other church simply because we spent so much time with Noe and his family. We often went to their home after church for a yummy lunch. Guests, along with Noe and his wife Rebecca, were always seated first at the table, the children serving the meal and eating after the adults had finished. It was a lively meal, everyone who was not seated to eat would be standing around the table enjoying the conversation.



Noe and Rebecca had six children, all girls except the oldest, a boy named Ludin who grew from 12 to 14 years old while we were in the country. He grew up to become a pilot serving with rural missions in Guatemala.

Their youngest was Elvia, a 3-year old little girl, a great playmate for Ruth. Elvia was very dark and Ruth was very blond. The Reyes family called Elvia "la negrita", the dark one, and Ruth "la blanca", the light one.



Men working with Roy in the workshop and technical aspects were Noe and his brother Elias Reyes, and for one summer, Austin Anderson, an engineer and teacher from Moody Bible Institute. Noe worked with Roy the longer of the two brothers so that we became very well acquainted with him and his family.

RADIO STATION WORK – TGN

Roy's work at the radio station began immediately the next morning after we arrived in the country. Roy was given a very brief introduction and overview of the station equipment by Ed Yoder the engineer, who was anxious to be on his way to the United States with his family. The Yoder family returned to the States within that first week, if we remember correctly.

Roy was quickly thrown into the work of the station, finding himself in the position of needing complete dependence on our Lord for guidance in how to do the work.



The station was on the air from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. each day but because of the advanced age of the broadcasting equipment, staying on the air was a challenge. The signal went off the air frequently, sometimes as often as two to four times during a 16-hour broadcasting day. Each time it failed, Roy had to drive eight miles to the antennae site to get the signal back on the air. Each time he was faced with failed equipment, Roy would pray asking God to direct his thinking in doing the repairs. He claimed the verses in Proverbs 16:3, which says, “Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.” Time and time again God revealed the source of the problems and the solutions as Roy trusted in Him for guidance in this task, which was so huge.

The antenna site was located out of the city, near the little town of Petapa, on a large piece of property with a building that housed the transmitting equipment.

Antonio Reyes, the resident caretaker of the property, and his family lived in a small house there. The property could not be left unattended at any time because of the possibility of theft or vandalism. Antonio had the on-going job of cutting the grass, which he did with a machete.



Radio TGN, which stands for Telling Good News, used a standard AM broadcasting frequency of 730 khz. Radio TGNA, Telling Good New Abroad, was on the 49 meters short wave frequency of 6.995 Mhz and radio TGNB is on the 31 meters short wave frequency of 9.505 mhz.

TGBA a small but vital radio transmitter was in Barillas, on 2.360 Mhz, called Radio Maya. It had a small range but reached out to pre-tuned radios using local languages which included the four major Indian languages of Guatemala; Quiche, Mam, Cakchiquel, and Kekchj.

In 1970 a new frequency was added using TGNC on the 90 meter short wave frequency of 3.300 Mhz. This allows them to experience less interference from other stations using the 49 band. The FM outreach has really grown, Roy left a FM transmitter on 100.5 Mhz, which has been replaced with a much more powerful model. Today all the stations are broadcasting from a 7200 ft high mountain just to the north of Guatemala City with a coverage all the way to the East coast of Guatemala, into Mexico, Honduras, and San Salvador. Repeaters rebroadcast as well to lots of communities throughout Guatemala. There have been lots of improvements over the many years since we were there.

As the first few months of our stay in Guatemala passed, the problems of staying on the air consistently were major. Lightning was a big problem, causing arcing between the tower and ground, putting the station off the air and damaging the tubes in the transmitter. This was solved by adding an electrical ground to the tower. Gradually the broadcasting equipment was made more reliable so trips to the Petapa site were reduced to only once or twice a week instead of several times daily.

Among his other responsibilities at the station, Roy had to climb the towers at the antenna property in order to maintain the antenna wires and change light bulbs. The heights of the main tower was 330 ft, the smaller one was 150 ft. In order to improve the signals, Roy and Elias Reyes, who worked for the station, tried experimental antenna designs, eventually settling on one design called a Lazy H.

Those of us from the USA who were working at TGN often met as a group in our homes for meals, fellowship, singing and prayer together. One evening shortly after we had arrived in the country, we were all together eating supper in Don & Pat Rutledge’s home, when suddenly we heard a series of three large explosions in the distance. The others at the table told us it was bombs! Somewhere in the city, there was trouble between the rebels and the army.

Although we saw soldiers around frequently, I think that night was the first time I knew that the country was under a martial law situation! It is possible to be that uninformed when you do not speak the language well enough to read a newspaper or understand much when listening to the news.



Don & Pat Rutledge

Roy says he knew before we went to Guatemala that it was under martial law, but does not think he really understood what that meant. For example: returning home very late one night after working on the equipment, Roy pulled up at our home, stepped out of the pick up truck to unlock our gate and found himself face to face with two soldiers, one of whom was pointing a machine gun at him!

Because of the martial law at that time, anyone driving after dark had to have the dome light turned on in the vehicle. That enabled authorities to see what was happening inside a vehicle when they had to pull one over and approach it. The dome light in our truck had burned out that night as Roy was driving along. He had turned on a flashlight and laid it on the dashboard, but it did not have a very good battery so flickered off and on as he drove along toward home. For that reason, these soldiers had followed him back to our house. They were very young men who appeared more frightened than Roy felt, which made him a bit nervous having a gun pointed at him!

When we first went to Guatemala, we drove a Rambler station wagon, which was our family car. The government was charging very high import duty fees on cars, the fee for our car was somewhere between \$1500 and \$2000. Since we could not pay such a price it was decided that Roy would drive it back to Phoenix and purchase a pick up truck to bring back. He was accompanied on the trip by Harold Casper, who helped at the station in the music ministry but whose main service was as the go-between for the mission in matters relating to the government.



**Harold & Juliene
Casper**

Roy and Harold were gone a couple of weeks, staying at the home of Roy's parents. Dad Smith helped them build a box over the bed of the pick up which was then filled with things they wanted to bring back to Guatemala. The box was filled as full as it could be with transmitter parts for use at TGN and also for David Solt to use at stations operated by the Latin American Mission in the other Central American countries. Roy remembers the import duty charged on the truck as being 10% of what he paid for it, maybe about \$35. Because TGN had a "public radio" kind of relationship with the government of Guatemala, there was a minimum amount of paper work required to bring into the country things for use at the station. There was also import exoneration so things being used at the radio stations could be brought in duty free.



Ed & June Yoder

We originally were to stay in the country for about 3 months to help out while the Yoder family sought medical help in the States. But, things did not go quickly for the Yoder family as they went through medical tests for their daughter. It became apparent that they would not be able to return very soon to Guatemala. They needed to stay close to medical care for her. As it turned out later, they were unable to return to the ministry there.

So it was that, the mission asked us to stay on at TGN until we could be replaced by two couples who would be coming to work at the station after they would complete their two year course of Spanish study at a language school in Costa Rica. Roy contacted Wycliffe about this, which had its own schedule for our training program, to inform that mission about this further change in our lives. The three months that we had been scheduled to stay in the country was extended to almost two full years.

There were many aspects to the ministry of the radio station. TGN and TGNA are known as La Emissora Radio Cultural, cultural radio.

Literacy programs produced by the government were aired over TGN in a "public radio" relationship with the government.

The missionary staff created music programs with vocal segments accompanied by piano, violin, organ, and vibraharp, which looks much like a marimba.





There were various children's programs, a children's choir and an adult choir. Bible correspondence courses were offered over the air with many lessons being received by mail every day. There were also short wave broadcasts beaming Christian programs in English toward the United States.



In addition to the missionary staff of three couples at the radio station, here are a few pictures of the Guatemalans working in the office, and behind the microphone. Left to right, here are Ruth, Maria Velia, Paco, Benjamin, Jorge and Jeremias.



When we first arrived in the country, TGN studios were located in a rural area known as El Campo. Two months after we arrived there was a service of celebration in honor of the fifteenth anniversary of the station. A huge tent was put up, guest speakers came and a huge crowd attended.



Not long after that the studios were moved from El Campo to a location in the city, directly behind the Central American Bible Institute (CABI). This was quite a project!

First an existing building at the back of the CABI facility had to be remodeled to accommodate the offices and studios. Air conditioning and soundproofing were added.



Another section was added on to serve as a technical workshop.



Then, a high wall was added inside the existing walls around CABI to enclose the station buildings. A new entrance gate and guard house was added. The studios, offices, and workshop buildings were cement block construction, while the higher enclosing walls were of adobe bricks. Roy was in charge of all these modifications including the hiring of local men to do most of this work.

Every year a crew of men came from Washington State to work on various projects that needed doing. They were present at the time this construction was being done. What a great help they were!

Shown here is the before and after of the new entrance gate and guard house.



RADIO MAYA – TGBA

The remotest radio station ministry of the Central American Mission was in the northern part of the country in a village named Barillas. This small station was TGBA, Radio Maya, and it broadcasts the gospel in several local indigenous languages. As mentioned above in the overview of CAM radio stations, TGBA is still in operation.



Traveling to Barillas was via the Pan American highway with a stop at the city of Huehuetenango.



There we visited the school for the children of missionaries who lived in rural areas and villages. Roy did some work on the electrical power regulator and food refrigerator there at the school. We enjoyed getting acquainted with the house parents and teachers, thinking that one day our own daughter Ruth might be one of their students. It was a good place to rest up before continuing on the remaining 89 miles of the long journey to Barillas along dirt roads with huge pot holes, mud, rocks and bumps. In those days it was about an 11 hour drive. Roy made the trip several times, Ruth and I went along on two trips.

The first time we traveled to Barillas was during a hard rain. It got dark long before we arrived and at one point we had to work our way carefully around a fallen tree blocking part of the road. It was touch and go, getting around it without plunging over the steep cliff on one side! David Eckstrom, who was traveling with us, got out in the rain to walk ahead and guide us.



Another time Roy's sister Barbara came to visit us from Phoenix, AZ and we took her along to Barillas. It was quite an adventure for her, as it was for us every time. I remember that particular trip as one of sunshine rather than of rain.

The Radio Maya or TGBA transmitter was in a small room at the base of the tower in this picture.

It rained a lot there in that mountainous part of the country, I read once that they get 270 inches a year, but Bill Veith has told me it may have been as much as 9 meters or about 367 inches a year! All that moisture made the dirt roads very muddy. Out walking once in the rain, Helen Eckstrom and I sank above our ankles into the muck as we tried to step on rocks where ever we could find one.

The 4 towers in use by TGBA then had an antenna that became untuned when it rained. So one of the first things Roy needed to do was replace the wire antenna between the towers with one that was not affected as much by all the rain. This provided a much better signal so the broadcasts could be heard a lot further away.



There were three missionary couples living in Barillas.



One couple was David and Helen Eckstrom, who were mainly involved in Bible translation, evangelism and teaching. They could hike many miles a day up and down the mountains right along with people who lived far from any roads at all and were used to walking many miles at a time. As of the time of this writing David and Helen speak and have done translation in five languages. In addition to Spanish which is the official language, in 1996 the Guatemalan government recognizes 21 Mayan language groups still being spoken in the country today.

The Summer Institute of Linguistics breaks those groups down even further so in addition to Spanish, it lists 51 languages still being spoken in the country at the time of this writing.

Jim and Gail McKelvey had only recently arrived from language school in Costa Rica. They were involved in the ministry of the Instituto Evangelica Berea, the Bible Institute which trained young men for ministry.



Jim & Gail McKelvey



Bill & Margie Veith

Bill and Margie Veith are another couple who lived there. Bill kept the radio station running and taught at the Institute. Margie did some music on the air and in the local church. Pastors who lived further out in the mountains would sometimes come into town for short Bible training courses, music lessons, shopping in the market and fellowship with other pastors.



Bill and Margie had built their home of cement blocks and corrugated metal for the roof. It was a comfortable, roomy house. A generator powered the radio station for broadcasting two hours each evening. Electricity for the house was available only during those two hours. The light from kerosene lanterns was used the rest of the time.

There were not always enough lanterns to go around, especially when there was company in the house. That's when Margie had to wash dishes in the dark. As I dried dishes in the dark beside her, I asked how she could tell if the dishes were clean. She cheerfully replied that she had learned to feel the clean. After all these years I remember that, and sometimes purposely do not look at a dish as I wash it. Its true, you can tell if a dish is clean by the way it feels.

People would come from more remote areas for medical or dental help and trading at the market. Sometimes a couple would ask Bill to marry them. I had the privilege to attend one such wedding.

The little church in Barrillas had two Sunday services, one in Spanish and another in the local Indian or indigenous language. When we entered the small church for the wedding, there were a few people sitting here and there on pews made of wooden planks. I did not see anyone who looked like they were getting married, so I thought the happy couple had not yet arrived. But sure enough, they were there, along with their little boy about 5 years of age and a baby. I was told that when couples living together according to their native customs in remote areas of the countryside become Christians, they usually want to be married in church. They do this when they get an opportunity to make a trip to any town or village that has a church.



Following the wedding ceremony a lady from the church opened her home for a small reception. In her small house we sat on low benches around a fire pit in the center of the dirt floor. Cups of coffee and sweet tasting bread were served to us. The bride appeared to be kissing her baby but then I realized that she was transferring chewed bread from her own mouth to her baby's mouth. Before this, I had not thought about what mothers do to feed their babies when there are no prepared baby foods available, no blenders to make your own baby foods and no electricity to run a blender if you did have one!

A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY!



Barber Shop



Carrying water



Carrying wood

Guatemala is a land of volcanoes, of which a number are active, often creating earthquakes some almost unnoticeable, but others were pretty strong. Quakes were common enough that we ignored them most of the time.

Pacaya volcano is close to Guatemala City and has been belching smoke, steam, and streams of lava on a constant basis ever since 1965. One day a group of us drove as close to it as we could, then climbed up to a ridge near the crater. It was slow going in deep gritty lava cinders about the size of peas, called scoria. Our feet sank in ankle deep so that for every step forward we slid backwards downhill.



Roy made the climb with Ruth sitting on his shoulders. It seemed like we would not ever get to the top, but we finally did. We enjoyed sitting on the ridge watching the mountain perform. The sound was like that of a canon booming. Coming down was much easier than going up had been! We simply sat down in the lava and slid on our bottoms. Not a good idea to wear clothes that you cared about!

Today there are guided tours to take the many tourists to the best viewing places on the mountain.



Chichicastenango is a city famous for its mixture of Spanish and native cultures. The main plaza is where the market takes place. There are two Catholic churches, facing each other from either end of the plaza.

Chichicastenango was then and continues to be a popular tourist location.



Up a hillside in the woods we saw a place where chickens were sacrificed and candles burned. The shaman there offered to sacrifice and pray for good fortune on our daughter. We declined his offer.

The city of Antigua was the first capitol of Guatemala but was severely damaged by earthquake and floodwaters spilling from a lake on a volcano. After that, the capitol was moved to Guatemala City.



Antigua now is a lovely older city full of churches damaged by earthquakes. The ruins were in much disrepair when we saw them, but more recent pictures on the internet show that much restoration has been taking place over the years since then. Antigua is also a major tourist attraction.



To renew tourist status on our passport, several times during the two years we were in Guatemala, Roy traveled alone to San Salvador, the capitol of El Salvador. Ruth and I went along on two occasions. Whether Roy was alone or we all went, we stayed away a couple of days at a time visiting in the home of David and Georgina Solt, missionaries with the Latin American Mission (LAM) who were also in a radio station ministry. It was a hilarious experience being with this couple and their lively family of six children.

One of Dave's sons now has his own electronic equipment manufacturing company, and the transmitters now in use at TGN are his design. It is a small world we share!

Twice Roy had the chance to make trips with David through Honduras and Nicaragua to help him with maintenance work on the LAM radio stations in those countries.

SOME OF OUR FREE TIME

Once we were able to take a short trip to Puerto Barrios on the east coast. There we played in the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

On another occasion, Noe took Roy fishing in the Pacific Ocean. They did not catch anything but were able to purchase a large Bonita, a member of the tuna species, from another fisherman.



Mayan ruins abound in the country and are very interesting.

We visited these ruins at Zaculeu in the State of Huehuetenango.

Once a year we had opportunity to vacation at property used by the mission as a vacation retreat for its staff. This was at beautiful Lake Atitlan, a gorgeous blue lake surrounded by volcanoes, which many people consider to be the most beautiful lake in the world.



On one occasion the entire staff of the radio station and their families went to the lake together. It was a wonderful time of swimming, playing games, and fellowshiping as a group.



PMT VISITS

Practical Missionary Training (PMT) was a summer of ministry and training for college students who were preparing to become missionaries. PMT and CAM cooperated together each summer in their ministries. Students participating in the PMT program, would arrive in the country as a group, then were scattered around into the homes of resident missionaries where they would live for three to four weeks at a time.



Ken and Mary Royer, a couple who had attended Biola College with us, and who had in fact announced their engagement the same night we did at the annual Spring Banquet, were the leaders of the ministry of PMT during our time in Guatemala. Ken and Mary now work with a group called Link Care, a counseling center specifically for missionaries and those in Christian ministry.

We had the opportunity of housing a young man from New York while he helped at the radio station. In addition to their time with CAM, the students also visited and participated in other ministries in Mexico and other Central American countries.



THE LAST MONTHS

Roy worked on the radio equipment fixing as much as he could during our first year there. But as the days marched on into the early months of 1966, the age of the equipment combined with technical problems brought the mission leadership to a decision that a new 10,000 watt transmitter needed to be built. It was necessary for Roy to travel to the United States to purchase needed items for the project.

First the design had to be drawn up. Then a very long list of electronic items, wire, tools, and other things that were not related to electronics but which were needed, was compiled. This preparation lasted several months. All of this in addition to the on-going work of maintaining the station, kept Roy even more busy than usual.

But there came a day when he stayed away from work with an upset stomach. Roy has always been one to keep to his regular routine, plugging along, even when not feeling at his best, so staying home from work was a bit unusual for him. At first I did not think much about this change in his behavior. I was busy because Roy's cousin Carol Crook, a nurse, was visiting us. Carol had spent that summer in a medical ministry in Honduras. On her return trip to the States, she had stopped to visit us for a few days.

Carol and I were enjoying doing girl things together while Roy just sat around at home. After a couple of days Carol commented that he appeared jaundiced, stating that she was sure he had hepatitis. Sure enough, not much later, he began non-stop vomiting and his urine turned the color of coca cola, which we were told was a sure sign of hepatitis! Again, Dr Rios made a house call.

Roy was hospitalized for about a week with an intravenous line of fluids going into his arm. He was fed a bland diet including one item that seemed to be served at every hospital meal, a squash called “guisquil” (pronounced wis-keel). He came to dread seeing it. Guisquil was one vegetable that neither of us ever learned to enjoy!

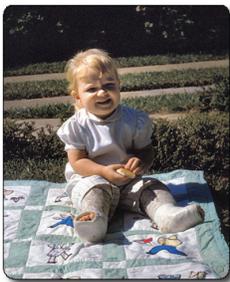
It was only a few weeks later that Roy flew to Chicago to begin collecting the items on the long list that were needed to build the new transmitter. Ruth and I stayed in Guatemala and had a number of dubious adventures while he was away!

GALE’S ADVENTURES

One night there was a rattling of the front door, which was locked. It woke me up and frightened me out of my wits. I was sure some robber was trying to get in the house! With trembling hands I phoned Don, who lived about three blocks away. He asked if I had left the porch light on, which I had. He told me to look out the window and see if I could see anyone. I did not see anyone at all. When the sound did not occur again, Don concluded that it was probably a very large moth flying at the porch light! Yes, they do have very large moths there, known as hawk moths! One species having a wing span up to 12 inches wide.

By the time Ruth was a two year old, her legs had become quite bowed. The doctors at Children’s Hospital in Los Angeles, California had recommended the orthopedic surgeon who was seeing her in Guatemala. He had been educated in the United States, so when he recommended doing corrective surgery, I felt confident it was the right thing to do. It was the same course of treatment that had been given to me as a small child.

Surgery was scheduled for some time ahead and ended up taking place during the time Roy was in the States. I was able to stay day and night with Ruth for the entire time that she was in the hospital. Don and Pat sat with me through the surgery and were at the hospital with us as often as possible during that week. When we returned home, Ruth had casts on both legs.



It was while Ruth was in the hospital, and I was staying with her constantly, that some changes occurred in Rebecca’s life. She was unable to continue to work for me. Pat helped me hire another young lady named Maria. I could not have gotten along without Maria’s help! She carried Ruth as we rode downtown on the bus for check ups at the doctor’s office. She was a wonderful help at home anytime there was a need to carry Ruth.

Maria was a country girl, so coming to the city for the first time had some new experiences for her. Maria had never used a telephone. She hated to answer it when it rang, holding the receiver as far as possible from her ear, and then yelling at it. An elevator was a mysterious thing too. She rode in an elevator for the first time when she accompanied Ruth and I to a doctor appointment downtown. When I stepped into the tiny “room” she looked mystified. Not realizing that she did not know what the “room” was, I told her to get in. When the door closed behind her, she almost panicked but when it began to move she about died!

When Maria went to the market for me, she would buy herself a length of sugar cane to suck on. As she peeled back the outer bark, she would drop it on my living room floor, much like peeling a banana. We had to have some lessons then in what is appropriate for “city life”.

In our small kitchen there was a water heater about the size and shape of a portable dishwasher. It was just the right height for me to stack things on top of, as if it were more counter space. I was in the habit of making all our bread myself. One day I realized that the cement tile floor was warm there by the water heater so began setting the bread pans on the floor. The bread would quickly raise right up! I was able to get the bread baking done in record time. This went on for some time, probably for weeks. Then one morning while Roy was in the U.S., I awoke to discover the kitchen was flooding with warm water!

Suddenly I understood why the floor had been warm. The pipes running under the cement tile floor from the water heater to the sink had corroded producing a small leak of warm water into the dirt under the kitchen floor tiles. Slowly the leak had grown in size until now there was so much water that it was seeping upward through the cement floor into the house! It was creeping through the kitchen and advancing toward the living room. I hollered for Maria to wake up. We grabbed broom and mop and began to push the water out the kitchen door onto the patio that had a drain in the center.

I grabbed the phone and called Don who had to come all the way from the radio station to turn off the water. When Don arrived he hunted all over for the shut off valve for the water only to realize that it had to be under a huge pile of dirt on the sidewalk in front of the house! The streets in our subdivision had been dug up weeks before while new pipe was laid for the sewers. Of course this was not done a block or two at a time. No, they dug up ALL the streets in the subdivision at the same time and left them all dug up the entire time they worked on the whole area! We were able to drive our cars alongside the ditch and park on the few clear spaces in front of our houses, but there was not room to turn into our driveway because our gate was blocked with piles of dirt. We kept our cars outside the metal fences around our yards.

Not until several months later after all the pipes had been replaced did they cover any of the ditches back up with dirt! I did not have a shovel, so Don had to drive back to TGN to get one. Then he had to dig through the dirt piles in front of our house until he found the shut off valve in the sidewalk. Maria and I spent the entire morning sweeping water out of the house!

Once the water was turned off, Don hired a plumber, who had to break up the kitchen floor and dig down into the mud to get at the leaking pipe. The next step was to wait for parts to be shipped in from someplace. Maria and I stepped over the big holes in the floor for nearly a month until the pipes were finally repaired and the cement floor tile replaced. During those weeks we had cold water so could cook and use the bathroom but there was no hot water. We showered at the Rutledge's home three blocks away.

ROY'S ADVENTURES

Meanwhile, Roy was very busy in Chicago. He stayed at the home of an engineer-teacher mentioned above, Austin Anderson, while he gathered many kinds of things. It was quite a mixture: wire, knobs, switches, lots of hardware, transformers, resistors, capacitors, motors, fans etc, for building the transmitter. A lawn mower for keeping the grass on the large antenna property under control, some tape recorders, another radio tower, and even a piano that had been donated by Moody Bible Church. The original builder of TGN transmitters, P K Myre, (on left in this photo) was the primary source of most large items but there were many donations by others.



To haul all of this, Roy had to purchase a large enclosed truck. He drove the fully loaded truck to Miami, FL. There it was loaded onto a ferry that traveled weekly across the Caribbean to the port city of Puerto Barrios on the east coast of Guatemala.

Since this was not a passenger ferry, Roy flew back to Guatemala City from Miami, arriving home after being away for nearly a month. It was another week until the ferry arrived in Puerto Barrios. It was then necessary to meet the ferry and drive the truck back to Guatemala City. So Harold Casper and Roy traveled together in a truck to Puerto Barrios.

There an armed guard of soldiers met them. At that time rebel activity was frequent and often severe in the rural areas in the eastern part of the country. It was necessary to protect electronic equipment, which would have been a desirable commodity for guerillas to possess or sell to finance their rebel activities.

While Roy and the others walked through the dimly lit hold of the ferry toward the truck, Roy suddenly stepped off into thin air. He fell approximately 15 feet down an opening where a metal ladder descended into the blackness of the bowels of the ferry. The other men heard him scream as he fell. He landed on a square platform, striking his back on a railing that enclosed it. If the platform and railing had not been there, he would have fallen much further and probably been killed.

This happened on the day of our fourth wedding anniversary. I almost became a widow that day! But God had other plans for us both, protecting Roy in the wonderful, mysterious ways He has as He works in our lives. Roy had some back pain from bruising but otherwise was unharmed.

The drive back to Guatemala City was made with an escort of a couple armed military jeeps and at least one armed guard riding with Roy in the truck. The trip was made safely, without any unpleasant incidents.

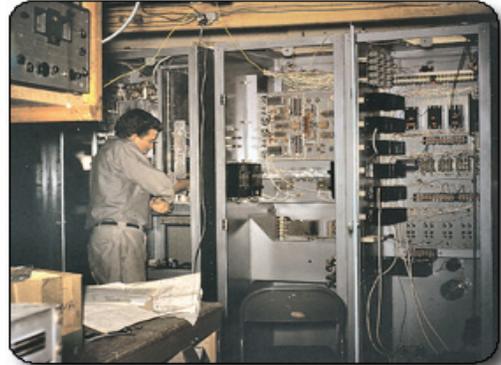


Noe prepares sheet metal...

After clearing customs, the real work began. Everyone at the station had a hand in some part of the unloading and unpacking of the truck, a major project in itself. Then followed the organizing of a mountain of materials and finally the construction of the new transmitter began.

The pressure was great to complete the construction of the new transmitter as much as possible and run important tests on it, so work was carried out for long hours every day, and late into the nights. Noe and Roy worked side by side, and Noe's faithfulness to that ministry reminds me of the verse in Proverbs chapter 17 verse 17 that says,

“A good friend sticketh closer than a brother”.



...Its coming along. We're getting there...

While all this was going on, our second Christmas in Guatemala arrived.

Antonio and his family who lived at the antenna site, wanted very much to visit with their family for the holiday. However, it was necessary that someone be at the site at all times.

So it came about that we spent Christmas day at the antenna site. I did not like the idea of being out at that isolated country spot for Christmas! It wasn't exactly my idea of the way one spent Christmas! I'm afraid my attitude was not very good! We had a campfire meal and Roy did some antenna work way up on the tower.



I remember trying to hold on to the ends of unruly wires so they would not become tangled while he worked. Ruth had a great time playing outdoors in the warm sunshine.

GOING HOME AGAIN

As I mentioned before, two new families were scheduled to replace us as soon as they would arrive from Costa Rica where they had been in Spanish language school for two years. As the construction on the new transmitter began, we were already closing in on the date for them to arrive. Our family was scheduled to leave the country as soon as the two new technicians were given a brief introduction at the radio station.

On the last day of January Ruth bumped her leg quite hard while playing on stairs and cracked the right shin bone. She had to have another cast put on, which she wore for three weeks but came off in time for us to leave the country. It was a prelude to problems she would have in the future with healing bones.

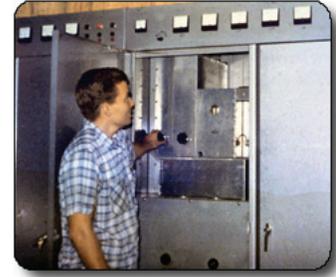
The construction of the transmitter was still not quite complete in January 1967 when the new families arrived from language school in Costa Rica to replace us.

In order to give our rental house to one of the new couples, we moved into an apartment in CABI, the Central American Bible Institute. We lived there while construction of the new transmitter went forward; the new men were introduced to the radio ministry and the construction of the transmitter, the broadcasting studios and the rural antenna site.



During this time, I was mostly involved with packing our belongings into 55 gallon barrels for shipment back to the U.S.

When the day came for us to leave Guatemala, the transmitter was still not complete. Although the construction of it was almost done, except for finishing touches, it had not yet been tested for use in broadcasting. Roy wanted to stay to see this job through to completion, but funds for our support had run out at the mission headquarters and the new men were eager to carry on the work themselves.



...cutting it close!



Our return to the U.S. in late March was by a propeller driven airplane from Guatemala City to New Orleans, a non-stop flight. The flight was a “white knuckle event” for me since I had not ever flown before. Another missionary wife Doris Cassell, the mother of Gail McKelvey, told me to remember that “underneath are the Everlasting Arms”. It helped some, but to this day I am still a chicken when it comes to flying.

From New Orleans we took a train to Dallas where we spent a few days at the CAM mission headquarters. After that we traveled to Phoenix, Arizona to spend a month with Roy’s family.

A PERSONAL TESTIMONIAL

Our dear friend David Luna has been mentioned previously in this chapter as one who listened to radio TGN while growing up in Guatemala. Having dinner with David and his lovely wife Marion recently, David talked about the ministry of radio in his life.



At the age of 15, David was sent to Latina America, a Christian school in Guatemala City, which had been founded by missionaries, both American and Guatemalan. The boys and girls were in separate dormitories and had house parents.

David remembers listening to TGN at school and that the radio staff came to school retreats and chapel meetings at the school.

He says that the Biblical teaching on the radio, added together with church and the school, was very important in his growth in understanding of the Gospel and in bringing him to faith in Christ.

David feels that because of the programs of literacy, education and the good quality of music, TGN was a very popular station with many people including those who were not Christians.

Ludin Reyes the son of Noe, also attended Latina America and was there at the same time David was.

Eventually David and Ludin met again here in this country and have maintained a friendship over the years since.

Ludin became a pilot serving his country in missions along with his wife Becky who is a nurse.



