

OPERATION AUCA - THIRTY YEARS LATER

by Larry Dinkins (Thailand)

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It was thirty years ago this past January that these five brave missionaries embarked on a campaign which has been called one of the boldest missionary exploits of modern times. Its name - OPERATION AUCA.

As I reviewed Elliot's book, I was intrigued by the dynamics that went into Operation Auca. The entire operation lasted only six months, yet in that brief span a number of principles surfaced which are in fact characteristics of any successful missionary enterprise.

1. Team work. Operation Auca was indeed a team effort. It combined the diverse personalities and gifts of a pilot, Ph.D. candidate, wrestler, orator, and paratrooper. Although representing three different "faith missions," the five were united in the "Auca dream" - taking the gospel to this unreached tribe.

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2. Prayer. The magnitude of the risk reflected the magnitude of prayer that went into Operation Auca. Jim Elliot's prayer life is a good example. After his death, a

we allow the tyranny of the urgent to disrupt our communion with God?

3. Language. The team was not afraid to tackle Auca as their third language. The majority were already proficient in Spanish and an Indian dialect. My tendency is to "hang up my linguistic harp" on the "willow of lethargy" after attaining a certain level of proficiency. Yet even the prospect of a third, unwritten language did not divert these five men.

4. Vision. Before forming Operation Auca, all five were having a fruitful work among Indians in established stations. Yet, at God's prompting, they were willing to step beyond their "job descriptions" to reach a fierce tribe numbering only 1,000.

5. Dependent on God. Since Operation Auca wasn't an "official mission project," the five decided to finance the venture with personal funds. This attitude especially struck me in view of all the controversy in OMF about finance and lack of funds. Why, imagine someone in OMF using his meager personal stipend to finance a ministry not covered in the estimate!

6. Persistent At one stage, a major flood wiped out Jim Elliot's station and he had to start again from scratch. Jim heard about the Auca in 1950 and tried to enter Aucaland in 1952, but was unable to do so. Finally, after six years of asking, seeking and knocking, and four months of preparation, he met his first Auca face to face.

7. Willing to take risks The Auca were Stone Age tribesmen who had killed all foreigners who dared to enter their territory. Nate Saint, the pilot, said, "The Aucas kill on sight, but someone must take the gospel to them." Jim Elliot told his wife, "If God wants it that way, I am ready to die for the salvation of the Auca."