

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Story by Christmas McGaughey

Frank and Marie Drown: Serving God Since the *End of the Spear*

Most people choose not to relive the most painful day of their lives. But Frank Drown recounts it regularly, and he does it with joy. Not with joy in having suffered the loss of his five missionary friends, but joy in seeing Christ use surrendered lives to bring others to eternal life.

Frank and Marie Drown were missionaries in the same Ecuadorian jungle as Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, and the three other Christian men whose deaths were retold in the movie *End of the Spear*, released earlier this year. Now in their 80s, the Drowns have never stopped serving God and are currently working to establish a radio station for unreached Native Americans in Canada. God is still using the couple's story, and the story of the men's deaths, to encourage Christians and to spread His Word both in Canada and in the Ecuadorian jungle.

In January of 1956, Frank led the search party to find the men's bodies; he then performed the burial ceremony. "Because I buried the men, people see the film and I become the connection. It's opened so many doors—more than I can count," he said. "That was probably the hardest day of my life. I asked God, 'Why didn't You stop it?' Later I realized God allowed it to happen because He wanted to speak to the American people." Many Americans were busy pursuing the American dream; American churches were too focused on their own programs and funding.

"So many Americans are looking to make money," Frank said. "That should not be our goal in life; our goal should be to serve God with all we've got." He added, "I don't believe God has a double standard for missionaries and non-missionaries. He expects us to sacrifice and to serve Him. ... The goal of our lives should not be for ourselves but to do the will of God and enjoy it."

God is again using their story with renewed interest from the movie. "I think it's challenging people to sacrifice for God. We're not our own; we've been bought with a price," Frank said. "We serve Him because



Marie and Frank Drown

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we love Him. We do it with all our hearts and with joy, and He'll bring joy to us."

Frank and Marie stayed a total of 37 years in the Ecuadorian jungle. Over time, they were able to reach the Shaura and other tribes with the Gospel, train up leaders in the church there, and turn over the established ministry to the native believers. They also helped improve the people's way of life through better farming, health, and electricity. The Drowns returned to the States in 1982 and have continued to serve God. Asked about ministering in his later years, Frank remarked, "That's the time to do it more: You've got more experience with God." The new radio station in Northwest Ontario will broadcast the Bible and the Gospel in three languages to indigenous peoples whose culture is similar to the jungle tribes of Ecuador.

When Frank heard of the high suicide rate among the young Native Americans of Canada, he felt a conviction to help native believers spread God's Word through radio in their own tongue. "People need to hear the Bible in their own language—that's the language of the heart. They need to hear the Bible every day; that's what we saw really changed the Shaura people."

Their ministry to Ecuador continues from afar. With the *End of the Spear* movie renewing interest in the Drowns' book, *Mission to the Headhunters*, proceeds from the book will be used to print the first-ever complete Bible in the Shaura language.

The Shaura now have 50 churches among them, Frank estimated. The New Testament has already been translated, and soon, a complete Bible with both the Old and New Testaments. "We feel it's very important for the pastors to be able to read the whole Bible," Frank said. Frank and Marie were among the first to begin developing a written language for Ecuadorian tribes 50 years ago. When they first met the Shaura people, the tribe's population was nearing extinction—as were many of the jungle tribes—mostly because of the "back and forth" revenge killing. Those who were once murderers and voluntarily controlled by evil spirits are now following Christ and taking His message to other tribes. "It's a great blessing to see how God changed the people," Frank said. "They used to be warring, and that's gone. They used to shrink heads, and that's gone." Their population and lifespan has increased, and now many entire families name Christ as Savior.

The Christian life is not always easy, the veteran missionary said. He encouraged believers to seek God for how He would use them for His kingdom. "We have to read the Word and let it speak to us, open our hearts and let God talk to us: Most people want to tell God what to do. Instead, we should be happy in what He gives us to do and joyful that He allows us to work with Him."

The couple still work through Avant Ministries, the non-profit Christian missions organization they have been with since the 1940s. 🇺🇸

Avant Ministries

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