

Banmethuot, Viet-Nam,
December - 1954.

- CIRCULAR NO. 31 -

Our very dear friends,

Christmas is just ahead of us. We are receiving lovely Christmas cards from so many of you already, and these are a joy to us. Thank you so much for them and all your kind letters and gifts. There is no comfort like the comfort of love. We do want to tell you how grateful we are to you for all your love and prayers for us and our work.

So many of you have stood the test of continuance all through these years, and we are greatly encouraged by each praying group and each individual friend. We also pray for you and trust that each of you will have a happy Christmas and may God shower upon each one His rarest, finest gifts through the New Year.

Part of the joy of letters is in answering them, and we count our letter-visits with you as part of our life work—telling

you about these needy brown-skinned tribes friends out here and sharing with you the many possibilities for service among them.

We are going to have a wonderful Christmas this year. Our oldest son, Douglas, writes us that he expects to be here for Christmas! He is going to work for the U. S. Information Service in Saigon. Just as soon as he can find suitable living quarters for them, his wife Ruth and two dear babies—Linda 2½ and Douglas Warren 2 months—will also come out. This is a great joy to us.

Often we've been stricken because we have not had more time with our children. Now we are so happy to have our Leslie with us in Banmethuot, and soon Douglas, Ruth and the babies will be in Saigon. Our Stanley will be feeling lonely at Wheaton College, missing the family reunion, but he is plugging ahead in his studies and his goal is the mission field in a few years' time.

We are also expecting our four wonderful "Vision Inc." friends from Spokane, Washington, for Christmas—Rev. and Mrs. Clay Cooper, Rev. John Newman, and Mr. Joe Erickson. They have introduced us to so many American churches, and their radio and film, NEW HORIZONS, have won us many friends. They are coming out here again to hear and see and touch this heathen world, and make another moving picture showing the vast, unmet needs of Indo-China. They will make their movies in cinemascope, and will probably be the first to present missions by this new amazing method. Pray that they may be able to move many hearts through their radio programs at home, which will be kept up through daily tape recordings from this country. We are praying that their visit may bring outstanding blessing to our people.



CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS

Our big four-day Christmas Conference at Banmethuot begins on December 22nd. This year we expect many more tribespeople to gather from near and far. The army is lending us some tents, otherwise our people would have to camp out on the bare ground with no shelter. In other years we have erected shelters for hundreds of people, but owing to the financial stringency this year, we have to cut down expense as much as possible.

Many will come from fifty to sixty miles away, bringing their children and food for several days. Our two jeeps and other cars will be going night and day to bring these folks in. Each car will be packed to overflowing. It is a great time for everyone and it means so much to the Christians in this area.

Preparations for the programs have been going on for weeks. Carolyn Griswold and I (Laura) have been practicing 37 of our Banmethuot Raday Christians in a big Christmas scene with a lot of music. This will be presented on two of the evenings. The rest of the days and nights will be given over to preaching and conferences.

The three nurses at the Leprosarium are also practicing the patients there for a lovely Christmas program and this will be presented on Sunday night, December 26th. On December 27th we, with our American visitors, will be going to Dak Song, fifty miles away among the Mnongs, for two days. Our Vietnamese missionaries and Cungs are planning a nice program for these wild jungle folk.

GOSPEL RECORDINGS

Brother Vaughn Collins of Gospel Recordings, Inc., has been spending a number of months in Indo-China making records in the various languages. He recently spent a few weeks with us recording Gospel messages in Raday, Mngong Bunor, Mngong Gar and Stieng languages.

What a job! How painstaking he was, how patient! The 3½ minute messages were first written in English, then translated by our preachers into the various languages. Then, except for the Stieng language, our preachers made the recordings on a tape recorder. They read a paragraph at a time, but it usually meant reading only a sentence or two at a time in order to get the right inflection. Over and over again these messages were read, corrected and edited.

I (Gordon) helped at Nui Bara, 200 miles from here, where Mr. Sung, the Vietnamese missionary, had translated a number of messages into the Stieng language. At first we used a Stieng school teacher, not a Christian, who was one of the few in this large tribe who can read and write. This young man was rather indifferent, and it was difficult to get him to work regularly. A young Stieng was then brought in but as he could not read, each sentence he was to say was first read to him, so that he could repeat it. This was very slow work, for he hardly knew the meaning of what he was saying. It was all so new to him. Finally eight sides were recorded in this new language.

We then tackled the Mngong Dip language, which is spoken about fifty miles away from Nui Bara. At Nui Bara we found several young Mngong Dip soldiers and invited them to Mr. Sung's house. One Mngong Bunor soldier came along, and was most eager to make the recordings, saying he knew Mngong Dip well. He could not read, nor did we have anything written in that language. This is about how it went for hours at a time:

- Vaughn - (To Gordon in English) "Tell Mr. Sung to read the first line in Stieng and have the soldier repeat in Mngong Dip."
- Gordon - (To Mr. Sung in Raday) "Say the first line in Stieng and have the soldier say it in Mngong Dip."
- Mr. Sung - (To soldier in Stieng) "Say this sentence in Mngong Dip."
- Soldier - (He rattled off something which he said was Mngong Dip. The other soldiers argued with him, and he finally said a sentence they all agreed upon.)
- Vaughn - (To Gordon in English) "Have him repeat this sentence. Tell him to pronounce Jesus properly."

Here we spent some time trying to get the soldier to pronounce the name of Jesus (Yesu). He would say "Yaychoo," "Eechoo," and a variety of other words. All through the recording he stumbled at this Name, the first time he had ever heard it.

After a while the soldier showed signs of great mind weariness. His brain just wouldn't function any more. We asked him to repeat sentences correctly, but he would say them backward, all mixed up, not knowing what he said. Finally, his eyes stared blankly into space, his jaw dropped, and he seemed in a trance. We had to let him go, for

although he came on and off for two days, we could get nowhere with him. The other soldiers soon saw how hard the work was, and didn't show up again. The Mnong Dip language will have to wait, for Vaughn could only spare a short time in this region.

These Gospel records in some of the main languages of our area will enable us to reach most of our people. Many dialects are similar to each other, so the records will be understood by several dialects each. They should be ready within a few months. **THEY WILL BE USELESS UNLESS WE HAVE PHONOGRAPHS.** Inexpensive hand-wound phonographs are being furnished by Gospel Recordings, Inc., 124 Witmer Street, Los Angeles 26, California, and they will ship them to us at \$10.00 a piece. (This price may have changed recently.)

WE CAN USE AT LEAST ONE HUNDRED PHONOGRAPHS AT ONCE. If our preachers had two phonographs each, they could leave them in various villages for a few weeks at a time, then pick them up and leave them in other villages. If you would care to share in this great Gospel ministry, please send your good gifts to Gospel Recordings, Inc., and mark them plainly--"For phonographs for Banmethuot, Viet Nam."

These records are being used of God in a thousand languages in all parts of the world. The messages are often memorized by the people as they play them over and over. Churches have been started through them, and many souls have been saved. We should get into every longhouse in this great Tribesland with this message of salvation.

OUR PREACHERS AT WORK

As time permits we visit the preachers and their groups of Christians. This is always a great joy to see them growing deep in the things of God. Their monthly reports show they visit many nearby villages, as well as taking long trips to distant places. A meeting is held every night in each of their chapels whether the preacher is on hand or not. The preacher's wife or a deacon leads the service when the preacher is away.

At Buon Krong the other day we saw ten new benches the preacher Y Jut had made with his own hands and an ax. At Buon Hngo, Y Dlung had two extremely heavy benches carved out of precious wood. He said they had been thrown out twice by two different villages because there was supposed to be a spirit in them which had caused much sickness and death. Now they serve the Christians in their little bamboo chapel.

At Buon Tuor one of the leading Christians who works for the Government helped erect a fine new bamboo chapel, complete with platform and pulpit and benches made of wood. For the dedication it was beautifully decorated with garlands of flowers and native blankets. At the feast afterwards a great crowd of Christians and missionaries had fellowship together.

There are a number of new groups of Christians living away over the mountains whom we have not yet visited. We expect many of them for Christmas.

Our Banmethuot work has been divided into three main areas:

- Radays - including the Mnong Gar, Mnong Rlum, Bih, etc.,
- Mnongs - including the Mnong Preh, Mnong Nong, Mnong Bunor,
- Stiengs - including the Mnong Dip, Tunggul

The preachers in the Raday area meet once a month at Banmethuot, and they have their own Tribal Committee. The preachers (four Mnongs) in the Mnong area meet at Dak Song. I (Gordon) meet with them each month, and take them on village trips with the Jeep and trailer. This area is in charge of Mr. and Mrs. Cung, Vietnamese missionaries. The Stieng area is still in its infancy, in charge of the Sung, also Vietnamese missionaries. There are a number of inquirers, but no real conversions among the Stiengs as yet.

I recently took Vaughn Collins to visit a new tribe, the Tunggul, a branch of the Ma tribe, about 50 miles from Nui Bara. We followed a Jeep trail through the dense jungle for fifteen miles off the main highway, and found we couldn't understand the Tunggul language. So we could not make any recordings in it. The men were very picturesque in their loin cloths, neck beads, and tall feathers and red pompoms in the knobs of their hair. They all carried sharp spears. The road ended near the Donnai river, on the other side of which is a great unexplored area.

I have just returned from Dak Song, taking Mr. Cung and Y Brong, a Mhong preacher, to visit a number of villages. At night we showed lantern views with a kerosene pressure lantern in one of their long, low, smokey houses. Only a couple of doors let in air, so with eight or ten fires burning inside, it was difficult to see and breathe.

Out of the dim recesses of the longhouses, eyes peered through the smoke to see pictures for the first time in their lives. As the story of salvation unfolded, we prayed that the seed of eternal life might be implanted in their hearts to spring up into a new creation in Christ Jesus.

With my bedding roll stretched on a filthy bamboo platform, I usually have to sit or stoop most of the time, for the ceiling is very low. They keep their grain stored up above. I frequently bump my head, which seems to amuse the short Mhongs. Rats run rife all night long, and pigs grunt under the "bed."

This week I sat in the doorway of a longhouse, praying that God would visit this land with a great ingathering of souls. I read this in an American religious magazine: "Missionary effort that was once symbolized by a man in a sun helmet, disappearing into the jungle in search of souls, has changed to mass revivals involving audiences of up to a hundred thousand or over. Miracles that astound and baffle science and medicine are the order of the day."

Well, there I was, tramping the jungle in search of souls, telling for the first time in a few villages each month the story of the Cross. How long would it take at this rate to witness to a thousand villages? With only a handful of native preachers? Is there some quicker, better way? Will God do a new thing in our midst? The cry of my heart for the past two years is for such a divine manifestation of God's almighty power that these raw, ignorant semi-savage people may turn and seek the Lord. At what price to me? Humbling, first of all. Then a desperate faith. I have felt that we are missing something big these days as God pours out His Spirit on other lands in such an overwhelming confirmation of the Gospel message. Will you join with us in our heart's cry for a great wave of salvation to sweep over our tribal land?

Will you also kindly remember these needs? The house for Carolyn Griswold and Dorothy Moos is not yet finished, for lack of funds. We are building it with special gifts outside the Mission budget. Our new Bible School dormitory is not finished. The house at Nui Bara has had to be left unfinished. We need many more new native workers. Four new Mhongs who can read and write are asking to study the Bible after Christmas and we should take them in. There are many demands on our faith, and we ask you to steadily trust that these large needs shall be supplied. We know that God does not do things half-way. God does things richly and gloriously.

At the Leprosarium the patients seem happy and most of them have accepted the Lord. It is good to see the nice clothing from America so many have sent, and their sore feet and hands are bound in soft white bandages made by many of you. This week some of the girl patients finished knitting little sweater coats for the healthy children in the nursery. They are disinfected, of course.

Ever our warmest appreciation and love,

Laura and Gordon H. Smith

P. S. Any parcels sent directly to us by mail enter duty-free and arrive in about two months time.

Please make out all gifts to the Treasurer, The Christian & Missionary Alliance,
260 West 44th Street, New York 36, N.Y.
Mark them: "Tribeswork," "Leprosarium," etc., care of Gordon H. Smith.

- SPECIAL NOTE -

Change of Policy

After the war in 1947, our work was given a great impetus by the visit of Rev. Jackie Burris to our field. On his return to the States he aided us by obtaining the support for native workers at ten dollars a month. We responded by allotting individual workers to individual donors, sending photographs, etc. Thus began a fellowship with many of you who have been faithful ever since in sending precious gifts.

When we began the Leprosarium we felt led to adopt this method for supporting patients, construction work, and gave the givers a definite share in their own patient and building.

In following this program we wished to sustain the interest of our friends, but we knew we would have to pay a price. It would mean hard work, much correspondence, sending photographs, keeping records. We were happy to do it. We rejoice that God has richly blessed this method.

For some time, however, we have felt we should make a change. The method was too complicated, taking too much of our time. Prices began to rise. The financial situation became uncertain with the value of the dollar fluctuating. We had to inform our friends that it was costing us much more to support workers and patients. In our July 1954 circular, we stated clearly that it was necessary to put two or three gifts from donors toward the support of one worker. We do not know how long this will be necessary, but are praying that the dollar may increase in value soon.

This then is what we feel led to do - FROM NOW ON WE ARE PLACING ALL GIFTS FOR WORKERS IN A GENERAL WORKER FUND, ALL GIFTS FOR PATIENTS IN A GENERAL PATIENT FUND.

We want not only to simplify the work here, but to keep faith with our friends. We shall still send photos of workers or patients, stating that your gifts are going towards their support. We know that some of you will be disappointed in not being able to call a certain worker or patient exclusively your own. We want you to still pray for the worker or patient toward whose support you have been sending. WE DO NOT ASK those of you who are contributing so sacrificially to do more. We simply plead with you to trust God that He will enable you to continue to help as at present, and that He may raise up many more helpers.