

The Christian and Missionary Alliance
APO San Francisco 96240

February 14, 1968

3. 1. 5. 4 6. 7. (Ruth was no. 2)

Dear Mr. Stebbins, Bob, Hat, George, Betty, Ann, and Tom,

I believe Bob is the oldest and I know my friend Tom is the youngest. About the rest I am not sure.

I am now sitting on a crate out at the Banmethuot airport waiting for a ride to Nhatrang. I had a memorial service for Ed, Ruth and Ruth Wilting and wanted to write you while everything is fresh in my mind. Cleo will type this when we get back to Nhatrang.

First, however, I want to tell each of you that we have been praying daily that the Lord will be a real source of comfort and strength to you at this time. Cleo and I are still stunned, and it all seems like an extended nightmare. Even after coming here to Banmethuot it still seems unreal. If you could have been here for the wonderful memorial service, I am certain you would agree that it was best to leave the bodies of your loved ones in Banmethuot. This meant so much to the Vietnamese and Tribes Christians.

Now let me tell you about events as they unfolded the last couple days. I met with the Army Graves Registration personnel relative to the disposition of the bodies. It was our wish to inter the bodies and move them to a site across from the church. I had thought we would enclose this small area as a memorial plot for our 3 colleagues. I just didn't like the idea of leaving the bodies in a former bunker. On the 13th we began preparations to remove them to the new site. When we uncovered the bodies I changed my mind completely. Here is why.

Ed and Ruth were locked in an embrace. Ed was holding Ruth and was shielding her body with his own. This was the way they left this life--locked together when death came. As a U.S. Army Captain said to me: "Together in life, together in death." My mind was then made up. I felt it was best to leave them right there. I checked with Dick Phillips and he agreed. We filled in the grave and returned to MACV for the night.

The next morning (February 14th--Valentine's Day) the Rhade helped to beautify the site as much as possible under the conditions. At 10:30 a.m. I conducted a memorial service and Dick assisted. There were a number of Vietnamese and Rhade Christians in attendance plus about 10 American GI's. Dick Phillips, Reg Reimer and I were the only American civilians.

The memorial service was conducted in three languages--English, Rhade and Vietnamese. Y Siok, a Rhade pastor, and Mr. Cung did the interpreting. I thanked the Rhade for their help in fixing up the grave and expressed our appreciation to the American servicemen for their every kindness to the missionaries.

I then explained why we left the bodies in the original grave. It was here that I broke down. After regaining my composure I continued with the service. I read the following passages of Scripture:

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord
Jesus Christ." I Cor. 15:55, 56, 57.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." Psalm 91:1,2

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Isaiah 12:2

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength." Isaiah 26:3,4

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." Isaiah 40:11

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." Isaiah 43:2,3a

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11:25,26

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. 4:7,8

Dick Phillips closed with prayer in Vietnamese which ended a simple but moving memorial service for three wonderful missionaries who have joined that noble army of martyrs for Christ.

As soon as it can be arranged MACV will come out and help us to erect a memorial site. This will include the 4 Rhade graves. A low wall will be constructed around the graves and later on sod and flowers can be planted. MACV will also supply materials to make 3 cement slabs upon which the names of Ed and Ruth and Ruth Wilting will be inscribed. This then will be a small Mission cemetery and a memorial site for three fine missionaries.

Well, it all seems like a dream. This tragedy has stunned the Mission and the whole Alliance. We can't understand it because we're looking through a darkened glass. Some day--and what a glorious day that will be--we will understand why God took six dedicated servants of Christ. Ah, what a blessed hope is ours.

We trust that God will fill the void in your hearts and be a source of strength and consolation at this time. Some day there will be a new Banmethuot Mission Compound. The grave site will always be there as a memorial to inspire others who come to fill up the ranks for those fallen in battle. "Blessed in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Psalms 116:15

In the bond of Christ,

Gene Evans

Will send picture later