

MINCAYE AND TEMENTA

Mincaye and Tementa are natives from the Amazon jungles of Ecuador. Both have a unique relationship with Steve Saint. The first helped kill his father, and the second is the son of the man responsible for the killing. Both are now Christians and were in Joplin, Missouri on Mar. 21, 2000 to record their testimony at Good News Productions, Intl..

These two men call themselves "Huarorani," or "The People." Historically, every encounter with this remote tribe had ended in death. From the sixteenth-century conquistadors to the seventeenth-century Jesuits, to the nineteenth-century gold and rubber hunters, all outsiders had been killed. The twentieth-century confrontation came from oil companies. The Huarorani not only killed oil company employees who ventured into their territory, they even slipped into their camps and killed the unsuspecting men in their own quarters. The killers were called "Auca" which means "naked savage." These "savages" were not only killed by outsiders, they also killed one another. In fact, anthropologists have concluded that 60% of all deaths among the Huaroranis were murders within the tribe. By 1955 their numbers had been reduced to only 500 and they were facing extinction.

It was at this time that five American missionaries felt called of God to preach the gospel to the Aucas. The missionaries were: Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, Ed McCulley, Roger Youderian, and Pete Fleming. All five were killed by Huarorani spears on January 8, 1956.

The initial contact between the missionaries and the Aucas seemed peaceful. Gifts had been exchanged and Tementa's father, Nankiwi, had even taken an aeroplane ride with Nate Saint. This is the man the missionaries called "George." Movies and photographs of "George" have been seen by millions around the world. It was this man duplicitly, however, that caused the missionaries to be killed.

Nankiwi had fallen in love with the sister of Dayuma and followed her into the jungle. Since her family did not approve of Nankiwi an old woman followed them as a chaperone. These are the three Aucas who had such friendly contact with the missionaries. On the way back to their village, however, they met a hunting party. The girl's brother, Nampa, flew into a rage and was ready to kill Nankiwi. At this point, apparently to divert attention from his own indiscretion, Nankiwi said the white men had attacked them and they were fleeing for their lives. This vicious lie sealed the doom of five innocent men.

Gikita orchestrated the attack. He sent three women across the river to divide the missionaries and divert their attention. Then he rushed the three left on the beach. He slipped on a wet log, however, and his spears made such a loud noise that the element of surprise was lost. The missionaries were armed, but had vowed to die rather than kill. One by one they went out into eternity. The last to die was thought to be Pete Fleming, as he was most familiar with their language. He could have fled into the jungle and saved his life, but instead he stood still calling out: *'We just came to meet you. We aren't going to hurt you. Why are you killing us?'* At this point Kimo waded out and speared him to death. This remarkable encounter with men who would rather die than kill haunted the Aucas and was a principal factor in their conversion.

The wicked Nankiwi was soon speared by members of his own tribe. In typical Huarorani fashion the mortally wounded man requested to be buried alive. Death beneath the ground was thought to prevent his soul from perpetual wandering. He crawled into his grave and requested his daughter. The mother dutifully strangled her to death and placed her by his side. Then Nankiwi asked for his infant son. The distraught mother was about to kill him too when she realized she would have no one to hunt for her when she was old. That infant who was spared is Tementa, the man who came to Joplin with Mincaye.

Mincaye, the killer, has not only been forgiven by Steve Saint, but even accepted as a part of his family. When Steve's son Jesse graduated from High School, his only request was that Grandfather Mincaye be brought to the states to share in the celebration. To see the love between Steve Saint and Mincaye is to see what true Christianity is all about.