

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 295

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will feature one of the world's most famous grandfathers. His name is Mincaye, which means "wasp" in his native language. He was born in a violent Stone Age culture in the jungles of Ecuador. While he could only count numbers on his fingers and toes he has spoken to as many as 45,000 at the same time. He was featured as the main character in the movie "End of the Spear" and his fame as a convert to Christ has been a positive influence on millions around the world. Mincaye passed away of natural causes April 28, 2020 in the tiny village of Tzapino, Ecuador. In the absence of a birth certificate his age has been calculated to be between 88 and 91 years of age.

Mincaye is survived by his wife Ompodae (Otter), thirteen children, fifty some grandchildren, many many great grandchildren, and millions of admirers.

Mincaye came to fame on Jan. 8, 1956 when he joined with a small group of warriors in killing five American missionaries. The martyrs were Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Pete Fleming, Roger Youdarian, and Ed McCulley. Their deaths were featured on the cover of Life Magazine and their story has since gone viral. These five obscure followers of Christ are now among the most famous martyrs in history.

Mincaye belonged to the fierce Waodani Tribe which some believe was the most violent tribe on earth. Not only did they die of disease, accidents, and at the hands of their enemies, but sixty percent of the deaths within the tribe came when they killed one another. In 1956 their numbers had dwindled to a total population of only 400 – 500. In addition to all the many other dangers they faced, the Shell Oil Company was invading their territory searching for oil. If the Waodani's killed an oil worker in defense of their land they were hunted down like animals with helicopters and machine guns. Sadly, the Waodani Tribe was on the verge of extinction. This was a major concern of the missionaries who were willing to risk their lives to save the tribe and teach them about Jesus.

After the missionaries were killed two women dared to go into the jungle and teach these violent people about the love of Jesus. One of the women was Elizabeth Elliott, the widow of the martyr Jim Elliott. The other was Rachel Saint, the sister of the martyr Nate Saint. Elizabeth didn't stay too long, but Rachel devoted the rest of her life to the Waodani Tribe. She lived in their midst for 36 years in the most humble of circumstances. She died there of cancer on Nov. 11, 1994 and is buried only a short distance from her tiny cabin.

Rachel spent years translating the Word of God into their language. They call the Bible "God's Carvings". The title is derived from their ability to put unique identifying marks on a trail. If they were attacked in the middle of the night, for example, they would grab their hammocks and flee in all directions. (Their hammock was one of their most valued possessions as it takes them a week to make one) The next day family members could track down their loved ones by following the "carvings" they left on the trail. Each member of the family had his or her own unique carving. If you wanted to find your father, for example, you would simply follow his carvings. Consequently, they use the same terminology to explain how you find God. How simple! If you want to find God you simply follow his "carvings".

Steve Saint was one week shy of his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday when his father died as a martyr. After the Waodani's came to Christ Steve would spend as much time as possible in the jungle with his beloved

Aunt Rachel. Mincaye became concerned for young Steve as he didn't know how to make blow guns and poison arrows or anything else essential to surviving in the jungle. When Mincaye spoke to Rachel about this she confronted him with the question that since he killed the boy's father who did he think should take the responsibility? Mincaye, now a Christ follower, accepted the challenge and took young Steve under his wing. From his tribal perspective this was a dangerous thing to do. The Waodani tradition dictated that when Steve became a man he would be duty bound to avenge his father's death. Fortunately God gives us a new life. This new life is not characterized by a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). Mincaye dared to do the right thing and his efforts were rewarded by Christian love. In fact, he was accepted as a beloved father and grandfather in the Saint family.

The transformation of these Stone Age warriors from the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit is dramatic and unmistakable. It has been my privilege to travel with Steve and visit the Waodani's in the jungle. I slept on a hammock in their midst without fear. They are now new people! The hate the Waodani's once experienced has now been replaced by the love of Jesus. In the obituary Steve wrote for his beloved grandfather, he mentioned one of Mincaye's favorite refrains: *"We lived angry, hating and killing 'ononque' (for no reason) until they brought us God's markings. Now those of us who walk God's trail live happily and in peace."* Then he would often ask: *"How long did you have God's markings before you brought them to us?"* *"Waa, ininamai" (well I don't know)* *"Maybe if we had known sooner that 'Waengongi' (The Creator) did not see it well that people should live angry, hating and killing for no reason, we could have walked God's trail sooner"*.

In case you haven't seen it, follow this link for an interview I did with Steve Saint, Mincaye, and Tementa. <https://youtu.be/70STTWk3L6c> If the link does not open copy to your browser.

Grandpa Mincaye was the "real deal". The transformation of his life is clear and his honored place as "Grandpa Mincaye" in the Saint family is without question. The last book of the Bible puts it like this: **"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit they will rest from their labor for their deeds will follow them" (Rev. 14:13).**

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce