

Russ's conversion:

### **How the Auca (Widoni) Indians Saved My Life.**

I was 10 years old in Daily Vacation Bible School. The teacher told how we had to be perfect to go to heaven. Up until the 10th grade, I lived in a small town of 250 people in the mountains of Washington State. The church I grew up in was one block from my home and I attended SS and morning church as well as Youth Group every Sunday night. Though I was not a "bad" or "rebellious" child while growing up (my dad was the town deputy sheriff) I knew I was not perfect enough to get into heaven. One summer in VBS I raised my hand to stay after class to accept Jesus into my life.

In my young mind I felt I would have to give up having a girl friend and being a cowboy. (I later learned that it was OK to have a girlfriend and I did get married) Two things had happened that made me open to the teacher's invitation.

My concern about going to heaven came at the same time as the martyrdom of Nate Saint, Ted Elliot, and the other missionaries in the jungles of South America in 1956. This was the first thing that had a big impact on my life. Their commitment to Christ and then their deaths made me want to go as a missionary to unreached South American Indians. That week I told my SS teacher, Mrs. Gardenier, that I became a Christian and that God had called me to be a missionary.

The second thing that affected me was a story in the Boy Scout Magazine. It was a science fiction story of a space ship captain. He was tired of wars and conflicts and was looking for peace. He was at a planet where he was told there was a good Man in town who could give peace and joy. He said that was silly and decided to leave. His best friend decided to stay and follow the Man. The Captain went on but never forgot how his friend seemed to have really found peace from the teachings of the Man. Now he hoped that he could find the Man once again and follow Him. Every time he got to a new planet, the Man had left. Sometimes he missed Him by a few minutes and he never found the Man again. It was a fantasy story but the point hit home. I felt I might miss Jesus if I did not accept Him when that invitation was given.

My Dad was not a Christian, but my mom and grandparents were. They had a big influence on me and I'm sure their prayers helped me to follow Jesus. My sixth grade teacher, Tom Hill, was also my SS teacher. He and his wife were a daily godly influence in my life. We have remained friends to this day.

When I was older, I wanted to be a scientist but felt because God had called me to be a missionary to South America I could not go into science. Now I teach Creation Science as a home missionary and God has brought my scientific desire and united it with my desire to serve Him as a missionary. I have learned that He gives us the desire of our heart.