

Les and Jane Zerbe

In the Heart of Alaska for the Hearts of Alaskans

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Dear friends,

I started this letter while in the airport at Mexico City on the way from Costa Rica to Texas to visit Jane's brother. Our trip to find the Cabécar Indians, deep in the mountainous jungle on the rainy Caribbean side of Costa Rica was a great success! Let me explain. We had visited Costa Rica to help a Spanish speaking church reach the "invisible Indians" or "hidden people" in the jungle. This church, we learned, had known of these people and had been walking 14 days in each month to get to the Cabécar villages. Various teams from the church would go each month, doing this for 20 years and praying for 19 years that somehow these journeys could be shortened in both time and distance. No roads go to these tribal people, and except for this very mission-minded Spanish church, these people would still be in total darkness.

Through a series of events that only God can orchestrate, when we first got to Costa Rica last year, the hotel called a van driver to take us around San Jose. Juan Carlos was not the driver they would usually call, but a friend of the regular driver, who for some reason could not take the tour that day. Juan Carlos told us that he too is a Christian who went out on mission trips. He invited us to visit his church, and, although it was all in Spanish, we could sense the fervor of the service. There we met a very special housewife, Alicia Villalobos, who has been guiding the mission trips to these invisible tribes in the rain forest. The farthest the team members have gone is five days walk in, but she has gone seven days one way into the jungle. Their stories of five days walking through the mountains to reach remote villages, stirred our hearts.

We returned to Costa Rica in February this year accompanied by deacon and pilot Al Irwin and his wife Joyce from a church my dad started years ago in Montana. We met with the pastor of the Spanish church and the mission trip leaders and made plans. Remember that these people have been praying for 19 years that someone would come to help them!

Al and I went to the airport in San Jose and chartered a Cessna 206 like the one I fly in Alaska. Our young Costa Rican pilot, who had only three months experience, was frightened to fly amid 12,000 foot mountains, flying low over the river looking for gravel bars exposed on the riverbed, with the volcano steaming over the top just behind us. The company insisted that we also take Larry, a more experienced pilot, along too.

As it turned out, this second pilot was a Godsend! Larry knew the area well because his uncle has a 1000 acre cattle ranch just 15 minutes from a river we were going to investigate. From that point we learned that it's a five-hour walk to some of these people hidden in the jungle who have not yet been reached. Instead of seven days walking these people can be reached in a 30 minute flight, then 15 minutes to the river, and then five hours walk! On the uncle's ranch there was a grass airstrip in his cow pasture that had not been used in 40 years. The rancher said he would fence the runway to keep the Brahman cattle off and smooth it so we could use it. After Jane and I left Costa Rica, the rancher drove Al and Joyce out to his ranch, three and a half hours from San Jose literally to the end of the road. He introduced Al to his worker named Herman who knows all the trails from the ranch to the Cabécar villages and can show us their GPS coordinates.



Cabécar boy



Alicia Villalobos



Les, Juan Carlos, and Alicia and helper mapping the areas to explore to find the Cabécar villages



Ranch church building we may use

I purchased a \$99 “find me spot” device, which is a personal GPS locator and gave it to Alicia. As they walk into the mountains, this device will track their progress, which can be accessed on internet or cell phone. The team can let those in the city know if they are okay, or if they have an emergency.

I’ll be praying and you also for a full time missionary pilot to take this ministry. I’ll donate for this effort the plane that was donated to the Caravan Connection last year. Keep in mind; he has to be a “gravel bar pilot”. He has to be able to land uphill going toward the volcano and take off downhill toward the ocean. He will have one chance to do it right. In the mountains, cold air descends in the AM, and hot currents rise in the afternoons. This is a crucial factor in mountain flying.

It’s always a good feeling to be able to take the Gospel to a people group for the first time. The Costa Rican Christians are so faithful in trying to reach these people. All they need is a pair of wings!

The early church in Acts had pastors, evangelists, teachers, deacons, and congregations. About the only thing different today is technology. We travel by cars, motorcycles, and planes, etc., instead of walking or riding a donkey. Another change from the church in the Book of Acts is the way we stay in touch. Letters and offerings were sent by trusted messenger, by foot, by slow-sailing ships; but we use email and Skype on our computer to call overseas. We transfer funds by money gram to African pastors, and they get it in five minutes. Every morning, the pastors in Liberia connect with each other on cell phones for a huge conference call and have a prayer meeting! Awesome use of modern technology!

Thank you to those of you who have continued to help the Liberian people with rice and support for pastors. Please keep it up as the Lord leads and provides. This month we were also able to provide a pastor in the Tappita area with a motorcycle for transportation. We are back in snowy Alaska, but able to serve the Lord, using our years of experience to mentor and encourage ministries internationally through your support. Thank you. God is good all the time!

Yours truly,

Les Paul Zerbe

Also on his property there was a Catholic Church building that had been destroyed in their last earthquake. The Catholics did not rebuild the church, so the rancher rebuilt the church himself. Then, when they wanted to come back and hold services, he did not let them come back. He did say that we could use the church instead.

Over the next mountain range, on the next river, we found a gravel bar on which we can land and be close to the people in that area. It will require some clearing of big rocks and cutting down vegetation before a plane can land safely on big tundra tires. This worked the same way when we were in Africa.



Cabécar villages dot the wild remote mountains.

SOURDOUGH SAM SEZ:

*“I’ll walk a mile on snowshoes,
but I’d melt in the jungle!”*

