

LIGHT FOR ALICIA

*"Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done,
and thy thoughts which are to us-ward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."* Psalms 40:5

This verse from morning devotions put the Master's finishing touch on 12 days of *MISSIONARY* work for Mama Anderson. Wednesday, November 5, [1958] was "E" Day: Embarkation for Evangelism. Plans were made by the men last March for a return trip to Alicia, but on "E" Day Vernon was still sick; Joe and Pauline [Watkins] were three days new to Ozamiz; the school construction needed supervision. So Vernon says, "Mom, you and the kids [Laurel & Hope] will go with Vicki [our helper] and Poten [our evangelist]."

In the flurry of preparation that followed, we emerged with generator, bedding, duffel bags, public address, and flannelgraph. Joe drove us 150 kilometers over tortuous, hairpin turns to Pagadian (Joe's first drive in the mountains). Then we boarded the *Dumaguete J.*, an inter-island boat passing by Alicia. We slept in three army cots among the myriads of travelers on the deck, cot to cot. The diaperless baby from the next cot slept half with Hope and me. Our usual traveling diet is bananas and bread, but during the night the ants attacked so the next morning we smoked the bread in the ship's galley and ate around the "amigas" [ants]. This was a leisurely trip, giving me time to study while Poten gathered newsy items on Pope John XXIII's coronation. He uses such choice details very wisely to show people the true Gospel and the true Church and with his sense of humor, people are enlightened with a smile. Our A.M. arrival was fast becoming P.M. because the ship loaded in one town for seven hours. The stop before Alicia was a Moro (Mohammedan) island and a tropical dream it was—all white sand, palms, turquoise sea—just at sunset. The Moros paddled out in their bancas [small outrigger canoes] to load sacks of rice and other colorful things. A curious people they are, Untouched by the Gospel, held in fear by most. I had a great tug at my heart for that secluded island of people, void of the Light. As the ship weighed anchor, Moro swimmers rushed up to the top of the ship, poised momentarily and dived into the sea—a beautiful spectacle of gleaming brown bodies cutting the water smoothly and swimming swiftly to the fading shore. This display opened up a good discussion with a Catholic Customs official who was watching us enjoy the swimmers. I talked with him until Alicia and he told me he wished we'd talked sooner for he'd never talked with a Protestant about religion before. He was so surprised that we have logical reasons for preaching Christ as we do.

Alicia ahead! Quickly we gathered up all the equipment, peered out to the dark wharf, and saw several men waving welcome to us—our friends from the church! They'd waited all day with a rented Johnson [outboard motor on a banca] to carry us across the bay. It was pitch black as we disembarked and struggled down the ladder to the banca. White wind clouds filled the sky but we calculated the faith of these welcoming brethren and then by faith pushed off from the dock and trusted our Lord. Hope sat on Vicki's lap and she was so frightened she was trembling at being in a small boat for the first time in her life. But as we motored over the dark, quiet sea of the bay, we began singing and Vicki showed Hope the stars and she was assured that God would take care of us. After 40 minutes putt-putting along we neared the opposite dark shore and began singing "Over the sea, over the sea, Jesus, My Savior, will pilot me." In the lantern light we saw our brethren awaiting us while some came wading out to the banca to carry the cargo. Over the side we climbed, wading in the warm, muddy water to shore. Many people gathered around saying, "Stay here tonight...wait till morning...too muddy...too far...too dark." The Lord's work requires endurance. We started our hike uphill, a regular parade lit by one Petromax and several kerosene bottle torches. LAPOK=MUD !!! The trail went winding up around through the shoulder-high grasses, over one-log bridges and even up a stream. We arrived 5 km. farther at 10:30 P.M., where several other people were awaiting us. The shin-deep mud was washed and scraped from our feet and tennis shoes, our dirty clothes exchanged while a chicken was killed, cleaned and roasted for our supper. Poten started the generator and P.A. for singing and announcements. Very late we rolled our mats on the floor, hung the mosquito nets, and literally "fell" to sleep.

4:30A.M. Awake. Was I surprised to see every available space covered by sleeping bodies! Filipino custom demands that all who attend the services be fed and bedded if they desire, which means that many Marthas are needed for preparing and repairing. At 10A.M. that Friday morning Vicki and I gathered the children for a class in the chapel. We used a turned over table and benches with a piece of flannel and some tacks. You should have heard how happy the children were with the choruses; ever after that they would break into singing *The B-I-B-L-E, Jesus Loves the Little Children, Joy, Joy, Joy*, and *Jesus Is The Way* [of course, in Cebuano]. The Wordless Book, creation, the crucifixion and others were used to the delight of kids and adults alike. During a terrible wind and rain storm Saturday afternoon we taught our new translation of *The Wise Man* and they loved it with the motions. Poten taught the big dispensational chart of God's Prophetic Program in three morning sessions; everyone was smiling to see how well their scriptural questions were answered by applying dispensational truth. "Claro kaayo!" they kept

2

saying, "Very clear!" Afternoons I taught extremely simply on salvation, daily salvation and completed salvation. The Rapture, eternal security, the judgment seat of Christ—oh, how blessed but unknown these treasures are—they are soaked in like the showers following the drought! Evenings Poten held evangelistic meetings: 13 people received the Lord during those nightly invitations. One young husband, saved the first night, explained it all to his wife and the second night as soon as Poten gave the call, she handed her baby to a neighbor and went forward. Another family, crossing the bay in their small banca, coming to receive Christ, were submerged in the Saturday storm and forced to swim to safety. That night the father and son came forward. The Devil also came and offered his complaints; last March Vernon and Poten had been stoned by some men; on this Saturday evening several men loitered around again with bolos [machetes] threatening to disrupt the meetings. In an effort to protect Poten, a member shut the front window without noticing the P.A. wire strung over it—CRASH! The P.A. was hurled to the floor. Everyone gasped. It was right during the invitation! A 16 peso record and the needle of the phonograph were smashed but our wonderful God preserved that speaker. "Temptations," the Filipinos called it. Another "temptation" was the rented generator for it was running sporadically. On Sunday two members carried it slung on a bamboo pole to a far-away repair and back again for the evening evangelization. *THIS HILLTOP CHAPEL at BINANGONAN is the ONLY GOSPEL CHAPEL FOR MILES AROUND. We heard of NO OTHER BIBLE CHURCH in ANY DIRECTION.* No wonder the saints wanted to sing and rejoice till midnight! These saints had given 8 pigs, plus 12 sacks of rice, myriads of chickens, so all the countryside would be invited to hear the gospel.

Friday had already brought invitations to two other places, DawaDawa and Talusan, and though we'd scheduled our return for Monday, I sent a telegram back by travelers, and onward we went. "Balik! balik!", "Come back! Come back!" is the farewell call. Monday afternoon we hiked 2 km. to the seashore to get a banca, increasing the ranks with four young people who loved the fellowship, plus the other members who carried all the equipment. At the cove we again waded through the deep, muddy, warm water, climbed into the banca (this time no motor) and paddled out to sea. The joke was on us—our banca was said to be the fastest and easiest—we'd take the equipment by sea. But as we floated out, several holes began appearing, filling the banca with water. Vicki and I bailed the whole trip with coconut shells. We sang and sang, Vicki told us a Filipino story, we even had a little adventure paddling by the Moro villages along the shore. They are notorious pirates and stared at us, suspiciously whistling to one another, even getting into their small bancas, but we went safely by and entered the river which narrowed finally till the balancers of the banca were touching the overhanging trees, making progress very tricky. At last the clearing of DawaDawa was spotted. We piled out again into the mud, hiked 1 km. through the rice fields to a big house on a hill. (Our companions, who had taken the smaller banca to a closer spot and hiked 4 km., arrived two hours earlier than we.)

Quickly we ate supper and changed our wet clothes as the people began to gather from everywhere. But the generator wouldn't run! By lantern light all the mechanical "doctors" worked feverishly to put life back into it but at 9:30 it was still dead, so Poten held the service minus the loudspeaker. Next day Vicki and I taught the kids morning and afternoon and Poten used the chart again. Another long journey by banca, those faithful brethren returned the generator in running order but in the pitch dark! Everyone was overjoyed. We'd already finished our service but the people wanted all the neighbors to hear so Poten began another service with the loudspeaker. Afterward, the most religious man in the community questioned Poten about idols. Everyone expected a hot debate, but the man was very quiet and humble. The singing then went on till past 1A.M. but I was too tired to join in. My mat and pillow felt like a floating Simmons that night. *A few Christians live there in DawaDawa but no chapel and they asked Poten if they/d organize, could they join with us?* We were thrilled.

Wednesday was Hope's birthday and another invitation came to hold a service in Panangan, a nearby place. After dinner we hiked over the countryside to a new nepa [swamp fiber] house, a new place for the Gospel. One woman was saved that night, a woman already thought to be "inside the fold" but she realized that a decision for Christ means yes or no, not maybe. Many people were interested. (I should explain here that the Filipino custom is to listen the first visit and respond the second—the people made us promise to return soon.) We hiked home from there in the blackness, following a kerosene bottle torch as before. It reminded me that even the tiniest light can lead many people. No matter how small the light, it dispels the darkness. Too many Christians feel unqualified so they are carrying the Light under their basket of unconcern, leaving others stumbling and falling in confusion and ignorance over the precipice into Hell.

Thursday A.M. before dawn we packed up quickly and hiked to the river. More people accompanied us this time and we needed three bancas to tote the cargo and Christians. For some reason I was in bailing position again and leak bubbled like a spring so up and down all the way with the coconut shell again. Passing through the quiet channel in the early morning stillness, we were suddenly startled by a noisy colony of monkeys swinging through the trees across the river—it was delightful—big monkeys, baby monkeys, all chattering and climbing—it was fun. Onward through the river we glided to the island of Olutanga. At a little cove we disembarked, loaded the heavy things onto the waiting carabao [water buffalo] sled and trudged off down a muddy trail to a huge bamboo house high on poles.

This was the barrio of FLORIDA.

Immediately Poten started up the generator, made the announcement that the Gospel had arrived, inviting everyone to come. People began arriving; Poten began teaching from the Bible, using the chart. Many questions needed to be answered. *In the afternoon the people showed us the skeleton of their proposed chapel, just poles now but to them the symbol of the Light in a dark place.* Their request was to join with us because they were so happy we were doing evangelistic work. In the evening the house was jammed. How these isolated barrios can suddenly be swarming with people is a mystery, but a mystery we cherish for it is our opportunity to REACH OUT in Christ's stead. After the message on *The Brazen Serpent*, at Poten's call, several people stepped forward and received salvation. Poten always counsels them, asks questions, we pray together and then welcome them as our new and beloved brethren—those are the best handshakes in all the world! At the Open Forum later, several Adventists present wanted to dispute our preaching of pure grace in favor of their law system. But the Bible was used in reply and lively discussion helped everyone to learn. Friday the Bible class continued. In the afternoon we all hiked to the town of Talusan for an open air meeting. Talusan is a Moro-Cebuano seaside village prolific in people, kids, boats, fish, dogs, flies and smells. We assembled just outside the market street so everyone could hear. Poten's subject was *Salvation Without Works*, which started a very spirited Open Forum following the service. One town official who was drinking, asked the question, "Is drinking sin?" Poten answered him that he knew of one place in the scripture instructing people to drink, but that was Timothy and the reason was stomach trouble, which left the official answered kindly, but still without excuse. All open air meetings end like this, with questions. The people love to listen and it does bring out the thoughts troubling the community at the time, a very good example of free speech. On the return hike to Florida, a sister begged us to visit at the house of a man dying with cancer. There he lay in a tiny bedroom on a cot, with a large, oval-shaped tumor open on his chest, just using the local "cures" and dying. Seven months ago in Manila he was diagnosed incurable and since that time he had never left his bed! But his face was a beautiful face. In the candlelight it reminded me of the pictures artists paint of Christ, a suffering but peaceful face, only the eyes held longings. I talked to him some in English, discovering that he was trusting Christ and awaited the resurrection and final rest for his body. Vicki read Romans 8 and prayed in Cebuano, also Hope and Laurel sang two Cebuano choruses for him. He said he could hear the P.A. even though it was far away, and I thought of him often and his suffering. It jolted me also to lay aside that very, very heavy weight of personal, physical ease we Americans are stumbling over in our race for souls. Can a soldier of Christ live in a bed of roses? How? Why is it that we so often confuse convenience with God's will for us? Our rest is in Heaven WHEN He comes.

After supper the house was filled again and when the invitation was given, stressing the urgency of salvation, more wonderful "seekers" who had become "finders" stepped forward. To our surprise, the first one was one of the young ladies who'd journeyed with us all week. She proved to us once more that the outward man needs not salvation, but oh, the heart, there is the crying need! After prayer with the new saints a testimony was given by one of them and very bold he was. He announced to all that though he'd been all his life a Roman Catholic, he had been reading the Bible, trying to understand the truth, and that now he was assured of true salvation by grace. "Goodbye, my Catholic members," he said, "I've found the truth. Don't worry about me. I'm joining the true Church." Isn't that boldness from the Lord? He was not ashamed to announce to the whole countryside that salvation is in Christ, not an organization. Questions on idols, saints, souls, the Law, on and on they came but all were answered from the precious Book, our refuge in debate. At 11:30 the gasoline was nearly consumed so the meeting ended. To our great rejoicing one young fellow informed Poten that he just couldn't go home until he'd received Christ. "Why didn't you come before?" "I was late for my house is far away." So we all prayed together and he was the happiest fellow you ever saw when he left that night. Nineteen new sons of God in Florida!

Saturday morning at 4 A.M. the people persuaded Poten to preach 'till the gasoline was gone—they wanted to linger in the spiritual fellowship. After a brief message, the gasoline was gone and the generator finished its work in the gospel. Poten's voice had also disappeared. It was getting daylight so we needed to hurriedly pack up and rush back to Talusan to await the *Lady of Fatima* for Pagadian. In the morning sunlight the town looked so peaceful and right, but by God's Word we knew that there is still darness and sin—ONLY the Gospel brings light. As we bade farewell and paddled out in the banca to the ship, I smiled within and felt absolute assurance that God had led us here so 33 souls could escape from Hell! While waiting to sail, one young boy from the meeting paddled out with many bananas for us and just as he turned to return to the pier, his tiny banca capsized. But he was a good swimmer and bobbed up, climbed on the overturned boat and waved for help. But do you know that two bancas went by only 10 feet away and never even changed their stroke to help? Only the boy's uncle jumped into another banca at the pier and speedily came to save him. I wonder about you spiritually—are you the one who keeps paddling his own canoe, or the one who jumps into any available bark, rushing to the rescue? Remember—the one you rescue from the swirling current of the world becomes your brother, your crown of rejoicing.

Aboard the ship and time to mend the tired body. I distributed the remaining literature Sunday morning to our

A
fellow passengers and had one more wonderful opportunity to explain the way of salvation to a Catholic gentleman, provincial head of the Boy Scouts. He was very interested in us and even presented Hope with his new hat when we were docking in Pagadian. In answer to our wishes and Poter's "prophesying", Vernon was awaiting us in Pagadian and how happy we were to be together again. Everyone began talking at once, telling all the blessings and adventures of the trip—we felt so happy, we wanted to tell everyone!

In the Lord's jeep we proceeded to Molave, where we changed clothes and hiked up the mountain to attend a wedding party and give a report. Joe and Pauline were there to meet us. Sunday evening, at home again in Ozamiz, to be welcomed by our beloved brethren, who had prayed and held us before the Lord. Is anyone greater than my Lord? Ah, no! For I have tasted heavenly joys. I have been adventuring for Christ! Won't you join me next trip? ?

From *International Harvest*, Jan-Feb 1959