

A woman with dark skin is walking through a tall grassy field. She is carrying a young child on her back. The child is wearing a green and white long-sleeved shirt. The woman is wearing an orange short-sleeved top and a patterned skirt. She has a red headscarf and a yellow beaded bracelet. On her head, she is balancing a large, shallow, yellow bowl decorated with red circles. The background is a lush green field with trees in the distance.

CRY DIGNITY!

By John L. Peters, Founder of World Neighbors

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John L. Peters spent his life serving others. Whether in his role as a businessman, youth executive, pastor, Army chaplain, college professor or the founder and president of World Neighbors, Peters passionately gave of himself to help those less fortunate.

During World War II, where Peters served with a combat infantry unit in the Philippines and Korea, the seeds were planted for what would become his life's work. While in those countries, he witnessed firsthand the overwhelming need for an organization to help rural communities battle poverty, hunger and disease.

In 1951, Peters delivered a sermon at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City in which he spoke about the need for a program to address the root causes of poverty by meeting real needs with real solutions. He dreamed of an organization administered by people who were aware of the reality that what people need and want are not always what others *think* they need and want.

Peters' proposals were so persuasive that an organization to implement them sprang into being. World Neighbors was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in 1952, and the first board of directors voted that the organization should focus on long-term development rather than short-term relief, should remain nonsectarian and shouldn't solicit or accept government funds.

World Neighbors first programs began in India and

eventually stretched to more than 45 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. While serving World Neighbors, Peters met and counseled people from all walks of life, from prime ministers, emperors and presidents to illiterate tribesmen and rural villagers. He lived and worked with the millions struggling for subsistence throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Throughout his life, Peters received countless honors for his work with World Neighbors. He was elected to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize. He received *Guidepost* magazine's "Good Samaritan Award," a citation from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and honorary doctorates from three universities. But no prize or award was more satisfying to him than giving rural communities the tools and knowledge they needed to grow, prosper and find a bright hope for the future.

FOREWORD

John L. Peters' inspirational account of his vision for healing social sickness isn't based upon abstract theories. Instead, his grass roots vision is made up of concrete realities like food for the hungry, health care for the vulnerable and marginalized and self-generated economic stability for the poor.

This story is about a group of men and women with sweat on their brows and motivational fire in their bellies. They've learned some practical tools to help rural people help themselves, which they have been teaching to communities throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America for more than 56 years.

You will learn about an organization that believes in treating illnesses, not symptoms, by providing realistic answers to some of our world's most basic problems. And these answers are the result of actively listening to the needs of rural people and then determining how to effectively fix those problems by offering education and training, not by giving away food or material aid.

Through Peters' eyes, you will witness the kind of walking compassion that transcends language, dogmas and cultural barriers.

Thousands upon thousands of people have benefited from World Neighbors programs, resulting in plentiful food, healthy children, reduced infant and maternal mortality, leaders who have the skills to tackle community issues and an overwhelming sense of hope for the future.

Peters passed away in 1992, but his inspiration and vision live on in the mission and people of World Neighbors, a true testament to the belief that one person really can make a lasting difference.

DEDICATION

To Kay,

Who caught the vision, shared the dream and walked each mile of frustration and fulfillment with me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is impossible to acknowledge all to whom I am indebted for this account: the host, past and present, from whom I learned and borrowed; the legion, near and far, who challenged and inspired me; the friends who, with insight and empathy, encouraged me; and the family (God bless them, every one) who lovingly “suffered” and nourished me. But the completion of the book owes much to the special labors of my talented staff.

PROLOGUE

Our little globe — this planetary home of the human family, this spacecraft with limited support systems — was never in greater peril, a peril that is both acute and absurd.

It is acute because of its character and momentum. It is absurd because the equipment to tame and transform it is already at hand.

We are, for instance, the first generation in all history with the technology — cybernetic, atomic, genetic, spatial — to usher in the millennium. Yet our absorption with the trivial, our fear of the alien, our indulgence of the sensuous, has mesmerized us. We are, in consequence, stumbling toward the threshold of oblivion.

Somehow, we have been unable to establish our priorities. We are beginning to sense our crucial, global interdependence. We know, for instance, that the lifeblood of industrial nations — manganese, chromium, cobalt, tin, bauxite — flows largely from the “less developed” countries. And these nations concede that their present needs — technological, economic, administrative and agricultural — must come principally from the “more developed” countries. Yet confrontation — in the form of competing cartels, associations and regional organizations — still elbows aside cooperation. We actively energize what will destroy us and passively enervate what will save us.

So, on our globe today, millions face starvation as other millions fight obesity. While food supplies decline, atomic

weapons proliferate until we are at the “flash point” of devastation. And within 75 years our presently troubled family of less than 4 billion is scheduled to be 11 billion. Does anyone believe that, as people and problems multiply — while resources and goodwill diminish — violence and disaster will merely dissipate?

The fact is that, unless we take radical and remedial steps, we are preparing to leave to our children’s children a world in which they cannot survive.

Yet almost every survey indicates that we who can do most have grown weary of trying. We are disillusioned with past performance and disappointed with past results. We know that something needs to be done, but we relegate the answer to the admitted incompetence of bureaucracy.

This book is the story of a group of people who became convinced that part of the needed, world-changing task was theirs. It reports their conviction that nothing cripples a man more deeply than to be stripped of his dignity — and their determination to preserve and enhance that most prized of his possessions. It recounts their efforts to be brothers, not “keepers,” to those in greatest need; to tender help as a catalyst, not a cushion; a hand up, not a hand out. By doing so, they have begun to demonstrate that interpersonal transactions can be crucial, even determinative, factors in international relations.

1

CONCEPTION

Shaking, dazed, churning with anger and protest, I dug the heels of my boots into the slimy hillside and held him while he bled to death.

The artillery round had burst squarely on top of us. Leaves, twigs, shreds of ropy vine had come showering down. It had been a smashing, instantaneous nightmare. When I could, mud-covered but amazingly unhurt, I had looked for him — the infantry replacement from Tennessee who, only days ago, had joined our outfit. At our first meeting this tall, blond, rawboned lad had shown me, as his chaplain, the letter from his draft board. It had reached him just before we entered the forest.

“You’re 4-F,” it said, “you don’t have to go.”

Caught between amusement and resentment, he explained: “I was the only able-bodied man on my father’s farm,” he said, “but I got tired of hearing people say, ‘Why aren’t you in the Army?’ so I enlisted.”

Now, as World War II drew to its bloody end, he was part of the 40th Infantry Division, one of whose units had been ordered to affect the surrender of several thousand Japanese Royal Marines who were making a stand on central Mindanao. And, as we doggedly pursued them, he had

fallen in line just three paces back of me.

Step after heavy step, we flogged our laden, protesting bodies through the clinging muck of rotting generations of jungle flora and fauna. And as we did, I thought back to that sunlit afternoon when we had marched down Fifth Avenue. Flags crackled; trumpets blared; shouts and martial music — all the fanfare of bewitchment. But here, in this reeking mud, there were no Sousa's marches; no bunting; no cheers. Just death and dysentery and decay. Here, man's inhumanity was stark naked and stinking mean.

Then came the roar and the shrapnel. And, when I could, I looked for him. He was on his knees, his fingers clutching at a thorn tree. I slid down beside him.

"Are you hit?" I asked. He trembled but didn't answer.

I pulled him from the thorn tree and turned him onto my chest. A small red geyser pumped with steadily lessening force through a rip in his sodden jacket. I called for the medics and thrust my hand vainly over his wound. The warm blood pushed through my fingers and oozed down my arm.

He grew quiet, then cold. A final spasm shook him. Suddenly, he was gone.

I prayed a bitter, earnest prayer. It was for him, for us — the architects and victims of this madness — and for the family that, unknowingly, was giving him up. Easing him from my arms, I read a portion of the service over him. More would follow at the burial site — if we ever got back there. I gathered my legs under me, tied his body to the thorn tree, went on up the hill and reported his death to the company commander. The letter to his parents was beginning to take shape in my mind.

It would be like so many others: "He was a good soldier . . . died quickly, not knowing what hit him . . . bravely, in line of duty . . . you can be proud . . . God sustain you."

What else could I say? But I was sick of saying it.

That night, in the foxhole I had so carefully scooped from the fetid sludge, my muddy fatigues stiff with the blood of

the boy who wasn't supposed to be there, I promised God, "If I get out of here alive, I'm going to do something ... somehow, somewhere . . ."

It was, for me, a sort of commencement — a milestone on the road to maturity. On that road, I'd stumble, wait and evade. For maturity is a distant and difficult ideal. Nevertheless, a new impulse had caught me up and I was borne along by its urgency.

The Basic Preparation

Perhaps I'd been getting ready for this longer than I knew. Born into a love-filled home in Arkansas, my boyhood had been rich and rewarding. Our circumstances were sparing, but I never felt deprived. Our status was a humble one, but I never felt ashamed.

"Remember, John," my mother would tell me every now and then, "you're not any better than anyone else — but nobody else is any better than you."

And somehow she made me believe it, that spunky little darling who never herself had the chance at more than a grammar school education but who refused to let that limitation quench her curiosity or mute her opinions.

She whetted my appetite for education. And, indulging it in the Southwest and in New England, I absorbed the traditional values of my day and area. To some, these values seemed trite and outmoded. To me, they waxed strong and wore well.

A teenage religious experience planted the seeds of moral accountability and social concern — bringing me also the conviction that I mattered greatly to God and that he cared deeply for me (it took me a lot longer to realize that, as my mother had intimated, he cared just as deeply for everybody else). In seminary, preparing for the ministry, I joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation. But Hitler, and Pearl Harbor, made me look more deeply at the implications and limitations of non-violence. So, with a few years of pastorate

and youth work behind me, I enlisted as a chaplain. In time, through the arcane convolutions of military procedure, I found myself in Asia.

There I met — became really aware of — people I had previously known only as blurred units in a mass of undigested data. To me, Asians had been people to whom we sent famine relief and missionaries. They were picturesquely odd and indisputably alien. To far too many of my associates, they were simply “gooks.”

But from Hawaii on, I met flesh-and-blood neighbors, with needs, and wants, and hopes and fears exactly like my own. I even met enemies — a group of Japanese soldiers, too enfeebled by malaria to resist, whom we plucked from the mud of a crumbling jungle bivouac.

As we shared with them our K rations and Atabrine, I asked their young lieutenant, “What did your country hope to gain by attacking us?”

“I can’t speak for the men who make my country’s policy,” he replied in halting, accented, excellent English. “As for me, I want only a chance to own a little piece of ground and give my children a decent education.”

I almost dropped the helmet in which I was bringing them some precious water. Here was my enemy, wanting only what I knew he would have to have if his children and mine could ever know fulfillment. And yet we and our companions, agonizing to destroy each other, were exhausting the very resources which could ensure our future needs. It was madness.

The Fateful Resolution

Madness or not, the fighting continued. The malaria-stricken prisoners had been carried to the rear. We had pushed on into the forest. And all the while, building up in me, was the growing sense of wastefulness and misdirection. It grew no less as I read occasionally from my little New Testament and from Frank Laubach’s *Letters by a Modern*

Mystic (written when he, too, had been on Mindanao). These, together with the pictures of Kay and Don — my wife and son — were wrapped in oil paper, the only things on me which I could keep dry.

So, when the shrapnel slashed down upon us, it ripped open not only trees and earth and live young flesh, it also tore to shreds the encrusted shell of my own insulation and inertia.

It was a new me who promised God, “I’m going to do something, somehow . . .”

PEACE!

The glorious word reached us on Panay, in the Philippine Visayans. “It’s over! It’s over! The damn war’s over!” And we cried; prayed; fired rifles; pounded each other. “California, here I come,” we each sang with cracked voices.

But California had to wait. For the 40th Division had been chosen to help take the Japanese surrender in Korea and to prepare the way for interim military government. And the road to San Francisco passed through Seoul . . . and Kwangju and Po Hang and Pusan.

Somewhere along the road, the malaria I had brought from the Philippines, almost endemic in our outfit, laid me low. I wound up in a station hospital near Inchon.

One evening, almost recovered and waiting to go back to my unit, I turned on the ward room radio. A. J. Cronin’s story, “The Keys of the Kingdom,” was being broadcast. I listened to the account of the priest who had gone to China; who decided to stop the pattern that produced “rice Christians;” was opposed, misunderstood and, when he persisted, was transferred. By the time his efforts proved their merit, his successor received the credit.

I sat, quietly absorbing the impact of the program. Then, deeply moved, I thought, “Wouldn’t it be tremendous if each of us, like that priest, would do what we knew we should — and not worry about who gets the credit?”

It was as though I had touched a high-power transmission line. Instantly, I felt myself invaded by an energy which surged, and warmed, and lifted. With amazement, I noticed that the ward room was beginning to change. I was looking into, not merely at, the walls about me, seeing the very molecules which gave them form and substance.

Thunderstruck, I asked myself, "What's going on?" The hospital had never heard of LSD. This was no narcosis. But a curtain had been pulled aside — a shutter opened. I was looking past appearance into essence.

I turned to look at the people around me — five officers and a ward attendant. We were a motley crew — sick of whatever brought us there . . . sick of the ward . . . sick of occupation duty . . . sick of each other.

Yet, as my eyes moved from one to the other, I realized how infinitely valuable, extravagantly loved, each of us was. For I saw, in clear and sculptured outline, a glowing, vibrant inner core in each of us; a shining, encapsulated bud of transcendence, able to transform and transfigure its possessor.

Deep inside me, something began to melt. I had long reckoned myself free of bias or bigotry. I warmly subscribed to the thesis that all were created equal. But I was forced to recognize that not all were equally endowed. Some could race and some could only creep. Some could sing and some could merely croak. Some could lead and some could barely follow. And these differences, claiming first my attention and then my regard, had overborne the basic identities. I was infected with the self-concealed prejudices of the self-confirmed liberal.

The Puzzling Promise

But now I knew that none would ever again be really alien to me. He might be different in more ways than I could count, but I would know that, if the envelope of our superficial peculiarities were stripped away, he and I could discover our family likeness. For I had glimpsed that highest

common denominator that makes the world akin.

In the grip of this experience, I sat down to write to Kay. I felt if anyone could understand, it would be she. For her devotional life was deeper, more vibrant, than mine. And in our ministry, I had said to her, “Honey, I’m the part of you that speaks to people and you’re the part of me that speaks to God.” I wanted to share this experience with her, to describe if I could what was happening to me.

But more than description came through. I found myself writing:

“... and as I follow God’s directions into that significant work into which He will surely lead me, there will be absolutely no fear of failure. It may not be success as the world counts success. But the assurance is that God’s care will always be there.”

When, weeks later, Kay received this letter, it seemed, she said, to be alive in her hand. She read it, wondered at it, put it securely away.

And neither of us had the slightest idea of all that it was to mean.

BIRTH 2

History, I suppose, will attest to the fact that when gunfire fades in the distance, euphoria moves onstage. Somehow, when we are no longer threatened, we seem unable to sustain high resolve and deep commitment. Granted a measure of respite, we succumb in happy relief to the hucksters of trivia.

This was certainly true of the America I observed following my return from Korea. The Gross National Product — that modern “cloud by day and pillar of fire by night” — seemed to be on an endless escalator. Things, the economists agreed, were going to be so abundant that the fattest of cats would need far greater leisure fully to enjoy them. The “pursuit of happiness” had become a headlong dash after gratification and what was once an inalienable right was now an insatiable appetite. Gluttony was not swinish but stylish.

Fresh from the stark simplicity of life in an Asian countryside, I was appalled at the overblown affluence of what was being called “the American way of life.” Shocked and self-righteous, I was ready to denounce its wastefulness as criminal; its ostentation as obscene. I was an aroused Puritan, ready to call down curses on the sybarites around me.

Yet, upon reflection, I knew that only my wartime experiences had kept me from being a complete and artless participant in these excesses. Having come to this recognition (or was it mere rationalization?), I found it not too difficult to make my adjustments and hold my peace. I did so. Then came April of 1951.

Five years earlier I had left the Army and entered doctoral studies at Yale. It was a pleasant and rewarding time. But for a brief period, away from my family and forced by poor fiscal planning to try to make 15 cents cover my daily food budget, I was introduced to a course not in the curriculum. It was the peculiar logic of hunger. I found, for instance, that I actively disliked people who were eating when I was not. They had, it is true, done me no harm. In fact, they hardly knew that I existed. But I just didn't like them.

This perception, totally unappreciated at the time, was probably the best thing I garnered from my graduate studies. Third World anger, though often thoroughly irrational, is now a bit easier for me to understand.

A Stage Is Set

When my courses at Yale University were completed, I began teaching at Oklahoma City

University and in late 1950 I was asked to serve also as the morning preacher at St. Luke's Methodist Church. It was a temporary and challenging assignment. For the congregation of more than 6,000 members, while impatient of old platitudes, was responsive to new insights. My life, at the surface level, had become satisfying and stimulating.

Every now and then, however, there came pushing through the curtains of my complacency memories of the rain forest on Mindanao — and the boy from Tennessee who lay buried not far from it. Those memories troubled me. I generally concluded, however, that what I had said to God in that foxhole was just something you say to God in a foxhole. For, given the huge complexities and immense difficulties of our

world situation, who could actually “do something” about it?

Occasionally Kay and I looked at the letter from Korea, only to wonder . . . and wonder.

One Thursday, the outline of my sermon for the following Sunday comfortably sketched, I turned on the radio to hear my old commander, Douglas MacArthur, giving his report to the joint Houses of Congress. I listened as, with discernment and resonance, he said:

“Long exploited by the so-called colonial powers, with little opportunity to achieve any degree of social justice, individual dignity or a higher standard of life . . . the people of Asia found their opportunity in the war just past to throw off the shackles of colonialism and now see the dawn of new opportunity, a heretofore unfelt dignity and the self-respect of political freedom.

“What they seek now is friendly guidance, understanding and support, not imperious direction; the dignity of equality and not the shame of subjugation.

“What they strive for is the opportunity for a little more food in their stomachs, a little better clothing on their backs, a little firmer roof over their heads and the realization of the normal nationalities’ urge for political freedom . . .

“Numbering half the world’s people and controlling far more than half the world’s resources, they are on the march . . .”

It was enough. Vivid pictures, long forgotten, came sweeping in on the general’s words.

Memories Come Alive

There they stood — the long lines waiting with the stubborn patience of the damned. For what? For the privilege of dipping into our garbage cans.

There they came: the mothers stumbling with frantic hope toward our aid stations as they sought help for their emaciated babies; the fathers clinging desperately to the last vestige of their dignity as they asked the opportunity of earning enough to provide minimal subsistence.

The foxhole promise began to smite and burn.

Sunday arrived. The great church had filled. The singing ended. The lights went down. I came into the pulpit wondering what I would actually say. For, hours before, I had discarded the sermon I had prepared and intended to deliver.

I heard myself saying, "Are we, who have so much, fully aware of the plight of those who have so little?"

And then, with insights which transcended my experience, I called for the sort of program which would meet real needs with real solutions; be humbly administered, recognizing that what men need and want is not always what we *think* they need and want; be sharing rather than giving, since we have neither the resources nor the insight to administer this program alone; designed to help men find self-sufficiency in the only way such a process is possible, by their own participating efforts . . . and, finally, be extensive and aggressive, shot through with the spirit of Christ.

Wondering if I had preached a sermon or merely wrung out in the words the long-pent anguish of my heart, I closed:

"There are men of means and intelligence listening to me. They have proved what they can do for themselves, their families, their communities. This is the hour when, under God, they need to rise and show what they can do for their world. "

The benediction was given. Almost no one left. As though caught up on a constraining wave, the congregation moved toward the altar.

Typical was Beverly Osborne, founder of Chicken in the Rough restaurants. Taking my hand, he said, "God tapped me on the shoulder this morning. What can I do?"

And Beverly was not alone. For down the corridors, in the church offices, the phones rang and rang. We had been on the air and some of the thousands who listened were calling. "What do you plan to do?" they asked. "What do you plan to do?"

I was dumbfounded.

Listening and watching, Kay wept. The message of the Korean letter, she knew, would soon be understood.

FINDING DIRECTIONS

3

To call for global action is one thing. Almost aghast, I realized I had done it. To construct the effective machinery was another. Almost overwhelmed, I knew I must attempt it.

For, following the sermon, a group of businessmen had met. They passed a resolution to “back John Peters 100 percent in what he wants to do.” Some even came forward with substantial checks. “How do we make them out?” they said. In a kind of daze, I replied, “Just sign them. We’ll think of something.” It was unbelievable.

There could now be no turning back. We *had* to “think of something.” But where to turn?

Somehow, in those days, we felt that knowledge — particularly as it related to things international — emanated from New York and Washington. And so I traveled east. My “open sesame” was simply, “I represent a group of businessmen who ...” It happened to be true. And it worked every time.

In New York, at Flushing Meadows, I met with representatives of United Nations agencies. “We’re still trying to figure out what to do,” they said. At 156 Fifth Avenue, I visited officials of the Committee on World Literacy (who offered me a job); the Christian Medical Council (who described their far-flung operations and

deplored their lack of resources); Agricultural Missions (who told me of the unmet needs and opportunities in Asia).

These conferences taught me much, but I could not keep from wondering why these agencies, though sharing the same address, pursued such independent courses of action, unaware in so many ways of what the others were doing.

I found my way to an ex-Army barracks in Washington where I met with Dr. Henry Bennett. He had come from Oklahoma State University to be the first director of the Point Four program. "I want to keep this program small," he said, "but it isn't going to be easy."

And over at the House of Representatives, Dr. Walter Judd was good enough to come off the floor, listen to me and say, "Why, what you're proposing is what I've been asking for years."

A Concept Takes Shape

As the bits and pieces began to fall into place, it appeared obvious to me that any real developmental program had to be multifaceted. It needed the integrated, synchronized disciplines of agriculture, health, literacy and industry. Given these legs, it could stand and walk. Deprived of one or more, it would fall.

For to improve the health of an area, and fail to increase its agricultural productivity, is to ensure starvation within decades. To make a man literate, without concomitant programs of improved publication and increased income (so that he can buy the periodicals his new appetite requires), is to bestow frustration and receive resentment. To introduce improved agricultural implements, and fail to provide employment opportunities for those displaced by such equipment, is to court disaster.

Later, we were to see how important this integrated approach was to the success of family planning. For in the developing areas, children are the major source of needed labor and the only assurance of old age security. In rural

India, for instance, a father is certain he must have at least six children before he can be assured that a son of his will survive to maturity. And that same certainty is shared by his counterparts in Nigeria, Indonesia and northeast Brazil. In these areas, therefore, family planning will have its best reception when it is offered in a context which has first dealt with maternal-child health, improved nutrition and increased income.

I concluded that what we wanted — if we were to provide a needed and effective instrument — was a program which majored on long-term development rather than short-term relief. There were already many worthy agencies specifically geared to respond to the latter need. There were all too few concerned with the former. And, remembering a luminous experience in Korea, I was certain that the projects most likely to succeed and endure would be manned by those whose pride would not be eroded by our assistance — and whose identity would not be erased by our participation.

I discussed my concept with a long-time professional in the voluntary agency field.

“It’s got to be an integrated program,” I explained as the coffee in our cups gradually cooled, “a sort of ministry to the total man in his total situation. And it’s got to be done in such a way that he can feel he did it; that it’s his program.”

My friend chewed thoughtfully on a thumbnail.

Difficulties and Decisions

“All right,” he finally said, “if that’s the way you want it, so be it. But I can tell you one thing — you’ll never raise money for it. It’s not emotional enough. No starving babies; no scare approach that says, ‘tomorrow this may be you.’ You even make it hard to claim the credit for what you’ve actually done. Believe me, that’s not the kind of thing that separates people from their money!”

He spoke from broad experience. And he knew what he was talking about. What I had in mind was going to

be difficult to explain, tough to “package,” hard to sell. It lacked neatness, succinctness, pathos and self-gratification.

And there were times when, to my embarrassment, we had to “claim the credit” in order to prove to our donors that we had used their investments wisely and well. My idealism was forced to accept the strictures of harsh reality.

Back in Oklahoma, I wondered whether I could really justify my trip east. For I brought little back with me except some promises of cooperation, some petitions for assistance, and the genesis of an operational structure. It wasn't, I thought, enough. But it was something. And I laid it before a company of my assembled fellows — men of differing religious affiliations and races, united in a common concern.

They listened, considered, debated, decided. The program, they agreed, would be practical, humble, sensitive, responsive. And, while spiritually motivated, it must not be sectarian. We would serve after the pattern of the Good Samaritan who, according to the biblical story, went to the help of his suffering neighbor simply because his heart was moved with compassion. There was nothing in the story to suggest that behind all he did for the man in need was the thought, “now, maybe he'll become a Samaritan.”

We knew, of course, that our resources would be limited. We could do only so much. The needs to which we responded, therefore, must be coupled with an opportunity for eventual self-reliance. And our response would be made without regard to caste or creed or color.

If men saw in us or our associates a spirit they cherished or a faith they desired (and many came to do so), well and good. If not ... still, well and good. Our responsibility was to love and serve.

From these men a board of directors was selected. And they insisted that the same rigorous principles that governed

their businesses should regulate ours — in our dealings with both donors and recipients.

“Maybe we ought to call this,” said one, “hard-nosed love.” As far as I was concerned, it was an apt phrase.

What these men demanded of others, they exacted of themselves — time, energy, study, resources. They agreed to take care of my family if I would give full time, to the new organization.

“We’ll see that they don’t starve,” chortled one of the directors.

I laughed back, “You may not know it but that’s a better proposition than the college is making me!”

I agreed to try it. And Kay agreed I should. So, leaving her to run the “office” (our dining room and a filing cabinet), I traveled across the country to harangue civic clubs, churches and concerned individuals. Gradually, the program took shape. A secretary was added, more suitable quarters secured. When the time was ripe, the board sent me to India to explore at firsthand the situation there — and to initiate our first project with a small agricultural institute in Madras State.

This would be our learning experience, a mixture of successes and failures. From it, we would discover the power of creative example, the superficiality of imposed solutions, the joys — and the difficulties — of intercultural relationships, the destructive virulence of caste rivalry, the immense inertia — and frequent value — of long-established tradition.

On that first trip, the travel agency had explained that it was cheaper to make a complete circuit of the world than it was to go out to India and turn around and come back. So I decided to look at project opportunities in Africa and the Philippines also.

Not everyone I met seemed overjoyed to learn about us. At one center, for instance, I had mentioned that we intended to work as partners with needy people, regardless of their creed or caste. Later, a troubled committee called

on me. Their leader studied me carefully from under thick, lowering brows.

“We heard your talk,” he rumbled as we gathered on the veranda to catch what evening breeze we could, “and frankly we don’t understand how you, a Christian, can fellowship with peoples of other faiths — as you said you intend to. Can you explain that?”

I cleared my throat. “Well,” I said, “I keep remembering that Jesus, in his keynote sermon to his neighbors in Nazareth, said a few things that almost got him killed. So he must have felt that they were important.”

The committee shifted restlessly. The night insects began to orchestrate.

“What he told those orthodox friends and relatives,” I went on, “was that, in the days of a couple of their great prophets, God limited his miracles of food and healing to a Lebanese widow and a Syrian captain, neither of them worshippers of the true God.

“So, when Jesus tells me that I must be like my Heavenly Father — who sends his rain on the just and the unjust alike — and when he says that I must love even my enemies, I can only conclude that he means for me to include literally *everybody* in my circle of concern. I must confess that I don’t see how I can love somebody and reject his fellowship. In fact, I don’t see how I can reject anybody and remain a Christian. Do you?”

The committee went off to consider the matter. And, since we’ve never been asked to work with them, I can only assume that somehow I failed to make my point.

Undoubtedly, I failed in many other ways, for I was, indeed, an absolute babe in the woods of differing customs, cultures and expectations. I overtipped, underslept, ate the wrong food and listened to the wrong people. But, amid it all, I began to sense the full scope of the problem, the vast commitment required; the awesome alternatives if the task were left undone. And there were times when, despite the promise given in Korea, I

despaired that any real “answers” could be found. Back home, more than once I woke in a cold sweat, having dreamed that I was in an overladen cockleshell, headed for the rocks in a stormy sea.

Rewarding Developments

Then came the letter from Congressman Walter Judd.

“Can you come to Washington,” he wrote, “to meet with Frank Laubach, Melvin Evans, Roy Burkhart and me? We’d like to discuss with you the work you’re doing and see how it might be expanded.”

Of course I went — to report, listen, pray and plan.

The men I met in Washington comprised a vast reservoir of experience: Walter Judd, former medical missionary to China and longtime member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Frank Laubach, whose insights gained among the Moros of Mindanao had catapulted him to pioneering leadership in the field of world literacy; Melvin Evans, successful exponent of the application of Christian principles to labor-management problems in the United States and Japan; Roy Burkhart, influential author and the dynamic pastor of First Community Church in Columbus, Ohio.

Out of this meeting began a new chapter in the life of World Neighbors. Roy Burkhart, until failing health stopped him, gave impressive leadership. In Columbus, new directors labored to provide a more effective administrative structure. John Eckler took time from his busy law practice to guide the new incorporation. W. E. Chope, then in process of getting Industrial Nucleonics off the ground, wrote an entire operations manual.

A battery of notable voices gave wide exposition and willing endorsement: Judd from Washington; Evans and Robert Ingersoll (later to be the U.S. Ambassador to Japan and an Assistant Secretary of State) from Chicago; Laubach and Norman Vincent Peale from New York; Samuel Shoemaker (famed author, rector and radio minister) from Pittsburgh.

It was an impressive effort, but there were difficulties and obstacles. McCarthyism was in the air and new organizations, with international concerns, were highly suspect.

“I’d like to propose that our convention give you its endorsement,” said the head of one veterans’ organization, “but something with ‘world’ in its title hasn’t got the chance of a snowball in hell.”

We seemed to be mavericks, speckled birds. And Roy Burkhart and I agreed that we needed *some* sort of institutional sponsorship. Perhaps, we thought, it might help to have the endorsement of the National Council of Churches, then just bringing its various segments into coalescence.

Searching for the Channel

I returned to New York, therefore, and met with a committee of the Division of Foreign Missions. Stating our case, I handed out copies of the “statement of cooperation” which we had prepared. Several of the committee members appeared to think the statement adequate.

But one member, whose denomination had only recently joined the N.C. C., said, “And what’s the theology of World Neighbors?”

It was a question for which I was not prepared.

“I can give you my own,” I stammered, “and it’s in keeping with yours. But World Neighbors is not a confessional group and I can only tell you with certainty that we all believe that it’s a good thing and a right thing for a man to love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself.”

Jesus, I recalled, had once said that this was the sum total of the law and the prophets. But Jesus, of course, had not had to consider those complex doctrinal and institutional issues which would weigh so heavily on the troubled shepherds of his fission-prone flock. So my questioner turned to his associates.

“We’ve just finished cleaning house of people who wanted to say no more than that,” he thundered, “why are we fooling with this group?”

The interview was over. The issue was closed. There would be no endorsement.

I left the session feeling that we had suffered a major misfortune. As time passed I knew instead that we had been fortunate indeed.

But one thing was certain: our fund raising task remained a formidable one. So, from Oklahoma City where businessman P. X. Johnston had given us land for a new headquarters, I pounded pavements, pulpits, doors and desks. Others joined me but, even with all the splendid voices raised in our behalf, we were able to raise only about \$120,000 a year — far too little for the tasks we had assumed but enough to teach us restraint and responsibility.

About that time I was invited to Washington to meet the acting director of Point Four (then undergoing various changes in its form and title). He had heard something of our work, knew several of our Directors and approved our purpose and program.

By now the headquarters was no longer an ex-Army barracks. The appointments were impressive; the staff only faintly infected by that Olympian virus which seeps into the pores of Washington officialdom. I hesitatingly gave a brief report of progress. And I was surprised at the response.

“I’m impressed,” said the acting director, “and I’ll tell you how I feel. We’re the bureaucrats. You’re the people. I’m going to take some of these millions we’ve got and give them to you.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. “This can’t be real,” I thought, “It’s got to be a dream.”

It wasn’t a dream; it was a mirage. For the articulate legal staff speedily made it clear that, if we accepted those millions, we would be subject to direction and review not only by our own officialdom but also by their opposite numbers in those countries where we would be serving.

And, by that time, we had come to see how such programs seemed more likely to produce subservient dependence than proud self-reliance.

This was precisely the opposite of our intended goal. For, from the beginning, World Neighbors had purposed to help men help themselves — in ways that called forth the maximum commitment of their own resources and conserved the maximum degree of their self-respect. It is true that our purpose was to help in programs of increased food production, better health, literacy, small industries and family planning. But how we helped was all important. For we were equally concerned to encourage indigenous responsibility, indigenous pride and indigenous leadership.

To evoke the climate in which these values thrived, we felt we needed to be able to say, “Look, we’re just people. People like you. We make our money the way you make yours — by working for it. But we care — about you; about us; about our world. And if you care, too, let’s pool our resources and see if we can’t do, together, what neither of us can do separately.”

Somehow, we felt, those words would ring false and prove impotent in an aura of government support and bureaucratic involvement.

So I thanked my friend, told him I’d have our board review his general proposal, and left. But I knew our directors would turn the offer down.

They did. And I was proud of them.

Finding the Resources

Nevertheless, our finances remained threadbare. And principles, however noble, pay no salaries, buy no plows, provide no seed, supply no fertilizer.

Even so, though conditions abroad were worsening and needs everywhere were deepening, we knew we were right in insisting on “no government help.”

For we strongly felt that we needed to help people — the

“haves” as well as the “have-nots” — to become what God intended them to be. And we knew that life can be stunted just as much by unabated acquisition as by unrelieved deprivation. Real enrichment, we were convinced, whether it is spiritual, psychical or material, flowed from service, from sharing, from giving.

Most of our donors could, of course, give only limited amounts. But it was soon obvious that these gifts paid double returns on the investment. They brought to the recipient an increasing spiral of benefits. And they brought to the donor the kind of joy that prompted a little river of letters saying: “I’m so grateful for this channel to those who need me” and “Thank God for the chance to be a real human being!”

Some could and did respond in unusual measure. And among them were Eleanor Reece Hamill and her sons Don and Bob Reece who, in a difficult year, almost doubled our outreach; Polly Young Keller, who shared with us a bounteous bequest; Bert Chope, who enabled us to tell our story more widely; the Mabee Foundation, who provided our new headquarters — and Ruth and Harlow Russell, who assured its long-term maintenance. There were also those dynamic souls — such as Clara Raisbeck, Dorothy Scattergood and Alma Hall — who, in addition to their substance, gave unstintingly of their time and energy in community leadership.

One little lady found in World Neighbors the real fulfillment of her life. She was Louise Munds who, as a teenager, was convinced she should be a missionary. When she was 22, having finished her nurses training, she appeared before the Mission Board under whom she hoped to serve. But, strangely, they offered her no encouragement. In fact, they turned her down.

“You’re just too frail,” they said. “You couldn’t take the rigors of the mission field. We can’t afford to send you out.”

With a heavy heart, she left. She knew that they were wrong. She looked bad only because she had worked so

hard. But the die was cast. The mission field was not for her. Years passed. This skillful, dedicated nurse was in constantly growing demand. Carefully she gathered others about her. Finally, she owned her own small sanitarium. She frugally saved and wisely invested.

In her 80s, semi-retired, she loved to read. And one of her favorite authors was Dr. Samuel Shoemaker. For one whole month, he was speaker on the NBC radio program "The Art of Living."

And one Sunday she heard him saying, "Let me remind you that helping the people of the underdeveloped countries to improve their condition is not a matter of endless relief: these people need technical assistance in self-help ... One of the finest of the agencies that I know is World Neighbors. We founded it some eight years ago; and it is now at work in Egypt and Africa, where we have sent teams of trained experts in agriculture, literacy, childcare, health and various skills. We have already reached some three million people with the expenditure of only \$750,000. If you want to know more about World Neighbors, write me and I shall gladly send you information."

Always a woman of action, she immediately wrote to Dr. Shoemaker, who referred her to me. It was my joy and privilege to tell Louise Munds all about World Neighbors.

"This, of course, is what I always wanted to do," she said. "And since I couldn't go myself tell me how I can send others."

I explained that, while we did have a small number of Americans in our overseas program, we worked mainly through dedicated nationals who were citizens of their own lands. And, since we were trying to bring about constructive change "from the bottom up," we had found this the most productive thing to do.

"We're sort of an 'operation earthworm'," I said, "motivated by the spirit of Christ but working with all kinds of people — regardless of race, creed, color or nationality."

Perpetuating Dedication

Mrs. Munds began to send what she could to World Neighbors. Out of her regular income, she couldn't send much. But when she died at 91 she left the bulk of her estate to World Neighbors as a trust fund whose returns would continue to provide, year-after-year, dedicated young people to do what she had wanted to do all her life.

The Munds Trust has furnished to the self-help program literally hundreds of these project leaders at the grass roots. And through her gift, Louise Munds, once rejected, continues to live and love and serve as a caring "missionary" to the sick, the hungry, the lonely and neglected of the world.

4

TESTING THE PRINCIPLES

Just as we thought we had worked out our procedural problems, our first project in India ran into trouble. It had been such a promising beginning. I was deeply dismayed.

For on my first on-site visit to this drought-stricken area, the need had been overwhelmingly evident. With the missionary who had invited me, I had walked through villages which, though inhabited, seemed like ghost towns. Out in the nearby fields I could see men plowing the arid soil in a kind of blind impulsiveness. But the village streets — except for a few naked, listless children — were empty. No women brought water from the well, nor beat the hulls from needed grain, nor kneaded cow dung into shape for drying.

Finally I asked, “Where are the women?”

He looked at the closed doors of the crumbling huts about us. “Well, you see,” he said, “there’s famine here not only in food but in cloth. In most of these homes there’s hardly one full garment. When the husband is in the field, if visitors come, the wife must wait inside.”

We went on.

I stopped to talk to a man and his son, both as thin and gnarled as the mango trees they were cutting down. The orchard had been their livelihood. The drought had killed it.

They were hoping they could sell the wood. Or trade it for a bit of grain.

“And after that?” I asked the father.

He shrugged.

The prospects were desperate. But not hopeless. Water could be found if wells could be deepened. And if the land could be made ready for the next monsoon — dams and bunds and percolation tanks — there was still a good chance for its recovery.

Moreover, in addition to the need and the possibilities, there was excellent leadership. A capable and dedicated missionary had trained an eager and competent group of young Indians. They were happy to work out a long-range program with us. And so, with our help and encouragement, a multiphased project of village extension was begun.

“Food for work” became the incentive for needed roads, wells and reforestation. Youth clubs wrought local miracles in poultry projects and village sanitation. Visiting nurses brought better health and improved nutrition. Revolving loans made possible better livestock and productive crafts.

The desert, it seemed, was destined to blossom as the rose.

But the missionary’s departure precipitated a crisis. The two young men whom he left to carry on simply could not work together.

They were, it is true, both Christians. And each had received an excellent education. But their Christianity could not erase their caste antagonisms (caste is still influential in most all of India’s religious “communities”). And, though much was accomplished whose results will abide, a promising future was aborted.

There were other efforts which bruised and bloodied us: The South American area where we misjudged village competence, local patience and the shifting bed of the river; the African project whose remarkable leader let outside assistance generate delusions of grandeur — and who thereupon traded in his faithful older wife for two younger models, ousted associates he could not dominate and

imported tractors he could not operate.

These, and others, taught us needed, costly lessons. Fortunately, since our specific investments were limited and our eggs were in no single basket, we were left neither bankrupt nor disheartened. We were, as Saint Paul once said, “Crushed but not despairing, struck down but not destroyed.”

To continue with these biblical analogies, it might be said that India, in many ways, is like the final judgment. Its harsh realities separate the sheep from the goats. Its consuming fires of rivalry and suspicion reduce to ashes a poorly executed project. Its political vicissitudes perennially discourage, but its needs and possibilities constantly attract.

An Exciting Experiment

“If we can make it in India,” I thought one day as the blazing sun beat through my makeshift turban (a couple of handkerchiefs), “we can make it anywhere.” Maharashtra State, in western India, was the locale of one of the projects in which we were involved.

I had reached my profound conclusion sitting precariously on top of a pile of manure as the high-wheeled cart on which it was loaded lurched drunkenly toward the old town of Ahmednagar. The dry, white dust was rising in drifting, lazy plumes from the hooves of the plodding oxen — to settle back, like suffocating caresses, on every tiny orifice of nostril, skin and fabric. I was miserable; my malodorous cushion my only creature comfort. And I wondered if I’d ever reach the project I’d started out to visit.

The journey had begun auspiciously enough.

The previous evening, in Bombay’s vast and raucous Victoria Station, I had found my train and compartment with no difficulty. Since the schedule was, for me, impossible to read, I said to a guard as I clambered aboard, “When do we get to Ahmednagar?” It was there I was to be met by friends and taken some 30 miles by jeep to Vadala,

the project I intended to visit.

“At 10 a.m.,” the guard had replied. I relaxed.

Through the night the train climbed smoothly and steadily through the lofty Western Ghats and, around 7:30 a.m., pulled into a neat little station. I wondered as I sat, bag unpacked and half undressed, where we were. Too late, as we pulled away, I saw the sign at the end of the station platform.

“Ahmednagar,” it said.

Eighteen miles later the train paused. I leaped off. The train pulled away.

At the miniscule station I learned that the next train back would pass through that evening at 8 p.m. And at this remote spot there was no other transportation — no truck, no car, no taxi, only the stationmaster’s bicycle. I was desperate. My whole schedule was imperiled.

Finally a bullock cart came lumbering down the road. A young farmer was bound somewhere with a load of manure. For four rupees he was persuaded to add me to his load and take me back to Ahmednagar. We reached there around noon, stopping at the well-remembered railway station. I crawled down. The farmer drove away. My friends had long since given me up and returned to Vadala.

When I could get enough dust out of my throat to talk, I asked the station agent where I might find overnight accommodations.

“You might try Ahmednagar College”, he said, “they’re used to foreign visitors.”

They obviously were. For Principal Tom Barnabas made me welcome — barnyard redolence and all.

The college was 12 years old, founded by a remarkable Indian Christian, Dr. B. P. Hivale, a Ph.D. from Harvard. His purpose, he had said, was to give rural boys an opportunity for an education so that they would provide leadership in the uplift of their people.

It was a worthy purpose and I was excited at its prospect. For I was certain that, if India were to succeed in her vast

struggle to feed, clothe, house and educate her people, she would certainly need the serious and sacrificial involvement of her academic community in the problems of her rural areas. I knew that most of India's people lived in the village and off the land. And, ideally, her educational institutions could be reservoirs of leadership and uplift.

Here was a college with an intention of becoming such a reservoir. I began to feel that the ride on the bullock cart had been no accident.

"How many of your graduates are back in the village?" I asked.

The question was naive. For young men in India (and Africa and Asia and, until recently, the United States) seek education to escape, not reshape, the village. With their parents' full approval, they flock to the cities, hoping to find a job and perhaps, on occasion, to send back a rupee or two to families who would otherwise never see such largesse.

Tom Barnabas was too polite to belabor my sociological innocence, though the question's obvious answer deeply troubled him. Both of us knew that there was something wrong with a system which, intending to uplift an area, actually lured away, year-after-year, its most promising leadership. Both of us recognized that the kind of education which produced self-conscious sophisticates, weaned from drudgery and scornful of labor, was something no developing nation could afford. It was not merely irrelevant luxury, it was sociological leukemia.

A long discussion ensued.

I finally proposed that, if our directors agreed, World Neighbors would provide support for a village-oriented program combining research and service. The village, not the campus, would be focus and laboratory.

Dr. Barnabas was sure that a course which required college students to "work like coolies in the dirt of the villages" would never receive accreditation. I was certain that the college could not find a professor who had what it took to successfully direct such a program — enough sensitivity

to be accepted by villagers, enough dedication to labor with harijans (outcastes), enough inspiration to enlist the emulation of students.

We were both wrong. I was the first to be proved so.

For, even while I sat on a windswept porch and talked with Tom Barnabas, S. K. Hulbe was half a world away in Austin, “working like a coolie” toward his Ph.D. at the University of Texas. He was from Ahmednagar. Learning this — when I returned to the United States (after visiting other projects including, incidentally, the one at Vadala) — I went to see him.

There, in his small apartment in Austin, we hammered out the outlines of an operating program, agreed upon a tentative budget and made mutual commitments. Our directors approved the project and, when the class work for his doctorate was completed, Hulbe returned to Ahmednagar to begin what was to be a creative experiment in college-village cooperation.

When the news reached me that the new project was underway, I could just see the whole thing in my mind’s eye — the happy villagers welcoming those who had come at last to deliver them from their age-old miseries; the garlands, the greetings, the homage. Perhaps Dr. Hulbe and his first student contingent anticipated the same. At any rate, as I later learned, the project was launched with high hopes.

A Disheartening Start

Its reception was a disaster. The villagers, tired, as they said, of “social workers who come out to preach to us,” made it abundantly clear that they did not welcome this collegiate “invasion.” Government officials viewed the effort with jaundiced eyes. The wider academic community appeared scandalized at a proposal which had college students and faculty becoming compromised and contaminated in the heat and dust of the villages.

All this was a blow to me and a mountainous challenge

to Hulbe's hopes and dreams. The project almost died aborning.

But Hulbe and his associates persisted and our support and encouragement continued. Carefully evading the trap of mere "social work," courses were developed which met high scholastic standards. Their purposes were three-fold: to reach and involve villagers (even those former outcastes, the harijans) in programs of sound improvement; to so involve college students in village life that India's program of "nation building" would be supplied with a growing cadre of competent and dedicated leadership at the grass roots level; and, finally, to make education more substantive and relevant by supplying valid data concerning the economic, social and political life of India's rural society.

These were, by the way, almost the same objectives recommended by India's Education Ministry when, three years later, the aims of the National Service Scheme (India's domestic "peace corps") were outlined.

But during those first few years the project battled for its very life. Rural apathy and official vacillation almost choked it. Village factionalism and failing monsoons almost derailed it. Open opposition and covert suspicion all but stopped it. For this was an area where the "opposition party" was strong. And had any U.S. Government money been involved in its support, it could not have survived.

Persistence Pays Off

But survive it did. Movies, plays, classes in literacy and public health — these broke down village hostility and opened the door to mutual understanding. Villagers counseled with each other and established their own priorities: deepening wells, improving farm-to-market roads, building schools. And, as the months passed, students, faculty, land owners and harijans joined forces to dig wells,

build roads, erect buildings, terrace fields, try out new seeds, test soil and organize cooperatives.

In time, 10 of the villages formed their own association and, under the college's guidance, built an oil mill (to process peanuts, one of their principal crops), a furniture factory, a poultry center and a medical facility. Other villages followed suit. The project was alive and growing.

When news of all this reached me — through reports from the project and from the overseas staff we were beginning to establish — I was ready and happy to concede that I had been so wrong. There were professors who were willing to swim against the current of custom, to forego the approval of their peers, to put aside personal aggrandizement. Hulbe and his fellows had proved it.

They had, moreover, brought changes in attitudes not only to villagers but also to students, faculty and university nabobs. When the Diploma Course in Community Development was offered by the college in 1961, for instance, only five students enrolled. By 1965, the number of applicants had risen to over 200 — far more than could be accommodated.

By 1967 the project included a one-year, post-graduate Diploma Course in Social Work. It had a distinctly rural bias and, because it was actively involved with village life and problems, it offered unique opportunities for field training and experience. The course was so successful that, in 1974, Poona University — under whose academic supervision the college program operated — upgraded it to a master's degree course, the only such course in the country.

Finally, when the Central Government's Commission endorsed the program, colleges from across India began sending professors for orientation and training. As a result, more than 60 other colleges have incorporated comparable studies into their curricula. And the program at Ahmednagar has been recommended as a model for India's National Service Scheme.

All along I had hoped that the Church in India, coming to recognize the full dimensions of her calling, would be

a major factor in basic rural development. But for many years that church gave little evidence that she considered “rural development” to be a really serious part of her calling and commission. It was a high hour, therefore, when word reached me that Catholic and Protestant institutions, impressed by the program at Ahmednagar, had asked that the college arrange developmental courses in which their seminarians might enroll.

I must confess that my elation over this news is still tempered by a modicum of skepticism. Somehow, I cannot visualize any tidal wave of seminary students rushing to learn how they might help village farmers prepare compost pits, construct latrines and lay out an irrigation system. But the door had been opened. And who knows? I had been wrong about professors. I could be wrong about preachers.

Base of Support Grows

One other bit of news from Ahmednagar has cheered me greatly. Knowing the limits of our own funds, I was elated to learn that, as the project demonstrated its value, other groups and agencies have come forward to assist in its support. Besides the United Church’s Board of World Ministries, these now include India’s Central and State Governments, the University Grants Commission, the Planning Commission, and India’s Council of Churches.

So, to those who tell me that India’s illness is so far advanced that mere individuals, however concerned, can only wring their hands, I can point to a program whose value has been proven and whose pattern is being emulated. Over a 10-year period, local farmer incomes have doubled and then tripled. And, in a district-wide review, the state of Maharashtra awarded first prize in “family planning” to the taluk (132 villages) which constituted the operational area of the program. It was no accident. For the college program had been the first in that area to introduce visual aids on family planning; the first to promote “vasectomy camps” in

the villages themselves.

And in India, perennially unable to feed her burgeoning masses, any success in family planning is a cause for celebration.

Such success is, of course, governed by the finding and mobilizing of effective “agents of change.” And their effectiveness will rest upon at least three things: First, they must recognize that the motivation for family planning is directly related to the compelling need for family security. In other words, parents must be assured that by accepting birth control they will not be assuring their own poverty — either because they have insufficient help in the home and fields or, above all, because they will have no surviving children to care for them in their old age. Secondly, these change agents must have concern for and rapport with the villagers they seek to influence. And, finally, they must be able to transmit that sense of urgency which can overcome traditional resistance to change.

To integrate family planning into community development was not, at first, an easy step to take. It aroused opposition. And it cost money. But we were encouraged to undertake it by the Scaife Family Charitable Trusts of Pittsburgh. By their help, we were able to carry the gospel of “responsible parenthood” into the villages of more than 20 developing nations. The program continues and grows.

“But how,” someone may ask, “do you find the kind of ‘agents of change’ you have just described?” Well, you ask and you listen and you search. You prospect for such unusual people much as a miner prospects for gold. Let me offer a typical example:

In 1955, visiting projects in South India, I heard of a man who, with limited resources and unlimited faith, was making a real difference in the lives and circumstances of some desperately poor people.

Finding Local Leadership

So one hot day, in a desolate area of Tamilnadu, up a

road that was little more than a track, I found him. He was standing outside the door of his modest home.

I crawled down from the Land Rover. "Hello," I said, "I'm John Peters of World Neighbors."

"Welcome," he answered, "I'm Joseph John of Deenabandupuram." I found later that this meant "home of the friend of the poor."

Little by little, I learned his story.

Back in 1947, he had been a pastor, enjoying more prestige and greater security than he had ever known before. Then one hot day, seeking to console a troubled farmer, he had quoted those great words from Philippians, "My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory."

The farmer looked at the ground, shuffling his feet in the dry sand. "Pastor," he finally said, "you can say such things because you get a salary. I have planted three crops and have not even recovered my seed. I do not have food to put into the mouths of my children tomorrow. How can I say, or believe, that the God you speak of really cares?"

Deeply troubled, Joseph returned home. Days of prayer followed. "How, O Lord, can I prove that you do truly care; that you will supply such needs?"

A Hard Decision

And the answer seemed clear: "Give up your church and your security. Go sit where that farmer sits. And I will go with you."

The decision was no easy one. It meant giving up security, honor, the place of dignity and service for which years of study had prepared him. But, supported by his wife, a doctor, Joseph took his little family into an area where no one had ever before cultivated the ground or raised a crop.

His first and greatest need was for water. And he spent his entire life's savings, and months of labor, digging by mattock and basket, the huge well he would need for irrigation. All

he got was a dry hole in the ground, 50 feet across and 60 feet deep.

Again he went aside to pray.

“Lord,” he said, “is this the way you treat your servants? Have I misunderstood? What shall I do next?”

About this time, he received an unexpected gift of money. He spent it digging a new well. And this time he struck an almost artesian spring. Land was brought under cultivation. A community of loving service sprang up — a clinic, a school, a home for orphans.

When, after seven years, I saw these results, I asked if World Neighbors might not join hands to help expand this bright beginning. And, since then, we have been “partner” in his enterprise.

That enterprise now includes not only one huge well, but 2,500 more, in hundreds of villages in Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh.

New crops have been introduced; new methods adopted. Increased income has led to the building of new clinics, new homes, new schools throughout the area. And an unexpected phenomenon has occurred. This is the growth of the church. For Joseph’s church, when I first met him, was simply a tree with a bell in it. I was even asked by one local Christian, “Why does World Neighbors work with a fellow who is outside the church?”

But today, in an area where “proselyting” was forbidden, there are a score of new churches which were not there in 1955 — built not with money from World Neighbors, nor from some “foreign mission” board, but paid for, with pride, from the increased resources of the local villagers themselves.

And a religion whose representatives have helped to bring in better health and increased income has proven so attractive in that area that a second diocese of the Church of South India has had to be formed. Moreover, the Tamilnadu Christian Council has been so impressed by the project itself that they have voted to attempt its replication in 18 other areas.

To me, one of the highest tributes to Joseph — and to the work which we assist — has been the response of his own two sons. Both have been highly trained, in their own country and in the United States. Karuna is a graduate in agriculture, from California. Prem Chander is a medical doctor with a master's degree in Public Health, from Johns Hopkins. They could enjoy high salaries and an affluent lifestyle, here or elsewhere. But inspired by the example of their parents, and challenged by the need of their country, they have returned — to work alongside their father in the villages of South India.

And as other agencies have come forward to assist Joseph and his sons in programs of food production and small industries, World Neighbors has concentrated its resources at Deenabandupuram in programs of public health and family planning. And the results have justified the investment.

For this small center, with a modest hospital and a mobile clinic has — year-after-year — topped all others (in the 201 hospitals of the Christian Medical Association) in the insertion of intrauterine devices. And, with new facilities now available, it is pressing its associates in sterilizations as well.

This record was made possible because it followed years of attention to increased food, better nutrition, improved health and enlarged income. It is a certification of the growing conviction that the prerequisite to voluntary family planning is a sound socioeconomic base.



Villagers easily adapt World Neighbors conservation techniques to improve their land and agricultural needs. The A-frame is made from local materials and is used to define contours on mountainsides for terraces and other techniques of soil conservation. These farmers can increase their production of corn and potatoes by conserving water and improving the soil. Through farmer to farmer sharing, neighbors teach each other and successful approaches spread.



Above Left: Women play a central role in local community development. They are involved in food production, income generation, maintain the household and bear the primary responsibility for raising children. World Neighbors supports integrated sustainable agriculture and reproductive health programs. In a way that reflects their own culture, couples learn that just as “mother earth” needs rest and nutrition to be fertile, women also benefit from good health, nutrition and spacing of children. When women have access to more food and other income, the children also benefit.

Above Right: Training in soil and water conservation in the uplands of Indonesia enables small scale farmers to make the transition from “slash and burn” agriculture to permanent field cultivation. By increasing the richness of soil, farmers now enjoy growing vegetables for their own use and sale at local markets. This man is explaining contour hedgerows to prevent erosion.

Right Top: Throughout the world, the hands of women, such as this woman from Nepal, hold together society. Women’s hands nurture children, carry water, harvest crops, cook meals, make household items and generate extra money to send their children to school. Women worldwide also impart wisdom, knowledge, ethical and moral values to children.

Right Bottom: World Neighbors programs help people achieve food security and overcome hunger. Farmers experiment with seed varieties, soil conservation techniques and other innovations to see what works. They then share these successful approaches with others.





Sustainable agriculture refers to ways of practicing agriculture that balances environmental, social and economic dimensions of farming while maintaining productivity over the long term. It is a world wide movement to make agriculture profitable, ecologically sound, socially just and culturally appropriate.







Above: In developing areas, women are often paid very low wages to work for wealthy landowners. World Neighbors programs provide these women with access to small loans, help them to learn new skills and enable them to pay their debts, feed their children and become self reliant.

Left: Women in the Ouaboidi village in rural Burkina Faso proudly display the sheep they purchased with loans from World Neighbors supported programs. As part of the program, the women are provided with training on the care and feeding of the sheep in order to maximize the survival rate of the sheep. The loans are organized through community associations and offered to the poorer women. When fully grown, the sheep are sold. The families often use their earnings for household expenses and to purchase other lambs, resulting in a good source of ongoing income for women.



Above: World Neighbors organizes women into groups that start savings and credit activities. Every month each woman contributes a small sum of money. As the savings amount increases, the group provides small loans to its members. These loans are used to start small businesses that generate additional family income or for much needed household items, such as medicine for a sick child. Through their savings and credit group, many women are able to escape exploitative relationships with local moneylenders.

Right: Self assessment of their own performance is an example of how World Neighbors programs involve the whole community. This simple visual chart allows villagers in Mali, West Africa to share the results of a participatory exercise with both their neighbors and other communities.



1 - I nani bi bi si bu kpaabu.
2 - Tali ginyodux fua fua du.
3 - Magili foga gina (didaali).
4 - Di fuali kuuma
5 - Mi koma nbi csi yaaba yabi.
6 - Ki laaga bu poodima.
7 - Bu kpaabu tuon soan biadu ki ye.
8 - Ki linga kuuma banna ki ye.
9 - I nani bi bi si bu kpaabu.
10 - Di fuali kuuma

Bu kpaabu yuti ni
Li binli 1988





Top: John Peters discussing our program work with area representatives in the Philippines.



Far Left: In 1951, Dr. John L. Peters delivered a message so powerful it became a movement—called World Neighbors.

Left: "World Neighbors seeks partners, not paupers. It works with "neighbors," not mere recipients. It is therefore deeply concerned to rob none of its associates of their most precious possession— their self respect."





Top: This photo represents a typical field in Guatemala before World Neighbors began working in the program area—dry and barren with no hope of sustaining a high level of productive farming.

Bottom: This photo represents the same Guatemalan field after World Neighbors has begun training farmers to employ new technologies, such as the A-frame, creating much more productive fields.

Left: Women must often walk many miles to get water for their household use. With help from World Neighbors, communities learn to organize and construct their own water supply systems to reduce this heavy burden on women, freeing up time for income generation while improving health.





Above: Women are a vital part of the community and family life. World Neighbors supports their efforts to increase productivity and their families' incomes.

Top Left: In communities that experience a long dry season, crafts made from local materials, particularly those items targeted at the middle class, such as baskets and textiles, provide an alternative source of income.

Left: When is an armband like a red flag? When it tells Moms their kids are already in danger of malnutrition! This simple measuring tool is used to show parents if their children between one and five years are getting enough nutritious food. The band is wrapped around a child's upper arm. If the "start" line lands in the red danger zone, parents are alerted that the child is malnourished. Yellow is the warning sign, and green means the child is adequately nourished.



Top: In India, World Neighbors helps organize farmers into groups and teaches them techniques to improve their food production. Through loans from group savings and credit, group members who are too poor to buy oxen and plows on their own pool their resources with other group members. Together they purchase the seed, fertilizer, drills and oxen they need to improve their food production.

Bottom: Through participation in World Neighbors integrated programs, people realize they can develop their own skills to solve their problems. This new found self confidence leads them to initiate more activities to strengthen their self-reliance.

Extending the Outreach

Can this “success by indirection” be widely duplicated? Our experience in India’s southern state of Kerala encourages us to believe it can. We began there in the early 1960s — joining hands with the Kerala Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (roughly the “Gandhi Memorial Association”), the YMCA and the Church of South India.

At that time, conditions in Kerala were approaching desperation. Her soil, so much of it laterite and porous sand, produced only one-third of her food needs. Farms averaged one-sixth of an acre and average per capita income was reported to be 11 cents a day.

From more than 75 small rural centers — with a major effort in a 65-square mile area around Trivandrum — we helped to extend programs that majored on increased food production, better nutrition, improved sanitation and lower infant mortality.

Among the first steps were intensive composting, increased fertilizer and irrigation. In one three-year period, 8,798 tons of compost were produced from 6,830 compost pits. And a revolving loan fund permitted impoverished farmers to purchase improved seed, fertilizer, plows and mobile pumps.

Priming the Pump

The fund was small at first. But as evidence of wise use, rapid turnover and high repayment became apparent, the fund was enlarged until it totaled \$106,000. And, as local Gram Sabhas were formed (village groups who pledged their group resources as security), bank loans began to be available even to the poorest farmer.

As a result, there was a tremendous increase in foodstuffs. For the first time, over 9,000 acres of rice paddy were planted to a second crop — with several hundred planted to a third. Sale of eggs from the poultry program, which got off to a most difficult start, averaged more than a million a year

— this in addition to those consumed in the homes of the producers.

In 1970, our overseas director reported the results attained by approximately 100,000 people involved in the Trivandrum District Development Program. “Because of the input of World Neighbors and the dedicated work of the men and women on the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi staff,” he wrote, “the output of vegetable foods this year (rice, tubers, vegetables) gave an increase of 6,050,000 pounds or an average per capita *increased* availability of vegetable foods of 60.5 pounds. There was also an increase of 650 grams per person in animal foodstuff, largely from eggs and poultry.”

He estimated that, for every dollar invested by World Neighbors, the value of food produced in any single year totaled more than \$43. If his estimate is correct, our investment of \$563,000 between 1962 and 1974 stimulated the production of over \$24 million worth of additional food. And all of this was for local consumption.

Observing the Dividends

These impressive results did not go unnoticed. I was present at a dinner in Trivandrum when the state minister of agriculture leaned across me to say to the project director, K. Janardanan Pillai (secretary of the GSN), “I don’t think you’ve seen the evening papers but we’re announcing that we intend to multiply this program of yours throughout the state.” It was both an endorsement of things past and a promise of things to come.

Food production was not the sole thrust of the Kerala project. Small industries, designed to meet indigenous needs, were initiated or enlarged: poultry, cloth, soap, rope, candles, bricks and bells. Income steadily increased.

But it was attention to maternal and child health that paid the major dividends. This we did not, at first, recognize. We simply knew that to check the diseases and change the conditions, which so needlessly destroyed both mothers

and children, was humane and obligatory. The training of hundreds of midwives, the inoculation of thousands of children, the improvement of sanitation, the enrichment of diets — all these, together with family planning motivation, were vigorously promoted, not simply because they were demographically expedient, but primarily because they were ethically right.

And so I learned that what is done because it is right generally becomes that which is also expedient.

The October 20, 1974 issue of the *New York Times* confirmed this. For in it, veteran *Times* correspondent Bernard Weinraub reported a “Breakthrough in Birth Control” saying:

“Over the past decade the birth rate in Kerala has fallen from 37 to 27 (per 1,000) or less.

“Over the last 20 years, however, India’s birth rate has fallen from 41 to 37.2 per thousand ...

“Because figures in Kerala, as well as in the rest of India, tend to be slippery, economists here have based their conclusions largely on the fact that primary school enrollments in the lowest classes are falling. Officials say there is no evidence that parents are failing to register their children for school. Instead, officials conclude that couples have had fewer children in the last decade.

“Economists attribute this to several key factors: The death rate is nine per thousand, and life expectancy here may be as high as 60 years, placing Kerala on a par with European nations. Because of low infant mortality and life expectancy, couples tacitly acknowledge that their children will survive and that there is no pressure to have extra infants.”*

*Underlining mine.

And if Mr. Weinraub’s figures are correct, the people of Kerala now have some 200,000 fewer births per year than do groups of comparable size elsewhere in India.

Obviously, many factors conspired to bring about these results in Kerala. The high degree of literacy, the strong

support of state and district officials and the yeoman work of the Kerala Family Planning Association were major influences. But the effective change agents — the “earthworms” whose programs of food production, improved nutrition and maternal and child health prepared the soil so that it could and did respond to the propaganda “rain” and the official “seed” — must include those widespread, grass roots, deeply motivated groups who were urged on, assisted and equipped by World Neighbors.

The fact that comparable, though less publicized, results were attained in similar projects in Maharashtra and Tamilnadu only strengthens the above conviction.

Unworthy “Spokesmen”

My experiences in India, and throughout the developing areas, taught me a great and growing respect for the “man in the rice paddy” — and a deep and abiding suspicion of those who, from high vantage points, professed to speak for him. The more vehement and articulate their protestations, the more stubborn and assured my distrust. This was particularly true when there was a wide divergence in the respective resources of “champion” and “people.” As those contrasts widened, my skepticism deepened — generally with good reason.

For instance, I was once invited to be part of a group assembled to welcome back a high church dignitary from an international conference. My enthusiasm for the assignment was, however, vastly diluted by a visit which I made the previous week to a “palace” which this dignitary was completing.

At that time, standing on the eminence where the horseshoe-like structure was coming to completion, I asked the foreman, “When will the owner be moving in?”

He stopped to wipe the sweat from his face and said, “Oh, I really don’t know. He has four of these, you see, and he can’t get around to any one of them very often.”

So, at the reception, I was less than enraptured when the

bishop declaimed, in that resonant vibrato which must have been a persuasive factor in his ecclesiastical elevation, “My brothers of the West, you must realize that your professions of fellowship are sadly lacking as long as you continue to enjoy 85 percent of the world’s goods while we, your poor brothers of the East, are forced to subsist on the remaining 15 percent.”

There was a certain amount of truth in what he said — though his figures were typically inaccurate and his anguish was patently fraudulent. Moreover, he was not the man to be speaking. For any relief directed to his people would be thoroughly “ripped off” (to use a current and accurate phrase) if it had to pass through his hands.

It was, therefore, difficult for me to continue with the charade of his “welcome.” He kept reminding me of a book I had once read, *How to Become a Bishop Without Being Religious*. And he also brought to mind a host of acquaintances who seem to feel that a recital of the clichés of radical reform is a certification of their social involvement and a palliation of their personal indulgence.

At any rate, as I returned to my village associates to assist in the task of helping find decent housing for some of the least fortunate, I felt that I was following much closer in the steps of Jesus than if I continued in the company of this richly-panoplied “deputy.

5

BUILDING THE TEAM

The program was growing, but so were the issues with which it sought to deal. Could India's problems be solved? Could the new nations in Africa make it? Would the people of these areas — and of Latin America and Southeast Asia — have a real voice in their own future? Could population and food resources be brought into proper balance? And would the efforts of World Neighbors make any difference?

I was sure they could. But I was also sure that, if they did, it would take more help than we presently had. Some outstanding associates had been recruited for the domestic program. But where was that needed overseas contingent — men and women who understood our new approach and would give themselves wholly to it?

This concern was heavier than all my baggage when we landed in Addis Ababa. The flight down from Cairo had been most pleasant. The brilliant green of the Ethiopian plateau was a lift to the spirits. My room at the Ras Hotel would, I knew, be adequate. And I looked forward to my visit to Mulu, where World Neighbors was working with Dan and Christine Sanford in a program designed to help some Galla peasants learn how best to help themselves.

But all of this was clouded by that growing realization

that somewhere, somehow, and soon, I must find needed assistance. This would, I promised myself, be first priority as soon as I got home.

But first, and before I went out to Mulu, I wanted to see the man who had been so generously training some of our Galla teachers in the effective use of the visual aid equipment we had supplied. His name was Merlin Bishop and he was the general secretary of the Ethiopian YMCA.

"Welcome to Addis Ababa," said Merlin as I walked across the tiled floor of the impressive "Y" to meet him. And as he came more than halfway to shake my outstretched hand, I was instantly aware that, although he and I were white Americans, Merlin's orientation was with his Ethiopian colleagues. When he called them, "Brother," he meant it. When he spoke of local conditions, or referred to local people, he said "we."

This was a refreshing contrast to my experience with many other of my countrymen. So often, as we met and talked, they referred to the nationals among whom they lived and worked as "they" or "these people." They had crossed the ocean but not the desert of their insularity. They were still provincial, still segregated. Some, dedicated and sincere, were convinced that they were, by biblical injunction, "their brother's keeper" (a term which comes from Cain, not God). And "keepers" are almost necessarily authoritarian. They can be condescending; they are most certainly paternalistic.

The fact is that I am not my brother's keeper. God is my brother's keeper. I am simply my brother's brother.

Merlin, I felt, shared that view. And, in him, as I discovered, I had found a man whose love was nurtured by a strong religious faith but untrammelled by imposed distinctions, a man of empathy and concern, a man admirably suited to undertake the overseas tasks of World Neighbors.

A few months later, when a change in his assignment made a transfer opportune, Merlin became director of our overseas program.

He moved into the administration of the overseas program like a general who had finally found his long-awaited command.

“Everything I’ve done up to this point,” Merlin once said, “has been in preparation for this job.”

And I believed him. For he brought more than empathy and concern. He brought wide experience and rich expertise. He had been a builder of vocational schools in China, a professor at Fukien University and the director of a multi-agency relief program. In Ethiopia, as the founder and builder of the first YMCA, he was a confidant of Ethiopia’s elite and the beloved friend of every street boy. And Eunice his wife, born in China of missionary parents, complemented and sustained him.

But a general must have aides, lieutenants and troops. And, since our battle was a very special one, these must be very special people. We decided to take only those whose competence and dedication had already been proven . . . who had been trained in the basics of food production, health and community development . . . who could live and work effectively under village conditions . . . who knew and respected the culture to which they would be assigned . . . who cared for, and could communicate with, the people with whom they would be attempting new accomplishments.

Selecting the Staff

And so we carefully screened and slowly gathered an operative cadre — with backgrounds of service in Latin America, India, Malaysia, East Africa, West Africa, and the Philippines. After orientation and further training (especially in the technology of family planning), these area representatives were assigned to their sectors of service. There, like wide-ranging county agents, they became prospectors, catalysts, instructors, inspirers and trouble shooters.

When, in the spring of 1972, after more than a decade

of pioneering service with World Neighbors, Merlin Bishop died of a heart attack on his way to Lesotho, I was desolate. And from around the world, expressions of tribute and grief came flooding in. It was a loss from which recovery seemed impossible.

But within hours, his friend and associate Stanley Reynolds was in South Africa and had picked up the fallen reins. Stan, with a passion for the underdog, and a degree in International Relations, had come to World Neighbors a year earlier to assist Merlin in the direction of the overseas program. He had previously served as headmaster of a school on Mindanao and as director of the Peace Corps in Ceylon. Bringing new insights and establishing new patterns of accountability, Stan and his staff are guiding the overseas program into increasingly productive paths.

And growing with it is the domestic program, its support and complement.

Here, too, the road upward has been marked by tragedy. Bill Harmon, whose Ph.D. and gentle spirit equipped him well, was, for the first 10 years, my right hand man in the field of administration. Then cancer struck. Hearts were torn and expectations threatened. But Ralph Sanders, who had come to us only months before from his post as public relations director of the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce, was able to step into the breach.

With a sound apprenticeship as reporter, newscaster and administrator, Ralph brought to World Neighbors a rich store of experience and a genius for organization. Under his direction as executive vice president, the administrative structure became, as so many have said, "a really tight ship."

Among his many contributions was the initiation of a new department to produce rural development communications materials for our overseas workers. As he traveled through the project areas, he realized the crucial importance of incisive, relevant, visual aids if our field workers were to convey their messages, train their local assistants and widen their outreach. But the store of such materials available at

the major depots (Rome, Paris, Mexico City, Bangkok) was, for the most part, far above the comprehension of the villagers among whom we worked. So, securing young men who were possessed not only of outstanding visual skills, but who had developed those skills under village conditions in India's Punjab, Ralph and his associates began the production of materials which would strengthen the effectiveness of our efforts.

These materials — films, manuals, slides and flipcharts on such subjects as food production, fish culture, rat control, improved storage, sanitation, nutrition, child care and family planning — are produced in response to known and expressed need. Stage-by-stage they are field tested, evaluated and re-evaluated. In their final form (in English, Spanish and French), they serve as effective teaching tools in the hands of our local workers. Their effectiveness can be gauged by the fact that we are now supplying them (at cost) to representatives of other agencies (governmental, U.N. and church-related) in more than 120 countries. We are aided in the production of these materials by a grant from the *Reader's Digest*.

When James Morgan came to us from his post as vice president for development with a Christian college, I felt a real transfusion of strength. Trained in linguistics and anthropology and already informed and involved in overseas operations, James so demonstrated his leadership potential that he was soon named senior vice president with wide-ranging executive responsibilities. And augmenting this leadership, an excellent body of young men and women, with rare dedication and competence, took over the tasks of education, development, production, research, accounting, acknowledgment and office management. The “organism” was maturing. The “cadre” was taking shape.

Wise Grass Roots Direction

But “officers” need troops. And, as a former infantryman, I am still convinced that it is the foot soldiers — noncom

and private — who actually win the battles and hold the territory. In our task, this meant the training of and full reliance upon indigenous personnel, the villager himself — generally regarded as the mere recipient, not the participative architect, of “development.”

And it was in Guatemala that the soundness of this insight was clearly demonstrated.

In 1963, World Neighbors heard from Carroll Behrhorst, a truly unusual doctor who had left Winfield, Kansas (where he had been the 19th physician in a town of less than 50,000), to go to the Chimaltenango District of Guatemala (where he was the only American-trained doctor among more than 200,000 Cakchiquel Indians). With a real skill and a tremendous admiration for the people among whom he worked, he won his way into the confidence and affection of the Cakchiquels.

Unfortunately, as he discovered, the most skilled application of curative medicine was not enough. He could help people get well, but he could not keep them well. Inadequate nutrition and improper sanitation kept bringing the same patients back to his overcrowded clinic — a couple of rented adobe houses with some 48 beds.

Like so many mission hospitals, he was “running an ambulance service to the foot of the cliff when he should have been building a fence around the edge of that cliff.” This he knew and he called upon World Neighbors, among others, to help him in his search for answers.

In 1963, therefore, we together began an association which lasted for almost 10 years and which produced a remarkable pattern of operation.

The association was the most costly one we had yet undertaken. Over an eight-year span it was to cost us more than \$300,000. To keep the doctor from spending precious months trying to raise funds in the United States, about a third of this amount was applied to his support. And to assure that a corps of visiting nurses would make the rounds of the needy villages, we undertook their expenses also.

There were other costs: transport, equipment, supplies. But our principal investment was the provision of able and creative guidance in the persons of Paul and Mary McKay, Roland Bunch and, later, Bill Ruddell. Paul and Roland were graduates in International Agriculture from California State Polytechnic College. Mary was a specialist in child care and nutrition. Bill's forte was the management of cooperatives. They had all had previous experience in village-level operations. And, like Dr. Behrhorst, they loved and admired the Cakchiquels — those quiet, dignified descendants of the Mayas.

They were, indeed, quiet and dignified. But the years of subjugation had taken a cruel toll. Used mainly as cheap labor, their low income had forced the adoption of a diet which was tragically lacking in nutrition. When a Cakchiquel baby was taken off the breast at the end of the second or third year, it was put on a diet of tortillas, corn gruel and coffee. And, though Guatemala coffee must rank with the world's finest, it was not surprising that four out of every 10 Cakchiquel babies died before their fifth birthday.

Tackling the Causes

The concern which World Neighbors shared with Dr. Behrhorst, therefore, was to implement a training program which would improve nutrition, increase food production, initiate environmental sanitation and add to local income. Only so could the doctor's efforts find long-lasting success and local support. Only so could the Cakchiquels recover the confidence and dignity they needed to face the future.

With only minor alterations the "clinic" became a training center. A rough circle of 13 surrounding villages became the target area. And from each village a young man, chosen by his own people, was selected for training. The proposition made him was this: If he would spend every Tuesday for a year at the training center, World Neighbors would pay for his bus fare and provide a noon meal.

Each Tuesday morning, therefore, 13 solemnly intent

young men followed Dr. Behrhorst as he made his clinic rounds.

"This is pellagra," the doctor would say, as he lifted the spotted leg of a malnourished child. "Here is what you do."

And he would identify symptom-after-symptom of the common diseases of the area — pointing out what needed to be done to cure what had happened, and what needed to be done to keep it from happening again.

In the afternoons and into the evening, the trainees would be introduced to basic principles of improved agriculture by our staff, American and Guatemalan.

"This is fertilizer," they would say. "Properly used, it has an almost magic effect upon your crops. And here's how you find out just what you need and how much of it you should apply."

Then would follow a demonstration of soil testing and a full discussion of the values and dangers of various types of fertilizer.

The trainees, almost overwhelmed, returned to their villages to try out their new information. Next Tuesday they would be back, to report, to question and to learn more.

Thus began a program which would work a major transformation in the lives of the Cakchiquels. Dr. Behrhorst, with World Neighbors support and with assistance from various other quarters, had full direction of the medical aspects of the program. McKay, Bunch and (later) Ruddell, with occasional help from Peace Corps and British volunteers, developed and supervised the agricultural extension operations.

And so the program grew. The 13 villages became 25, then 40, then 50. All this called for an increasing investment: more "visiting nurses," more extension workers, more transport, equipment, some additional buildings, a revolving loan fund. Fortunately, the project had come under the eye of a representative of England's Oxfam program. And they came forward to assist. I breathed a sigh of relief.

Turning Trainees into Trainers

The program had been carefully calculated to “train trainers.” Without that, we had observed, once the outside agency has withdrawn, “development” grinds to a halt. Each trainee was therefore considered a potential trainer expected to share voluntarily what had been so freely given to him. To help him do so, our workers developed some guiding principles:

1. *Find out first what changes the village people most desire*
Talk with the leaders. Have meetings for discussion. Carefully observe what they are already trying to do, or change.
2. *Select a few problems on which the village can concentrate.*
Do the people feel the problem needs solution? Can we realistically help? Can it be done with local resources? Can the solution be readily taught to needy neighbors?
3. *Try out solutions and select a few of the best.*
Note which brings the greatest improvement; at a cost which can be more readily afforded; under the greatest variation of circumstances, with the least difficulty of reproduction.
4. *Select the local leaders who will make the best trainers.*
Have they used the proffered solutions to good advantage in their own lives? Do they understand readily? Above all, do they care about other people?
5. *Do everything possible to see that all attempted solutions are successful.*
The degree of success in these early trials will determine the degree of the trainer's enthusiasm.
6. *Design the program so that its success also rewards the trainer.*
It should add not only to his prestige but also to the increased productivity and/or income of his own holdings or situation.
7. *Deliberately prepare the trainer to teach others.*
Explain the “whys” of the solution. Anticipate questions and supply answers. Stress motivation. Teach the most effective use of visual aids.

8. *Continue the training and maintain communication.*

Be ready for the next step. Keep in close and sympathetic touch.

A Typical Recruit

Where do these trainees come from? Well, 29-year-old Anacleto Tuy is one. Here's how he explains his involvement with World Neighbors.

"There were 13 of us in my father's family," said Anacleto. "We tried to eke out a living on our one acre of sloping land but there was never enough money for food and clothes.

"My father's land did not have contour ditches for soil conservation. We never heard of such things. Nor had he analyzed the soil to see what fertilizer he should use . . . and so he harvested a mere 400 pounds of corn. It was not enough to feed us."

(In America, by the way, a good farmer in a decent year will expect a yield of not less than 4,200 pounds of shelled corn per acre on unirrigated land.)

"To survive," Anacleto continued, "we had to go two times a year, for five-week intervals, to work on the lands of the large coastal farm owners. My father, and those of us who were old enough, left my mother and the younger children behind. We did not like to separate our family but there was no other way."

There was pain in his eyes as he recalled those early days. "I went for the first time to help my father pick coffee on the coast when I was 10 years of age. We lived, along with 800 to 1,000 other workers, under large roofs made of leaves. There were no latrines. We bathed ourselves in the river. My father received two pounds of corn and four ounces of beans each day to eat. We children received half that.

"We got up at 3 o'clock in the morning to go to work and at 3 o'clock in the afternoon we would join hundreds of other workers waiting in lines to weigh the coffee we had picked. We usually finished waiting about 8 or 9 at night.

Then, often in the rain, we would join all the other people under the ‘corozo’ leaves.

“But, even with our work on the coast, all of us did not survive. Four of my brothers and sisters died before reaching the age of five.

“At 15 years of age, I began to work and live on my own. At 18, I was married, and we continued in the pattern of my father’s family. There was no other choice.

“But six years ago I started attending the World Neighbors classes at Chimaltenango, coming the 23 miles once a week. But, because I could hardly read or write, I could not understand the classes and stopped going.”

For several years, Anacleto tried to continue the old ways. And he suffered the old results — losing children, becoming ill, going into debt.

“But in July of last year,” he said with a new note in his voice, “my life began to change. I met a World Neighbors agricultural extension worker and, at my request, he arranged to help me and the men of my village with 15-quetzal* revolving loans for the purchase of fertilizer. At the end of the season, I was easily able to pay my loan back.

“It was during that same month that I once again began attending the medical and agricultural classes at Chimaltenango. Now I found that the material was more simply written. I could understand it.

“These classes were, for me, like waking up to the world. Through them I began to realize what surrounded me; I began to discover who I was and what I could be. I came to know that others were in my same situation and that we could change that situation.”

**A Guatemalan quetzal has the approximate value of a U.S. dollar.*

Once awakened, Anacleto was thirsty for even more knowledge. He managed to attend a course at nearby Landivar University. He studied harder than ever the material offered by World Neighbors. And he found in himself an eagerness to help others.

“So I organized a study group of 25 active men in my village. This took some time because there are beliefs among my people which degrade studying. One such holds that rich people who study don’t sleep well and turn crazy. Another says that studying brings no results and that rich people do it only because they already have the money.

“But in spite of these beliefs the group gradually increased its members. The men liked the classes so much that they asked for a full day of them. We decided to have classes during holidays, too.

“Using the material I received from the classes on Friday, I would teach the study group the following Saturday and Wednesday. In medicine, I taught them about sickness and where it comes from. In agriculture, I taught them about the life of a plant, how it eats like all of us, and how we have to help it and take care of it to have a good harvest.

“After teaching the group of men some months, I decided I must help the group organize itself in case I died or had to move away. I wanted to leave them the inheritance of classes that would not end if I could not lead them. I told them to choose a person as coordinator of discipline, another to be coordinator of culture, and another to be coordinator of classes. The men voted, and I was very pleased with those elected. Now I am no longer worried if at some time I must leave the group, because its members can direct themselves.

“Last year I made another decision. I decided to use family planning. Two other families have now made the same decision, but working in family planning is slow and hard because of strong religious beliefs.

“I used to believe, along with others, that it is sinful to plan one’s family because God has predestined the number of children one is going to have. According to this belief, if a person was going to have 10 children and only has five as a consequence of family planning, it is like killing the other five. In this belief, God says, ‘Grow and multiply until you fill the world.’

“Then I attended a World Neighbors class about the possibilities and meaning of family planning and we saw movies about population problems throughout the world. During this class they give an example of a family that had five children just like mine has. They divided the land owned by the father between the five children. These five each divided the land between their sons. The number of persons kept growing, but the amount of land did not increase.

“I began to realize that I could barely sustain my five children. Why should I continue having sons if I could not educate, feed and clothe them, and give them some land? I was saddened by the thought that our children are made in the image of God and that we might leave them without anything.

“Some think life is only for the moment, but we ought to think that if we don’t carry on the fight for a better future, we will leave no inheritance for our sons and daughters. If we do nothing, and leave the land poorer than when we began to cultivate it, our children will find little hope; and what we do to our children, we do to God, for he said, ‘What you do to the least of my children, you have done unto me.’”

Propagating Progress

Anacleto Tuy is only one of 55 volunteer extension workers who made the Chimaltenango program such a success. As they introduced nitrogen “side dressings”, for instance, wheat production rose by more than 30 percent and corn production increased from an average of 14 bushels to the acre to better than 40 bushels. Some village farmers produced 60 bushels and two reached as high as 100 bushels to the acre. It was a remarkable but reproducible achievement.

And progress did not stop with an increase of wheat and corn. Other crops were introduced, designed to build up the

soil, to increase nutrition and to add income. Chickens and pigs were inoculated. A horse-drawn plow was introduced. Well-baby clinics, established throughout the villages by the visiting nurses, drastically reduced infant mortality. And the lowering of infant mortality brought demands for help in family planning.

Moreover, with increased income and growing self-confidence, the villagers began to take their place as articulate and concerned citizens. Their voices were listened to; their votes solicited. Better schools were built. Improved roads appeared. A forgotten and exploited people now had a stake in their future and a responsible role in its development.

And Dr. Behrhorst, who has realized and shared his dream widely with others, now runs a small, well-equipped hospital. Many of the ills which formerly demanded his time and attention are being cared for in their own villages by the trained "health promoters" (the Guatemalan counterparts of the Chinese "barefoot doctors"). And patients, once cured, now tend to stay well. The hospital continues to serve the serious needs of the area, but it no longer suffers recurrent losses and deepening debt. For the patients can now pay for their services — and do so. Health is promoted, costs are underwritten and dignity is preserved.

A New Project Is Born

At the end of the eighth year of operation, the World Neighbors staff, by now almost wholly Guatemalan, felt that they would like to establish a new project area, serving more needy villages, wholly autonomous. Fortunately, Oxfam was willing to continue its association and assist in the support and development of the new program. Thus encouraged, the staff chose the town of San Martin Jilotepeque as the location for the new training center.

San Martin was selected because, in spite of its potential, it had remained one of the poorest centers of the area. Local

income averaged about half that of towns of similar size and character. Productivity was low, population-growth was high (3.5 percent), infant mortality exceeded 40 percent, disease was excessive and apathy was rampant.

The director of the San Martin project, Marcos Orozco Miranda, was thoroughly versed in World Neighbors procedures. As he said, "our first step is to gain the love and confidence of the people." He therefore began by making it dear that he placed great value on the capacity, honesty and enthusiasm of the local people. He asked them to indicate the changes they felt most important. He tailored the program to their desires and capacities. And he related all that was attempted to governmental and private agencies of similar purpose.

To help him in the program, Don Marcos was provided with a secretary-accountant, four agricultural workers and three health workers.

Indians Lead Indians

Responsible for agricultural training is Anacleto Sajbochol, a 26-year-old alumnus of the Chimaltenango project. He began work for World Neighbors six years earlier as a "day laborer" on some experimental land we were helping to develop. Showing high promise, he was given every opportunity to study and to assume new responsibilities.

Now at San Martin, Anacleto conducts classes which major on soil improvement and corn and bean cultivation. Experiences gained in the Chimaltenango project gave real and practical substance to these classes. They are, of course, designed to turn out volunteer teachers who will share with others the information given them. By the middle of the third year, 48 students had been trained and all of them have profited. At least 14 of these are now teaching similar classes, which Anacleto visits from time to time, in their own villages.

Largely because of the lessons of the Chimaltenango effort, change has come much more swiftly to the San Martin program. Local income has doubled and, said one report, "except for a half-dozen cases in which the national government actually built the ditches, there is no other place in the country where as many farmers have as many contour ditches as in San Martin." Since erosion was such a major factor in low productivity, its control has been a basic step in the general improvement.

Although corn and beans are the major crops, the growing of vegetables is also an important part of the San Martin program. In keeping with traditional practices, this activity has been taken over by the women's groups.

But vegetable gardens are by no means the full scope of the women's work. That increasingly important part of the San Martin program is under the direction of Hortensia Otzoy, another veteran of the Chimaltenango program. I first met Hortensia when she worked for us as an extensionist in the promotion of nutrition and hygiene (she had formerly served as a nurse's auxiliary in Dr. Behrhorst's clinic). She was quiet, self-assured and effective. After directing the family planning clinic in Chimaltenango, she came to San Martin to head up the women's work.

At first that work was disappointing. The women simply did not have the financial resources to adopt the practices she proposed — better diets, hygienic procedures, family planning. But during the second year, as local income increased, Hortensia's program came to life. Better foods were purchased, vegetable gardens were started, and in 18 villages — after a course given by the McKays — women began raising rabbits to add more protein for home consumption. By now, more than 200 women who had previously cooked on their dirt floors have constructed adobe "cooking platforms" in their kitchens. They can even afford soap for washing dishes.

And of the 300 women who regularly attend the classes conducted by Hortensia and her aides, at least a dozen

have volunteered to begin similar classes in their own home villages. It is confidently expected that the program with women will increase by at least 50 percent during the coming year.

Women's Work Impressive

To illustrate one of the ways in which the women's program works, let's take a look at a typical village, San Miguel. Four years ago it had no latrines. So, following one stretch of heavy rains, the streams from which the villagers drank were polluted and every family was ravaged by dysentery. But last year, when Hortensia visited to help inaugurate some new classes, only one family was known to have dysentery. For the village women, after watching the germs in their drinking water through Hortensia's microscope, had adopted the hygienic practices — building and using latrines, washing one's hands before eating, boiling drinking water — which eliminated their age-old scourge.

The overall results have been impressive, made doubly so since they were achieved by wholly indigenous personnel. Under the direction of Marcos Orozco, a Guatemalan, the labors of Anacleto Sajbochol and Hortensia Oztzy, both Cakchiquel Indians, have — in three short years — achieved results which few “outsiders” would have thought possible. Corn production throughout a project of 567 families has doubled (in a few instances tripled). Ninety-seven percent of the farmers have adopted soil-conservation measures — such as contour ditches. Over half have planted fruit trees and built improved (smokeless, raised-platform) cook stoves. Thirty-seven percent have built, and use, latrines.

But the most rewarding change was revealed by the statistics on infant mortality. When the baseline survey was conducted in November 1971, out of 650 families surveyed, there had been 465 deaths of children under 5 years old that year. When a similar survey was made among these

same families in 1974, only 21 deaths of children under 5 were reported. A report from Roland Bunch describes the differences this result helped to precipitate:

“In just the last few months, Hortensia has begun to notice perhaps the most important change of all. Women who previously refused to think about family planning are now beginning to seriously consider it. Some women have mentioned that they just cannot afford to have more children now that they know what is required to raise a child properly. For others the reason is that they expect more of their now well-nourished children to survive past childhood. Still others are motivated by the increase in satisfying activities outside the home.

“But yet another factor may well be affecting feelings about family planning even more than any of the above. Probably one of the most widespread and least understood psychological defense mechanisms in the world is that of not thinking about the future. For vast quantities of the earth’s people, today contains all the pain and insecurity they can bear; they can little afford to look ahead at what tomorrow might bring. But I have lived among these people as their situation improved. I have watched as those same people who previously had refused to think about the coming year started planning for future generations.

“As soon as these people feel capable of taking care of today, they will begin thinking about how to take care of tomorrow. And one of the resources to which they will turn will be family planning.”

Cooperatives Take Root

Not all the good things that happened in World Neighbors have been the result of careful, long-range planning. Some of the best have been pure serendipity. The development of the Chimaltenango and San Martin cooperatives is a case in point.

Cooperatives, for all their promise and performance,

have by no means proven to be panaceas in the “developing areas.” Often they were imposed by some well-meaning bureaucracy. And, lacking indigenous roots or sufficient local concern, they succumbed to inexperience or nepotism. But some took a long time dying and — with tender, loving care — were capable of restoration and health. Such was the Quetzal Central Marketing Cooperative.

World Neighbors’ relationship to El Quetzal came about because we needed help. The agricultural extension program radiating from Chimaltenango had spurred interest to the point that an “agricultural store” had to be established to supply the new, and demanded, inputs. Moreover, to permit their purchase, we had created a revolving loan fund which, by 1972, totaled \$15,000.

To administer the store and service the loans were, despite their importance, not what we considered the major priorities of our American and Guatemalan representatives. Their tasks were to teach . . . and to move on to other areas. We therefore began to look for local institutions which, with our encouragement, could manage the services now required. The Quetzal Cooperative appeared to qualify.

Their primary asset was seven years of experience, most of it bad. Initially assisted by USAID, they had steadily lost money and, at the end of 1972, were \$800 in the red. But they did have a dedicated board of directors made up of influential leaders from 13 Indian villages. And each village constituted a unit of the cooperative. They also had a new manager, Daniel Cujcuy.

To help them move toward a successful operation, World Neighbors supplied our own Bill Ruddell and secured the help of Jan Karmali, a British Volunteer. We also established a revolving loan fund of \$20,000 which, in turn, prompted a loan from the National Federation of Savings and Loan Cooperatives of \$50,000.

To further assist the Cakchiquels in the securing and management of credit, a savings and loan cooperative was

established. It took the name “Kato-Ki,” which meant “let’s help Ourselves.” Within six months, it had over 800 members with a total of \$16,000 placed in savings. And within a year the two cooperatives had integrated their management, directive boards and capital assets. They hired Bill Ruddell as manager, relieving World Neighbors of its further subsidy.

In 1973, to their amazement, this joint operation was able to distribute 54,000 hundred-pound sacks of fertilizer valued at \$283,000 to over 5,000 farmers. And this is an area where, a decade earlier, fewer than a dozen had ever used it. A miracle, it seemed, had happened — and more were on the way.

Adversity and Advance

Then tragedy struck. The oil embargo drove fertilizer sky-high — and almost off the market. Large landholders competed for the reduced supply. Small farmers were stricken. World Neighbors, its funds fully committed, was unable to respond further.

Just at the point when all seemed lost, Oxfam of England came forward with a loan of \$100,000 to the Kato-Ki — El Quetzal account in the Guatemalan branch of the Bank

**The terrible earthquake of February 1976, literally devastated many of the Guatemalan villages where our people are at work. The full measure of death and destruction may never be known. But, almost miraculously, none of the World Neighbors staff, workers or volunteers were killed. They remained in the area, directing and implementing decisive and wide-ranging programs of relief and rehabilitation. Health measures were established, food was supplied and, most of all long range measures of recovery and ongoing improvement were established. Our Guatemalan associates, Indian and Ladino, aware of their ability to help themselves, are tackling their grim problems with determination and hope. As some of our other projects which have suffered serious reverses, we expect this one also to “rise from the ashes.”*

of London and Montreal. Even so, more than two months were to go by before the presidents of the cooperatives — Daniel Cujcuy and Jose Xoyon— were able to supply the basic needs of their members and offer limited supplies to the general public.

The shortage in fertilizer continues, but it has been made an opportunity for the San Martin program to undertake an intensive campaign in the use of organic fertilizers, especially the making of compost. And full cooperation with governmental agencies is paying off in terms of increasingly better methods of soil conservation.

In fact, the record of the cooperatives during these difficult times has been so impressive that in the spring of 1975, the government of Guatemala granted them a 25-year, low-interest loan of \$500,000.

As for World Neighbors, we feel that we have witnessed one of the most difficult stages in a self-help development project, the transition from dependence upon outside support to a fully self-sustaining basis. The Cakchiquel farmers of the Chimaltenango-San Martin area are on their way. And those who are leading them are from among their own number.*

It is this battalion of indigenous leaders — more than 700 of them throughout the developing areas — who fill out the ranks of the World Neighbors “team.” They are the field troops, our comrades in arms. For many of them, World Neighbors assumes the full measure of their support. Others are “assisted volunteers.” Still others are assigned to us from cooperating agencies. But whatever the measure of their support, they are all proud members of their own communities who have caught a vision and are leading their people toward self-reliance.

Nor are they found only in India and Guatemala. They may, in fact, be anywhere.

There’s Martin Msseemmaa in Tanzania, for instance. As a Masai “junior warrior” he was won to Christianity. Influenced by the local YMCA, he went away to school. But,

deeply concerned about the welfare of his tribe, he returned to help them. And, providentially, World Neighbors was there to help turn his intentions into reality.

Conserving Values

“There are so many good things in the Masai culture,” said Martin. “There’s the differing age groups which assume specific tasks, care for their own members and respect their elders. There’s the mutual respect between husband and wife; the traditions which give unity and stability to the tribe. There are a host of good things which somebody from the outside might despise.

“But there are dangers, too. We have an attitude toward our cattle which ignores the economical side. It’s only numbers that count. And if we continue like this we may be lost. For other tribes, growing both educationally and economically, may one day swallow up our culture. And it will be the end of the Masai.”

So, heading up a joint World Neighbors-YMCA effort, Martin began the introduction of improvements which would enhance, but not destroy, the Masai way of life.

Since cattle were the heart of that culture, the improvement of cattle was where he began: chemical dips to control the ticks, better pasture land, improving the breed, introducing a cream separator, teaching the value of hygienic methods. Gradually Martin persuaded the adoption of new features — schools, clinics, improved housing, better sanitation and, finally, the introduction of crops: wheat, melons and vegetables. The Masai of Monduli Juu — becoming literate, with money in the bank — are saving themselves from the oblivion to which they once appeared destined.

When the local papers told the story, the headline read: “Changing the Face of Masai-land.”

And constructive change, guided and nurtured by local leaders, is coming to other areas also.

Nigerian Comeback

In eastern Nigeria, for instance, Walter Ossai is ushering in a grass roots transformation. Son of an Ibo chief, inspired by Anglican agricultural missionaries and trained in Scotland as a poultry specialist, Walter had returned to Nigeria avid to help his people. But resources to fully utilize his skills were not present — until World Neighbors, in the person of Merlin Bishop, appeared on the scene.

Joining hands with Walter, and relating our efforts to a training center at Asaba which had been started by Dr. and Mrs. K. H. Prior (a remarkable Anglican missionary couple from Canada), we began a program which involved a substantial investment in needed equipment.

Thus provisioned with transport and implements, Walter was able to initiate an extension program of increased food production, poultry and public health. Village headmasters offered full cooperation. And within a few short years, the program was making itself felt in hundreds of local communities.

Then came the civil war — the “Biafran conflict.” And Asaba felt the full blast of its fury. Unbridled barbarism, the hallmark of tribal wars, swept the area. Many of the people whom Walter had recruited were slain. Almost miraculously, Walter, his wife and baby son, were able to escape. They spent three years in “the bush.” And those three years provided a post-graduate course in how to make the most unlikely resources yield the greatest degree of nutrition. Walter became a sort of Nigerian Euell Gibbons.

One sunny day, the scars of the recent war still evident, I was back again in Nigeria and visited with this personable, soft-spoken, able young man. Rebuilding was under way. And I marveled as I watched the new baby chicks come rolling from the incubators. They had white bodies and red tinged wings. For Walter had found that White Leghorns eat less mash and lay more eggs than do Rhode Island Reds. But in “the bush,” Rhode Island Reds forage for themselves and stay healthier than do White Leghorns. So the chirping

fluffs from the incubators were part of a program designed to produce the chicken which would eat the least, lay the most and fare the best under village conditions.

Many of these baby chicks would be made available, at cost, to schools where students paid for the chicks with maize (corn) grown by them on their own school land. That maize would then be the base for the new “World Neighbors Chicken Feed” — among the cheapest and best in Nigeria.

Grass Roots Reproduction

As we moved from one project to another, I noted that we had a distinguished visitor. A striking, broad shouldered Nigerian priest was Walter’s virtual shadow. And soon I was introduced to him. He had been sent by his bishop from a Roman Catholic diocese some 250 miles from Asaba.

He was no ordinary cleric, soft of hand and tongue. His interest was keen and insatiable. He tramped through the pig pens, tested the ripaws, checked out the incubators, explored every process and noted every development. And he assured me that much of what Walter had been able to accomplish at Asaba would soon be duplicated in his distant diocese.

“And,” said Walter, “just before you arrived the Anglicans had a delegation in here. And beginning Monday the Methodists will bring groups of their young people from across the country to spend a week with us. We’re beginning to really attract attention. I’m believing that this program will influence not only this area but, eventually, all of rural Nigeria.”

Perhaps Walter is too optimistic. But one thing is certain: if rural Nigeria is influenced for the better, it will be because a rural Nigerian believed it could be done and, given a bit of encouragement, decided to attempt it.

Thank God, these rural “miracle workers” are to be found, like diamonds in the rough, throughout the world. Their names appear in no “Who’s Who.” They have never written

a book, never attended (much less addressed) a conference on development. They have simply started their people on an Exodus from dependency to self-reliance. And we have been privileged to help them do it.

In the Andes — and Beyond

There's Saul Lamberto, Quechua-speaking Peruvian, who has made himself the channel for the transmission of unheard-of change in one of the most remote and poverty-stricken areas of the Andean highlands. Associated with the Summer Institute of Linguistics — with transport and salary provided by World Neighbors — Saul brought about the adoption of new methods, new crops, new pasture grasses and a new type of high-wool-producing sheep especially bred for these highlands by the Swiss Development Mission. All this called for a higher degree of efficiency and comprehension than had been formerly thought possible of these indigenous people. It was so unusual, in fact, that the director of the Swiss Missions called it "the only instance that he knew of in South America" where this type of technology had been transferred to the campesino.

But Saul's love and ingenuity had not only transferred the technology but had transferred with it the spirit of concern for others. For after five years, Saul is leaving that area — now proudly self-reliant and moving steadily upward — to encourage one of the many other food-producing projects which Lilly Endowment is assisting us to support. And the campesinos whom Saul served and trained are already carrying the new technology to other Quechua villages in that section of the Peruvian Andes.

The list could go on and on; Filipinos, Indonesians, Kenyans, Ugandans, Upper Voltans, Zairois, Paraguayans, Colombians, Brazilians — a black, white and olive skinned little army working with dedication and imagination in the slums, favelas, barrios, pueblos and villages of more than 25 developing nations. They are "of the people," helping to

encourage a program which is “by the people and for the people.” They are joined and encouraged in their efforts by the thousands — principally but not exclusively American and Canadian — who have found in World Neighbors an effective outreach for their concern. And all of us, when we have time to stop and ponder, rejoice that we have found an enriching fellowship and a rewarding task.

But then we grow reflective and are instantly reminded of the needs and opportunities still unmet, the resources still unmarshaled, the tasks still unfinished. And we know that all we have done is just prelude and practice for what still remains. The joy in our accomplishments is simply fuel for the long, hard road ahead.

For there's no stopping place — not yet, anyhow. Not as long as widening gulfs keep brother from brother.

6

FACING THE FUTURE

What's ahead for the human race? Will we be suffocated by the swarm of our increasing numbers, consumed in the fires of our widening differences, strangled on the miasma of our rising pollution? These are all looming possibilities.

And while we grope for answers, will communism continue its confident, spreading advance? Are despotisms of the right and left ordained to crush all that is left of individual human freedom? Or will people, somehow, somewhere, find the moral courage and the spiritual concern to determine that the human family shall, indeed, be assured a tomorrow of survival and fulfillment?

This is not likely as long as a small elite are primarily concerned to protect their privileges while the vast multitudes are wholly absorbed in a struggle for subsistence. With no stake in their economy, ignorant of all but the most local of issues, defenseless before domestic and foreign exploiters, these multitudes are readily manipulated by agents provocateur. Massive armaments will neither deter nor redeem them. Treaties with their present — and so very transient — rulers, neither guarantee their submissiveness nor assure their well-being. The “development” of their natural resources and the growth of the GNP offers no guarantee of a stable and prosperous economy.

Only when they are “developed” — when their intellectual, spiritual and material resources are improved and enhanced — will the door of hope be opened. Only when they are participants in both the process and fruits of production will the foundation be laid for any enduring prosperity.

Can we marshal a program that will accomplish this end?

As I ponder the question, I’m carried back to the evening of a hot day in South India. A rope bed had been moved onto the threshing floor so that we might catch any vagrant breeze. Sitting on its edge, I watched the last rays of the sun flare and fade through the evening haze. And while I did, one of our workers told me this story — a familiar folk tale in that part of the subcontinent.

“Once upon a time”, he said, “a monkey and a cow were being chased by a hungry tiger. Just as he was about to catch them they came to a tree, standing all alone in the middle of the plain. Instantly, the monkey leapt into the tree and scampered into the highest branches.

‘Wait,’ said the cow, ‘what am I going to do?’

‘Climb the tree,’ yelled the monkey.

‘But you know,’ bawled the frantic animal, ‘that cows just don’t climb trees.’

‘Listen,’ said the monkey, ‘this is one tree you’ve got to climb.’”

So here we are in the latter part of the 20th century, a generation pursued by circumstances so ravenous that they threaten to devour all hope of a decent tomorrow. We face not one but a whole pack of “tigers.”

And our only way out requires of us more than we have ever done before — a whole new course of action, a tree we’ve got to climb. And it is we who must climb it — not some distant and amorphous “they.”

Many, though vaguely uneasy and increasingly troubled, have not yet reached that decision. They take recourse in rationalization. The task is so huge, they argue, that only government (or some equally omniscient agency) can do it .

. . and, given enough money, surely will.

Or, recognizing that governmental efforts have so regularly failed — and being religious in profession if not always in practice — they piously assert that this task is beyond mankind's competence or obligation; that it will, in fact, be taken care of only at the Second Coming. They somehow forget that the Lord, for whose coming we wait, is the same Jesus who promised only condemnation to all who fail to get involved with the world's hungry and naked.

Actually, this tree is so formidable that, if it is climbed, it will require the strength and wisdom of every segment of society — the state, the church, the public servant and the private citizen.

The Crucial Role of Government

Government must, of course, take the major steps — to provide credit to the “little man,” develop systems of transport and communication, facilitate markets, provide basic social services. But what is drastically needed in the new nations of the world is what is being called “people development.” For it is people — more and more of them — who are following patterns which, if left unchanged, will make our globe untenable. “People development” is a spiritual process, a major change in basic attitudes, an acceptance of new goals, the voluntary adoption of new practices. The key word is “voluntary.”

At this point government falters. For “people development” is not its province. This kind of development proceeds from the inside out and from the bottom up. And it is evoked, not commanded. It has continuing vitality as its goals become internalized. It prospers only in the climate of persuasion. Its deadly enemy is coercion. Its best agents are the humble, the patient; the non-possessive and the non-aggressive.

Somehow, governmental aid programs neither develop this pattern nor engender this spirit. For it is too much to

assume that the envoys of the “aiding” nations are endued with 20/20 vision and pristine motivation. Even if they were, it will not be they who will be administering the program at its point of actual application — the point where “development” does, or does not, begin. This, for good or ill, will be done by the office holders of the new nations themselves.

And some of these nations have able, experienced and dedicated civil servants. Some have, indeed, demonstrated a remarkable ability to usher in a better day for their grass roots populace.

But we are at a time in history when the governments of many new nations, among them the neediest, are forced to create from whole cloth the administrative infrastructure they require. Frequently unprepared and generally inexperienced, they are in process of shuffling and reshuffling their power structure. And the material with which they must deal is, alas, only human. Moreover, in nations old and new, those who rise to positions of influence and power normally do so not because they are paragons of compassion but because they possess an instinct for the jugular and a capacity for ruthlessness. And in far too much of our world, power is simply a license for aggrandizement. With rare and wonderful exceptions, to expect “people development” at the hands of such agents is to expect grapes from thistles.

Realistically, we must recognize that most governments in today’s world are not actually representative. The genuine few that do remain constitute, in fact, an endangered species. To accept most official pronouncements as the “voice of the people” is fatuous.

Yet this folly is repeated again and again. Some voice from the chancellery, or some vote in the United Nations, offends us and we say, “Well, if that’s the way those people feel about us, don’t ask me to help them.”

The fact is we will never know how “those people” feel about us until we develop meaningful, person-to-person,

grass roots channels of communication with them. And they will never know how to feel about us until they see us for themselves or have us interpreted to them by persons they trust.

This last qualification cannot be overemphasized. And Martin Mseemmaa spoke for more than the Masai when he said, “Anything coming from outside the tribe is alien, is foreign.”

The Curse of Alienation

We must therefore find a way of coming from “inside the tribe.” For the “man with the hoe” — that great, inarticulate mass who makes up the vast majority of the human family — has learned, with good reason, to distrust that which is foreign; to fear that which is alien.

It is not hard to understand; therefore, why so much that has been attempted in the name of “development” has failed. For a new cultural practice (a major component of development) is like a transplanted organ. If it comes from a stranger, it will be almost certainly rejected. But if it comes from one whose kinship is immediately recognized, its chances for retention and success will be greatly enhanced.

Deep in our very cells there is the fear of the strange, the different. Our major task is to find those common denominators, those nonthreatening activities, which will bring us together and help us to erase this primordial alienation.

And this is a task that cannot be delegated to governments or institutions. To change people requires people who are changed — people in whom fear and antagonism have been displaced by love and concern. And the urgency of this task should rally that once-vigorous conviction that *people*, by the grace of God, can be the arbiters of their fate and the architects of their future.

Which brings us back to our original question: how do we cope with the problems which are about to destroy us?

To find out, suppose we look closely at one of the most intransigent of these problems: the population explosion. More than 80 percent of it is occurring in the developing areas, the areas least able to sustain it. To discover why this is so, let's try to "walk in the shoes" of those who are presently responsible. They make up almost a billion people, the poorest sector of the world, still unreached by all the vast efforts to aid.

And what are they like?

Well, as a campesino, ryot or tao — the small farmer of Latin America, India or the Philippines — you would own a hectare (approximately 2.4 acres) or two of land, no more. Your "farm" might be in one piece or, more likely, in two or three — not necessarily contiguous.

You would rise long before the sun in order to get your work animal, a water buffalo or a bullock, ready for the day. Since precious, stored grain must be kept for the family, this means that you — or somebody — must cut the grass and bring the needed water. That water may have been previously drawn by your wife — or someone — from the village well or from a nearby stream.

You, having had your morning tea (and nothing else), will then carry your plow or hoe or machete to the field. At midday, your wife — or someone — must make the long trip to the field to bring you enough to sustain you through the rest of the day. And unless someone can help you, you will do all the cultivating yourself — clearing the land, plowing the soil, harvesting, marketing. Since you own nothing mechanical or electrical, all this must be done by hand.

In the late evening, exhausted, you make your way home. And before you eat your handful of grain and retire you must — unless you have someone to help you — groom your bullock (or bathe your water buffalo), cut more grass for his feed and tether him inside the yard of the compound. A short sleep on a rope bed or, more likely, on the ground will prepare you for a similar day tomorrow.

The Crying Need for Help

Meanwhile, your wife arose when you did. She prepared your tea and began grinding the grain in a wooden mortar with a pole for a pestle (or between hand-turned millstones) for the single day's meal. When that is done she — or someone — must gather the fresh cow dung and form it into cakes which, when dried on the compound wall, will furnish the needed fuel for the mud oven. After she has taken your food (a wheaten pancake with perhaps some lentils) to the field, she — or somebody — must again carry the water from its source; wash the clothes, without benefit of soap, by beating them on the rocks of the nearest stream and then, if time permits, take care of whatever other needs arise.

The fact is that these chores, so necessary to mere existence, require more time than you and your wife, by yourselves, can possibly give to them. But, with an income of less than 27 cents a day, you simply cannot hire someone to assist either of you.* Yet you *must* have help.

And in your circumstances, your only answer is children. For another handful or so of grain, they can take care of those vital chores without which you cannot survive. And, if the gods are good, at least one or two of these children will survive to see that you are not left completely helpless in your years of incapacity — generally, your late 40s.

But because disease and malnutrition carry so many of your children away, your wife and you — to play it safe — have two to three times the number you ultimately will need. There is, of course, no social security, no Medicare, no “relief.” So you dare not listen to the public exhortations of the “family planning officer” as he tells you not to have any more babies.

But, as a desperate alcoholic will listen to another who has found help, you *will* listen to a fellow villager who has shared your lot and has found a way out. You *will* be impressed as he shows you how, with the same kind of land and tools as yours, he was able to produce three to five times

the crops he ever produced before; how he found a way to check the diseases that were regularly killing his chickens ... succeeded in bringing *all* his children through those perilous early years ... has now adopted family planning and, for the first time in years, has money stored away and a wife who is happy, healthy and responsive to his attentions.

You will ask how you, too, may have a part in all this. And, having been told, you will find a way to start down the road you've heard about.

The Traits of the Task

This may sound simple. Believe me, it isn't. But it is both possible and replicable. And it was the prevailing pattern which made it possible last year — in the areas where World Neighbors is privileged to work — for approximately 193,000 couples to ask for, and accept, family planning services.

"A drop in the bucket," someone says. Perhaps. But a spreading drop. For, if the pattern of the past had continued into the next 10 years, those same couples might well have added a million more to their already swollen numbers. Now, instead, it is conceivable that they may persuade almost that many of their neighbors to follow their example.

I do agree, however, that so much more needs to be done. And several years ago I reached what I believe was a sound conclusion.

**In 1971 the "real per capita income" in India was slightly more than 12 cents a day, an increase of 31 percent since 1951 in terms of 1948-49 prices (India News, issued by the Information Service, Embassy of India, Sept. 13, 1974, pg.2).*

It was simply this. We must multiply programs and projects which offer a hand up, rather than a hand out, which encourage self-help rather than dependence; which provide small loans rather than large gifts; which work with nationals rather than outsiders; which reward worthy individuals rather than corrupt bureaucrats; which enhance

native values rather than impose alien customs; which foster dignity rather than engender servility; which develop mutual respect rather than encourage hostility; which serve the “whole man” rather than some isolated interest.

The Needed Pattern

And to make a really significant impact, we must find and work with and through a grass roots infrastructure whose roots are deep and indigenous, whose outreach is wide and acceptable, whose competence is sound and malleable and whose motivation is spiritual, humane and inclusive.

Do these “infrastructures” actually exist? Not in great numbers and not often with the full complement of the characteristics just described. But wherever their approximations can be found, an instrument of great potential effectiveness exists.

This is why, as I came into West Africa not long ago, I was filled with high expectation. Some months previously, I had met a friend in New Haven who, as our conversation proceeded, suddenly asked me, “John, did you ever hear of the Church of Jesus Christ According to the Prophet Simon Kimbangu?” Of course, I hadn’t.

So he pushed the books from his desk, leaned back and told me an almost incredible story about an indigenous church in Zaire which had come into being because a Congolese lad, some 50 years earlier, had become a Christian and started reading his Bible — only recently translated into the native tongue.

As he read, Simon Kimbangu was amazed to find teachings of which he had never been told. He began to share what he read with others.

An astonishing fellowship, completely African, came into being, believing implicitly in what they read and seeing it actually happen in their lives and circumstances. The movement spread into the bush, greatly alarming “the establishment” — both ecclesiastical and governmental. After

three years of ministry, Simon was arrested and jailed, never to be released until his death 30 years later.

But the work he had begun spread and flourished. His sons who, with their mother, were permitted occasional visits with Simon, continued to give leadership. And when the Belgian Congo became Zaire, this underground, persecuted fellowship came forth — three million strong — to be L'Eglise Kimbanguiste, the largest church in all of Africa. They have been thoroughly examined and accepted by the World Council of Churches as an authentic Christian body.

As I started across Africa, I was told in Kenya — by a scholar who had done an exhaustive and sympathetic work on this church — that I simply could not meet their leadership.

“You have to understand,” he said, “that they are hesitant to receive outsiders who might unduly influence them. You should have written months ago, outlining your credentials, listing all possible questions and making clear your areas of interest. You’ve got only a ghost of a chance. And, if they see you on such short notice, it will be something of a historic breakthrough.”

Developing Relationships

Perhaps he exaggerated. At any rate, not long after I reached Kinshasa, doors opened and soon I was at the Kimbanguiste headquarters, meeting the leaders, taking the first steps to a further and deeper acquaintance. As a result, we are now involved in developmental activity with this tremendous fellowship — whose units extend throughout that vast nation. And we expect this involvement to deepen.

For, in lands where wealth gravitates to the few and poverty remains the lot of most, we know of no better way to reach and help the people — real, needy, grass roots people — to help themselves.

Consequently, we have joined hands with other

widespread, grass roots indigenous groups in Nepal, India, Indonesia and the Philippines. Those efforts have been rewarding. And their outcome, to my surprise, has brought us substantial attention. For instance, I was once asked to discuss with a group “the factors which have brought success to World Neighbors.”

I was frankly nonplussed. I knew that it was altogether too early to call World Neighbors a “success.” Besides, I wasn’t sure what the word was intended to connote. But the program chairman was a friend of mine. He had evidently had a cancellation. I decided to go along with his suggestion.

Favorable Factors

“Well,” I began, “I attribute the major part of our success to our failures. They taught us early on that, if real improvement — what might be called ‘development’ — ever took place, we would probably not be its purveyors. It would be carried, instead, by the awakened, indigenous representatives of the areas of our operation, ordinary men and women touched with extraordinary faith and love. Our role, we discovered, would be as catalysts, encouragers and nourishers — midwives who help bring to birth, and continue for a while to nurture, the dynamic resources that were already there and waiting.

“But perhaps a second reason for whatever success we have attained was the development of methods of measurement and evaluation which make clear to us and to our associates what is actually being accomplished with our investment of time and resources. This has helped us to distinguish between mere activity and real performance. It has challenged, corrected and encouraged. It has kept us on track. And it has evoked a pattern of fiscal responsibility which strengthens productivity and circumvents waste.

“Finally,” I concluded, “our area representatives and project directors are selected not merely because they have technical competence but because they have an infectious

quality of spirit — the kind of spirit which, as it infuses others, will extend and multiply their own efforts. For the world faces problems that grow in geometric progression. Our answers have to have that same generative dimension.”

I owe the recognition of this latter truth to a dear friend, Pete Hudgins, who, as head of International Development Service, once told me, “John, as you select your workers, don’t fool with anybody who hasn’t got fire in the belly. They’re the only ones who’ll get the job done.”

Pete’s right.

And the only people who can help us escape the looming disasters which threaten our globe are men and women with “fire in the belly” — the fire of vision, of compassion, of resolution. For the sake of generations yet to come, we must be that kind of people. And we must then find others similarly inspired. They’re around, at home and abroad. As one family under God, we must join hands with them . . . *and climb that tree.*

Alone, we’ll never make it. But I am among that stubborn number who believe that together, and by the grace of God, there’s no worthy task impossible of accomplishment.

EPILOGUE

This book has been the story — still unfinished — of what a few ordinary people, pursuing a course sufficiently unorthodox (to discourage traditional support), have nevertheless been able to do. I haven't begun to enumerate all who have contributed to what has been accomplished. The board of directors — unpaid, unsparing, devoted friends; the World Neighbors staff untiring, competent, inspired and inspiring; the hundreds of overseas associates — unsung, innovative, sacrificial and determined; the wide-flung network of donors — unselfish, concerned, patient and expectant. What an army.

To all of them — and especially to the God who has challenged, changed and sustained so many of us in this undertaking — I give deep and lasting thanks.

The task is far from accomplished. To stop is to be overwhelmed. But breaches have been made and beachheads have been established. In hundreds of villages in Africa, Asia and Latin America there are those who have found in our association a bond of unity and a door of hope.

Once in a while, I ask God to tell that to the boy from Tennessee. I hope he feels he didn't die in vain.

WHAT IS WORLD NEIGHBORS?

World Neighbors is an international development organization that works with some of the most remote and marginalized communities in ecologically fragile areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The organization supports the transformation of communities by helping people address hunger, poverty, disease and other challenges that undermine their livelihoods, and by inspiring lasting leadership and collective action for change.

Unique in its approach, World Neighbors invests in people, not things. The organization provides training and knowledge so that people gain the skills and leadership to work together for change. The result is long-term self-reliance rather than a short-term fix and ongoing dependence on external aid.

World Neighbors empowers communities to create and sustain their own change by asking rural people to determine their own agendas based on their most urgent needs. Most programs begin using locally available resources and innovative, simple and low-cost technologies. Programs often address areas such as food security, farming, literacy, community and reproductive health, water and sanitation, environmental conservation, savings and credit, non-formal education and income-generation activities.

As people gain skills and confidence, local leaders and organizations emerge to carry on the work, multiply results and participate in coalitions advocating for wider change.

Since 1951, the organization has helped more than 25 million people in 45 countries improve their lives and the communities where they live.

This story is about a group of men and women with sweat on their brows and motivational fire in their bellies. They've learned some practical tools to help rural people help themselves, which they have been teaching to communities throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America for more than 56 years.

You will learn about an organization that believes in treating illnesses, not symptoms, by providing realistic answers to some of our world's most basic problems. And these answers are the result of actively listening to the needs of rural people and then determining how to effectively fix those problems by offering education and training, not by giving away food or material aid.

Through Peters' eyes, you will witness the kind of walking compassion that transcends language, dogmas and cultural barriers.



**WORLD
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