

End of the Spear | Steve Saint Beyond the Gates of Splendor | Movie

End of the Spear by Steve Saint

Beyond the Gates of Splendor – video

It was a Sunday in January 1956 that this writer, a boy nearing his ninth birthday, will never forget. It was a cold morning as my family and I entered the aging sanctuary of the First Evangelical Free Church in Boone, Iowa. My parents always had their children – there were five of us – sit near the front close to the choir loft. My father was an usher and my mother sang in the choir and from that vantage point she could discipline us.

At that age going to church really had no special meaning for me -it was just something our family did every Sunday, especially now that my parents had come to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. But, something was to happen that Sunday that would be indelibly stamped upon my heart forever. I can recall it as if it happened just yesterday. Our pastor approached the pulpit for the time set aside for pastoral prayer. Yes, we always had a pastoral prayer in those days. But before praying he made the following announcement: An MAF plane, missing for several days in the jungles of Ecuador, had been located, and the bodies of five young men had been found in the river near that plane. These young men had been killed by a group of people known as the Aucas. My pastor then proceeded to remember these families in his prayer.

The names of the five martyrs – Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, and Peter Fleming – were unknown to most of us. But, as their story became told through television and LIFE magazine articles, lives began to be changed. Then Elizabeth Elliot, widow of one of the martyred missionaries, wrote the story in a book titled, *Through the Gates of Splendor*. God used the deaths of these five young men to open up the Auca tribe to the gospel.

Now, fifty years later, their story is being retold with the publication of a new book and the release of two films. The book, written by Steve Saint, son of Nate Saint, is titled, *End of the Spear*, and is published by Saltriver, a division of Tyndale House Publishers. The films are, *Beyond the Gates of Splendor*, released on video and DVD and available at most Christian book distributors, and *End of the Spear*, released in theatres across the country this past January.

Steve begins his story with the funeral for his aunt, Rachel Saint, who had spent many years among the Waodani people. Steve, himself, had spent several years there among those people following the death of his father. During a conversation with those present at his Aunt Rachel's funeral, Steve begins to learn the reasons for the deaths of his father and his four companions many years earlier. The very men who were telling the story to Steve had been among those who had participated in the spearing of the foreigners there at Palm Beach. The men then invited Steve to come and to live among them. The following chapters in the book tell the story of how Steve moved his family from Florida to the jungles of Ecuador. It is told with compassion and strength. Often you will find yourself laughing at the situations. But, you will always be amazed at the depth of God's love for this people.

The Waodani people, known to the outside world as Aucas – which meant “naked savage” – were among the most violent people in the world. They lived in a culture of hatred and violence, revenge and counter-revenge. Homicides were common among the various groupings within the tribe. At times, as you either read or listen to the interviews on the video, you marvel at the courage of Rachel Saint and Betty Elliot to go in and to live among these people after what had happened on the shores of that jungle river. God worked in a mighty way to turn the hearts of these killers to Jesus Christ. Hearts, previously filled with

hatred, were now filled with love. Lives that had been centered around selfish ambitions, became lives that lived to serve others. The jungle darkness had been penetrated and broken by the light of Jesus Christ.

Friends, I heartily recommend the book, *End of the Spear*, to you. I can assure you that you will have great difficulty in putting it down once you begin. The story of God's transformation of stone-aged killers into gentle servants of Christ will thrill your heart. And the video, *Beyond the Gates of Splendor*, is equally outstanding. You might shed a tear or two, and a lump might come to your throat, but your heart will rejoice in the mighty power of an Almighty God who loves His world so intensely that He would allow the deaths of five young men along the banks of a forsaken river in the jungles of Ecuador in order to reach a lost group of people with that love.

A Sunday in January 1956 – a day a nearly nine-year old boy will never forget. And neither did many others. The deaths of those five young men – Nate, Jim, Ed, Pete, and Roger – might just have been the greatest missionary event in the past century. I urge you to read and to view their story one more time.