

in-ká-hai
HOW SWEET IT IS!

Chantal Chen

in-ká-hai

HOW SWEET IT IS!

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To those on the front lines and behind the scenes alike who strive tirelessly to bring the gospel to those who have not yet heard.

acknowledgments

This book is the effort of many individuals who, by the grace of God, worked together to make it possible.

I would like to thank John Cross, who entrusted me with this project, taught me the ins and outs of chronological Bible teaching, patiently guided me along the way and oversaw it to completion. I am grateful for Paul Humphreys, who first envisioned the concept of this book and made all the necessary arrangements to bring it into being. And thanks to his son, Scott Humphreys, who penned the insightful Study Guide that truly made the book what it is. Thanks extends also to Rachel Bader, Amos and Jennifer Kwok, and David Cross, who contributed behind the scenes to bring this together.

I am indebted to Pete and Leah Humphreys for graciously trusting me, a complete stranger in the beginning, to put their story on paper. They have become precious friends in the Lord through this process! Thank you for telling your story and staying involved throughout the process to ensure that the doctrine is correctly represented and the story best communicated. Thank you for your transparency, humility, dedication and godly example.

I appreciate those who helped me in the writing. Russ Smyth, Elaine Yoon and members of the Coeur d'Alene Bible Church Writer's Guild were kind enough to provide me with valuable comments and feedback.

Gratitude goes to my husband, Derek, and all the family and friends who have stood behind me and prayed for this project. Our churches in Chicago, Evanston Bible Fellowship and Evangelical Taiwan Church, have faithfully supported us.

Although told in their voice, this is not just Pete and Leah's story. Time and time again, they have talked about the countless others

before and after them who have sacrificed much so the Manjúi people could hear the Word of God. These individuals, many unnamed, served in various capacities, such as Bible teachers, support workers, linguists and other vital roles. Their work and dedication cannot be ignored. Of the few I can identify here, I would like to thank Norm Fry, Gordie Hunt and Jeff Hunt for providing me with their insight regarding Santa Rosa, Manjúi culture and the Manjúi church.

Indeed, there have been too many wonderful stories, too many touching testimonies I wish space and time would allow me to include. I am grateful to all those who have served in Santa Rosa, and to the Manjúi believers, for allowing their story to be made known. It has been a blessing to me, and it will surely be a blessing to more people than you will ever know.

To maintain ease in reading and remain consistent with the Bible text chosen, lower case initial letters have been used for pronouns that relate to God.

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THE MANJÚIS

(The accented syllable is represented by capitalized letters.)

Manjúi (people group) Mahn-HOO-ee

Hanimo (M) Ha-NEE-mo—Humphreys' neighbour. Husband of Tina.

Isnei (M) Eesh-NAY—Son of Meyin and known as the local thief when he was young. Later, the husband of Zitila.

Juana'a (F) WAH-na-uh—A young single mother with three children. Suffered from TB.

Kalowi (M) Kah-LO-wee—Gifted orator and leader in the Manjúi community. Pete's language helper.

Laanis (M) LAW-nees—Shaman and family patriarch.

Lanino (M) Lah-NEE-no—Soft-spoken young man.

Laweyin (M) Lah-WAY-yin—Blind shaman in his 40s. Leah's language helper. Uncle to Seyin.

Limina (F) Lee-MEEN-uh—Daughter of Laanis and wife of Liwis.

Lisa (F) LEE-suh—Baby daughter of Laanis.

Liwis (M) LEE-wees—Stocky young man. Husband of Limina.

Meyin (M) MAY-yin—Father of Isnei.

Nina (F) NEE-nuh—Daughter of Laanis.

Nowai (M) No-WHY—Uncle to Laanis.

Sesa (M) SEH-suh—Son of Laanis.

Seyin (M) SAY-yin—Nephew of Laweyin. Brother to Tina.

Wanyo (M) WAN-yo—Young man in the tribe.

Wiwita (F) WEE-wee-tuh—Wife of Laanis.

Tina (F) TEE-nuh—Wife of Hanimo.

Weinkil (M) Wayne-KEEL—Shrewd shaman, feared by the tribe.

Zitila (F) Zee-TEE-luh—Daughter of Laanis and wife of Isnei.

THE TEAM

(Bold-faced names are mentioned in this book.)

1971-1978	Norm & Iris Fry Made initial contact with the Manjús.
1971-1977	Verl & Susie Koons Made initial contact with the Manjús.
1972-1982	Gary & Mickey Stous (married in 1979)
1973-1976	Rich & Dee Perik
1974-1975	Curt & Mary Wildish (short-term help)
1974-1987	Steve & Ithie Jackson (married in 1978) Physical aspects of ministry.
1977-ongoing	Gordie & Nancy Hunt First Bible teachers, then Bible translators.
1978-1979	Roland & Betty Connery
1980-1997	Pete & Leah Humphreys (Cheralyn, Shaun, Deryk, Charissa)
1985-1995	Jerry & Sue Pettus
1987-1997	Don & Julie Flower Literacy and physical aspects of the ministry.
1988-1991	Dave Wood
1991-1993	Brad & Leslie Hilton
1992-1993	Dan & Jan McNutt (short-term help)
1996-2002	James & Penny Camacho
1996-2007	Dave & Hope Bradley
1999-2010	Jamie & Char Hunt (Gordie & Nancy's son)
2001-ongoing	Jeff & Stacy Hunt (Gordie & Nancy's son)

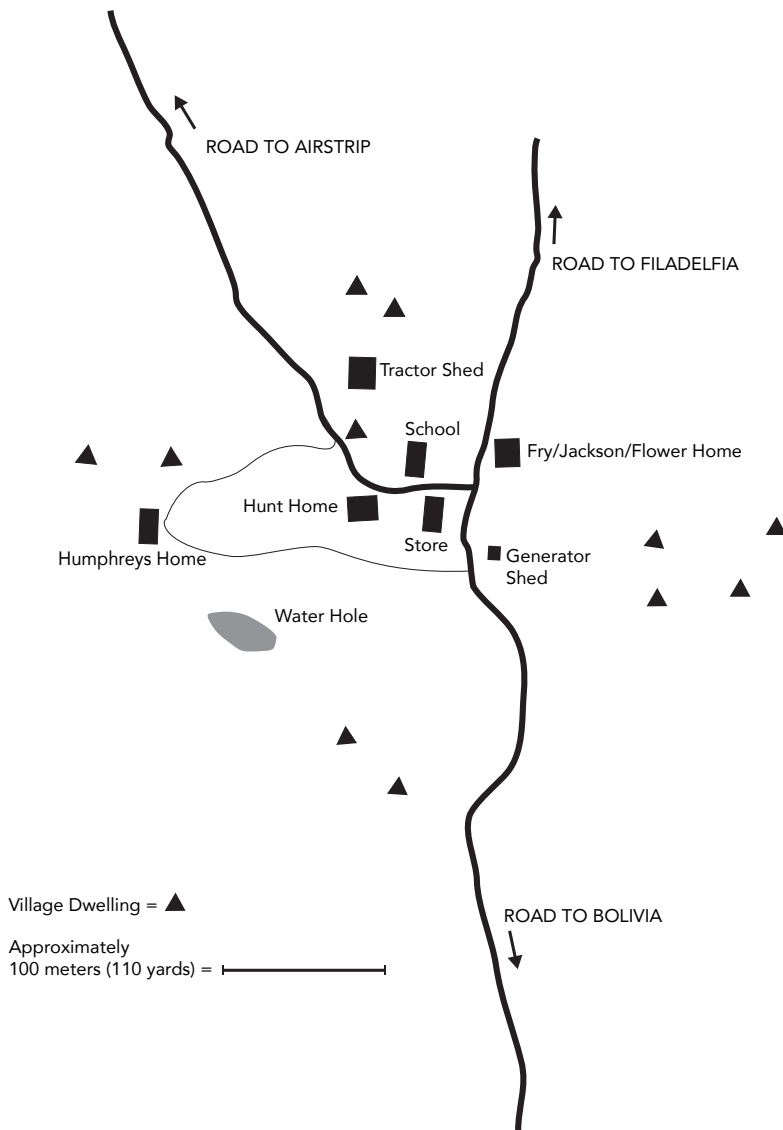
OTHER

Laywot (LIE-wote)—Pete's Manjúi nickname, literally "radio man."

Neshen-hewot (Nee-SHEN-hee-wote)—Name of Satan.

Zinat (Shee-NAHT)—Name of God (literally, our father).

MAP OF SANTA ROSA



foreword

If I handed you a piece of wild honeycomb, you'd notice its dark, sticky surface matted with dust, crawling with buzzing bees, and wiggling with larvae. Sure it's intriguing to look at, but how reluctant would you be if I dared you to take a bite?

As you read **in-ká-hai** you'll notice all sorts of foreign matter—thorny jungles, odd cultures, strange languages, dangerous animals, even demonic encounters. Like wild honey, you might see it as an intriguing story, but one you'd be hesitant to try yourself.

This book is the telling of a true jungle adventure. It records how committed men and women helped the Manjúi people come to believe what the psalmist wrote:

*How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey
to my mouth!*

Psalm 119:103 NIV

But how did it happen? What obstacles were overcome? And how did the Manjúi people respond?

Instead of leaving the answers to these questions at the edge of the Chaco jungle, you're invited to consider the lessons learned in the midst of struggles, and how they might apply in your community—with those God might enable you to reach with the Bible's message.

So read on—I dare you! You may find that what's offered here is sweeter than you think.

~Scott W. Humphreys

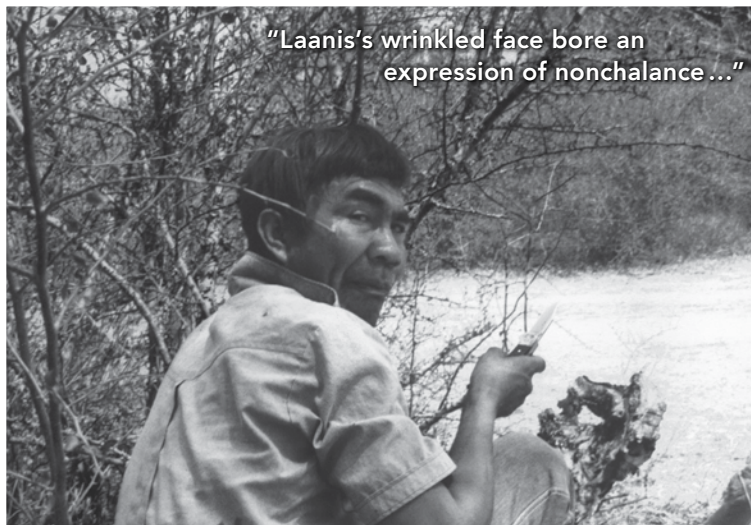
Nephew of Pete Humphreys

prologue

The hot north wind kicked up sand and fine grey dust. The grit stuck to Laanis's brown skin like an oily film. The sun was just setting, but that did not bring relief from the scorching heat that held the land under its grip. Laanis squinted and scanned the horizon. The only things in sight were the gnarly *quebracho* trees and long-barbed cacti etched like skeletal snakes against a dull, colourless sky.

Laanis's wrinkled face bore an expression of nonchalance with just a hint of irritation, for he had weathered many long, dry seasons before. His eyes were bloodshot from a tiring day of hunting. Streaks of dry sweat caked the sides of his face and the nape of his bony neck. His greying hair and scraggly beard were smothered in dirt.

His fiber-woven game bag only grew heavier and the hunger pangs, like blows to his stomach, grew stronger as he trudged back wearily



to the water hole near which his family was camped. Laanis realized that this was his third day without a bite to eat. No wonder. The scrub jungle was *neshi-wata*—barren and foodless—and the dry season had only begun!

He couldn't bring himself to go back to camp and tell them that he'd had another empty-handed day of hunting. Oh, the agony of having his whole family spend another night in hunger! He knew his wife would not be in a good mood, especially since she had been taking care of a hungry, crying baby all day. He found himself kicking over twigs and leaves to try to find even one lizard or mouse he could kill for food.

But as darkness descended upon the scrub jungle and stars began populating the night sky, Laanis quickened his steps. Although he knew the jungle well, he was also aware that the worst mistake a Manjúi man could make was to stay out in the dark on his own. Evil spirits lurked behind every tree and could snatch his soul at any time. They were conniving and malicious, doing harmful things to unsuspecting mortals who dared cross their way. Laanis shuddered. Even though he was revered as a powerful shaman, he knew better than to leave himself vulnerable to the demons.

Laanis breathed a sigh of relief as a small fire came into sight. He counted the dark figures in the shadows: his wife, son and six daughters, including the newborn. Good—they were all safe. The presence of another fire farther back in the brush indicated that more relatives had joined his family during the day.

Stepping closer, he could see his wife, Wiwita, huddled by the fire next to their oldest daughters, Limina and Nina. They were talking in low voices. Even though the night was oppressively hot, the women stayed close to the fire where they would be safer from the spirits.

Upon his return, Nina's almond-shaped eyes glanced up hopefully beneath the long, unkempt hair shadowing her naïve face. Laanis's dejected expression told her that he had come home empty handed. Her eyes dropped instantly and her brows knit tightly together. Young as she was, Nina was familiar with the feeling of hunger.

His son, six-year-old Sesa, was trying to yank something out of a stray dog's mouth. Laanis was just about to yell at Sesa for wandering too far from the fire but found himself too weary to put out the extra effort. It wouldn't be any use flying into a temper now, anyhow. Sesa was probably restless from not having eaten anything substantial for the last few days. Laanis's three younger daughters were sprawled out in the dirt, in that state between sleep and wake. The baby, Lisa, who was barely six months old, lay naked and asleep on Wiwita's lap.

Tiny Lisa uttered a muffled cry as she stirred in her sleep, evidently haunted by a nightmare. Her puff of black hair, tangled and tousled, stuck out in all directions. Her little brown face was smeared with clay, just like the rest of her body, from rolling around on the bare ground all day. She opened her mouth and yawned, then let out another short cry, this time louder.

"Nothing today," Laanis said as he sat down next to the fire. His wife sighed sullenly and arranged herself and Lisa in a sleeping position.

He glanced over his shoulder at a muddy puddle—what was left of the water hole they had found three weeks ago. Even at its best, it had only been a few paces across. Now the water was all but gone. This meant they had to search for another source. If they didn't find one, they would be very thirsty by nightfall tomorrow.

We'll leave this place in the morning, he thought, or else we'll die here.

He knew Wiwita was still weak from childbirth and did not do well on the long hikes through the jungle. But Laanis was glad that she

was alive and could walk. He remembered that only a few months ago she was so thin and emaciated he could fit her whole body in his woven string bag. He had carried her and their newborn daughter in the bag when they travelled through the jungle.

After Wiwita had given birth, Laanis had forbidden her from eating any milk, meat or eggs, in accordance with tribal food taboos. Her own sister had almost died from a wracking cough the year before for not following the ancestors' instructions regarding food. Hadn't the shamans chanted long hours to the spirits to save her?

Yet the only foods Wiwita had been allowed to eat—cactus hearts and squash—were scarce during the drought season. Laanis had watched his wife dwindle into a pile of skin and bones.

Laanis knew that the baby, too, had been a weakling from the moment she was born. He should have known better than to let her live.

"She'll never survive!" Laanis had said after taking one look at Lisa. "We should bury her."

"No, no, no!" Wiwita had cried, her lips quivering. She held the baby to her tightly and turned her back to him. For the next few hours, she wept uncontrollably and wouldn't as much as talk to him.

Reluctantly, he had agreed to let her keep Lisa. Too weak to breastfeed, Wiwita had given her honey water. The baby had sucked it up voraciously, but she didn't seem to grow much.

Now the girl was hot and sticky and obviously irritated by her empty stomach. Laanis lay down by the smoky fire and tried to ignore Lisa's finicky whimpers. As he drifted off to sleep, his thoughts wandered to the inevitable question: *Are we going to survive tomorrow?*



A single, piercing cry woke Laanis from his slumber.

It was still night. Laanis sat up and looked over at Lisa, cradled in Wiwita's arms. Her red face was scrunched up in a tight knot and her eyes, nose and mouth were encrusted with white and yellow pus. Wiwita was trying to make her hush and go back to sleep, but Laanis knew something was wrong.

"Sesa, wake up!" he hissed. "Go get your uncles and cousins." Sesa's footsteps pattered into the distance.

Laanis scooped the baby up. The tiny body, trembling and shaking, felt almost weightless in his arms. Lisa had been restless for the last few days, but this was not one of those normal times of fussiness caused by hunger, thirst or heat. An evil spirit must have snatched her soul when they were asleep! That was making her sick. Laanis uttered a curse. He must act quickly.

Laanis's ancestors had taught him about the feared demon chief *Neshen-hewot*—"the flesh person," as all the Manjúi called him—who sent out his lackeys to snatch people's souls. *Neshen-hewot's* servant demons were very sly, very powerful. They could strike when a person least expected it. If Lisa's soul was stolen and not retrieved, she would die and *Neshen-hewot* would eat the flesh off her bones.

Laanis had healed his daughter several times in the past, always succeeding in retrieving her soul, but he had a feeling that tonight would be different. It must have been a powerful demon who acted this time—he was sure of it. He needed all the reinforcement he could get. He hoped his male relatives together would be powerful enough to save her.

His two brothers and three nephews arrived. Forming a tight circle around Lisa, they began chanting. A low, monotonic rumbling sound arose simultaneously from the throats of the men, led by Laanis.

Wiwita and her daughters sat close to the fire, a stone's throw away from the group of shamans, waiting in suspense. Sesa inched closer to the group and cocked his head as he listened intently. Even though he was young, he knew that one day he too would be expected to do the things that shamans did, like his father. *What does all of this mean?* he thought with curiosity.

The eerie rumbling grew louder and louder until it became a steady, rhythmic hum. One by one, the men fell into a trance. Some stared emptily into space while others' eyes rolled back into their sockets. Sharp, rapid yells now accompanied the humming. Laanis called out to the spirit world.

"Oh, my *spirit helper*—retriever of stolen souls—hear my voice and come to me!" he cried. "Clothe yourself with my body! Empower me to find my daughter's soul and return it to her!" As his *spirit helper* entered him, Laanis began convulsing. Other men followed suit, summoning their *spirit helpers*. Controlled by them, they too began to convulse.

The invisible battle began. The possessed men grappled and wrestled with *Neshen-hewot's* demons in a desperate effort to retrieve the baby's soul. Shouts and grunts, cries and groans filled the night air.

"I see her soul! There it is; there it is!" one of Laanis's brothers declared. He lurched forward, only to fall headfirst into the dirt. "There it goes! Go after it!"

"Watch out! Wait, I think I have it!" Laanis shouted. Just as he was about to grab hold of it, he grunted and staggered backward as if he had been stabbed in the stomach.

The battle went on for hours. As the crackling fire died into glowing embers, the shouts and cries diminished into mere whispers. One by one, the men slumped down onto the ground, exhausted.

Wiwita pulled Lisa to her, crying softly in the darkness. Sesa and the girls had fallen asleep on the dirt floor. After what seemed like an eternity, the men awoke from their trance. Dawn was just about to break. Laanis was the first to speak.

“We have fought the demons courageously, and we have lost,” he said matter-of-factly. “Lisa’s soul is irretrievable. She is gone.” Although the baby was still breathing laboriously between whimpers and wheezes, the shaman had proclaimed her fate. Her soul was *it-nan*—extinct. She was as good as dead.

At this, Wiwita broke into a loud wail. Sitting cross-legged on the ground, she held Lisa tightly to her body and threw her head back, howling desperately. Limina and Nina wrapped their arms around their mother, squeezing her and Lisa.

Laanis’s older brother came forward. “Let go of her,” he said. “She’s dead.” The other men had already begun digging a small hole in the ground to bury the baby.

“Noooooooo ... nooooooooo ...” Wiwita wailed. Giving up the body would mean it was over. They would never see the baby again.

Laanis felt a heavy pang of loss and sadness, for he too had hoped that Lisa would live, but his heart was numb from the teachings of his ancestors. They had told him that whenever a person’s soul was lost to the demons, he or she would surely die. Laanis had chanted over too many people to be mistaken. This was clearly fate. What else was there to do but bury her?

By this time, the whole family clan had gathered. They formed a circle and quietly watched the drama unfold. They were used to this. Not all Manjúi babies were expected to survive anyway.

A tug-of-war broke out between the women and Laanis's brother. He grabbed Lisa's ankle and tried to pry her body out of the women's grip. Limina, who was on the other side, fended him off, yelling at him to stop and clawed at his hands. Another brother stepped forward and tried to grab Lisa from the other side. The relatives stood watching from the sidelines. Sesa looked on in despair as his baby sister's body was tugged at and twisted.

"It's time," someone said.

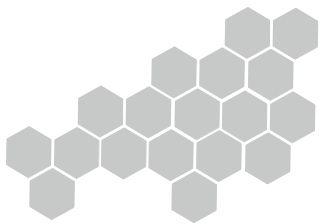
Two more men stepped forward to join in the struggle. The women, still huddled close together, wailed and howled as they were being attacked from all sides. They were tenacious, but eventually broke down from sorrow and exhaustion. The men won. Dangling Lisa by the arm, one of them carried her limp body a distance from the camp and dropped it into a shallow depression in the ground.

Covering the body with dirt, the men built a fire on top of her grave and burned the few things ever associated with the little girl: the woven blanket that Wiwita had wrapped her in and the gourd she had been fed from. They did not want her soul to come back and haunt them, so they were going to erase every trace of Lisa.

Wiwita fell facedown into the dirt and remained there, wailing uncontrollably. The wails were hollow and piercing.

Laanis slumped onto the goatskin next to his wife. Hopelessness was thick in the air. Soon, they would be packing up and travelling to another area of the jungle—without Lisa, for she was *it-nan*, extinct.

Dark and despairing thoughts, together with Wiwita's heart-wrenching wails, would permeate the jungle for many days to come. And the memory of his daughter's death would plague Laanis's mind for decades.



CHAPTER 1

El Infierno Verde THE GREEN HELL

The Manjúi people lived and died for generations in the unforgiving Chaco jungle of northwestern Paraguay. Generation after generation, fear and desperation clung to them tenaciously like a chronic headache. *Will there be enough water and food today? Will one of Neshen-hewot's demons snatch my soul? Will one of his servants harm me?* These were the questions a Manjúi asked himself every day from morning to sundown. He did not dare hope beyond the present.

The Manjúi people had little time to discuss politics, philosophize about the meaning of life, or dream about the future. They understood little of the art and music so commonplace in the modern world. Instead, all that occupied their minds were the pressing concern to stay alive and the constant terror of the spirits. The only art that surrounded them was a dense thorny jungle of skeletal trees and gigantic cacti, looming taller than a man and armed with four-inch spikes. The only music they ever heard was the monotonic chanting of a shaman who summoned spirits around the campfire at night.

FOREIGNERS

In 1971, a team of North Americans ventured into the Chaco jungle. They were in search of the primitive, semi-nomadic tribe known as the Manjúi. Among the team were two couples, both from California.

Norm and Iris Fry had sold all they owned and moved to Paraguay with their two young daughters. They were joined by Verl and Susie Koons. These foreigners were not explorers or anthropologists. They were ordinary men and women who had something important to deliver: the Bible's message, a message unknown to the Manjúis.

It wasn't an easy feat for a foreigner to live in the Chaco. The sprawling, semi-arid plain of forlorn brush is landlocked east of the Andes Mountains. Characterized by pervasive heat and extreme dryness, the Chaco is one of the most difficult places to survive in the world.

A prevailing northerly wind drives waves of intense heat through the scrub. Temperatures regularly soar above 46°C (115°F). The only precipitation comes three or four months out of the year, sometimes adding up to less than 500 mm (20 inches) of rain. Spanning 60 percent of Paraguay's land mass, the region supports only three percent of the country's population. Even today, few Paraguayan nationals venture into the region they refer to as *el infierno verde*—"the green hell."

CONTACT

Filadelfia was a small town in the Chaco used as a supply base for exploration. From this town, Norm and Verl began making regular trips into the jungle to establish contact with the elusive Manjúi people. After several failed attempts, they received word that some Manjúis had been spotted northwest of Filadelfia. Immediately, they headed out to that area of the jungle.

A few hours later, their old International truck rumbled to a stop on the overgrown dirt road. Norm and Verl stared at the sight in front of them—a group of Manjúi men were standing right in the middle of the road! It seemed as if they had heard the truck coming and had come out of the jungle to wait for the foreigners.

Scrawny, dishevelled, with matted hair sticking out in all directions and brown skin smeared with dirt, the dozen Manjúis stood silently, watching and listening. They wore nothing but cactus-fiber loin cloths.

Norm trembled with excitement and fear as he stepped out of the truck. *All my training never prepared me for this!* He stole a nervous glance at Verl. His teammate was shaking too.



One of the Manjúi men stepped forward and greeted them in an unintelligible language. They crowded around the vehicle, peering into the truck bed to see what the strangers were hauling.

Gesturing and signing, Norm and Verl exchanged sacks of beans, rice and *galletas*—dried biscuits—for a few fiber-woven bags and a wooden smoking pipe that the Manjúis offered. The Manjúi men smiled. They were pleased with the swap.

It's clear that these Manjúis have interacted and traded with others before, Norm thought to himself as they made their way back to civilization. But how can they still be living in the jungle under such primitive conditions?

SANTA ROSA

When the team later explored the area, they counted around 90 members of the tribe left. Because of the Chaco's harsh physical conditions, the nomadic Manjúis were on the brink of extinction. They were forced to wander between shallow lagoons left from the rainy season. They had adopted no means of modern technology, hunting with slingshots, bows and arrows and gathering their food at the mercy of jungle resources.

The Manjúis scraped by with whatever they could find or kill for the day—plant roots, rabbits, lizards, snakes, birds and occasionally a wild boar or small deer. They ate, cooked and slept on the ground without so much as a roof over their heads. They travelled by foot, carrying everything they owned in cactus-fiber bags. They wore the same home-woven clothes until the fabric literally rotted off their backs.

The Manjúis were semi-nomadic, but not by choice. Environment dictated that they move through the jungle to survive. When food and water reserves were depleted, migration was a matter of life and death. Early on in their initial contact with Norm and Verl, the Manjúis indicated a desire for a secure source of food and water. The team knew that before they could deliver the Bible's message to the Manjúis, they had to meet that need.

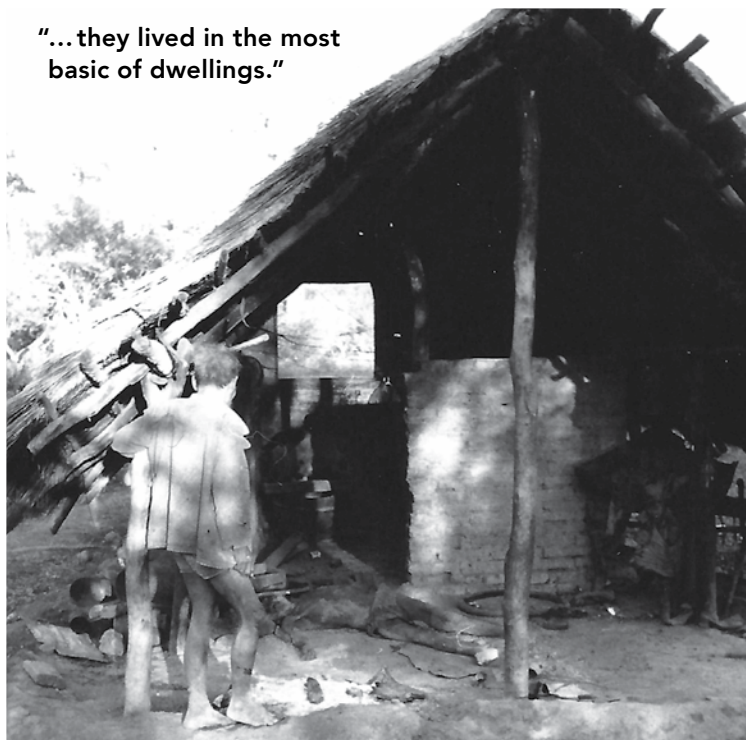
Over the next few years, Norm and Verl developed a station at an abandoned Paraguayan military base called Santa Rosa, 212 km (133 miles) northwest of Filadelfia. They drilled a well to tap underground water and set up a supply store that carried food staples such as rice, corn, beans and green tea (called *yerba*). They employed Manjúi men at the station so they could exchange their wages for food. They also stocked basic medical supplies.

The curious Manjúis had no idea what these foreigners were up to. They surrounded them, making all kinds of motions and talking non-stop in their fast-paced dialect, full of strange clicks and sounds.

What do the foreigners want out here? their inquiring tones seemed to ask.

Most Manjúis were friendly and accepted the foreigners' help. Others weren't as amicable—like Laanis, the shaman who observed everything with a sinister glint in his eyes and hurled insults at the foreigners when they passed by. At night, Laanis chanted over sick members of the tribe. The chanting and wailing went on into the wee hours of the night so often that Norm and his family could hardly get any sleep.

**"...they lived in the most
basic of dwellings."**



Despite the availability of food and water at Santa Rosa, it was years before some Manjús chose to live for extended periods among their guests. Even then they lived in the most basic of dwellings. Their transient lifestyle made it hard for the team to develop relationships with them. They would just get acquainted with a Manjúi family, only to have them wander back into the jungle and disappear for months on end!

The foreigners also found it extremely difficult to learn the Manjúi language. It was one of the most complex languages of South America, riddled with glottal sounds unfamiliar to the Western ear, and requiring multiple levels of conjugations for each noun and verb.

On top of that, surviving the heat and dryness of the Chaco was a challenge not for the faint of heart. And Santa Rosa was so deep in the heart of the jungle that a step in any direction was a step closer to civilization. But getting to civilization was not easy. The road out was a rough dirt path blazed through the scrub during the Chaco War* in the 1930s. It was a bumpy 12-hour tractor and wagon ride to Filadelfia, plus another 465 km (290 miles) to Asunción, the capital city.

The environmental and cultural challenges took a toll on many of the foreigners who tried to settle in Santa Rosa. The once curious Manjús grew skeptical by the time several families had come and gone. By 1979, when Norm Fry and his family were moved to Asunción to assume other responsibilities, no one had learned the language well enough to share the message of the Bible with the Manjús. The Manjús, oblivious to why these *tajeki leimijii'ne'*—white-skinned ones—were in their midst, continued living and dying in spiritual darkness.

THE HUMPHREYS

In 1978, after four years of Bible and cross-cultural training, Pete and Leah Humphreys packed their belongings and left Ontario, Canada. Taking their one-year-old daughter, Cheralyn, along with them, they bade friends and family goodbye and flew to Asunción, the capital city of Paraguay. At the time, Leah was also seven months pregnant with their second child. They believed that God was opening the door for them to go there as Bible teachers.

Pete and Leah had both grown up overseas. Pete, whose parents immigrated from England, attended high school in Australia. Leah Eaton, from California, spent most of her growing-up years in the Philippines. But it was at a Wisconsin Bible school that they met in 1974.

There they became friends and fell in love. Leah, an outgoing brunette, had planned on going to medical school. But as Pete shared his vision for their life together—to live among a tribal group who had never

*Between Paraguay and Bolivia

heard of Jesus Christ—Leah found herself resting reassuredly in the leadership of this young man who displayed so much passion for the Word of God. They were married in 1976.

Pete had always had an interest in Spanish-speaking countries, and with time the couple sensed their hearts being directed toward Paraguay.

A few days before they were to leave for Asunción, Pete and Leah found that they still lacked \$400 to pay for the plane tickets. “If God wants us to go, he will provide it,” they decided together.

The night before the payment was due, Leah spoke about their upcoming work at a ladies’ meeting at church, where the women presented Leah with a brand new pressure cooker. Leah remembered she had mentioned earlier that she might want to take a pressure cooker with her to her new country. But how was a pressure cooker going to help provide the funds they still lacked?

No matter. As Leah opened the lid of the shiny green pot, sitting inside was a check for \$400! *God had known all along.* This was one of many miracles God used to guide them and demonstrate his faithfulness.

Being just 21 years old, it was this trust in their almighty God that brought Pete and Leah to Paraguay. Shaun, their second child, was born two weeks after their arrival in Asunción. After two more years of Spanish learning and administrative work in the city, the Humphreys were asked to join the Santa Rosa team and go deep into the hot, dry and virtually uninhabitable Chaco to work with the Manjús.

The Chaco jungle? The Manjúi tribe? Was this an answer to prayer, a destination and a people that they could now set their hearts on? Young and ready for adventure, Pete and Leah looked forward to the day that they would move to Santa Rosa.



That day came in November 1980. From the small Cessna 206, Leah looked down at the Chaco jungle she would call home for the next 17 years. A dirty brown from the air, it was so flat and vast one couldn't tell where it began and where it ended. Leah didn't usually like flying, but held back her fears as the plane bounced and dipped in the air. Cheralyn and Shaun shrieked with delight as they enjoyed the rollercoaster-like ride.

Leah was eager to reunite with Pete, who had left earlier that week to move the family's belongings to Santa Rosa. Riding on a large truck, Pete and the driver had started out early in the morning and travelled through most of the night, trekking through 212 km (133 miles) of knee-deep ruts and freshly rained-on mud to get to what seemed like the ends of the earth. But this did nothing to dampen his spirits. "Come join me here—quick!" he had shouted excitedly over the radio to Leah.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Cessna landed on the rugged Santa Rosa airstrip. Leah surveyed her surroundings. An unrelenting northerly wind blew dry, gritty dust into her eyes and hair, and the sun glared down at her through a layer of haze. The heat was oppressive. The surrounding *quebracho* trees offered little shade—and they didn't offer much of a scenic picture either. The wiry and razor-sharp vegetation, covered in grey chalk, took on a lifeless hue. In fact, there was so little colour it seemed like they had stepped into a sepia-toned photograph.

She would relay this image in a letter home shortly after arriving:

"Almost every tree had thorns on it. There were so many cacti; and some of them crawled along the ground, looking like a snake. Thorny and snaky!"

Leah noticed the children of her new Manjúi neighbours. Playing and rolling about in the dirt naked, they were caked in grey dust from



head to toe. One child had developed a rash on her back. Horrified, Leah watched as the mother scratched her back to loosen the layers of filth on it. The sweat ran down in rivulets, washing away the dirt. It wasn't until then that Leah saw her actual skin colour beneath the grey.

"My children will never get that filthy!" she vowed to herself. Then Cheralyn let out a giggle. Leah looked down. There they were—her own two children—playing in the dirt and covered in the same grey dust as the Manjúi children!

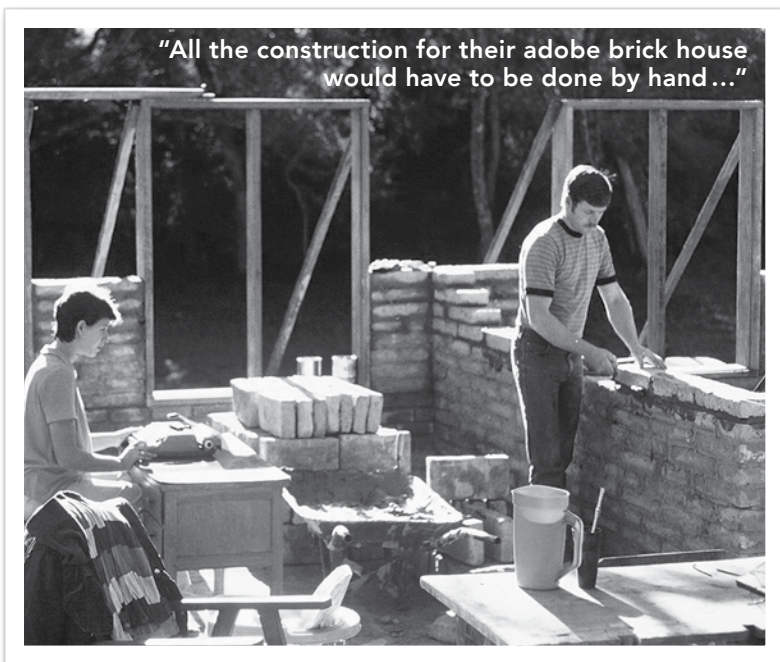
As Leah looked upon the harsh landscape and her neighbours' matted hair and dishevelled faces, she wondered, *What is it really like to live here? Are we going to survive?*

SETTLING IN

Although they had braced themselves for one of the harshest living environments in the world, Pete and Leah had no idea what challenges awaited them. With no electricity or running water, it would be almost two years before they could set up their home. All the construction for their adobe brick house would have to be done by hand—from moulding and baking each brick to cutting and hauling wood from the jungle for lumber. In the meantime, they took refuge in another team member's vacant home.

Leah soon learned that everyday household tasks, such as cooking, had become much more complicated and time intensive. Food staples like rice and flour had to be flown in by plane, and Pete shot deer or wild pigs for meat. Leah made all their meals from scratch. She rolled and cut her own noodles for lasagna, ground her own meat for hamburgers, and even made her own cottage cheese.

Primitive conditions aside, it was the excruciating heat that brought Pete and Leah to their wits' end. The waves of hot wind made them feel like they were being baked alive. Since arriving in November—



the beginning of the hot season—it only got hotter and hotter, until every day was a sizzling 46°C (115°F). With no fans or air conditioners, the heat was enough to drive one crazy.

At night, Leah soaked the family's sheets and pajamas in water so that it would evaporate off them as they lay in bed. It wasn't the most comfortable way to sleep, but it was a bit of relief from the heat and dryness of the day.

FALLEN GARDEN

In the years that followed, Peter and Leah gave this desolate place what they thought was a fitting name: the Garden of Eden after the Fall. There were times when everything told them it was time to leave—the brutal environment, the primitive conditions and

homesickness—especially as their family grew and God added to them two more children, Deryk and Charissa. Yet quitting was never an option for the Humphreys. To them, quitting meant rebelling against God and walking away from the ministry they knew the Lord had entrusted to them. They were committed to finishing the task.

So, despite the hardships and loneliness they experienced living in this fallen “garden,” Pete and Leah knew that this was the right place for them to be, and they found ways to live and work there for the next 17 years of their lives. It wasn’t until many years later that they were able to complete what they had been sent here to do, to give the Manjúi people good news—the message found in the Bible.