

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Helen Ruth Belcher Elliott (CN116, T002)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words that were recorded are omitted. In a very few cases, the transcribers could not understand what was said, in which case [unclear] was inserted. Also, grunts and verbal hesitations such as “ah” or “um” are usually omitted. Readers of this transcript should remember that this is a transcript of spoken English, which follows a different rhythm and even rule than written English.

. . . Three dots indicate an interruption or break in the train of thought within the sentence of the speaker.

. . . . Four dots indicate what the transcriber believes to be the end of an incomplete sentence.

( ) Word in parentheses are asides made by the speaker.

[ ] Words in brackets are comments made by the transcriber.

This transcript was created by Bob Shuster and Hannah Ting and was completed in October 2019.

**Please note:** This oral history interview expresses the personal memories and opinions of the interviewee and does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Billy Graham Center Archives or Wheaton College.

{E3 **THANKS for the opportunity to review these materials of our mother !**

**Great job transcribing this tape ! "Elliott" & "Crutchfield" corrected throughout.**

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**Collection 116, Tape 2. Oral history interview with Helen Ruth Belcher Elliott by Cherol Crutchfield on 05 May, 1980.**

**CRUTCHFIELD:** This is an interview with Helen Elliott by Cherol Crutchfield for the missionary sources collection of Wheaton College. This interview took place at Wheaton, Illinois, on May 5, 1980, at 3:45 PM. [Tape recorder turned off and on] On the last tape, we were talking about your being at the Summer Institute of Linguistics, sponsored by Wycliffe, in the summer of '51. Could you tell us just something about how you decided where you would go and how it came about to choose Wycliffe as a mission board?

**ELLIOTT:** I believe I was telling you something about Mr. Oughton, {E3 01:35 being a > } **the** Primitive Methodist missionary in Guatemala. He had the vision of reaching the Ixil people. {E3 01:42 who > } **They're** one of the Mayan linguistic groups. And he came to the Summer Institute of Linguistics at Norman in order to learn how to reach them and discovered that he wasn't able to do the work himself. But through Linda's friendship with him, then he transferred his vision to us. And both Ray and I felt that this was the people the Lord has been leading us to. Then the question was how to get there. We couldn't be a part of his mission because we weren't Primitive Methodists and Ray was not ordained. The Central American Mission talked to us very strongly about working with them, but the Central American Mission was not working in Methodist territory. We decided to apply to the Wycliffe Bible Translators specifically to go to the Ixil tribe in Guatemala. Our application was accepted and also our stipulation that we would go to...to these people. I think {E3 2:52 , we } we're probably among the very few who had joined Wycliffe {E30 3:03 [unclear] this } **in order to go to a** particular tribe. And so, our assignment was made. And we were, after the Summer Institute of Linguistics was over, we were to go that fall to a training camp in Arkansas. But because I had miscarried that summer and then quite a bit of hemorrhaging, I was quite anemic at that time. And by the time we got to the training camp in Arkansas, I was pregnant again. And it was thought best that we not try to go on to the field. Also, that was the time for Ray to write his master's thesis and to complete that degree. So, we went to our hometown in Independence, Kansas. There, Ray worked in an oil company, forty hours a week. And then a small church in the area lost their pastor by death and Ray was then asked to take the church's weekend pastorate. And he also completed his master's dissertation during that time. Along with that, we did some deputation for Wycliffe and Steve was born at the end of that year, so it was also a very full year. When the time came for us to go to the second summer of linguistics training at Norman, Steve had not yet been born and we had a very difficult time trying to decide what the Lord's will would be: whether Ray should go on down and leave me with the two little girls there in Kansas, or whether we should all go with him, even though my doctor and...and home and so forth were there in Kansas, or whether he should postpone going. I {E30 4:51 realize that his postpone in } **realized that his postponing** going for a second year of linguistics training would mean another year of postponing {E30 4:57 ^ } **of** our

going to the field. We prayed and thought about it a lot, and he did decide to go. As it {E30 5:07 turns > } **turned** out, his father was also dying of cancer that summer and he did die in July. And Ray came back after Steve was born and spent the {E30 5:19 ^ } **weekend and then another** weekend in the summer. So out of the eleven-week course, he was only on campus three weekends. Needless to say, he didn't make A's that summer. And that average academic status has stayed with him all... all of his life since then. I'm not sure that we made the right decision, but that's what we decided to do. At the end of that summer, we packed up and by the first of September we were on our way to Guatemala. His father's old car had been given to us. And so, we got a small luggage trailer and we started to put equipment in, and we started for Guatemala with this old Ford and a small luggage trailer. We got as far as Enid, Oklahoma, and a friend there who had been in Panama in service recognized that this old car {E30 6:23 was never made to pull through > } **would never make pulling in** the mountains. And so, even though he was a struggling young family man himself, he bought our Jeep {E3 6:34 Ford > } **for us**. And so, from then on, we had our Jeep for the next eight years, that we drove for the next eight years. We went through Mexico. We went on to Mexico City expecting to take Spanish in Mexico City University in the fall quarter, and not until we got there did we realize that Latin American universities begin at the first of the year, and so there was no introductory Spanish course starting in the fall. And so, a tutor was arranged for and we began a little bit of Spanish study. At the same time, both of us were {E3 7:16 working > } **given** jobs in the office along with taking care of our three children. Then in November, on the night before we were to leave Mexico City for Wycliffe's jungle training camp in southern Mexico, we received what should have been routine tetanus shots. Within half an hour, our oldest daughter Linda (who was seven by that time) had broken out in hives and vomited and so forth, and she had quite a severe reaction. I did the same thing she did, except I had even more distracting symptoms, and in half an hour I had passed out. By the time the Mexican doctor got there across Mexico City having run into a roadblock, he {E3 8:10 **had X** } examined me and straightened up and put his stethoscope away and said that I was dead. I had no heartbeat or no.... I was not breathing. This, of course, was something that shocked Ray, and he asked him in his very broken, incomplete Spanish if there wasn't *something* that he could do. He gave me some kind of a shot into the vein of my arms, I'm told, and waited for a reaction, and there was no response. And then he gave me another shot right into the muscle of the heart, and it did start to beat again. And I gradually came...came back. There were times in the days following when I rather wished that I had gone on to be with the Lord. I...I suffered more from that than I did from bearing all of my children. And some of the results are still with me. Obviously, we couldn't go on to jungle training camp. In fact, all I could do was to lay in bed and to struggle with the pain that I had. And all Ray could do was to take care of me with three children. And this caused us to examine all over again what the Lord was doing with us or what...what this all meant. Had we read His leading wrong? Should we give up and go back to the States until I was well? We just had many questions regarding that. But gradually I did get better after three months in bed. Then we decided that we either needed to start out in faith and go to jungle training camp with the proviso that nothing would be required of me, or else it would be another year before we could start our fieldwork. So again, we decided to go on. And the Lord honored our faith and after a few weeks I gradually began to take on more and more of the program. We had more children than anyone else had ever had in jungle camp. I was teaching Linda her schoolwork and also nursing Steve.

And by about the middle of the program, I was fully participating in everything. At the end of the three months, we were looking for our visas for Guatemala, expecting to go directly from jungle camp. And then I got malaria and was not able to travel.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Can...can we back up some and...and talk about some of the things you learned or the things you studied in jungle camp as preparation?

**ELLIOTT:** Okay. [Pauses] I would say that {E3 11:14 out X } of all of the training we had --our undergraduate work; our graduate work in anthropology, in linguistics, in translation principles and so forth-- {E30 11:25 But > } **that** probably, the three months of jungle training camp was the most valuable part of our total training. There were skills which were learned. For example, all of us had to swim the Jataté River, which was a swiftly-moving, very wide river, about fifty meters wide. We had to learn how to handle a dugout canoe. We had to know how to put together and start a generator. We had a carpentry project...just any number of projects. We also had a clinic course. We cooked on wood. We washed {E30 12:08 out > } **our** clothes in the river. In other words, we lived in quite a primitive way. And yet, we were able to do it with other rookies and we were able to do it with supervision. And I think that the most important part was the attitude building, to teach us that we really did not need very much to live with, that we really could live off of the land; we could be quite self-sufficient. In other words, it built independence, which we probably had because of how poor we had been all through school and so forth. We probably had less dependence on things than most American young people do. But even so, it was a very liberating experience to realize how very little we had to have to live. And also, another part of the attitude building was to teach us how much we could do for ourselves; that we really could go out into the jungle and make a home and live. So when, our visas came through for Guatemala, we left in just a few days. We drove in to Guatemala. We had a rather difficult experience crossing the border for the first time, in which we lost our upright typewriter. This was quite a...quite a distinct loss to us. We lost it at customs, where it was stolen, of course. We went on down the road, where we had an accident and were stranded. And the Lord took along some American people who were speaking at a coffee plantation to help us along, and we have been able to keep in touch with them all of these years. They did not stay in Guatemala, but we've kept in touch with them. And then we went on to Guatemala City, where Earl and Debbie Adams were directing the work at that time. They were living in a very small, dirt-floor house, and we were given one room. We put our sleeping bags on the floor and the baby crib. And we were there for just a few weeks. Ray and Earl went out doing some survey trips. And then we got our equipment together and everybody saw us off before we began our tribal work.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Okay. Can you tell something about the work of Wycliffe in general in...in Guatemala, such as the strategy that they used and what...what people groups they concentrated on, the kind of...the number of stations they had and so forth, there?

**ELLIOTT:** Missionary work was first begun in Guatemala by the Presbyterians. There's a particular Presbyterian missionary who was on the plane with the President of Guatemala and they made friends and the president invited him in. But the whole country was Catholic, and it was really illegal to do anything or be anything except Catholic. {E30 15:34 Missions worked started rather > } **Mission work started** very, very slowly. But gradually over the years, there came to be five mission boards working in Guatemala. And as it happened, they were working in different areas of the City of Guatemala. And then they came together, and they formed the Inter-Mission Fellowship, and between them they divided up the country like pieces of pie...pieces of a pie...

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** . . . where Guatemala City...anyone could work in Guatemala City, but each of the five missions then had their piece of the country or their piece of pie of the country. In doing that, as far as the five missions were concerned, they had no overlap of territory. They also gave each of these missions {E3 16:18 ' X } responsibility for evangelizing the people in their area. [Clears throat]

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** As years went on, some other mission boards came into the country. Some worked in cooperation with the original five, and others did not. But finally, I believe it was in 1950, that at one of the annual Inter-Mission conferences, they faced up to the Indian question and realized that though Guatemala by that time had quite a few missionaries, almost all of them were in institutional work in Spanish, and that there were something like thirty tribes in the country which had had no witness at all. It was decided by {E3 17:04 the > } **this** Inter-Mission group to invite Wycliffe to come in and work in cooperation with each of the missions in their particular area.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** And so, they contacted Wycliffe in their California headquarters. And through that, Wycliffe came to work in Guatemala. Specifically, to work in the Presbyterian area. They would establish Presbyterian churches among the tribal people, and also work in cooperation with the Presbyterian missionaries. And in the Central American Mission area, it would be the same. And so, Guatemala was the only...which had a unique...Wycliffe in Guatemala had a unique position as being invited into the country specifically by the missions already operating there to do a job which they did not have the personnel to do. And so, each of the missions listed the tribes which they had in their area...which they were aware of in their area. And Wycliffe did its own survey work discovering other tribes that some of these missions didn't even know about and determined where their priority needs were. By now, Wycliffe has {E3 18:20 two hundred and twenty seven [?]} of these > } **teams in twenty-seven of those** languages, working still in cooperation with the other missions in the area.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** Wycliffe does not establish churches of its own. There are no Wycliffe churches.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** [Clears throat] However, most of the converts in these Indian tribes...many of the converts in the Indian tribes are the fruit of the translation ministry.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Okay. What were some of your first impressions when you got to the target {E3 18:55 [?] X } area and the culture shock that you experienced and that sort of thing?

**ELLIOTT:** We really had.... Wycliffe was very new in Guatemala, having been there less than a year at the time we went. And there were only four teams in the country. Wycliffe has many, many more workers than that now, both city support workers, print shop workers, radio people and so forth. But at that time, they were very few, and {E3 19:29 /so X } **so** all of us were pioneers. None of us really had a support group of people who could come in and help us or to direct our work. We had read all that we knew about these people, which led us to believe that they were the most backwards {E3 19:44 [unclear] > } **people** in Central America. And we knew from the history books that they were the last area to be conquered by the Spanish. And because they repelled the Spanish army and they had to come back and get reinforcements

and go in again, the tribe was punished especially severely. We just knew a few things like that. Then when we moved...we drove all day on dirt roads and got through Quiché, the {E30 20:17 base > } **state** capital, and reported in to the mayor...to the governor of the...of the state of Quiché.... And for that night we slept in the Jeep by the side of the road, and the next morning we went to see the governor, who tried to discourage us from going into that area. Our lack of Spanish prevented us from really understanding what the problem was, but we did understand there was danger. And at one point, he said, "Okay, you can go in if you take these soldiers with you." But we didn't think that arriving with soldiers was the image that we wanted to give to the people. And so, we declined them. And finally, the governor just threw up his hands and said it was our own responsibility. So, we knew that something was going on. But we spent then the rest of the morning finding {E30 21:12 Cuchumatanes > } **the Cuchumatán** Range, which is the watershed of Central America (the waters on one side {E3 21:17 goes > } **go** to the Pacific, the other side goes to the Atlantic). And we left the floor of the valley, which was still about two thousand feet, tropical pineapple, papaya, coconut; all this tropical {E3 21:32 fruit > } **fruits** and vegetation which you think of. And we climbed up and up and up over a very newly cut road, a sharp drop-off on one side and mountain climbing on the other side, and just up and around on a one-way road. And every time we saw water, we stopped to put water in the radiator because the Jeep was overheating and so forth. And we felt we would never get to the top. But we finally did, of course. And it's about {E3 22:03 ninety > } **nine** thousand feet high. We had climbed from about two thousand feet to {E3 22:08 about ninety > } **nine** thousand feet. And we got out {E3 22:11 onto the path > } **up at the pass** and we looked back over the {E3 22:14 road > } way we had come, and it was very, very beautiful. We could see range after range of mountains. And from that height, you can count about eleven volcanoes, some of which are still active and others I think have been active during the time when we have been in Guatemala. And we could see little {E3 22:34 piece > } **pieces** of the road that we had come over. And we could see the little pieces of another road that we didn't know where it went. And we stood up there and we reviewed part of our lives; some of the turning points that had led us to be {E3 22:53 ending > } **standing** up there on that mountain {E3 22:56 path > } **pass** in Guatemala with our three small children. And then we turned around on the mountain {E3 23:02 path > } **pass** and looked the other direction. I remember my heart came up into my mouth and I go, "What are we doing here?" And it was very different. Whereas the one side had been dry and deserts and hot and tropical, we looked over the other side, and it was lush and green. And there again, we can see mountain range after mountain range. And we knew that in that area, {E30 23:28 nobody > } **no one** knew exactly how many or just where the boundaries of the tribes were, yet there were approximately fifty thousand people who spoke this one language which, we understood, no white person had ever learned. These people were not calling for us to come in, but we felt that the Lord had put us there. And that quiet conviction that we were in the will of the Lord is what keeps us there during the next very difficult {E3 24:00 year > } **years**.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** And so, {E3 24:02 once > } **as** we stood up there, Ray took out his Bible and we read the first chapter of Job...of Joshua, where Joshua likewise stood on the mountain and looked over the Promised Land and {E3 24:16 ^ } **he** claimed it for God. And God promised him success, as long as he {E30 24:23 could > } **would** meditate on His word and be open to {E3 24:24 him > } **Him**. And then we got back in the Jeep and drove down the mountain through the valley, which was still six thousand, seven hundred feet. {E3 **footnote** } [Coughs] We were able to locate a Spanish-speaking Christian man, Pentecostal, who had just built a new home on a corner. And back on the side street, he had two small rooms, ten by ten feet. And we were able to rent those two small rooms. And so, it was mid-afternoon by then. We made a fire in the middle of the floor and I made something to eat. We set up our army cots and baby's crib. And it gets very, very dark very early there. About 3:30 in the afternoon we could no longer see to read. And of course, we had no {E3 25:22 light > } **lights** in the house; no windows. No water, no floor. And so, having been...not gotten much sleep the night before, having had a rather hard trip, we went to bed quite early. In the middle of the night, we heard all of these people outside of our door. And we didn't know either Spanish or the Indian language at that time, but we could tell {E30 25:47 this from what > } **which one** we were hearing. This Indian language has a lot of sounds that are made in the throat; a lot of clicking sounds, and you can tell the difference. And babies cried and you could tell {E30 26:00 ^ } **that** people were drinking, {E3 26:01 ^ } **and** getting drunk, {E3 26:02 ^ } **and** setting off firecrackers, and they go away for a time and then they {E30 26:06 ^ } **would** come back. And the only thing {E30 26:09 to hold > } **that held** our door {E30 26:11 set > } **shut** was a leather thong. And we {E3 26:13 were > } **kept** wondering if they were going to come in. And sure enough, they did, but it was so dark inside they wandered around and went back out again. And the next morning, we found out from our landlord that we had stumbled into town on the eve of the annual *fiesta*. And there's just these two truckloads of Indians that had been driving from a nearby coffee plantation. And they didn't have any idea we were in there. So, all night long, we held hands and...and just pleaded ourselves to the Lord. And we certainly knew they were out there. And the only way we could learn that language was to hear it. We could learn...we needed to learn Spanish also, so we were learning two languages at the same time. But Spanish was much easier to learn partly because Spanish is related to English; partly because the Spanish-speaking people would talk to us. They were friendly with us. And partly because Spanish is written, so that we could read; we could study it. But none of these things was true of the Indian language. And the people were very frightened of us. They had never seen people with light {E30 27:26 ^ } **blue** [unclear] and all of our children were towheads [blondes]. [Clears throat] So every time they saw us, they would...you could see the look of terror in their eyes and they'd dash behind the nearest cornstalk {E30 27:38 [?] X } fence. I'd go up to the market to try...try to buy some...*something* to eat for my family of five, and the women would duck their heads into their blouses and cover their {E30 27:50 shawls > } **wares** with their shawls so that I didn't give them the evil eye [cast a spell on them] and contaminate their merchandise. And it was really very lonely. And for a person who {E30 28:07 had > } **has** paranoid tendencies like I do anyway, I certainly felt the rejection. We knew something was going on, but because of



our lack of command of either of the languages, it was some time before we really understood what had happened. [Clears throat] A few months before we came to town, I think it was seven months before, two Spanish soldiers that'd been waylaid on the trail, {E3 28:32 ^ } **and** had been murdered. It could have been for any one of several reasons why this had happened, but in retaliation, the government had sent in troops and the whole town was militarily occupied. They had also stood up a number of men, the heads of families, in the marketplace and had shot them by firing squad as a warning to the people. And so, all of the Indian people were just seething with rage and fright. And all the Spanish-speaking people were walking around with their pistols in their belts and they all told us always to go armed and to sleep with our guns under our pillows {E30 29:19 ^ } **and** couldn't believe that we didn't have guns. We began to realize what actually why the governor didn't want us to go into the situation. So, there was no way that we could explain to the people what we were there for. And they had good reasons to be afraid. And any people who had ever come over that mountain pass, they had come into the area had wanted something [?] – to get land or to take their women or to use their {E3 29:49 livestock[?] > } **resources[?]**. And so, they are...they were, and they still are suspicious of anyone from the outside who comes in. Now, in order to begin to get acquainted with the area and for the people to begin to get acquainted with us, we started taking daily walks when it wasn't {E3 30:06 rainy > } **raining**. And we would just take a trail and follow it out for...until we got too tired. I would carry Steve, who was fourteen months, on my back. And Ray would carry Marsha, who was two and a half, on his shoulders. And Linda, who was seven, would walk. We'd go for some distance and then we'd come back. We'd see people peeking at us behind...around doors or behind the fences, but as people saw us approach, they would just disappear. And we'd go for {E3 30:39 [unclear] > } **until we got tired** and come back home. And other days we'd take another trail. And then one day, we went down by the river. And we came around the curve and there was a bony, old cow, and like cows do, it went "Moo." And Linda was so excited. She jumped up and down and she said, "Mommy, the cow talks English!" [Laughs] With three small children and Ray and myself, I had laundry to do, of course. Since we didn't have water where we lived, I took my clothes...I would gather up my clothes and buy a {E30 31:15 bottle > } **ball** of soap and go down to the river, to the water hole to wash like the other women did. But at first when they began to see me coming, the word would spread. And by the time I got down to the river, everybody would be gone. But gradually, as we lived very openly in front of the people... (We had to have our door open because it was our only source of light.) But as we lived very openly in front of the people, they began to lose some of their fear of us. And a number of things happened which I could tell about. And Ray would go out quite a bit just...just to begin to hear the language. And everything he heard he tried to write down. And then he would try to figure out where one word ended, and another began. In the beginning, he worked on the sound system, beginning to figure out the grammar. But first of all, we had to have some greetings and just some basic terms in order {E30 32:20 **just X** } to live with the people. Like, "How much does it cost?" and the numbers and how to say "Hello," how to say "Goodbye," and how to say, "I want to buy it," and "Thank you" and things like that. And you can't imagine how difficult it was to make some kind of

breakthrough when {E3 32:39 ^ } **the** people are afraid of it and you have no intermediary around you. I remember one day, two people passed in front of our little rooms. Incidentally, we had two rooms, one ten-by-ten room, the one on the inside, we made a bedroom, so we had a wall-to-wall bed for the five of us. The other room, we...Ray had made a table, there was an open fire on the floor, and later we were able to get a wood burning stove and he made me a set of shelves. And that took up the room space. And that table was what I cooked on and then what we ate on and then what we used for {E3 33:19 [unclear] > } **for the office**. And it was obvious that we needed more space; the only space the children had to play on was on the bed unless they were outside. And it rained a great deal our first year. The Indians say that in rainy season...they say that it rained so much that in dry season it only rained *once* a day and in rainy season it rained *all* day. Or they also say that it rained thirteen months {E3 33:51 a > } **of the** year, which is just another way of saying that it rained a great deal. And they have a lot of {E30 33:55 ^ } **trouble** with...with mildew. But one day, two people {E30 34:01 camped > } **passed** in front of our house and we very distinctly heard one of them say, {E30 34:07 Trop [?]. > } **"Xhpap" [Shpap]**. In order to just say {E30 34:10 that, [unclear] > } **the xh sound [makes the sound]** you have to {E30 34:12 put > } **turn** the tip of your tongue back. {E30 34:16 It is not "Stop. [?]"t > } **So it's not pap, it's xhpap**. And the other one {E30 34:17 [unclear] Now, > } **answered "Tii."** **And we thought**, we don't know who said what or what their relationships were, but we knew that it had to be a greeting and an answer. And so, seven-year-old Linda and Ray and myself began, every time we {E30 34:37 felt > } **found** we were in hollering distance of {E30 34:39 one another > } **anyone**, we would holler {E3 34:39 "Trop[?]"! And the [unclear] > } **"Xhpap!"** **And at first they googled** and then after a while people began to laugh at us. Now, this was not a lot of fun to be laughed at, especially when you were trying so hard. Because when you're going to learn a new language, you're going to be laughed at quite a lot. And we began...as we began to get the greeting system, then we could understand why they laughed. Ray has it all charted out very nicely. And what greeting we use depends on the social relationship with the other person: whether you're higher or lower on the social scale; whether you're a man or a woman, or a boy or a girl, what {E30 35:23 kind > } **time** of day it is, (now, let's see), and who you're speaking to: whether they are a man or a woman, above or below you. Children are required to speak first, and the person of higher rank is...is not allowed to speak first; it is incorrect {E3 35:46 ^ } **for them** to speak first. And it happened that the greeting that we had happened on was what a boy would say to an elderly man. Which of course, didn't apply to any of us, but you have to start somewhere. And there were twenty-three separate greetings. There were other things that happened, but we stayed there for the first year and gradually began to learn the language. Ray also took a number of trips out into the area to begin to get an idea of the population concentration, the boundaries of our language. And we came to discover that there were three distinct dialects of Ixil. So distinct, that unless the people had rather frequent contact, they could not understand each other even though it was all part of the same language. Much more distinct. Just think of Georgia and New York.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Was any of this written at all?

**ELLIOTT:** Not before that time. The road, as I said, was new; had been cut through about four years before we came. It was considered only a dry season road. Once the rains came, it was just not considered passable. And the road stopped at our village. So, the other two dialects plus the whole rest of our dialect were {E3 37:17 ^ } **all** accessible only by trail. There were times when we made all of the preparations to leave and then could not climb the mountain over that road, or other times {E30 37:31 we'd try > } **we tried** to come back into the tribe and were not able to get over the road. In the {E30 37:35 intermittent > } **intervening** years, the...the road has been widened and includes a...a good deal of rock and gravel put on the road, so it's pretty {E30 37:44 much an > } **well** all-season road now until our village. And now there's a dry season road from our village to the other key areas. After we had been there nearly a year, we were expecting the birth of another baby. And then came the...the revolution on July 4<sup>th</sup> {E3 38:08 **footnote**} when Guatemalan troops came in from Honduras, with U.S. arms, incidentally, U.S. backing, and overthrew the communist government.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** {38:22} What year was this?

**ELLIOTT:** This was 1954, July of 1954. Debbie was due by the end of July. All radios were confiscated by the government {E3 ¿ added by? correct? [of Castillo Armas] } because they didn't want people to {E3 38:42 ^ } **to be able to** get anything except what they wanted to tell them. But the mayor of our town came to us and said, "They're confiscating all radios, so could you please take your radio up in {E3 38:56 your > } **the** attic and you listen to U.S. broadcasts and come and tell us what's *really* going on." They did, however, confiscate our atlas. And we had no permission to be in the road, with the threat of being shot at if we were. So, as the time {E30 39:17 of Debra's > } **for Debbie's** birth approached, Ray was thinking about being best man, but [unclear] {E30 39:24 ^ } **government [unclear]**. And we received permission to be on the road and the mayor himself gave us enough gasoline to get out of the tribe. And so, we went to Guatemala City and made it for her to be born and she was born {[unclear]} in a hospital.

[Pauses] By that time, we had moved to a small adobe house that was being made. It still had no floors or water and or lights and so forth, but it was roomier, and we definitely needed more room with {E3 40:08 ^ } **[unclear]** another baby. Gradually, over the years, we have improved this house {E30 40:15 renovated it > } **[unclear]** and turned it into the house that we call home. Over the years, {E30 40:19 putting > } **put** in water, electricity, windows, cooling and some other things, so have been quite comfortable, especially in the area there. We lived far more comfortably than the people we lived among. {E30 40:36 There was that house > } **Though if that house were** here in Wheaton, {E30 40:38 that was pretty cool > } **it would be pretty poor** in Wheaton. We have cement floor, {E3 40:40 and so forth > } **for example**. We got a letter from

our main supporting church in Enid, Oklahoma (the church we had gone to and {E30 40:40 > } **served when we** {saved... } came to know the Lord), and this letter said that they had read in a national Evangelical paper that the point of missionaries was to win people to the Lord. And so, local churches should write to their missionaries they support and find out how many converts they have had in a previous year and divide up their missionary dollars *that way*. And so, they were writing to us to find out how many converts we'd had, or how many we anticipated having in {a} **one** year. And no one was more aware than we that we had no converts. There were no Christians in the tribe, as far as we knew. It was a tiny little village [?]. In fact, we didn't even know how to tell them that God loved them. Because what words {E30 41:40 they were prone > } **were we going** to use for "God" {E30 41:42 meant > } **when they had** a multiplicity of spirits, every one of which was evil. How were we going to tell them love when we already had four words for "love" and *none* of them {E30 41:53 is > } **was** the kind of love that God has for us. One {E3 41:57 was homosexual > } **of them was sexual** love, {E30 41:58 was another > } **then there's mother** love, then there's love like charity, the kind of love you have for beggars [unclear]. As it turns out, Ixil had seven {E30 42:11 distinctions > } **distinct words** for love, and the language is very rich in this respect, but we still had no way to {E3 42:18 tell > } **teach** the people that God {E3 42:19 loved > } **loves** them. And the whole idea that God could love them was completely outside of their culture because all of their gods were evil. And {E30 42:29 there > } **they were very beautiful people, but they** [unclear] **were** performing all kinds of rituals **in order to keep the spirits appeased** and there was this great fear {for} **of** having offended one of the spirits. The Lord gave us a real {E3 42:48 , X } prayer burden. And as the fall went on, we were still praying more and more that the Lord would somehow bring something which would make a change in our relationship. By then, we were establishing friendly relationships with our neighbors, [unclear] {E30 43:07 streets and > } **we had a two-year-old**{s \$\$ } **and they** played with our children and were in and out of our house and **that helped a lot** [unclear] {talked a lot with the Ixil} **to assure the** people, that we were not...would not harm them. But slowly [?] [unclear]. And there are longer [unclear] understanding [unclear]. **Though our language knowledge was expanding, it still was not sufficient** [unclear] And when you think of the vocabulary, we needed to tell someone about the gospel { . They're } , **they're** not the kind of words {but }you can **point to and ask "how do you say eternal life"?** { quite hear [unclear].} Or "punishment." Or "redemption." Or "love," or "faith," or any of these words. And [unclear], **each one of these words**. {but } **But** at that point...at that point we didn't have any of them. And so, the Lord just put a real burden on our hearts, and we {asked [unclear] } **spent a lot of time in** prayer, that the Lord would just really help {to [unclear] both} **us know what people were saying** {of our faith} so that we could discover these words, the words of the heart, the way people feel. And so, we could {do our work with} **gain their** confidence. [Unclear] across from our house there was a local firework shop. And there are a lot of fireworks that are used in the native religion. There's no beauty or color about them; the whole point there is noise. And the idea was just to call these customary spirits [unclear]... [Blank space in tape] so it won't be wasted. And so, with Easter coming up, they were stockpiling fire rockets and other fireworks on bamboo shelves inside this little room.

**CRUTCHFIELD: {45:01}** Why would they be stocking up for Easter?

**ELLIOTT:** Because when the Spanish army under Cortes came to Guatemala [starting in 1523], {E3 45:10 **footnote**} priests came right along with the army. And people were...were made Christian, that is, they were baptized as Christians before they knew any Spanish or had any idea what it is to be the religion of the conquerors.

**CRUTCHFIELD: {45:30}** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** And by slave labor, large Catholic churches were built in most every town in Guatemala, including ours. From that point on, **the** people had been required to go to church and had been considered Catholic. But they really have only a little thin veneer of Catholicism because they haven't understood what it was about. The priests, along with the soldiers and the other leaders, never learned the Indian language, so they never really communicated with the people. So, the vast majority of them are still worshipping the same spirits. They're animists. They worship the spirits of nature, the spirit of the corn god. The sun, the moon, and the stars all have their spirits. The earth {needs } **has** its spirit. Every river, every waterfall, certain sacred trees and rocks; every mountain has its own holy {?} spirit. There's just a multiplicity of spirits they have to be afraid of. Now, some of these, they have also given a Spanish nickname to, but they really don't understand. Jesus Christ, to them, is their {old} **Ixil** folk hero who has none of the qualities of the Son of God, except he could perform magic, he was supernatural. He had consorted with animals, with the moon {?}. He was a wily, deceptive person whom no one could get the best of. And so, when the people came...the Spanish came along, apparently their folk hero was Jesus Christ, { who >} **so** they started calling **the Ixil folk hero** { [Indian name] } also { . One} , **one** of his names became Jesus Christ which of course has caused a lot of confusion among the Indian people...

**CRUTCHFIELD: {47:27}** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** ...because when they say Jesus Christ, they are not thinking of the {the Christ of the Bible?} gospel [?] at all. So, even though there was {as} a Catholic church there, at the time we went in...there are some who are better educated now and have more understanding what Catholicism is, but at the time when we went in, I don't think there was anyone who knew what Catholicism was about. But even so, they celebrated the...the Christian fiestas...

**CRUTCHFIELD: {48:00}** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** ...in their own way. And so, each year they had...they had to carry [unclear] abstinence and others with a lot of ceremonies, a lot of parading of their idols in the church, through the streets. But to them, these idols did not represent the saints of history, but they represented certain of their main, most powerful gods. And so, they would stockpile fireworks in anticipation of...of Lent coming up. And something happened that started a...a spark going, and it just went around the room, setting off these firecrackers, creating of course disaster in the room. The roof...the back roof exploded. And trapped inside, unable to open the door, {was > } were two young teenage boys who were badly burned all down the front of them. And of course, the noise of the exploding fireworks and the roof went off into the mountains clearing [?] the town and people came in by the hundreds. We didn't know what to do. Our...our staying there was still very tentative, and we could have been run out of town any time. But we just stayed there, and we prayed. And...and then after quite some time, we were called over and I went over to see. And these two boys were being held up by their arms to stand on straw...straw mats [?] so so that they wouldn't {won't} pass out. I don't know why they didn't go into shock. They had had three treatments by the time I saw them. The first was that limewater had been spread...poured over them and lime [?], of course, is toxic as burning in itself. The second one was used motor oil had been put on them. And the third was that ashes had been put on top of the motor oil. So, they had all of the blood and searings [?] {on} of their burns...on their open, burned areas with all of these things on top of them. And so, I went back home to see what I could get. I gathered a few medical supplies. I went up to the open market and bought more things and gave them injections of morphine, put them to [unclear]. And I gave them penicillin, and this was the early days of penicillin and gave them a 5cc shot there [unclear]. And I gave them both the morphine and the penicillin and then I convinced them to lay them down and they cut off the burned flesh and tried to remove the burned smell. I introduce them to a...I had torn up a sheets and put it in my pressure cooker with Vaseline to make sterile dressings over all the [unclear]then I tried to get some liquid into them. When I finally went back home, I had to start over and make up my {farming > } fire, nurse my baby, feed the children, get them to bed and so forth and then I felt like falling into bed and yet I {knew} felt that I should go back and check on the boys. And I opened my front door and the street was packed...packed with people. But mostly...our neighbors now who beginning to {get over} lose their fear of us. They didn't understand us. We just couldn't explain ourselves to them. And yet they were beginning to feel more comfortable with us. But these were people who had come in from the hills. Many of them had never seen us before. And because of this fear, they needed to watch us. And I got over and I found that these two boys on their straw mats had been pulled back into the room where the explosion took place [unclear] for religious reasons. And one of the leading witchdoctors had been called in. And he had ordered [unclear] and brought in incense and beads and [unclear] listening to everything he said. And he was praying for all of the saints and all of the gods that they would tell him which gods had been offended so that they could [unclear], how large {and} an animal and how many animals had to be killed and the blood [Unclear] on the boys. {[Unclear] and} He had in his hand a red hot chili pepper. And every once in a while he looked down and rubbed in their flesh with that pepper. And then he would spit {[?]} on them. And {Ray} I watched that for a while and [unclear] and had such pity for these

boys [unclear] And this man was praying to his gods and I believe they heard him. And everybody in the room was absolutely consumed by what he was doing. [Unclear] And I alone was Christian, and I was praying to my God. [Unclear]. And I went to the father of one of the boys, who was the owner of the firework shop and reminded him that he had called me to take care of the boys [unclear], and he agreed. And I said, "I left {him} them quite comfortable and [unclear]." And I said, "Look, you've got to [unclear]." And I said, "Look, you've got to choose {because} between either his kind of medicine {and } or mine [unclear]." And if that witchdoctor realized he was doing harm, he would be [unclear]." Because nobody {challenging} challenges a witch doctor, and certainly not a woman, and certainly not a foreigner. If you were to challenge a witch doctor what you'd do is go to *another* witch doctor and get him to perform black magic on the other guy. Well, finally they decided, and they told me the answer. They said they were going to die anyway, "So it isn't your fault." So, I said, "Okay, I'll take care of them on one condition and that is that nobody else touches them." And so, I started all over again, gave them {some} the narcotics. I started [unclear] and so forth, trying to give them something to drink with all these people pressing and watching. And then I went home exhausted, woke up in the middle of the night to nurse my baby, went over to see about the boys, and that went on day after day. I went over one day, [clears throat] my next patient was there, a man who had fallen out in his {corncrib [?]} cornfield and broke his leg; had a multiple fracture with the bone sticking through his leg, it was a gangrenous leg. And I had no training for anything like that. But, you see, the word had gotten out that I was taking care of these boys and they hadn't died. And so, for the first time, I had a use {to} for the people.

**CRUTCHFIELD: {56:07}** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** And so, what I did was {Ray} I prayed and I cleaned {down} off the area {with bacteria} as best as I could with alcohol, [unclear] saw he was suffering a great deal. I took hold of ankle and yanked. And the bone snapped into place. I medicated and bandaged him and [unclear] carried him back home. And some time later, he walked into town [unclear]. I {remember} went over another time when there was a baby dying of dehydration. And [unclear] gradually [unclear]. And [unclear]. [Clears throat] And the...the boys were recovering and so...and I gradually reduced the sedation, kept up the penicillin, kept the dressings, cleaning them, feeding them and so forth. And then I went over on the twentieth day and they were [unclear]. [Unclear]. And all of a sudden, there was [unclear]. And [unclear]. [Unclear]. And the boys {had recovered} did recover. And that began our medical work. And then the people became bold enough to actually come into our house. And it did not seem like I was averaging thirty-three stitches a day.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{58:18}** By this time, did you know the...the language enough to...to be able to...to be able to converse, or....?

**ELLIOTT:** No. My knowledge of the language was very {limited} **inadequate**. But through gestures and through the words that we knew.... Ray knew more of the language than I did, and I had to call him often and help {them} **then** to figure out what people were saying. But by having contact with the people and having a situation where they really wanted me to understand, so they were doing all they could to help me understand, so my knowledge of the language grew a lot. So did his. And gradually, we began {discovering} **to discover** other words which allowed us to tell them why we were there and to tell them about the gospel.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{59:04}** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** And gradually, they began to...to hear us because we were now **of** service to them. And we began to know *them* better also. The more we knew them and the longer we lived among them, the more we came to respect them. They're living in a beautiful part of the world but incredibly difficult [unclear]. And these people, they...they are poverty-stricken, filled [?] with nutritional deficiencies all the time; very, very little in the way of schooling. Their diet is deficient. No medical personnel in that whole area of sixty thousand people, no doctors, no nurses [unclear].

**CRUTCHFIELD:{59:52}** So...so then, what economy did they work on? Was it [unclear] bartering, or....?

**ELLIOTT:** Most Ixil people handle very little money. People like Grandpa, who lives across the street from us, are people who could grow enough corn to feed their family all year round. That...that was enough to be considered rich in the tribe. He also will have a couple of pigs that he is feeding at a time. And when a pig gets big enough, he will sell it and has [?] a little pig. Most Ixil people handle very little money. They bring their produce to the market. They'll either exchange in order to buy the things that they need to buy, like a hoe or salt. But really, they get by with very little, very, very little. Their diet is very monotonous. Almost completely corn, with some beans. They drink coffee. [Unclear] I...I just have a great respect for the people. The women make all of the clothing. They weave the cloth. And they {were} **wear** beautiful clothing, very creative. [Unclear], they have [unclear]. And they have [unclear]. Even though [unclear]. [Unclear] people [unclear]. They [?] {just have to affirm to them} their work. And gradually then, first one and then another [unclear] every [unclear]. But for them, the biggest stumbling block was coming to believe that God loved them because they'd never heard of God loving them and caring about them, giving Himself for them. That He [unclear].

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:02:33}** What was the most {respected} **effective** way of...of sharing the gospel with them?



**ELLIOTT:** Ray had done most of the evangelization, and it has been done largely at the translation table.

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:02:47} Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** As people began to trust us...as we began to save their babies' lives and just help them {in their} **when they were** suffering, then they began to trust us, and we could begin to talk with them. We never did have big evangelistic rallies or anything like that. But just very quietly, as {we} **Ray** worked with people on translation on the language in his office, and as they would visit us in our home, and they brought their sick people [unclear] and they were able to [unclear] why we were there and what was really important. And then, of course, as they became Christian, they...they are the ones **who** really would then evangelize. And in [unclear] town, which was the major town of the whole area, people would come for market, usually. And then they would go back home and tell...tell their own people what they had heard. And so, mostly, evangelization has been done by the {Ixilian} **early** Christians.

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:03:57} What...what sort of church structure did you **then** develop when...when people began...began to **become**....?

**ELLIOTT:** After some time, the Primitive Methodist missionaries, who could not speak the language, came in. And at that time, anything official like weddings or birth...or recognition of birth, baptisms, so forth, anything official had to be done by an ordained minister or priest. Which meant that even though Ray could talk the language.... Now, they required Ray to be there; otherwise, the people didn't know what was going on because they didn't talk Spanish. And yet, Ray could...could translate the words for them and could evangelize and teach them, but he couldn't baptize them there. And so, this has gradually changed over the years. And so now, the church leaders themselves can perform these very important {function } **functions** for the people whom they brought to the Lord. After a while, the...the converts which were there largely or almost entirely [unclear], they worked among [unclear] churches [unclear] department [?] [unclear].

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:05:28} [Pauses] Could you...maybe at this point give a chronology of the years there and did you stay with that particular tribe all the different years? I know that you had to come back on furlough and so forth and gone back. Or did you do some other types of work?

**ELLIOTT:** We have never worked with any other tribe except for the Ixil tribe. But we have...about a third of our... of the past twenty-seven years have been spent {with } **in** various {ministrations} **administrative positions**. Ray has been Director of Wycliffe **in** Central America during different periods. He's been Technical Studies Director, we've {spent } **done** quite a bit of {the fall [?]} **consulting and** teaching...teaching both in Guatemala and also coming back to teach in **the** Summer Institute of Linguistics, at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Washington and at the University of North Dakota. We've also taught linguistics in one of the

Spanish universities in Guatemala. So, our time has been broken up. And in the past twenty-seven years we're now on our fourth furlough in the United States. We were with the Ixil people eight years before we came back for our first furlough. And second term was four years; third, six. And then, the next term was five years.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:06:58}** Which of those years were spent in administrative work?

**ELLIOTT:** They were scattered **out**, really. It...it would take more time to have to sit down and figure out....

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:07:08}** No particular....?

**ELLIOTT:** No. But our...our desire...we consider our life work to be the translation of...of the Bible, of the New Testament and part of the Old Testament into this language. And the training of leaders and the teaching of {[unclear]} **reading** and quite a bit of my time as well as medical work has been preparing linguistic materials and teaching people to read or teaching teachers to [unclear].

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:07:40}** Well, we can now move into some of the...the cultural aspects of Guatemala itself. First, some questions about the social area. Can you tell us something about the...the racial or the ethnic problems and the extent of integration within the different tribal groups in Guatemala?

**ELLIOTT:** Well, Guatemala is a Spanish-speaking country and everything official is in Spanish. About sixty-five percent of the people speak no Spanish at all. Another percentage of the people speak only marginal Spanish. Therefore, the Guatemalan government considers about thirty-five percent of the people to be Spanish-speaking. The Spanish speakers who first came over {who married} **inter-married** with Indian women {were very} **so there's**...a large percentage of that thirty-five percent has been people of mixed race. There are very few pure Euro...Europeans now. And so still the vast majority of the country are Indian people speaking all these different {foreign} **Mayan** languages. And they are distinct languages. And within each language there are dialects.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:09:11}** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** But there are about thirty-three distinct languages in Guatemala. Since they are distinct languages, the...the people from one tribe cannot talk to the people of another tribe unless they had learned their language. Since they are related languages, like English and Spanish are related, they're easier to be here for they can learn another Indian language than for them to learn Spanish.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:09:39}** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** In our area, there are supposed to be five percent Spanish speaking. And so, [Several sentences unclear]

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:10:37}** Are there conflicts between the different tribes or is most of the conflict between the Spanish and the Indian people?

**ELLIOTT:** Conflict between the tribes was almost [unclear] limited to [unclear]. [Unclear]. So really, there is a [unclear] in the Indian tribes. And because they had been so oppressed and abused, they would have banded together against the Spanish speakers **long ago**...

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:11:27}** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** ...long ago if they had had a common language.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:11:32}** What opportunities are there for social and economic advancement for the Indians?

**ELLIOTT:** Guatemala is a caste society about as a Spanish society. Five percent of the people, this is the country as a whole.... Well, fifteen percent of the people are considered upper-class but five percent being the ruling class.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:12:02}** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** Fifteen percent of the people control **the wealth**, eighty-five percent of the wealth. There is a small but growing middle class. And then the vast majority of the people are considered peasants...lower-class peasants. It is possible for an Indian to move out of the peasant class into the Spanish-speaking {middle} **lower** class, but it is very difficult. And usually it takes two generations for it to happen. Some...some of the areas, usually with help from outside, have begun to get some light industry, but for the most part, the Indian people are...they're peasants.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:13:02}** What (this is in the political realm) what was the...or is the official government position on mission work? You mentioned the incident with the [unclear] policemen. Can you comment some more of their position?

**ELLIOTT:** Guatemala has had a number of revolutions. [Clears throat] The government of 1924 [1944?] ended with their accepting a democratic constitution based on the constitution of the U.S. [United States] Now, having a democratic constitution didn't automatically change the way that {[unclear]} society operated, any more than having the Catholics come in and baptize the Indians as Catholics didn't make them Catholic.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** But still, according to the law, they did have religious freedom.

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:13:59} Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** And over the years, they...they have become more democratic in the way they...they run the government.

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:14:14} So, what...what would their position be on...on mission work? They're...they're open to it or...?

**ELLIOTT:** All foreigners have to be registered and are under control of the local government.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** And in some areas, there is more hostility, in other areas, more freedom and openness. But the official position is a guarded openness, partly because Guatemala is so dependent on the U.S. economically, and yet Guatemala has a lot of resentment toward the U.S. because of its dependent position.

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:15:11} What about the relationship of government to the Catholic churches? Is there a...a difference there, a difference in attitudes?

**ELLIOTT:** Before 1924 {[1944]}, the Catholic Church owned and controlled large resources...large amounts of land and...and so forth. At that revolution, all of the wealth was taken away from the Catholics. Later, some of it was given back. Churches were...became state property. And I would say that there's probably...most Guatemalan -political and other - leaders are nominally Catholic. Catholic missionaries haven't usually not been [unclear].

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:16:09} Do you think that people in Guatemala are satisfied with their policies? Theoretically or....?

**ELLIOTT:** I think probably the vast majority of people don't know what the policies are. They (except for the upper-class of people) are not {political} **politically** aware. And many of those who make those policies are just nominal Catholics.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** They have really turned their back on those....

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:16:42} Okay. What about just the...the attitude of...of anti-Westernism or anti-...being against foreigners in the country as a whole? And did you find that was a big factor in your mission work or not so much?

**ELLIOTT:** {Not} **Until not** too long ago, I don't think it has been a large factor. But the...the wealthy people who get their money from banana plantations, coffee plantations and so forth want to be in...in favor with the U.S. At the same time, there is growing resentment toward the U.S.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** ...and feeling that they had not gotten true value for their produce. The Communists {are} **have been** quite active in Guatemala. They were in control when we first went there. And now, the state of the government is very shaky. And [unclear]. And they have a policy of kidnapping upper-class people and the ransom they get for them [long passage unclear].

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:18:42} So, what about the relationship of Guatemala to the...the surrounding countries like El Salvador and Mexico and Belize...

**ELLIOTT:** Belize?

**CRUTCHFIELD:** ...Belize and Honduras?

**ELLIOTT:** That's a complicated question and I don't have all the answers. Guatemala {had} **has** skirmishes with Mexico from time to time, what's called "shrimp wars." Mexican fishermen are {huge to come} **accused of coming** into Guatemalan territorial waters to fish. Guatemala and Mexico always have little skirmishes going on of one kind or another. And then over British

Honduras, Belize, which Britain has given its freedom, both Guatemala and Mexico claim that it's their own territorial right. And so, that's a very complicated situation...

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** ...{with} **British** Honduras, of course, is on the coast bordering both Guatemala and Mexico.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:19:49}** Can...can you recall any incidents during your work there or that...that affected you or that you...you remember happening that would sort of demonstrate the type of relationship and...?

**ELLIOTT:** between Mexico and Guatemala?

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** Nothing which touched us personally. [Unclear] talk to people from [unclear]. Except that it is very difficult for us to...to travel through Mexico to leave Guatemalan territory. We would expect to be given a bad time.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:20:39}** I want to ask some questions about the medical support in the country and you might not know the answers to some of this. [Unclear] But can you tell something about what the hospitals are like in the...the country of Guatemala? [Unclear] and so forth.

**ELLIOTT:** The first modern hospital in Guatemala was established by the Presbyterians. And it has operated for quite a number of years and some of our children were born there. And then as the government had established other hospitals, it became increasingly difficult for this evangelical hospital to meet their demands. The U.S. funded a large multi-hospital called the {[unclear]} **Roosevelt** Hospital which actually a cancer hospital, heart patient hospital, pediatrics hospital. It's quite a complex of hospitals. But over the years, we have seen {hospital }

**hospitals** in Guatemala increase, increase tremendously. There has also been an establishment of a number of private clinics and hospitals, which of course, the missionaries use since we're not able to use Social Security or[unclear]. [Unclear]. There are a few mission hospitals continuing. There are missionaries who do medical work like I did, not because they're {are} **so** qualified but because there is no one else in their area to do it. But the whole medical **field** has completely changed.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:22:47}** What are some of the [unclear]?

**ELLIOTT:** [Unclear] probably two hundred Christians in the. [Unclear].

**CRUTCHFIELD:** What about some of the...the prevalent diseases that are....?

**ELLIOTT:** I've already mentioned deficiencies to [unclear] **nutritional diseases from** the lack of pro...protein, the lack of vitamins and so forth, which brings beriberi and scurvy [unclear]. But anyway, [unclear]. [Unclear] in other areas too [unclear]. [Unclear] a number of others [unclear] living [?] in the area. Diseases such as measles, [unclear]. [Unclear] to the people for help [unclear] produce [unclear]. We lose a great many women in childbirth, and then more babies die. Either they're stillborn and die and they're buried young.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:24:44}** Are...are. you still in medical work? Or is that largely just...?

**ELLIOTT:** Several years ago, at my urging, the Primitive Methodist Mission established a clinic in {[unclear].} **our town of Nebaj**. They had a...quite a clinic program at that time in a...a lady with an RN [registered nurse certification] took over the clinic work. She was, in ways better, more capable than I was because of her training. But she was hampered by the fact that she couldn't speak the Indian language. And she was also hampered by the prejudices of her culture against being black[?], something she has really struggled with.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:25:36}** What's the...the attitude of the people toward the...the medical help and clinics? You said there were still the witchdoctors, and yet the people came to trust you as a...as a medical worker?

**ELLIOTT:** Uh-huh. Many people used both. They would come and get medication or have their [unclear] medicated and so forth. And then they would go to the witch doctor to find out the religious cause and what the religious price is to pay for it.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:26:23}** A question about the education...educational system in Guatemala. First of all, just for a description of the...the schools there.

**ELLIOTT:** You mean in our area or in the country as a whole?

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Well, you'd...you'd know more about your area, and if you...if you know something about the country as a whole.

**ELLIOTT:** Yeah. Since we worked {in educational ministry} **with the Education Ministry**...I know something about it.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** But at this point, I can only give some generalizations. Primary education is obligatory by law...

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** for all Guatemalan children. As a matter of fact, many Guatemalan children never go to school or they can only go two or three grades because that's all that is offered to them. Out in many of these rural Indian areas, there are no schools so they cannot require children to go to school. Even in towns and villages that have schools, sometimes they only have two or three grades. And even with that, the attendance is very poor. Among many of the Indian people, literacy is not yet a value because until recently, the only books that there were were written in Spanish which [unclear]. So, learning to read a language which they did not understand didn't



carry much value for them. Now, partly because of my husband's work when he was director, it took an act of Congress to allow us to establish bilingual schools in the Indian areas. Whereby we trained (we and others) trained promising young Indian men and women to go back and teach their own people, starting with the language which the people understand (their own language), and then transferring into Spanish.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:28:35}** What about in the...in the Ixil...

**ELLIOTT:** Ixil?

**CRUTCHFIELD:** ...Ixil tribe? How was the literacy problem there?

**ELLIOTT:** Literacy is still very much a problem. However, there are many more opportunities for people to learn to read. We have had the privilege of developing materials which are used in the government schools and of having some supervision of teacher training. There are now in the Ixil areas about twenty government schools. For the most part, these offer a pre-first grade, which is the introduction to Spanish. And then first grade to teach them to read and that's all they have. Many people, well, especially the Christian people, are now interested in learning to read so they can read the hymn book and so they can read the word of God [the Bible]. Other people have come to realize that there's an economic advantage in learning to read.

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:29:39}** What about mission schools in the country?

**ELLIOTT:** There are some mission schools in the country. Not very many, but some of the larger cities have them. The capital of our state has a mission school operated by the Primitive Methodist Mission. There are a few Ixil children who {receive [unclear] } **have received scholarships** from there. Of course, they study in Spanish so....

**CRUTCHFIELD:{1:30:10}** Can you describe some of the normal teaching facilities in...in the...in the Guatemalan schools? What kind of...?

**ELLIOTT:** They're very poor, extremely poor with very little equipment. I'm thinking of a particular school in a hot area which has a thatched roof and a dirt floor and palm...palm stalk walls up halfway. And they have benches, which are boards set on rocks. And there are no tables and no desks. And the teacher has a very small blackboard, about two by two. And he has a primer, but he doesn't have primers for the children. Obviously, in our preparation of reading materials, we have to keep all of these conditions in mind. And where I might want to make them little games and so forth, they depend on the use or the manipulation of equipment which they don't have. So, we have to keep our teaching materials very simple also.

**CRTUCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** But of course, every child should have his own primer; he should also have...have paper and pencil.

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:31:43} But that's not generally true for most of the country?

**ELLIOTT:** I'm not really able to speak about most of the country but in my area, it is a very poor area, where if the parents sent this child to school two or three mornings a week, {it seemed phenomenal. It's a} **it's an economic** struggle for them to do that because need the labor of the children.

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:32:09} What about the seminaries in the country? Where they're located, what's their general...what's their theological stands or different persuasions, their concerns; so forth?

**ELLIOTT:** Guatemala is known for being very evangelical...

**CRTUCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** ...or conservative field. So that, for example, the Presbyterians who work in Guatemala are good evangelical people. Some of them Wheaton trained. This is not universally

true of the Presbyterian Church, for example. We have had good fellowship with...with just about all of the missionaries in the country that we [?] have known as good evangelicals. There are several seminaries, the largest being (and the most prestigious of them) by the Central American Mission. Some of the missions have Bible institutes, which have lower entrance requirements and some even teach reading.

**CRTUCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** But then there are a couple of seminaries which are now of college level.

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:33:22} What about the use of TEE in Guatemala? You know what...?

**ELLIOTT:** Theological Education by Extension was developed in Guatemala, as you may realize. The people who developed it were Presbyterian missionaries and they began using it. And it is being used through a number of missions in Guatemala. And it needs to be expanded quite a bit more. But the concepts were developed there, and of course it...it is, to me, a very...very valid principle.

**CRUTCHFIELD:**{1:33:57} In...in what ways? Can you comment on the ways that you see it working?

**ELLIOTT:** I see it working in being much more effective. Whereas before, they took teenagers and brought them away from their homes, away from their community into a Bible institute setting and then sent them back to be leaders in their churches. So, they did not have the maturity or the respect of the community. Now, the idea is to go into the communities and teach those who are {actual believers} **actually the leaders**.

**CRTUCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** Some of whom are illiterate. But through cassettes and through listening to lectures and so forth. These people are just as intelligent as anyone else, they just don't have the

education. And the idea there is to teach those who are actually the leaders in the community and in the churches, which is a very valid concept. We...if the Lord allows us to be in our area, we intend to do a good deal more by ourselves through cassettes. And I had been experimenting with the idea to teach reading by cassette.

**CRTUCHFIELD:** Uh-huh.

**ELLIOTT:** Up 'til now our cassette ministry has been limited almost completely to reading with the Word of God on cassette.

**CRUTCHFIELD:** Why don't we go ahead and say that this will be the end of the tape because we're about to go to another subject and we'll just start there next time.

**ELLIOTT:** Uh-huh.

{1:35:27}

**END OF TAPE**

{\* **FWIW | Footnotes**

{E3 22:00 altitudes • Nebaj 6,200' • The Pass ? • Sacapulas 4,000' • La Antigua 5,200' •  
(Everest 29,000') }

{E3 38:08 (counter)revolution / coup • 18 June 1954 [not 4th of July] }

{E3 45:10 Cortés not in Guatemala highlands ~ Pedro de Alvarado 1524 ... 1530  
cf: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish\\_conquest\\_of\\_Guatemala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_conquest_of_Guatemala) }

**END FWIW | Footnotes**

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