

# Translators Bring Christianity, Written Language to Tribes

**Editor's Note:** Indiana publisher "Sam" Lambert Huffman recently spent several days in the wilds of Mexico living with Wycliffe Translators who are trying to learn the language of remote tribes so they can bring Christianity to them in the Indian's previously unwritten tongue. In this dispatch, he tells how the translators work and live, and how auto-matic now helps them in their job.

By **'SAM' LAMBERT HUFFMAN**  
Written for UPI

Three women live in a mud hut 110 miles north of Mexico City in a dusty, century-planted desert where they can work with an Indian tribe that lives in hidden hogans.

On their rough-hewn table are books on phonemics, the science of converting sounds into an alphabet; morphology, the study of how words are made; syntax, the study of sentence structure; and literacy, how to teach people to read.

The women—Ethel Wallis, Nancy Lanier of Santa Barbara, Calif., and Patricia Cowan of Waco, Tex.—are Wycliffe Translators, a non-denominational group of linguists dedicated to giving unlettered peoples around the world a written language.

Ethel, Nancy and Pat live in Tezu—a town that on first glance doesn't seem to exist. Hidden Indians.

"I know you can't see it, but the huts are camouflaged by these huge century plants," Nancy explained. "Within half a mile of us there are over 300 Indians. The entire tribe of over 80,000 lives within a hundred miles of us."

Until the three women arrived, the Indians could not write or read their own language. Now they are taking the first step toward learning.

Kitty Pride, whose dark eyes sparkled might have been an ordinary English housewife. Kitty is English, but her concern at the moment was not housewifery.

Sitting across from her at the Wycliffe translation center in Mexico City was a young Chinantec Indian wearing a bright blue shirt.

Beside the Indian stood Kitty's husband, Leslie, a thin, scholarly looking young man. "Tell him, lez-ly," Kitty said, "to illustrate the tonal endings on the word 'cuno'."

Meaning Change  
Leslie turned and quickly repeated her instructions to the Indian, who, understanding, repeated the word five times.

"It will no doubt surprise you," Kitty said, "to know that Pedro has expressed five different ideas. Now listen again, carefully, as he speaks."

All five pronunciations of the word "cuno" still sounded the same. "What did he say?" I asked.

"The first time, snake, the second time, load, the third time, thief, and the fourth time, mirror. The fifth time was 'he will cry.'"

Pedro repeated the word. "Now watch his endings. In almost a whisper he gives the last syllable of 'cuno' a musical ending. We have discovered that his language has sort of a five tone scale for this very purpose," Kitty said.

Rules Emerge  
"How one word has come to mean all these widely diverse things we do not know,"



**NEAR PLANE**—Lacandon Indians from primitive Mexican tribe stand next to a plane at Lake Naja airstrip. Plane is one used by Wycliffe Translators, who visit

she added, "but rules for use of these various tonal endings are slowly emerging."

Dr. Bob Longacre of Akron, Ohio, director of Wycliffe's language center, said that in Mexico alone there are more than 100 languages that have no alphabet, cannot be written or read. In the world, he added, there are perhaps 3,000 different languages with fewer than 1,200 of these having been reduced to writing.

Because of the job remaining to be done, he said, Wycliffe Translators seek ways to hurry their work.

Use of Computers  
"For instance, Bill Maryfield, who is with us here, is using electronic computers to develop language formulae. I really think that our hopes lie in finding the basic language from which all these languages emanate," Longacre said.

He said he believed the unwritten languages of Mexico might all spring from a common root called Otomanguan, just as the so-called Romance languages stemmed from Latin. By 1964, Longacre said, he hoped the root to all unwritten Central American languages might be found.

Another timesaver now used is bringing translators to Mexico City when they have collected enough data for substantial attacks on breaking down the spoken language. In the translation center, Longacre said, they have the facilities and more time.

"Once we have begun to analyze and set down our findings, we simply can't afford

the interruptions that occur in village living," he said. "So it is our plan to bring translators and their informants in here three months at a time once each year."

Daily life with a tribe perhaps less than a decade away from savagery does cut into the translators' main work. The translators set up hospitals, schools and churches

## Maclaren School Escapees Caught

Albany—Two teenage members of the Maclaren School for Boys Drum and Bugle Corps dashed away from their group during the Rose Festival Parade in Portland Saturday in an escape bid that was stopped on the U.S. 99 freeway near here.

State police wounded one of the boys from Coquille, in the shoulder after a high speed auto chase. He was in good condition in Sacred Heart hospital in Eugene. The other boy, from Eagle Point, was returned to the school.

Police said the boys took a car in Portland and headed south on the U.S. 99 freeway. State police picked up the car at the Halsey interchange and chased it at "high speed."

Two other police cars joined the chase and when they blew their sirens to pull the boys over, their car veered across the median strip and continued south in the northbound lane. A police car followed, and police fired a shot through the rear window of the fleeing car, hitting the Coquille youth.

The shooting occurred near the Coburg Interchange.

## HORSE DAMAGES CAR

Livingston, N.J.—William Raab was leading his horse to water Saturday when the bay mare bolted and jumped onto the hood of a passing car. Neither horse nor passengers were injured, but the car was damaged and Raab was charged with letting an animal run at large.

## An Unlovable Instrument

### Professor Describes the Human Nose As a 'Wonderful Piece of Machinery'

By **DICK WEST**

Washington—In this day and age, you rarely run across anyone who has anything good to say about the human nose.

By and large, we have come to regard the nose as an unpleasant connotation. By large.

Furthermore, the word "smell" has for most of us an unpleasant connotation. This is what makes Dr. James W. Johnston, associate professor of physiology at the Georgetown University School of Medicine, such an unusual man.

For the past several years, Dr. Johnston has been making a study of the human sense of smell, and he is prone to hold the nose as a wonderful piece of machinery.

Any disparagement of the olfactory organ is to Dr. Johnston deplorable, for he is convinced that the nose is a wonderful piece of machinery.

#### Talked With Doctor

I had a nasal type chat with the good doctor at the opening of an exhibit set up here by Schenley Industries. The exhibit is called "Scent-A-Rama," otherwise known as the "whiffykey test."

The purpose of the demonstration is to show how aging improves the smell of whisky, and how the smell, in turn, improves the taste. Somehow I got the impression that Schenley is in the whisky business.

Personally, I am inclined to think that the effect of the aging process on whisky is not as important as the effect of the whisky on the aging process of whisky drinkers. But we needn't get into that. Back to Mr. Johnston.

He and I fell into a discussion as to why smelling is less popular than the other four senses. Dr. Johnston said it was because most people don't smell well.

It is wrong, however, to hold the nose responsible for this. We have only ourselves to blame.

#### Nose More Sensitive

According to Dr. Johnston, the olfactory organ actually is more sensitive than the human eye. If it seems dull and lifeless, it is because we abuse it and neglect it.

We constantly exercise our sight, hearing, touch and taste, while letting our sense of smell go to pot. Many of us

hasten its decline by using our noses as smokestacks.

Under such conditions the nose brings us little pleasure. We tend to regard it as merely a pedestal for sunglasses, except when we have a bad cold. Then we criticize it for dripping so much.

But when properly developed, the sense of smell is a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

Mine is a bit clogged at the moment, but as soon as the sinus passages drain I intend to start a campaign to rehabilitate the nose and restore its good name.

Dr. Johnston has convinced me that smelling can be fun.

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## Lodge Wins GOP Spot In Senate Contest

Worcester, Mass.—George Cabot Lodge Saturday bested veteran Congressman Laurence Curtis for the Massachusetts state Republican convention endorsement for the U.S. Senate.

Lodge, 34-year-old son of former United States Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, polled 936 votes to 848 for the 68-year-old congressman on the first and only ballot.

## COMPLETES COURSE

Pvt. Carl A. Vanderpool, son of Mrs. Francis Vanderpool, 827 Gilman rd., Medford, recently completed the five-week single engine observation and utility airplane maintenance course at the Army Aviation school, Ft. Rucker, Ala. He entered the Army last December and received basic training at Ft. Ord, Calif. Vanderpool, a 1958 graduate of Crater High school, attended Southern Oregon college.

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## Pastor Is Delegate To Church Session

The Rev. Clarence Jackson, minister of Pilgrim Holiness church, Central Point, attended the general conference of the church in Winona Lake, Ind., as the official delegate to the conference representing the Pacific Northwest district.

The session started June 12 and continued through Monday.

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