

PART FOUR

THE ECUADORIAN FIASCO

1948–1950

JANAURY/17/1948./Southampton/ENGLAND

We embarked at the above date on the S.S.COLOMBIE - if I read my writing correctly in my Diary - which was a former hospital ship equipped with bunks, communal showers and toilets. Male and female passengers were segregated in separate departments.

As my landsman Al Einstein remarked, everything is relative. He said this the very year I was born in 1915, I thought you might be interested to know. Compared to the holds of the ship which took us, like cattle, from Sénégal to Casablanca, the S.S.COLOMBIE was the Queen Elizabeth. Compared to a regular passenger ship it was what it was, a former hospital ship with bunks and communal "facilities" which left a lot to be desired as far as hygiene and comfort was concerned and becoming downright abysmal as the trip progressed. And while on a hospital ship there are trained medical personell to look after the wounded, on the Colombie we passengers were expected to look after each other with the crew appearing only sporadically, to put it charitably.

As a lot of the passengers were seasick one time or other the condition of the floor became less and less attractive to look at - or smell at - to put it delicately, showing the residuals of attempted but unsuccessful trips to the facilities when they became seasick. We were allowed to visit the female passengers, like my wife and we did whatever little we could to help them. With many others of my shortcomings it seems that I was genetically unable to become either sea or airsick even during the worse conditions, so I felt it was up to me to help Trude and her neighbors as much as I could. Fortunately Trude got her sealegs pretty soon after

being very seasick the first few days.

Our first destination was Guadeloupe, Latitude 16 N, Longitude 61°30' W. according to my Diary if I can read my writing correctly, where we docked on January 27th 1948. Guadeloupe is a small island of the Caribbean Sea, with a population of about 300,000 people and a department of France. We were allowed to debark for a few hours and look around. What I saw reminded me a bit of Sénégal, which is no compliment. Watching Trude's facial reactions, always very expressive as it behoves a wellknown amateur actress of Vienna, I got the uneasy hunch that Ecuador in general and Guayaquil in particular are not going to be the perfect match.

AS I found out soon enough I was righth.

We pulled anchor on the 28th January with our next destination Martinique, Latitude 14°30'W. Longitude 61°W. We docked at Martinique @ 1845 hrs. We were again allowed to debark for a few hours of "walkabout" as the Brits say. I liked Martinique much better than Guadeloupe. The people were much friendlier and the women of Martinique are famous for their beauty. Martinique is also an o'seas department of France and the population is again about 300,000 people. We pulled anchor @ 0500hrs destination to another island of the Caribbean, Barbados, Lat. 13°15N. Long. 59°30'W where we docked on the 29th January @ 0500hrs. No walkabout in Barbados as the harbour was too shallow for the ship. Barbados is even smaller with about 250,000 people. It is an independent nation of the British Commonwealth. I realize that these descriptions are falling somewhat short of the Baedeker, but as you know we were not a luxury cruise. We pulled anchor @ 2100hrs destination Trinidad.

We docked at Trinidad, Lat. 10°N. Long 61°W. on January 30th, @ 1100hrs. We were not allowed to debark. Trinidad is the largest island of the Caribbean off the coast of Venezuela, with a population of one million people counting also Tobago. It is a former British colony and part of the British Commonwealth. We pulled anchor @ 2100hrs, destination Caracas, Venezuela. We docked in Caracas on the 31st of January @ 0630 hrs and were at Caracas for a week waiting for our tickets with Pan American Airways, staying with Trude's relatives. Caracas is a modern metropolis with 3,500,000 people.

I remember only two noteworthy things about our stay in Caracas. First and more importantly, that it was the first time I ate nice hot sandwiches washed down with yummy fruit juices made with all kinds of exotic tropical fruits. Second, that Trude's relatives were somewhat less than enthusiastic about our visit and were very honest not to make a secret of it. Nobody said it is a perfect world.

On the 7th February we got our ticket with Pan American Airways Panagra for Barranquilla, Colombia, with Trude's relatives visibly relieved at the good news. We landed at Barranquilla's Maiqueta airfield, at an hour unreadable in my Diary, and took off for Balboa, Panama @ 1315hrs where we landed @ 1700hrs on the 8th of February. I forgot to mention that Colombia was named for our friend Columbus, but you knew that already. We took off from Balboa @ 0745hrs for Guayaquil, Ecuador and landed in our new country @ 1330hrs.

According to one of those mock Diplomas, in my voluminous files, the P.R. department of Pan American Airways Panagra bestowed

on me, HEAR THIS: "On the 8th February in the year 1948, ERWIN FUCHS borne on the wings of an airliner PANAGRA accross the Equator en route from Caracas to Guayaquil, said passenger has been accepted in the Empirean Realm of His Exalted Majesty Jupiter Rex, and shall now and forever after be known as CONDOR FUCHS." - It IS a perfect world after all! You lesser breeds of non-CONDORS, eat your heart out!

Before launching into the years of The Ecuadorian Fiasco 1947-1950, perhaps this is the righth moment to explain why and how did we decide to follow our in-laws, Trude's sister Georgie whom she called Toiji, and her husband Hans to Ecuador which got it's name from the fact that the Equator runs thru it. The exact spot where it does is marked with a monument where you can get your picture taken, although this will not make you a CONDOR, sorry about that.

The exact date of their own immigration is lost in the myst of history, in other words I dont remember if I ever knew. What I do know is that when I got to England Trude was already alone.

Generally speaking Trude got to like England as far as I remember, although by no stretch of the imagination did she have an easy life, being allowed to work only as household help for a number of years and even afterwards she was never able to work in her own line as graphic artist. She lived in very modest circumstances in furnished rooms barely being able to make ends meat.

In all fairness to her I must be clear about the fact that ^{if} we wouldnt have gotten married she would have never ever considered to go to Ecuador. It was my own deep unhappiness with being constantly referred to as The Alien Bastard in the Pioneer Corp and later after my demob at the garage also, and having to register

at the Police as Enemy Alien, the antiJewish riots in Glasgow and Liverpool I mentioned, which made me decide that this is not the country where I want to stay even temporarily while waiting for our second visa which might take years. I told Trude I want OUT! She was sensitive enough person to understand my reasons and agreed with my decision. So we got in touch with her in laws asking for an "on the spot" report and their opinion whether it would be a realistic idea for us to come to Ecuador while waiting for our visa to America.

As you might remember I touched on this subject of asking for important advice before, shortly, but perhaps it is useful to elaborate on it a bit. I think there is a saw between newspaper reporters and other media people that it is OK to have wrong opinions but you should get your FACTS straight.

I don't think it is too much to ask of friends and specially of family members to get their facts straight, if nothing else, when they accept the responsibility to advise people about a very important step in their life.

Our in laws well knew from their own experience, to immigrate from England to Ecuador is not exactly a weekend excursion. Furthermore Georgie lived with Trude all her life and must have been

well aware of Trude's compulsive obsessive cleanliness, which could have been alone enough against advising her to come to a dirty, primitive, unhygienic country like Ecuador, to say nothing about Trude being an advertising artist in a country of illiterates.

AS for myself, I explained to them that I'm a Jacquard designer which is a very specialized branch of textile design, more about this later, asking whether there is a possibility to work in this line? Hans answered me that he inquired and yes there is a need for Jacquard designers, which was somewhat surprising to me but he was the guy on the spot who should know what he is talking about. He also assured us that Trude will also be able to work in her own line.

Both Trude and myself relied more on Hans's advice than Georgie's, because as Trude told me several times Georgie is the dimbulb of the family, to her father's great consternation, although she was even prettier than Trude. So we decided to take a chance and immigrate, after all it is going to be only temporary. Living space will be no problem as they are renting a big house with plenty of rooms. Hans made a good living, having a good head for business and being the exclusive distributor for the wellknown SCHLAGE locks.

I would like to make it perfectly clear right now, that there was never any kind of "personality clashes" or problems of any kind with the in-laws, including their little daughter Susi, who was probably some three years old. She was a lively, vivacious friendly little girl, although one of the homeliest little bucktoothed "ugly duckling" I ever saw, a cruel trick of nature in a

family of handsome people. Hans was no handsome Dan, but apart from his big prominent semitic nose - look who is talking! - he was not homely and he was a big gregarious type of guy. I heard from my son years later, after our divorce, that the family came to visit Trude and although Susi is still no beauty she is quite pretty, not the ugly duckling she used to be when small.

I never met them although we lived only a half hour by bus from each other in New Jersey. I assume Trude found it more convenient to let the in laws know only her version of our marriage and reason for divorce.

Hans took a big shine to me right from the start being very much impressed with my background in the Legion and the stories about it. He asked me of course, what did we do about sex and I told him the only kind was from cathouses of different quality.

It turned out I made a mistake telling him this because later when some of his friends visited us and the subject of the Legion came up, Hans interjected at a suitable moment to say: Erwin was in every cathouse in North Africa, chuckling happily. Trude glared both at him and me ferociously and I heard about this for days. I tried to tell her that Hans just wanted to be funny and that by no stretch of the imagination is it true but she was convinced that it is, only I didnt tell her. Georgie liked me well enough too and Susi likewise who called me Albin, finding it too difficult to pronounce Erwin. Georgie picked up the name too. Susi spoke of course fluent German and street Spanish, she picked up from the kids she played with and from the muchacha, the maid every family has in South America. Needless to say she also picked up some "bad

words," which caused some hilarity occasionally. Once the mu-chacha displeased Susie with something and Susie shouted at her PUTA! (whore). Georgie was upset and said, Susi! Este NO se dice! (Dont say this!) Bueno, entonces, putita? (so how'bout lit-tle whore?) this got a big laugh of course and Susi ^{looked} very proud.

The strain developped when it became obvious that they gave us a bumsteer and neither Trude or I will ever be able to find work in our line. Shortly after being settled down, more or less, I visited the textile factory Hans told me about and immediately found out the sad truth. They have ONE whole Jacquard loom and even that is not true because the loom was not used since years, needing extensive repairs and general overhaul. The owner said if I can fix it he might be able to give ^{me} a job as designer which was of course hilarious too as there is no way for one loom to keep a de-signer busy. In the outfit where I worked in Hungary we had six hundred looms, two hundred of them Jacquard and we had six Jacquard designers for the two hundred looms. As for fixing the loom I couldnt have done it to save my life. A Jacquard loom is one of the most complicated, complex and I might add, temperamental machi-nery ever invented. It takes years and years of experience to be-come a competent "loom fixer" and the master Jacquard loom fixer in charge of the 200 looms, who was from Checkoslovakia all the best of the loomfixers came from, earned more than the Director of the factory. Come to think of it, if you've been kind and patient enough to read all this sofar, the least I can do is to reward you with some "Facts You Can Use" to paraphrase the column of one of the national magazines to tell you a bit about

all this Jacquard hype you read lately even in the best mail order magazines and ads from other firms also.

Madison Avenue in it's great wisdom is aware of the fact that most Americans dont speak foreign lingos and that they are impressed with foreign words, unduly I might add. And if the subject concerns fashion and the foreign word is French, somuch the better. Jacquard is obviously a French name, so the trend since a few years became to imply that everything called Jacquard must be of the best quality! "Lies, nothing but lies!" The simple truth is that Jacquard has NOTHING to do with quality and quality has NOTHING to do with a fabric have been woven on a Jacquard loom. Jacquard is simply a METHOD or system of WEAVING. Period. Some of the best but also some of the worst junk is woven on Jacquard looms, although I must add that the system is anything but simple as I already mentioned. But to repeat, to claim that anything woven on a Jacquard loom is prime quality makes as much sense, or facts, as claiming that because a pair of shoes or boots were sewn on a SINGER machine are of primequality regardless whether the boots are of the best and most expensive exotic hides or the cheapest cowhide from the cheapest part of the hide.

The Jacquard loom was invented by the guy of the same name around 1800. The description of the exact working of the loom would take pages and I would have to look it up in a textbook which I suggest you do if you're interested in it, which I'm definitely not at this point in time. What I can tell you is that this loom can justifiably called the first, what we would call today, a PROGRAMMED machine. It used a sort of IBM card with holes punched

into it, the card being about one foot wide and up to ten feet long according to the complexity of the design. This card moved as an "endless" belt, with it's end sewn together. This card could be called today " the programm" or the software if you wish and I'd have been the programmer. Somuch about the loom, which is not much as I admitted. Now, the part what interests youmost: HOW can you, a non-expert find out at a glance whether something hyped as Jacquard is actually that? Elementary. If the design of the fabric consists exclusively of STRAIGHT lines it is NOT a Jacquard fabrics. Period. By straigth lines I dont mean only horizontal or vertical lines of course but diagonals, stripes, plaids etc etc. In other words, anything but CURVES. If the design of the fabric contains CURVES, of ANY kinds it is a Jacquard fabrics. A Jacquard loom can handle almost any design of any complexity. One of the tour de force made occasionally in limited quantity is the portrait of a celebrity or statesman. It is a nutcracker but it can be done. How can you use this info? Very simply. According to what kind of establishment you are shopping in, if the salesperson shows you something and hypes it as "Jacquard" and by now you KNOW it is not, you can say something like this, if it is a posh place: I'm sorry Sir/Madam but what you told me is not factual. This is most definetely NOT a Jacquard fabric because etc. Or if you're shopping at a discount house you can say something like this: Sorry friend, and I dont want you to take this personally but you are full of shit! This is NOT a Jacquard fabrics. Or you can do what I sometimes did, looking stoopid, comes naturally to me like flying to the Dutch,

and say, could you please explain to me what is Jacquard? If s/he is a young salesperson one gets you hundred that s/he wont have the foggiest in which case YOU explain it to him/her. If s/he is an oldtimer and gives you a cock and bull story, you tell him that at his/her age should know better than take it for granted that the customer is an idiot.

Meanwhile back at the farm with Georgie Hans and Susi. As it was painfully obvious that we ^{will} never be able to work in our own lines we set about to find something else to do, to earn a few Sucres, the Ecuadorian name for thei currency, so that we can contribute to our upkeep. The problèm of trying to make some money in a primitive country where we didnt speak the lingo, was aggravated by the fact that Trude hated the country from the minute we landed in Guayaquil. As the rainy season last from Janaury to May in that part of the country and we landed in February, we got righth in the middle of it. The rainy season in the tropic means of course heat an humidity, difficult enough even for the natives, not to say anything about people like Trude who never left Europe untill she got here. For me, after Sénégal which was even worse, it was no big deal and here at least we had no malaria only amoebic dysentery which came with the territory in the tropic.

Trudy was constantly depressed with frequent crying jags which put a guilt trip on the relatives of course which did not do much for the atmosphere. The only work Trude could find was windowdressing for the few immigrants who had what passed here for stores and a few others for the Spanish owners by recommendations from the immigarnts. It was gruelling work which would

have been hard enough for a stronger ^{person} too and badly paid as the owners had no concept of design of course. If Trude made posters or signs etc for the window they couldnt see why do they have to pay more than what the material costs? The windows were as small as the stores measuring somewhere about 6'-7'x4'x5' at best. And a good window display was considered the one which was crammed full of at least one piece of everything the store carried. And the heat in the windows was suffocating. I tried to help her as much as I could which was not much as there was barely enough space for one person in the windows. After about one month of doing this kind of work Trude was completely knocked out and had to give it up. AS for myself I couldnt find any kind of work at all I was even remotely able to handle. Any kind of physical work was out of the question as it was done by the natives for a pittance. Ecuador had the lowest per capita income in South America.

The kind of work some of the new immigrants did was called "klopper" which is a yiddish word for knocking, which was peddling textiles: from house to house, knocking on doors. The klopper bought from the wholesaler on credit as much as he could carry on his shoulder from day to day, at the end of the "business day" handing over to the wholesaler the money he made, keeping his own cut. If he was smart and a good hustler after a few months he was able to hire a young Indian kid to carry the stuff for him while he did the klopping and selling. The success story between the new immigrants was a young polish guy who after years of klopping was able to buy himself an old Jeep and hire a young Indian

kid to shlepp the "stock" from the car to the door while he did the driving and selling.

One day when we were again pondering what could I do to make a little money, Hans sent up the trial balloon asking only half joking, if I would like to try klopping. All I could^{do} is laugh although that was the last thing I felt like doing. First of all I didnt speak the lingo of course. More importantly and unfortunately, I couldnt sell a cuppa tea to an English man at five o'clock which is why I could never make any real money in America either. First and foremost a salesman has to be^a good TALKER, which I never was. As you migth remember even as a kid I heard my parents saying any number of times, Erwin is the quiet one, Tibor is the mile a minute talker. Furthermore, although I never considered any kind of honest work beneath my dignity, which I had ample opportunity to prove later in America, where during the first five years I did everything from cleaning shithouses in department stores to taking factory jobs even the blacks refused to do, I did draw a line somewhere, and one of the somewhere was to peddling textiles from house to house in this little shit country, we new immigrants called the asshole of South America. Later Trude added insult to injury by telling me that klopping is honest work and I shouldnt be too proud to try it. This really tore it for me and losing my cool I told her that if her relatives wouldnt have given us a bumsteer we would not be here. This went over of course like the proverbial lead balloon.

One of the other immigrants told me we should try to go up to Quito, which is the capital of Ecuador as you know. The climate

is wonderful between 55-65°F year round, Quito being 9300ft above sea level. If we dont have trouble with our heart we would love it.

As neither of us had any heart problem we decided to do it. We took the train to Quito on the 24th of April. The scenery during the train ride was breathtaking which we would have enjoyed even more if we wouldnt have a thousand problems on our mind about how to make a living in Quito? As it turned out we had no reason to regret it. Our luck changed pretty soon but then again after the three miserable months in G'quil there was no way to go but up as the song said.

Trude found a job very soon in a shop called FOLKLORE owned by a ^{Jewish} German couple but ran by the lady who was a ball of fire and a terrific businesswoman about fifty, by the name of Olga Fisch. Funnily enough I've read recently an article from^a travel editor in the local paper who says, "if you visit Quito dont miss the FOLKLORE shop of Olga Fisch". I wrote her saying that my wife worked there for a while in 1948 and is Olga still around? She answered to say that Olga is no springchicken anymore at close to ninety, but still a sprightly lady who runs the show. -

My luck changed too. I found out that there are about a half dozen German Jewish refugee doctors in Quito and decided to try to work for them as private duty nurse, knowing that their patients are the other refugees and knowing what the native "nurses" are like. One of their favourite ritual was to "desinfect" the site for a shot licking their fingertips and rub the spit-
le on the patients skin. How many got hepatitis from this little kindness only god knows. Once I was able to get my first job with

a German doctor, my "fame" spread between the others by word of mouth and I was in business. The largest drugstore, called METROPOLITANO was owned by a Hungarian jew who was kind enough to make friendly prices for me to buy my supplies I needed to work as private duty nurse, like syringes, needles, etc and in another store I bought a small folding Primus stove to sterilize them. Those were the days of the new miracle drug Penicillin, but at that time it existed only in aqueous solution which had to be injected every three hours intramuscular. Later they had oil suspended penicillin which could be injected daily. I was a busy bee having gotten a rep between the doctors of being careful, neat and reliable. Luck was on my side too. I never had an abscess or any other problems with the shots. I went by the book as my first German doctor taught me.

Later I met a Dutch couple by the name of Bloemkolk, if I spell it correctly, the guy working for SHELL OIL as geologist. SHELL was drilling in the Oriente which is the Eastern part of Ecuador the Amazon basin jungle. He got me a permanent job with the medical department of SHELL as paramedic, first in their medical department in Quito and later I was sent down to their jungle hospital in SHELL MERA in the Oriente. This was the best job I ever had in my life since I was demobbed from the British army. The pay was lousy as I was hired on the spot and counting as native not as "Foreign Staff" brought in from Holland or England but it was still the best pay I ever had since I was demobbed and in medicine.

One day the Director of the Medical Dept came to tell me that he wants to send me out to the residence of the Big Boss to give intravenous injections of Vitamin C mixed with Calcium gluconate to his wife.

I heard about Vitamin C being the latest "in" thing in medicine, but I still couldn't see why should a healthy person need Vitamin C IV, specially mixed with Calcium gluconate which can be tricky to inject IV. I hold my mouth shut of course the last thing I wanted was to pick an argument with my boss, the Director of the Medical department. I got my gear together and took off for the residence of The Boss. Their maid has shown me in to a beautiful almost palacial building in colonial style and asked me to wait in the foyer. Soon enough La Senora appeared, coming down from one of those staircases you see in movies The Star of the Show is making her entrance from. She was a very attractive and distinguished looking tall lady in her forties. I introduced myself and told her Doctor Cartagena sent me to give her the weekly injection of Vitamin C. She was very friendly and put me at ease and wanted to know a little about who am I and where am I coming from. After the formalities were over I took out my gear, spread my white towel I always carried, on a table. I lit my little Primus and started to sterilize my syringe and needles. She was somewhat surprised that I'm doing this here not like Doctor Cartagena who brings it ready for use. I explained that doctor Cartagena can do that because the technicians at the medical department will do their best for him but I can't rely on their goodwill so I feel it is safer if I do it myself right before I use them. That way I can be sure they are sterile. She seemed to be satisfied with my explanation. When my things were done I asked her to sit down and put her left arm on the table on my towel, and pull up her sleeve.

And thats when I almost swallowed my tongue and realized in the same time why Doctor Cartagenova sent ME to do this job. Trying to regain my composure the best I could, I said pointing at a monster hematoma the size of my palm in her elbow, looks like somebody was here before me? Yes, Doctor Cartagenova, she said with a little smile. Er... I think I'll try the other arm if you dont mind. Not at all. So I puton my tourniquet and asked her to make a fist, open her hand again and repeat it.No vein. Nada. I go slap, slap over her brachial vein with my two fingers. Nada. I ask her to get a small towel, soak it in hot water bring it back, sit down, I put it on her brachial vein and wait a few minutes. Nada. I dont think this lady ever lifted anything heavier than her dresses from her walk-in closet. I could feel her vein but could not see it at all. There are cases when even an atheist like me turns to prayer. I wiped her cubital fossa with an alcohol sponge and sent up a silent prayer : dear god, I'll be a good jewish boy from now on if you just help me this one time to hit her damn brachial vein on the first try without making another monster hematoma on this arm too for symmetrie! My sweet old Grampa must have put in a few good words for me because I was in like Flynn on the first try! I must have let out a BIG sigh, took off the rubber tube, told her to tell me immediately if she feels hot flushes to come, and started to inject the damn VITACE with GLUCALBOTT veery slowly and carefully. Everything went OK and she thanked me profusely. I hardly put my feet back into the department when Doctor Cartagenova came to tell me that La Senora called up and she is very satisfied with me and wants me to give her the injections every week.

It took me a littlewhile to figure out why did Cartagena look so happy about all this? Suddenly it hit me that for him this was a win-win situation. If I screwed up, it was the new gringo who screwed up. If I didnt, he got rid of the job which could have meant nothing but trouble for him and his rep. There is an old saw that fools, children and drunks have a separate god watching over them. I went back every week to give La Senora her shots till I was sent down to their jungle hospital, and I never had any problems.

It was a pleasant department to work for, people were nice and friendly. We had one gal who was the daughter of a big wheel in politic who worked as secretary. She was the type of gorgeous brunette you see on pictures as the girls of Ipanema of Rio.

By now I picked up enough Spanish together form what I remembered from the Legion, to be able to follow most of the conversations. If you speak French Spanish is easy. I heard them whispering every time this gorgeous gal walked thru the room, El Jabon Lobo!

I knew that jabon lobo means wolf soap but what is the connection here? So the next time she left the room and one of the guys said it again I asked him why are they calling this guapita Jabon Lobo? He laughed and explained that there is a brand of soap here called Jabon Lobo, whose motto is: "Bonito hasta el ultimo pedacito!" Good to the last little piece! I said , claro que si! which got a laugh coming from a gringo.

When Doctor Cratagenova considered me competent enough he sent me down to their jungle hospital in SHELL MERA in the Oriente with the companie's plane. I dont want you to visualize this jungle hospital as some little hut from banana leafs or whatever, with

Bushmasters crawling around and the Jivaros blowing their curare tipped darts at us just for fun. None such. We had very nice and comfortable prefabricated wooden barracks with comfortable beds, showers etc and a well put together kitchen feeding us very well with most of the supplies flown in by our own planes landing on our own airfield. After all SHELL OIL was no fly by night outfit nor a newcomer to this game. We had some 2000 indians on our payroll there and some hundred Foreign Staff from England and Holland. SHELL drilled for oil of course in the Oriente finding nothing but "agua salada" - salt water at that time, but years later they came back and were more successful from what I read and heard.

As for the hospital it was very primitive nevertheless. If a native needed major surgery we flew them out to Quito and if Foreign Staff needed major surgery we flew them home to England or Holland. We had three doctors and some six "supporting personnell" as by no stretch of the imagination can I call them "practical nurses" or even orderlies. They were dirty, lazy and suffering from chronic fatigue. I realized that if I want to improve the looks and hygiene in the hospital I'll have to do it myself. After asking the "orderlies" to scrub down the shelves in the pharmacy where the bottles and other supplies stucked to the shelves with no labels or any other identifications, they gave the shelves a few delicate passes with a dirty rag and advised me: este no sale Senor. (This wont go off.). So I scrubbed the whole damn place down myself from ceiling to floor, including the shelves, put a label on the bottles etc and did the same with what passed for operating room and treatment room. To make a long story short I've

worked my ass off, but when I was finished it could pass for a medical department in a jungle at least.

As I said we had three doctors all from Ecuador. One was an old geezer who might have been a good medico when he was younger but he was obviously over the hill. One was a dimbulb even the others made constantly fun off. And fortunately the third one was a real crackerjack who could handle damn near anything thrown at him. He was about thirty or so, a friendly guy with a good sense of humour and speaking fairly good English too. Needless to say this was the one I tried to make friends with and succeeded well enough when he realized that I might be a gringo but I'm not afraid to get my hands dirty. After I finished to get the damn place in shape the best I could, he came in, looked around and said with a grin: carrrrrajo de la nueventas gran PUTAS, hombre! The fucking ninety big whores: man! (Truth to be told the exact meaning of "carrajo" I was never able to track down. It seemed to be the favourite prayer.

Shortly after I arrived one of the other guys on Foreign Staff told me, the first thing I should do is to get myself a pair of Jodhpur boots made by a little shoemaker working in a little hut not far from here. It will be the nicest and best pair of boots I ever wore. This is something he didn't have to tell me twice as I always loved short boots. The guy was right too. It was the best fitting boots I had since I got my officers short boots in the Hungarian army with the elastic inset on the sides. This guy used lovely cordovan leather and made me a terrific pair of Jodhpur boots with the straps going around and buckled on the side. I have worn those boots some ten years, long after we left Ecuador for the USA and even here people kept asking me where I got them?

When the Foreign Staff found out that there is a European trained paramedic, they didnt let anybody else touch them, beside the doctors of course, and I cant say I blamed them. I wouldnt have let those native male "nurses" cut my nails and I'm not kidding.

One evening the Crackerjack medico came for me, saying vamenos senior, young putita will have baby in the hut not far from here. In South America and other Spanish speaking contries putita does not really mean whore and it is not considered between "friends" an insult at all. Com'esta putita? passes for a friendly informal greeting between old friends.

I was deputized to carry the Coleman lantern and we took off with our gear to deliver the little bastard of the putita who was well along in labour by the time we got there and the medico started to give her instruction what to do. Soon enough the little bastard stuck his head out, -"his" by the wisdom of hindsigth of course -and the next instant the goddamn Coleman lantern gave up the ghost! The medico let out a vintage stream of curses, but as I said nothing fazed this guy. He grabbed a bunch of cotton wool poored some rubbing alcohol on it, pulled the little bugger into this vale of tears, slapped his ass, clamped the cord, cut it and told the putita's mother what to do with the placenta. Vamenos senior, now you know how to pull baby out of the figa (pussy). Little did I realize that this was my test run for helping to deliver my own son later in Quito with a Check obstetrician at home.

If all this sounds as if I would have had a lot of fun it sounds just righth. As I was the only paramedic with anything like a medical training I'd a golden opportunity to work my ass off

around the clock as the native staff was working around the clock also in three shifts. I dont want to use the old cliché that "I loved every minute^{of} it" as I'm sure there were more than minutes which I not only ^{not} loved but hated but I can honestly say that these were the best times of my life together with those I worked as O.R. technician in America later. I realized what I suspected a long-time, that people doesnt get tired FROM what they do but OF what they do. If you like and enjoy your work, because it is a CHALLENGE, you can put in incredible hours and still able to keep going if it is necessary. I think this was why surgeons in field hospitals were able and willing to work around the clock sometimes, till they literally fell asleep on their feet, more from lack of sleep than "fatigue." It is also the reason why research scientists who enjoy their work because it is a constant challenge and expectation of something new and fascinating being just around the corner, that these people are never "clockwatchers". On the other hand nothing makes you "tired" faster then doing something boring. When I was bending over the hot drafting board later in America I used to get "dog tired" after eighth hours of "making lines" which is what basically drafting is about. Specially electronics where the injuneer is designing the circuit, which is the ONLY creative part of the job, and the draftsman is "transcribing" his pencil sketches into "legible" drawings. I had a supervisor at ITT by the name Stan Levendusky, who was a crackerjack mechanical designer, a nice guy but also a bundle of nerves. He used to go around exhorting his team thus: C'monyoufuckenguysMAKELINES!!" He knew what he was talking about. Yes, we had a few gals too but this was long before

Women's Lib was more than a wicked gleam in the eyes of their ^UFonding Mothers. For better or for worse. Now please dont misunderstand me. I think I can honestly say I'm a FAIR human being and being a jew I dont need anybody of either sexes ^{to explain} what it means to be discriminated against because you are a "minority" and/ or different. If you do the same job as competently as a man whether it is driving a bulldozer or heading up an engineering firm you should get every cent -and every respect - as a man do. But when a newspaper is advertising for a hangman, as the local paper here did not longtime ago, and a dimbulb writes a Letter to the Editor that hangman is a sexist expression and they should have advertised for a HANGPERSON or HANGER, things are getting out of hand. But I digressed. Sometime ago I mentioned the Jivaros and as soon as I tell anybody that I've worked for SHELL in their jungle hospital in Ecuador they all want to know about the Jivaro headhunters and their cute little shrunken heads. So here is what I know about them and their cute little shrunken heads, which is not much. I'm going to use the same copout as before and say that if you want to know more look it up in any number of specialized books which abound. First of all let me say that the Jivaros got all the bad press undeservedly, as it so often happens. They are nice guys who figth only their own enemies and leave everybody else alone. As far as I know SHELL never had any problems with them. The bad asses of the jungle are the AUCAS or as they are also called AUSHIRIS. They are the Irish of the jungle. They figth everybody. After SHELL pulled out of Ecuador a few months after I resigend, because they did not find anything but saltwater instead of OYEL, the Catholic

Missionaries took over the camp at SHELL MERA which was left more or less intact with all the medical and other supplies included . . . as it would have been more expensive to shlepp everything out by plane, which was the only way, than leave it there. In 1956 I've read in the local paper in Hackensack N.J. where I lived at that time, that the Aucas killed five Catholic Missionaries at the former camp of SHELL MERA. As I said they were very naughty dudes.

Nevertheless, as the Jivaros made those cute little shrunken heads you see in museums all over the world, I will dedicate a few words to this fascinating custom, but not before I warn you that most of these heads you see in private collections are fake, made from monkey heads, because this practice is strictly forbidden since years and severely punished if caught with a Jivaro's hand in the cookie jar so to say.

It goes without having to say that the exact modus operandi for shrinking heads is a strictly guarded trade secret of the witchdoctors, handed down from father to son. However by the best available intelligence collected by the missionaries, anthropologist and such, the basic steps are as given by the following RECIPE.

Shrunken Head à la Jivaro

Cut off one head.

Take it to your friendly neighborhood witchdoctor, who will abscond himself to the jungle and gather the approved herbs for the stock. After the head stopped drippping "jus" the witchdoctor will suture together the nostrils and lips of the donor to keep the ghost of same to escape and haunt him. Put a pot on the fire with enough water to hold the herbs and the head to be shrunk.

The witch M.D. will pick up his obsidian knife, the same kind his ancestors the Incas used for open heart surgery, and incise the the scalp righth down to the GALEA from the point where the SAGITTAL SUTURE and the CORONAL SUTURE of the cranium meets, extending it all the way down to the initial cut which resulted in the donorhead at hand. He will peel off the scalp now the same way you peel an orange. He will put the skin in the pot with the herbs and keep heating the water but be VERY careful NOT to bring it to a boil because if he does the hair will fall out and he might be out of a job. He will keep the skin in the hot water to the required time which is also part of the trade secret. When it is - I almost said al dente - time to get it out, he does, lets the water dripp off and stuffs it full with dried grass to absorb the remaining moisture and sutures the long incision shut. When this is done too, he takes out the grass and heats some sand and fills the skin with it, sutures the neck together, heats a smooth round stone and holding it with wooden thongs he uses it for smoothing out the wrinkles etc of the head. And as Lonesome George Gobel used to say when I was still watching the boob tube: "And theeeere you aaaare!!" The ready shrunken head will get hanged in the sacred hut with the others, to be admired and cherished by their proud owners.

Well, as the old saw goes, every good thing has to come to and end. After having enjoyed working my ass off around the clock some six months, wifeperson in Quito started to write me letters making it perfectly clear that she did not marry me so that I can play Doctor In the Jungle, and would I be good enough to drag my ass back to Quito with the first plane. She did not say ass of

course being the perfect lady she was, who never used such words in all the years I knew her - not very often in the Biblical sense I might add - but it came to the same thing nevertheless - ALAS!

The fact that I took the job in the first place must be a clear enough clue to the attentive reader, which I hope you are, that my ardent love I felt for her before I met her while in the Pioneer Corp, cooled definitely off long ago, to put it delicately.

However when this is admitted I still had to realize that she had a valid point saying that she being in Quito and myself in Shell Mera is not exactly what a marriage should be specially between a young couple, meaning young not so much in years, after all thirty are not teenagers, but in years being married.

So I gave notice and took the plane back to Quito. Needless to emphasize that I was hornier than the proverbial goat and although our sex life, or rather the lack of it, was one of the many reasons for our trouble in the marriage, others being what Trude so delicately called her "funny little ways", I was hoping that things will improve now that I'm back. Before going on with this delicate subject I think I should honestly admit that Trude made it very clear that she marries me with the clear understanding that we will have children. I readily agreed but with the condition that first we will have to live in our own country, have our own home and a steady job, good enough to make a modest living at least. Keeping this in mind we always used condoms. I wanted to carry on the same way but Trude said that she heard and read about a new system called the rythm method. I told her that I heard about it too but it seems to be unreliable. She countered with the remark that it is

unreliable only for woman whose periods are irregular and as I know hers are exact to the very day, which was true enough, trust my perfectionist wife. To make a long story shorter the name of our rythme method is Richard, he is six feet two inches, fourty three years old and a talented and well liked art teacher in New Jersey. He is not nearly as multi talented as his mother but fortunately not as crazy either.

Needless to say that as soon as we found out that Trude was preggie as the say in England, which was immediatly when she was more than a couple of days late, I did everything I could to make her realize that it is sheer madness in our situation to have a baby, all in vain. AS I used to work as private nurse with the best obstetrician in Quito, a sixty year old Checkoslovakian doctor, it would have been no problem to get her aborted, which Trude never lost a chance to tell Richard later. AS I said, more than once before, Trude never did anything halfway. She not just loved kids but WORSHIPPED them. She told me many times that all her friends in Vienna used to figth with her because she stopped at every baby carriage to stare at the baybee and make a fool of herself. Now that at long last her dream came true and have her very own baby she is not going to abort it, come hell or high water. My question of how are we going to manage in America with a new baby, no home, no jobs, no money was answered with "children bring their own money with them!" If there is anything what can get me ballistic every time, is when an intelligent person makes dumb remarks. Here was my genius wife and gives me the answer of a surerstitius peasant woman. I saw the writing on the wall and it was a premonitions of catastrophen

all of which became a reality in spades after we got to America. By then it was too late to do anything about it but try to SURVIVE the best we could.

Doctor Yaeger, our obstetrician told me that he has no intention to deliver Trude in that "Saustall" (pigstye) what passes for hospitals here and he will deliver her at home and I'll help him. He expected no complications and it will be I dont remember the exact number of the hundreds of babies he delivered in his long practice. The faithful day arrived on the tenth december. Trude being a primapara and thirty, did not have an easy time of it but she was very brave and Richard was borne without complications, but she had to have an episotomy (incision of the perineum). I helped the Doctor as much as I could and when everything was over I went to the kitchen to wash the doctor's instruments, about which I did not hear the end of for months afterwards, that it was more important for me to wash the instruments than to stay with her. AS the only instruments the doctor used was a pair of scissors for the episotomy^{a thumb forceps} and a needle holder to suture same, the washing of the instruments could not have taken longer than a couple of minutes, which for Trude's artistic imagination seemed like hours.

Trude's sister Georgie was supposed to stay with us for a couple of weeks to help Trude and she came up from G'quill. On the fourth day she came to me to say, Albin I'm going home. Eh? You were supposed to stay for a couple of weeks, no? Yeah but whatever I do is not good enough for her so I can just as well go back home to Puffi (Hans' nickname) and Susie. So we had to hire a muchacha to wash the diapers and another for cleaning the house as Trude

spent whatever little energy she had on the baby. I assume that this will put me squarely on the shit list of Woman's Lib but I must honestly admit that I told Trude as soon as she became preggie not to count on my help with the baby, which she took for granted anyway. In those days for an European man to be "mother's helper" was unheard of. A man who would have been seen pushing a baby carriage would have been the laughingstock of the town. We're talking about the early fifties and I've no idea what was the custom here in America. Trude was watching the baby as a hawk every minute . . . never letting any of the muchachas even near him, I asked her what is she intend to do in America and she told me that she is going to be a fulltime mother untill Richie is going to be ready to go to school. Not even 'freelancing as ^{in Vienna?} NO. It is the man's job to bring home the bacon, she told me. This gave me nighmares, all of which coming true after we got to America. Here is my genius wife and a worldclass advertising artist - worldclass ^{not} to be confused with worldfamous - who made up her mind that she is going to be a fulltime mother for six years, while I the no-talent guy with no special skills will have the full responsibility to make sure that we have at least the basic necessities. What little I knew about Jacquard design most of it I forgot and was completely out of touch with the industry for some nine years even by now, and we're not even in America yet.

While I was working . . . in SHELL MERA Trude got a job as secretary at PHILIPS which was at that time the largest electronics outfit in Holland with it's HQ in Eindhoven, which was for all practical purposes a PHILIPS town. Shortly I after I came

back to Quito on Trude's invitation, in March 1949, Trude told me that PHILIPS is looking for a stockroom clerck and he asked her boss, who was a German Jew, if I could come in for an interview, to which he agreed. So I went to see him and he explained what the situation is and what the job involves. PHILIPS was selling everything from electric shavers to fluoroscopes and in between and stocking spare parts for most and also having a repair service for them. They have no stockroom clerck (to save money, which he didnt say of course) the technicians just walking into the stockroom taking the spare parts what they need and putting them back what they dont - anywhere. The technicians were all from Ecuador except the lead man because it was in the contract that they have to hire the natives for every position they can handle. To make a long story short, according to him, the stockroom is such a mess now that they had to cancel all requests for repairing appliances because they cant find any of the spare parts anymore. If I think I can handle this mess and re-organize the whole stockroom from scratch he would like to take me upstairs and show what it is all about. As I needed the job badly I'd little choice but tell him I want to see it. The stockroom was large with shelves all around the walls up to the ceiling filled chockablock with spare parts overflowing to the floor. I knew of course nothing from nothing as far as the spare parts were concerned but he told me that everything has a code number and every part is listed in the catalogs. My job would be to match the code numbers with the catalog numbers and put them on the shelves according to some system I find best, label everything on the shelves so that one can find them easily.

Could I do it? I told him that I seem to specialize in these kinds of jobs as I did something similar in the jungle hospital for SHELL just recently. This is better as I dont have to scrub down the shelves and walls as I had to do there. Well, then you are the perfect man for the job he said laughing. Yes, but I've one condition before I agree to do it. What is that? This door will stay locked untill I finished. I dont want a technician come here for as much as a washer. Agreed. - After working like a maniac for some two weeks I went downstairs and told The Boss I'm open for business and he is invited to be my first customer. He came upstairs, looked around and said, this place looks better than ever did. Now I would like to see if it works as well as it looks. I gave him a catalog and suggested he asks for a spare part of his choice. He gave me the number, I walked over the proper shelf picked it out with effortless ease and gave it to him. He gave me another number, same story. Well Erwin, I never thought I'll see the day to have a storeroom which works and looks like this. Thanks Boss. Did he gave me a bonus or a raise? You gotta be kidding. The pay was lousy, barely more then at SHELL where I'd fullboard and lodging, so I kept my eyes open for a better paid job.

While working for Philips I came face to face with an aspect of life in Ecuador I didnt really notice before. The truly grinding poverty of the native indian, called cholo, by everybody else. Occasionally we had to fetch merchandise from the train station and get it to the store. This was accomplished by hiring laborers, called trabajadores. What these unfortunate people actually are, can be called only human pack animals, and even so I'm upgrading

their status because pack animals in the West are pampered compared to these trabajadores. They use enormous netzes made of rawhide supported by a tumpline on their foreheads. When these netzes are fully loaded they reach their ankles, barely clearing the ground and the top of the load reaches sometimes as high over their heads as the part below their heads. The amount of cargo these people are able to carry is unbelievable if you didn't see it. These poor cholos worked for a pittance. They live on a couple of bananas and a few ears of corn on the cob per day. Their "wordly goods" consist of the rawhide netz, a handwoven poncho and a pair of sandals made of old car tires. They hang around at the main plaza, waiting to be hired for a couple of hours of work. When they see a gringo coming they all run because they know we gringos pay a bit better.

Something else I saw in Quito was in a lighter vein. We had some kind of National Holiday, I forgot the name of it and of course the whole town was nicely decorated with flowers and garlands, the whole bit, and ^{the} Regimental Music of the army was going all out in their fancy uniforms too. As you probably noticed the smaller and poorer the country the fancier the uniforms of the army in general and the military band in particular. The drummers had white gauntlets and white leather aprons and they were beating the hell out of their drums when one of the drummer had to answer nature's call, as it is said in polite circles. He lifted delicately his white apron and let loose with a healthy stream getting an enthusiastic applause and roars of laughter from the bystanders. The drum major sizing up the situation with well practiced eyes,

walked over to the guy and gave him a terrific kick in the ass which did not hinder the fellow from finishing the task at hand, after which he dropped his apron and picked up his beat with great panache.

After working five weeks for Philips as stockroom clerck, keeping my eyes open for another job with better pay, not only compliments which does not pay for food or pay the rent, my luck changed. I saw an ad in the paper from an American highway and sanitation engineering firm HAROLD T. SMITH, looking for draftsman. I used to hate drafting in higschool with such a passion that I paid another guy to do my drawings. The drafting teacher was no fool and recognized the expert hands of the Datan Brothers who made nice money by servicing two different clientels in two price ranges. One of them did the cheaper qualities for people like me who just wanted to "pass" while the others did the prime stuff for the "strivers". As drafting was not what we call here "majors" everybody was happy, including the teacher, who did not have to correct all the shitwork from hotshots like me.

As it turned out life can play very dirty tricks on people. The only way I could make a fairly decent living later in America for some thirty years, was as a draftsman in electronics. But to get to the beginning of my career as such I went to see Harold T. Smith in my lunchtime while working at Philips. The whole crew was sitting outside the building on the steps, bullshitting when I walked over and asked if anybody is speaking English? A young handsome lanky guy wearing fancy cowboy boots got up and said, I do, my name is Dick Merkey and I'm the Chief draftsman of this outfit, can

I help you? My name is Erwin Fuchs and I'd like to inquire about the job you had in the paper for draftsmen. Well, lets go in and talk it over. I had the hunch righth from the start that we'll hit it off fine and my hunch was righth. He wanted to know of course how much and what kind of experience I've? I was always reluctant to make a horses ass of myself if I can help it and of course there was only one thing to do, tell the truth that I did not do any drafting since highscool. Remembering the wit who said lets not carry moderation to extremes, I kept my dislike for drafting to myself. Dick told me not to worry about anything he will teach me from scratch and having no experience is even better so I didnt pick up bad habits. He also assured me that the kind of drafting they do is very simple, just drawing lines for pipes being laid down, and all the symbols for valves etc etc are being made by templates. All you have to learn is decent freehand lettering. I told him this shouldnt be a big problem as my wife is an advertising artist who is specializing in lettering which was of course true. He offeerd me a starting pay which was much better than what I made at Philips. So when can you start Erwin? Howbout tomorrow I say. Fine with me! Lets shake on it! My boss at Philips was not very happy about my quitting without giving a weeks notice but I gave him a cock and bull story that the vacancy wont wait for me. -

Dick told me not to buy any kinds of supply as it is furnished by the outfit. The Senior Dsigner turned out to be a Viennese jew about sixty by the name of Husserl who was OK most of the time. The Chief of engineering was an old German gentleman about eigthy, whose name I forgot but what I remember is that he was one

of the designers of the Panama Canal and I kid you not. He was an absolutely incredible old gent who was there every morning long before anybody else was and was still burning the oil as they say when all of us left the office. He signed off and checked every damn single drawing and they better be perfect.

As I said I hit it off with Dick right from the first day. Once he came over to my board and asked me, do you know why did I hire you Erwin? To tell you the truth I could never figure it out. I wanted to have somebody I can bullshit with a little. These guys speak only Spanish and my own Spanish is just good enough to take care of the official business, but nobody wants to work every minute all day, right? I wanted to have somebody I can chew the fat a bit when I feel like it, and look what I got, a guy who turned out to do more work in one day than these clowns do in four and he has all those great stories from the Foreign Legion and the Brits to boot! Cant beat it with a hammer! We had a good laugh. He told me the native guys turn out drawings beautiful enough to hang on the wall but they take an eternity and who needs that for a working drawing to be used in the field by the technicians.

After working for them for four months Dick came to tell me that we finished the project - we were supposed to design a completely new water supply system for Quito - but the Old Gent agreed, on Dick's request of course, to keep me on for a couple of months longer to tie up the odds and ends, which is only fair as Dick said as we finished months ahead of schedule due to your non South American output. We exchanged later fond farewells and pictures which I still have in my files.

AS it turned out Harold T. Smith lost the contract to another because they were unwilling to grease palms, standard operating procedure in all South America, so the whole outfit returned to the States. So I was out of work again. Fortunately soon afterwards we got our second visa to America. The big problem was how to get enough money together for our plane ticket? From the little money Trude and I was able to make during these two years we barely had enough for our living expenses. It became soon obvious that the only way we can scratch together the money is by panhandling the Jewish Community and whatever we can get from the HIAS (Hebrew Immigrants Aid Society). As Trude was watching the baby every minute it became my pleasant task to undergo this new experience in my somewhat eventful life. I started out with the refugee doctors I've worked with, continued with my former patients ending up with everybody else I have missed. In all fairness to them most of them were very nice and understanding and did the best they could, to help us.

I'm ashamed to admit that with all my Diaries and other notes I'm hitting now a blank wall of two months about which I've no records whatever nor do I remember a damn thing. I know I had nightmares thinking about landing in our new country, homeless, jobless, penniless with a new baby. Trude's friends in Park Ridge N.J. told us that we can stay with them a "short time" until we find our own place but the way they put it, it was obvious that it is not going to be a day longer than necessary. I know we landed in New York in 1950 between the 10th of August and the 10th of October but the exact day is a mystery to this day. I looked in my

Travel Document issued by the Brits for Ecuador but there is no American Visa in it or anything concerning our trip from Ecuador to America. The only thing I can imagine is that the American Consulate issued us some kind of temporary Travel Document again which I had to give up when I took out my first American passport right after I became an American Citizen on the 7th March 1956 and never again was I without a VALID American passport to this day 20th March 1993, expiring in 1995. I don't know what would a shrink make of this when there are millions of Americans who never took out a passport all their life. Perhaps I just wanted to reassure myself that I'm not homeless and stateless anymore.