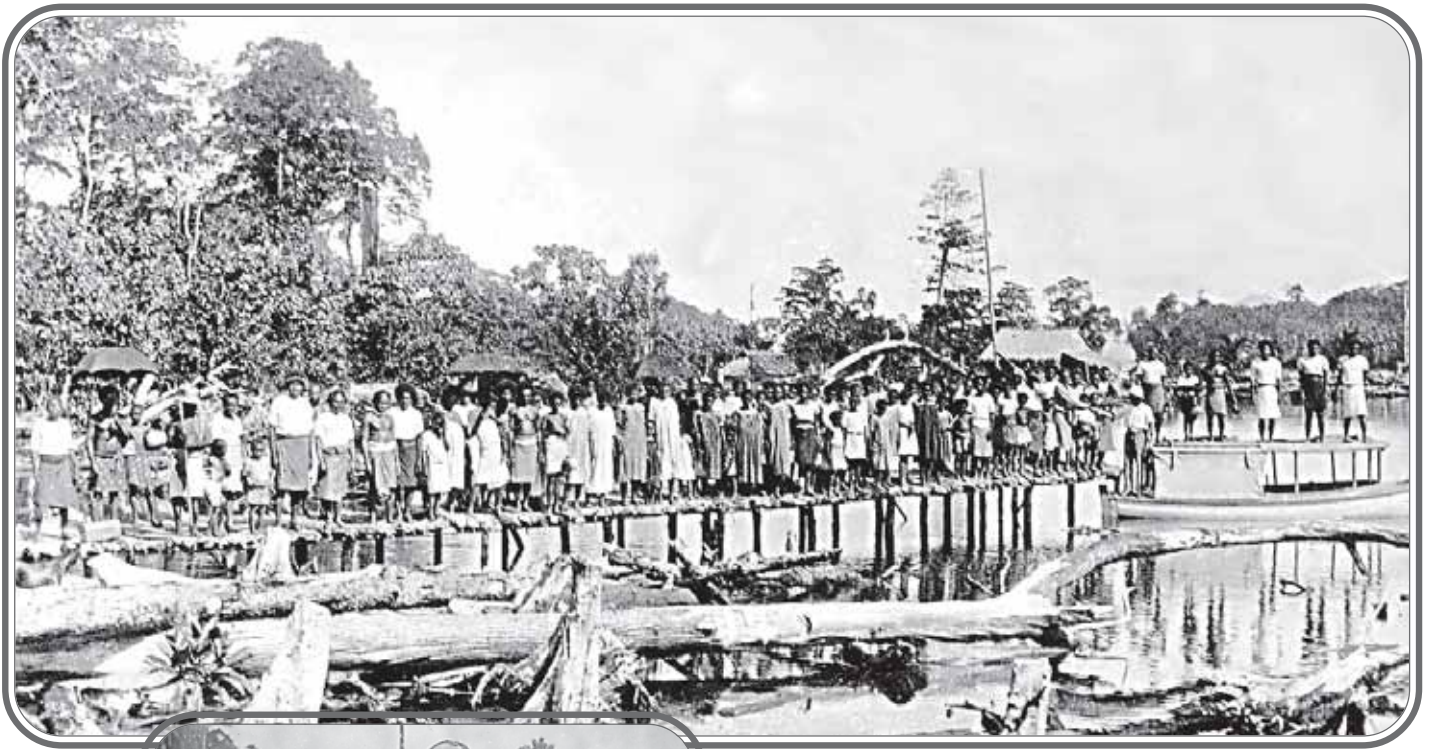


# *Journal of Pacific Adventist History*

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## Journal of Pacific Adventist History

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### Statement of Mission

*Journal of Pacific Adventist History* serves historians, members and others interested in the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific Islands. It focuses on people and events involved in the establishment and development of the church in preparation for the event of the ages—the Second Coming of Christ.

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\* The pictures on the front cover are members in the Marovo Lagoon district keenly awaiting the arrival of the missionaries on their return to the Solomons towards the end of WW II. Pr Norman Ferris reunited with three friends.

## Editorial

### Our Precious Heritage



*We in the South Pacific have a heritage of faith which is worth preserving. The history of the Adventist work in the South Pacific Islands is relatively young and still evolving. Much of the documentation of this history has been lost over time. All historians need resources to confirm the facts. There is a need for all of us to respond to the call to collect information on and about the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific Islands before it is gone forever.*

*Tucked away within the Avondale College Library (Cooranbong, Australia) is the 'Adventist Heritage Centre', which houses a vast array of documents, personal papers, books, magazines, photographs, films, electronic recordings, textiles, artifacts and other material about the Seventh-day Adventist Church within Oceania. This Centre is considered to be the best regional Adventist archive in the world. In the past many have responded to the appeals made but there is still much that we can all do.*

*This issue opens with part two of Dr Arnold Reye's fascinating analysis of the return of the missionaries to the Solomon Islands following World War II. In this article he documents the frustrating position the church found itself in when they attempted to return missionaries to the islands. You will also learn how missionaries have adapted to fluctuating cultural attitudes on the Rai Coast of New Guinea; and how cultural change influenced the need for new directions in the Central Pacific Union Mission youth ministry.*

*You will be enthralled to read how the Jones Missionary College music training program contributed much to the success of the school. The story about the early days of Adventist aviation in PNG, will show you what challenges were faced. The life and service of Ellen Meyers to the Fijian Indians will leave you asking, could I do that?*

*Ask yourself, how can I contribute? Have I resources which would be better housed in the Heritage Centre and thus made available to others? Have I a story to tell or some issue I would like to research? Let us do our part while we wait for the biggest event in the history of the world—the Second Coming of Jesus.*

*Rose-lee Power, Curator  
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Avondale College Library where the Adventist Heritage Centre is located, on the right on the ground floor.

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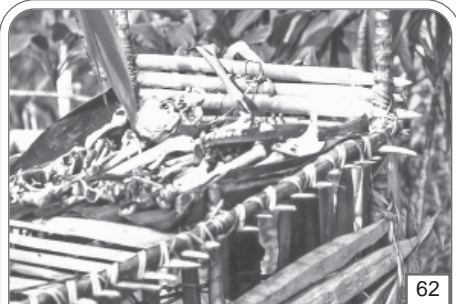
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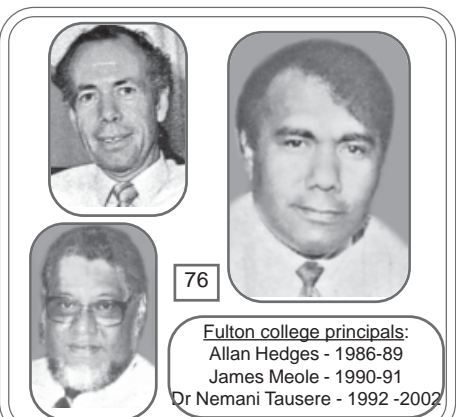
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# They Did Return!

## The resumption of the Adventist Mission in the Solomon Islands after World War II—Part 2

ARNOLD REYE



SEE CV IN VOL 2 #2

**Synopsis:** Although Japanese strongholds were cleared from Guadalcanal, the Floridas and Malaita by January 1943, it took nearly two years of negotiations to receive permission for some missionaries to return. Not being fully aware of the complexity of operations in a war zone, and being concerned over lack of progress, the officers of the AUC were frustrated and impatient. However, in January 1945, the Solomon Islands Resident agreed to the return of David Ferris and John Gosling, and in April, Norman Ferris.

THE RETURN OF EXPATRIATE MISSIONARIES to the Solomon Islands proceeded in three phases. While each phase had the overarching intent of the well-being of the Adventist presence in the Solomon Islands, there was also a more specific purpose. The intent of the first phase—the return of Pastors David and Norman Ferris, and John Gosling—was medical. These men, with an extensive knowledge of the Solomon Islands and Adventist missions, had the medical and practical skills to make an immediate impact upon the lives of the national people. They returned without their wives and families. The intent of the second phase was the re-establishment of an administrative presence and the capacity for post-war reconstruction. This involved the return to the Solomons of the new Superintendent, Pastor Herbert White, the Secretary-Treasurer, Archibald R Barrett, Lyndon R Thrift, headmaster-designate of the Batuna Training School, and Frank Aveling as engineer and manager of the Batuna Saw Mill. With the exception of Lyndon Thrift, these men were accompanied by their wives and families. The third phase was the more general return of missionaries, their wives and families, and new appointees to the Solomons.

### Pastors David and Norman Ferris, and John Gosling

Immediately upon receiving word in early March 1945 that David Ferris and John Gosling had been granted permission to proceed to the Solomon Islands, the Mission Board directed the two men to proceed via New Zealand. It was thought this would prove to be the quickest route. It was not until late April, however, that the AUC officers were able to record that Ferris and Gosling were on their way. The two men followed the supply route established by the American forces in the Solomons, namely, Wellington-Noumea-Tenaru (off Henderson Field) and, like the 1st Marines had in 1942, they disembarked by landing craft. Any temptation to follow General MacArthur's example and to publicly exclaim "We have returned!" was, however, tempered by Mother Nature. David Ferris explained: "Our landing was unceremonious for

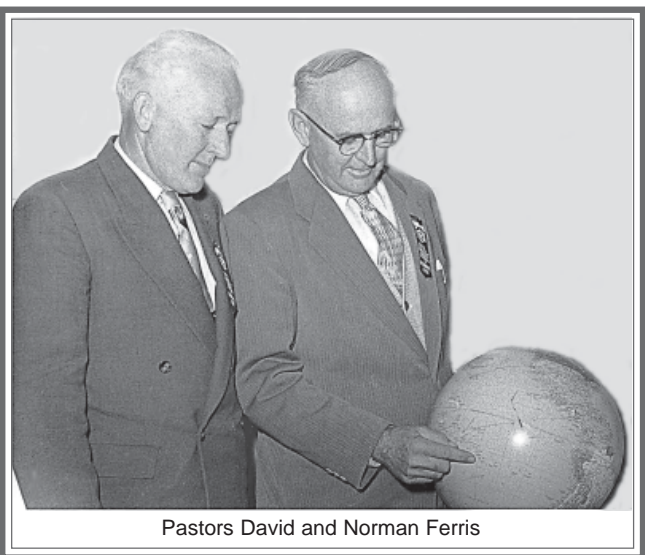
as we approached the beach a heavy shower wet us all thoroughly, and so effectively eliminated any suggestion of the dramatic." He recalled, however, that it was "with a sense of awe that we awaited the grounding on the beach and the lowering of the landing-stage on a spot where a little while back such far-reaching issues, that vitally concerned us all, were decided."<sup>26</sup>

Given a temporary residence at Lunga Point by a BSIP official, Ferris and Gosling quickly made contact with a number of Adventist young men working for the Americans and three joined them for *lotu* that first evening. Although not available to them, they were encouraged to note the *Dadarata* at anchor off the beach. As they met and talked with more and more Adventist young men they learned much of what had happened in their absence and, amongst other things, of the positive influence upon the nationals of Adventists serving within the United States armed forces. These military personnel supported the Adventist labourers and church leaders at every opportunity and helped the national believers perceive the Adventist Church as worldwide. This did much for local morale.<sup>27</sup>

As noted previously, permission for Norman Ferris to return to the Solomons had been somewhat delayed, but by late April 1945 advice was received from the BSIP administration that he could proceed. Unlike his brother and John Gosling, Norman Ferris returned to the Solomons from the west. With authority from Canberra and a letter directing that he receive "assistance through the areas", Ferris flew from Sydney to Brisbane, where he boarded a troop ship bound for Cape Torokina, Bougainville.



John Gosling



Pastors David and Norman Ferris

Cape Torokina, located in Empress Augusta Bay on the western coast of Bougainville was liberated by the Americans from the Japanese in November 1943 and became a key Allied base. A year later responsibility for the base was assumed by the Australian army. Torokina was essentially an Allied enclave with large concentrations of Japanese to the south and north on Bougainville and the major Japanese centre at Rabaul was within easy aircraft range. Nevertheless, of Torokina it was said that it was “about as pleasant a beach-head as one could hope for.” Throughout 1944 and until the Japanese surrender on 14 August 1945 the military forces at Torokina fought against nature, the terrain and the Japanese to expand the base perimeter. It was tough going. Months after the surrender, small groups of Japanese were being disarmed by the nationals and brought to Torokina.<sup>28</sup> Thus, as Norman Ferris transited this base in early June 1945, it was still highly operational and a very real part of the war zone.

At Torokina, to Norman Ferris’s delight, he met up with three Australians working for ANGAU: Rod Fowler, Lawrence Gilmore, and Len Barnard. During their brief time together Gilmore and Barnard showed Ferris photographs they had taken of inland New Guinea and the three discussed the potential for an Adventist mission station at Banga between the Chimbu and Mt Hagen. Although he conceded it was a digression, Ferris could not refrain from advising the AUC that it would be great for Gilmore and Barnard to relocate there as soon as possible.<sup>29</sup>

Although not within the province of the Solomon Islands Mission, Ferris was the first Adventist minister to visit Bougainville since Cyril Pascoe had been forced to evacuate. As a representative of the Adventist Church he was therefore implored by the Adventist nationals to intercede with military authorities on their behalf. With fighting still taking place on Bougainville, military authorities had drafted all available men for essential services and the transport of military equipment. Over twenty Adventists, including two pastors and a number of teachers, were being forced to work on Sabbaths. Appreciating the dilemma faced by these men, Ferris immediately sought an interview with the officer in charge of the labour corps. Although no assurances were given, the officer expressed his understanding of the situation and agreed to draft a letter to higher authorities seeking the release of Adventist men from Sabbath duties.<sup>30</sup>

Ferris’s final leg of the journey back to the Solomons was as a passenger in a large American transport plane. As he flew from Torokina to Guadalcanal, he marvelled that a distance previously requiring two-day’s uncomfortable travel on the *Melanesia* was accomplished in one hour and twenty minutes by plane.<sup>31</sup>

Upon their arrival at Lunga Point, all three men took the first opportunity to leave the Lunga Point area and to re-establish contact with mission stations, make assessment with regard to the condition of the national churches, evaluate the status of the mission plant and equipment, and to ensure the programs associated with each mission station were operating. David Ferris and John Gosling had proceeded to Kwailibesi on Malaita. In a letter home to his wife, and later printed in the *Australasian Record*, David Ferris was able to advise that the Japanese, although they had seen the mission from the air and thought it a likely place for a military base, had not occupied the compound. They had been dissuaded from doing so by the national leader, Toata, who had described the mission site to the Japanese commander as swampy, the buildings broken down, and the place generally unfit for habitation. This misinformation was accepted and the Japanese did not even bother to reconnoitre the site. David Ferris was delighted to report that the nationals had taken the precaution of dismantling the medical clinic and mission equipment and hiding the parts among the villages and islands. Ferris was also pleased to report that the parts had now been returned and “there is not an article missing.” Furthermore, although the mission station at Kwailibesi had remained unoccupied for two years, on their own initiative the nationals had recommenced the school at the beginning of 1945 and had begun the task of reclaiming the mission compound from the encroaching wilderness.<sup>32</sup>

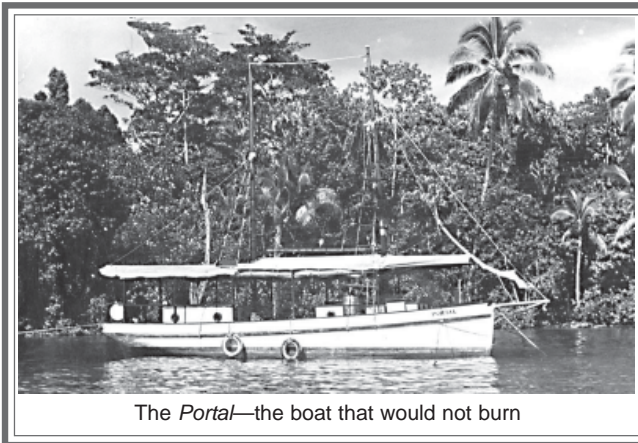
Norman Ferris began his assessment of Mission property with a return to Batuna. Perchance, as the boat Ferris had obtained passage on came abreast of Telina, a large sailing canoe came out from the shore and to everyone’s delight it contained Ragoso. It transpired Ragoso was on his way to Viru “to dedicate a new church, to baptize a number, and to marry two couples.” Deciding to delay the tasks at Viru, the Ragoso party provided an enthusiastic escort for the remainder of the trip to Batuna. Although Batuna had been occupied by both the Japanese and later the Americans, Ferris found

the Mission headquarters in very good condition. Due principally to the “courageous faithfulness” of Ragoso, the mission was “back to its pre-war condition.” The surrounding villages had been re-established and village routines were back to normal. Furthermore, the maternity hospital was functioning and was reasonably stocked with equipment and medical supplies. Ferris noted: “This is the first section of the Solomons group to return to normal life and this is largely due to Ragoso’s able leadership.”<sup>33</sup>

One of the first tasks Ferris set himself was the restoration of the *Portal* to working condition. It was essential for the Mission to have at least one



Kwailibesi hospital restored after the war. The patients waiting for treatment



The *Portal*—the boat that would not burn

boat at its disposal to facilitate rehabilitation of the Mission program. The story of the *Portal*, the ship that would not burn, is well-known within Adventist circles. In brief, at the time the Adventist missionaries left the Solomons, two mission boats, the *Portal* and the *Vinaritokae* were under repairs at Batuna and without their engines. Rago arranged for both boats to be hidden under trees in a nearby river. Major Donald Kennedy had issued a directive that should any local boat appear likely to fall into enemy hands, it was to be burned and rendered unusable. Kennedy should not be criticised for this for it was prudent war-time thinking—if you cannot use it, deny it to the enemy. With the Japanese about to occupy Batuna, the directive was given to destroy the *Portal* and *Vinaritokae*. With heavy hearts the nationals who had cared for the boats piled bundles of dry coconut leaf over them and then doused this with cans of methylated spirits. The *Vinaritokae* quickly burned, but when the match was applied to the *Portal* there was an explosion that actually put the fire out. Believing this an act of Providence, the men quickly hid the hull, removed the spars and working parts and distributed them among the local villagers.<sup>34</sup>

Neither Kennedy nor the Japanese were aware of the *Portal*'s continuing existence, but Norman Ferris's return to Batuna heralded the re-appearance of the *Portal* and the return of working parts. So began the mammoth task of refitting the vessel. In addition to the refurbishment of the hull, topsides, spars and rigging, a major task was removing all rust and reconstructing the engine, drive shaft, bearings, and propeller. This required making the metal lathe operative and in the process getting the sawmill engine working.<sup>35</sup> The shared tasks in getting the *Portal* seaworthy proved great for morale and when completed gave the Mission its first post-war vessel. The other boats were still in government employ.

Whereas David Ferris and John Gosling quickly focused on getting a medical work re-established on Malaita, Norman Ferris made sure the maternity hospital at Batuna was functioning. Norman Ferris was given an additional brief by the AUC officers. His task was to complete a survey of the main mission stations and to report on the condition of each. Not only did the AUC want this informa-

tion for its own planning, but it was essential that the BSIP government be advised of damage in the event of reparation becoming available. Furthermore, although not the designated Mission Superintendent, Norman Ferris was in the interim to liaise with the BSIP administration. However, lest he take too much responsibility to himself in dealing with government, the AUC officers reminded him "that his relationship to matters connected with the Solomon Islands is one of giving advice and furnishing information, but that all decisions which in any way affected the government be made by the Australasian Union Conference officers or Committee."<sup>36</sup>

One of the early matters Norman Ferris reported upon was his reception by officers of the BSIP. Upon first arrival back in the Solomons he met Major Martin Clements. The two men knew each other from the pre-war days and the meeting was most cordial. Evidently the matter of Church-BSIP relationships was discussed for Ferris reported: "There were many complaints against the present administration and its restrictions, but since my short stay I have sufficient evidence to know that the administration is limited in its activities and is certainly trying to do its best. It has given me every assistance possible." It was clear to Ferris that the BSIP officers were themselves looking forward to the pullout of the American forces and to the resumption of full control by the Resident Commissioner.<sup>37</sup>

The earlier concerns about government attitudes toward the Adventist Mission were in part dispelled when in July 1945 the BSIP wrote to the AUC with a number of suggestions. First, they were keen to see the Amyes Memorial Hospital, Kolombangara, re-opened and asked whether the Mission would consider transferring David Ferris from Malaita. Second, they recommended that Mrs Gosling join her husband on Malaita to provide medical support. The third issue proposed that the Adventist Mission establish a small hospital on the eastern side of Malaita. This latter suggestion took the AUC officers by surprise and a little time was spent discussing the likely impact of the suggestion on the clinic and work at Kwailibesi. In fact it was not until 1966 that Atoifi Adventist Hospital was opened in eastern Malaita.<sup>38</sup> The Mission Board agreed, however, to the immediate relocation of David Ferris to the Amyes Memorial Hospital and that at the earliest opportunity Mrs Ivy Gosling join her husband on Malaita.<sup>39</sup>



Pastor Reuben Hare (centre) at the Amyes Memorial hospital after its restoration. John Gosling is on the left and Pastor David Ferris on the right.



The arrival of the missionaries at Batuna



Ida & Frank Aveling with their two children and Lyndon Thrift ( on the right) on their arrival at Batuna.



Arch Barrett and his wife Hilda—earlier days in Batuna, Marovo, Western Solomons



Batuna Mission station from the air

A short time later Norman Ferris reported that his brother David had the Amyes Hospital back into full swing with about forty in-patients and many day patients.<sup>40</sup> From the Church's perspective, it was reassuring to note that BSIP officials were factoring in an Adventist contribution to the post-war development of medical infrastructure in the Solomons.

### The Administrative and Service Team

The administrative team arrived at Torokina in the latter part of November 1945. Those who traveled in this group were: (1) the superintendent designate, Pastor Herbert White, Mrs Vera White and twin daughters, Yvonne and Veronica; (2) the secretary-treasurer, Pastor Archibald R Barrett and Mrs Hilda Barrett; (3) the designated engineer and manager of the Batuna saw mill, Mr Frank Aveling, his wife Ida, and two children; (4) Mrs Ivy Gosling and two children; and (5) the newly appointed headmaster of the Batuna Training School, Lyndon R Thrift. Although recently married, Lyn Thrift travelled alone as there was no building at Batuna in which the Thrifts might set up home. Grace Thrift was not able to join her husband until a year later. There was one further person in the Adventist group, namely Reuben Hare who, as secretary of the AUC Mission Board, was on his way to investigate the treatment of Ragoso by Donald Kennedy. This group left Sydney on 26 November 1945 and travelled on the Burns Philp steamer *Montoro* to Torokina, arriving on 27 November. Apart from two military persons, the Adventist party made up the total passenger list. While the missionary party proceeded in the spirit of adventure for God and with calm assurance in His strength to meet the challenges that lay ahead of them, they travelled above spirits of another nature. The *Montoro* was laden with a volatile cargo of gasoline and spiritous liquor. The latter intended for the Christmas cheer of military personnel.<sup>41</sup>

From Torokina arrangements had been made to transport the missionary group to the Solomons by smaller vessels. As the *Montoro* moved to its moorings the veteran Barrett immediately recognised three Mission boats in port: the *Dadavata*, the *G F Jones*, and the *Portal*. While the first two were still under government control they served the needs of the Mission when convenient. Norman Ferris and Kata Ragoso were also on hand to meet the group and they quickly broke the group into smaller elements and assigned them to the three craft. It so happened that the *G F Jones*, still manned by a government crew, received a message that she was urgently needed to transport government officials from parts of the Solomons to Tulagi. In consequence there was a mad rush to off-load baggage from the *Montoro* and to quickly embark



the Aveling and Gosling families and Lyndon Thrift. They headed to Kukudu.<sup>42</sup>

The White family, with Reuben Hare, were assigned to the *Portal* and accompanied by Norman Ferris and Ragoso proceeded without drama to Kukudu. The Barretts, accompanied by two Solomon Island workers, Hoke and Tati, were assigned the *Dadavata* but they had an unexpected adventure. Their immediate destination was Dovele. Unfortunately, the hard wear-and-tear of war-time service finally caught up and two engine cylinders cracked. Providentially, however, the breakdown occurred as the ship was off the Shortland Islands and the sea was cooperative. The crew launched the ship's dinghy and successfully towed the *Dadavata* to an anchorage. From there locals carried a message to the nearest radio station and news of the breakdown got through to Kukudu. Eventually the *Dadavata* party was overjoyed to have the *Portal* alongside and the journey was completed under tow.<sup>43</sup> With their arrival the administrative team was back in the Solomons.

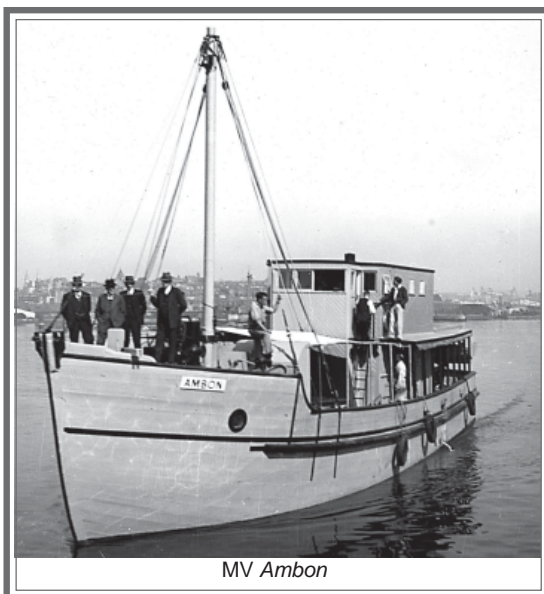
From Kukudu the *Portal* took over the task of conveying the headquarters group to Batuna. Back in their former home, the Barretts were delighted that the only real damage to the house was a bullet hole in the front door. While physical damage to Batuna was minimal, although occupied by both the Japanese and the US Marines, Barrett had no illusions about the task before the administrative team. He wrote: "The work ahead is mountainous, with every indication of a long, hard pull. . . and much effort will be required to re-establish everything on a proper footing in order that the field may begin to advance immediately." Apart from the resolution of the missionaries, Barrett was greatly encouraged by the attitude of the nationals. Their spirit was good and he declared: "Confidence in the message! Just mention it."<sup>44</sup>

### The Third Wave

The third phase in the re-staffing of the Solomon Islands with expatriate missionaries took place in the latter part of 1946. Two factors caused the delay in despatching the full staff complement. First, houses had to be repaired and new houses built to accommodate the missionary families and medical staff. The second had to do with transportation. While the administrative team had managed to obtain passage on the *Montoro*, the next group of missionaries faced months of

frustration in trying to obtain passage to the Solomons. From the Mission Board's perspective the solution lay in acquiring its own ocean-going vessel. The AUC therefore purchased the MV *Ambon* from W R Carpenter and Co. and refitted it as a supply vessel for Adventist missions in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Furthermore, the smaller boats in the Solomon Islands fleet were fully utilised in meeting local mission demands and could ill afford the time required to make the longer trips from Batuna to Torokina. Thus the *Ambon* solved two problems: getting the missionaries to their bases and providing a regular service once they were there. It may be recalled that the *Ambon* under Captain Jack Radley had played a role in evacuating expatriate families from New Britain in January 1942.<sup>45</sup> As a further bonus, Captain Radley elected to be a part of the bargain and undertook to command the *Ambon* in its new role.

On 15 September the *Ambon* set sail from Sydney with a crew of seven New Guineans, supplemented with five acting crew: Lester N Lock, John K L Fletcher, Wallace R Ferguson, Lloyd Tonkin and A L Whitehead. Mrs Radley was stewardess. John Fletcher described the first part of the journey from Sydney to Port Moresby. The journey began at 6.30 a.m. The 'acting crew' enjoyed a hearty breakfast of granola and eggs on toast as they coasted through Sydney Harbour. Soon after clearing the Heads, however, Fletcher and two others were vowing never to eat granola and eggs again. They experienced in full the wretchedness of *mal-de-mer*. However, they were on the boat to assist in its sailing and so, wrote Fletcher, "we had to drag ourselves (and our buckets) to the wheel and do our best to keep the ship off the rocks." In due course sea legs were acquired as the *Ambon* made its way northwards at eight knots along the Eastern Australian coast. Off the Sunshine Coast the novitiates amongst the crew were introduced to the challenge of weathering a tropical cyclone. The cyclone successfully overcome, there was welcome relief in passing Fraser Island and moving into the comparative shelter of the Great Barrier Reef. The trip from Sydney to Port Moresby took sixteen days with the only break being an unscheduled stop at uninhabited Lizard Island, north of Cooktown, where they refilled water tanks and spent a restful Sabbath. At Port Moresby the *Ambon* was met by Dr Cyril Evans, nurse O Lucas, and wives and families who had flown ahead. Four days later this augmented group set sail for Honiara and for deploy-



MV Ambon



1. Jack & Rose Radley
2. John & Betty Fletcher
3. Nurse Olga Lucas
4. Lloyd & Marion Tonkin



Pastor Herbert White

ment to the various mission stations.<sup>46</sup>

From when it first began the process in mid-1943, it had taken the AUC Mission Board over three years to fully staff the Solomon Islands Mission. This considerable time lag was due to the following factors: (1) a failure to fully understand the impediments to civilians in a war zone—it was not simply a case of walking back in; (2) the time required to evaluate

the effect of the fighting on the physical plants at the various mission stations; (3) the need to repair, replace and construct new houses and buildings to accommodate missionary families and (4) the logistics of getting personnel from Sydney to the Solomon Islands at a time when transport was still focused on the war effort and civilian needs were secondary. That the task was completed by late 1946 was due to the hand of Providence in preserving the Church's assets in a war zone, the faithfulness of national leaders and members in caring for mission property and equipment, and the practical skills and energy of those who led the return to the Solomons. There still remained, however, the task of reconstructing and developing the Church in the Solomon Islands.

### **Reconstruction: The New Pattern of Things**

Upon his arrival at Batuna the new superintendent, Pastor Herbert White, began the task of familiarising himself with his responsibilities. While he had read the reports of the impact of the war written by others, and had been briefed by Norman Ferris and Kata Ragoso, White had to see for himself the extent and needs of the Mission. A visionary and blessed with boundless energy, within the first few months White travelled over 5000 kms, made his own on-the-spot evaluations, and shared the results with the home field through the *Australasian Record*.<sup>47</sup>

In his article, White highlighted the physical needs of his mission: the boats that had seen extensive war-time service required extensive servicing including replacement engines, existing buildings required repair and repainting and new houses were required to replace those destroyed during the war and meet the needs of an expanding staff. With regard to medical equipment White advised that much was lost during the war, but this was more than replaced by equipment gifted by the American forces. Furthermore, the young nationals who had served in military hospitals were now available to work in medical mission service. He particularly emphasised the inadequacy of the educational program to meet the needs of the children and youth and to provide the church with a well-educated national ministry. He reiterated the crucial role of the Sabbath School and the JMV and MV programs in stabilising members, children and youth. It was therefore important that translating and printing work at Batuna be continued and strengthened.

White shared his appreciation of the manner in which church members had during the war years “stood out clean and strong, and proved themselves faithful stewards of the Lord's property.” He was impressed with the level of spiritu-

ality amongst the many congregations and groups he had met and with their keenness to re-consecrate themselves to God's service. He was also impressed with the opportunities that were presenting themselves for the entry of mission work into new areas. Norman Ferris and others had praised the work of Kata Ragoso and his national team in the Solomons. White added his voice with these words: “Pastor Rangoso (sic) has stood as a giant at the head of a very fine band of workers.” He concluded his survey of the strengths, weaknesses and needs of his Mission with a challenge to the church in the homeland to consider its relationship to the mission field.

At the year-end meetings of the AUC Herbert White presented a more concise and well-considered report on the Solomon Islands Mission and provided a blue print for the immediate future.<sup>48</sup> He warned that “if our rehabilitation programme takes us no farther than the mere replacing of planks and partitions destroyed by white ants and Japanese and the replacement of boats lost through war, then we shall have failed in our task.” The challenge, therefore, was to completely rethink and reshape the mission program. He proceeded to identify four key areas: the educational program, the medical program, the location of buildings and workers, and the effective use of materials and goods received from the Americans.

With regard to the educational program, White emphasised the inadequate qualifications of the village school teachers. Most had only one year's schooling beyond the village schools they had attended and very few had studied teaching methods. If the quality of the village school was to be improved this required the injection of qualified national teachers from other places such as Fiji, and the appointment of at least three white expatriate educators. These white teachers to be located at Batuna, Kukudu and at a new school to be located on Guadalcanal.

With regard to the medical and leper program, White emphasised that the AUC Mission Board needed to factor in the plans of the BSIP government for its medical work. These plans included the relocation of the BSIP administrative centre for the Western Solomons from Gizo to Kolombangara and the establishment of new medical services in close proximity. This would ultimately impact on the Amyes Memorial Hospital. The government was therefore urging that the Adventist medical program shift its focus from the Western Solomons to Malaita. With regard to the leper program, for the immediate future the fourteen-bed leper colony at Kukudu was adequate to meet the needs in that area. There was, however, a desperate need to provide services for the lepers of North Malaita. The number of lepers in that area was placed at over a hundred. Furthermore, White himself had identified a promising site adjoining the land leased by the Kwailibesi mission. White also advised that as a result of discussions he had held with Dr Rutter, local representative of the Leper Trust Board, the Mission could expect “liberal financial support” for the project.

With regard to the placement of workers and buildings, White reminded the AUC that pre-war there had been plans to relocate church headquarters from Batuna to Tulagi. These plans should, however, be restudied in the light of the BSIP's intention to relocate its administrative offices and the Solomon Island's commercial centre from Tulagi to the new town

of Honiara on Guadalcanal. Furthermore, since the AUC was already considering the establishment of a Union Mission to take in the Solomons, New Hebrides and other attached missions, now was the time to plan to locate Union Mission headquarters on Guadalcanal. The final matter, that of American equipment, was not elaborated upon.

The importance of this document is that through it White urged the AUC to take more than a band-aid approach to the re-establishment of its mission program in the Solomons. As a result, decisions were taken that led to the acquisition of land near Honiara for church headquarters and for the establishment in 1948 of Betikama Missionary School which, over time, became a full secondary school.<sup>49</sup> It also led to the establishment in 1953 of a forty-bed leprosarium at Kwailibesi, and it presaged the establishment of the Atoifi Adventist Hospital.

An interesting omission from White's document was any mention of future national leadership. Although the Solomon Islands nationals had provided outstanding leadership during the war years, both in the Solomons and elsewhere, there was no suggestion by White that over time nationals might assume a greater share of leadership responsibility. Maybe paternalistic attitudes prevailed, or that given other more pressing priorities White felt it too soon to raise the matter, or that he felt a 'softly-softly' approach was more appropriate. Yet another possible explanation for the omission was a political consideration. It may not have served the interests of the church in the Solomons were Adventists to move more quickly on national leadership issues than the agenda set by the BSIP. Whatever the reason, in retrospect, the question of future national leadership was a missing element in plans for the future of the Adventist church in the Solomons.

It is reasonable to assume that this failure to address the matter of national leadership was quite deliberate for White was well aware of emerging national aspirations. He recognised that the Solomon Islanders' perception of the world and their place in it had been changed as a result of the war and their contact with large numbers of American servicemen. Rather than a 'wind-back-the-clock' approach, White accepted change and encouraged positive outcomes. For example, as a result of working for the American military, some Malaitan men came to the conclusion that to avoid exploitation and to improve their lot they needed to take responsibility for their lives. This required organisation and the appointment of leaders beyond the local village level. The movement had four objectives: (1) working with the government and mission bodies in the provision of educational, medical and spiritual care; (2) the abandonment of small dirty villages and the organisation of larger and orderly communities; (3) the



The leper hospital at Kwailibesi

placement of children in school and (4) the repudiation of heathenism and acceptance of Christianity. White saw this 'new order' as a challenge to the Adventist Mission as it represented an attitude not previously encountered. While he felt dismay at the lack of monetary resources to support the Malaitans in their aspirations, he believed that "the same Power that has awakened in the hearts of these people a desire for better living will come to our aid as we endeavour to accept the challenge."<sup>50</sup> Whilst war had brought death and evil to the Solomon Islands, from its ashes came a revitalised Adventist presence. The words of Joseph had a particular relevance: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of lives." Genesis 50: 20 (NIV).

### The Australasian Union Conference

This article would not be complete without reference to the contribution of the AUC and its Mission Board to the re-establishment of the Solomon Islands Mission. The ongoing attempts to get key staff back to the Solomons has already been outlined and requires no further explanation. Likewise we have noted the aggressive AUC responses to misinformation about the Adventist Mission in the Solomons and its efforts to correct misperceptions concerning the behaviour of its evacuating missionaries. Furthermore, it did not accept the mistreatment of one of its national leaders as a necessary corollary of war.

There were, however, other decisions made which facilitated the healthy recovery of the Mission program. Not the least of these was the annual allocation of the Solomon Islands Mission budget. This meant that when expatriate staff resumed their work there were funds to facilitate reconstruction. The on-going management of the budget during the war years included, whenever possible, a flow of money to the Solomon Islands for the payment of national workers. There were also periodic attempts to get basic necessities such

as soap and writing materials to national workers. As was to be expected, the movement of money for wages and the dispatch of basic commodities was somewhat haphazard for its delivery was dependent upon the good will of military and BSIP officials who had access to the war zone. Once there was a permanent missionary presence, however, back wages were paid to those to whom they were owed.<sup>51</sup>

One major initiative undertaken by the AUC was the development of a Mission Vessels Replacement Fund. By 1943 it was known that at least three mission vessels—the *Malalangi*, the *Veilomani*, and the *Fidelis* had been destroyed. While these boats were not Solomon Islands based, their loss impacted on the work of the Church in the Western Pacific. Furthermore, without exception the vessels in the existing fleet, particularly those impressed by the military forces, were in dire need of major refits and in many cases replacement engines. For example, upon its return to Sydney in March 1942, the *Melanesia* had been impressed and saw service along the north coasts of Papua and New Guinea as part of the US Army Small Ships Section. On 19 May 1943, while at Douglas Harbour, the *Melanesia* was attacked by Japanese fighter planes. In the ship's log, Captain Alan Reynolds, described the post-attack *Melanesia* in these terms: "Ship badly holed and engine damaged. So we decided to run her ashore. . . It's going to be a big salvage job fixing her up."<sup>52</sup> Nor surprisingly, when the AUC took repossession of the *Melanesia* late 1945, the AUC Officers Minutes recorded "that the vessel; would require a complete engine refit and the refurbishment of parts of the superstructure."<sup>53</sup> Anticipating that the re-establishment of its mission fleet would be costly, in 1943 the AUC endeavoured to harness the liberality of church members and set a target of £6500 to be raised through donations. At the same time they began exploration of the availability of new and used vessels that might serve mission purposes.<sup>54</sup>

The spiritual needs of the Solomon Islanders were not overlooked. A project had begun during the 1930s to translate the Scriptures into the Morovo language. It would appear that translation of the New Testament had been completed at the time of or soon after the evacuation in early 1942. Under normal conditions, printing would have been undertaken by the Batuna Press. For obvious reasons this was not possible and rather than delay the publishing of this most valuable spiritual resource the task was undertaken in Australia. In 1943 the Officers Minutes record that 350 copies of the *New Testament* in the Morovo language had been packed ready for freight-ing.<sup>55</sup>

One final activity we will note as carried out by the Mission Board had to do with staffing the Solomon Islands Mission. With the evacuation of the missionary team from the Solomons, Papua and New Guinea, the core of committed and experienced missionaries was disbursed to the various conferences in Australia and New Zealand. Some, like John Howse and James Cormack, were redeployed to parts of the Polynesian mission field. Thus it became necessary to reconstruct a new team to take over the post-war mission thrust in the Solomons. There seems to have been a clear intention that David and Norman Ferris and John Gosling, and Archibald Barrett would return. Their names figured consistently in approaches to the British High Commission. J C Hamley Perry, the former superintendent was, however, needed in the New Hebrides and so early in 1944 Herbert

White was appointed superintendent designate and directed to undertake a course in navigation prior to taking up his new role.

From early 1945 the Mission Board focused on getting Dr Cyril Evans released from the Australian Army to take up an appointment at Amyes Memorial Hospital. Their first efforts were rebuffed as the Australian Army claimed its need for doctors was still too great. Hopeful that a letter from the BSIP administration might speed up the release of Dr Evans, the AUC suggested Norman Ferris approach the Resident Commissioner and request an official letter outlining the need for a qualified medical practitioner in the Western Solomon Islands. The AUC followed this up with a letter direct to the BSIP government pressing the urgency of such a letter as they made further approaches at the political level.<sup>56</sup> How effective this initiative was is not clear, for it was not until a year later that Dr Evans became a member of the *Ambon* party.



\* \* \* \* \*

War in the Southwest Pacific was a new experience for the Adventist Church in Australasia. Without precedents to follow Church leaders had to use the promptings of the Holy Spirit and their own common sense in responding to the many issues thrown up by the war. Although frustrated by the apparent delays and greatly concerned at what was perceived as an orchestrated effort to expunge the Adventist presence in the Solomon Islands, the AUC Mission Board maintained the fixed purpose of getting its missionaries back to the Solomon Islands as soon as was possible.

Those who returned to the Solomons in 1945-46 quickly assessed that the war had changed things: the people had become more aware of the larger world, their aspirations had developed a broader focus, and their perception of material things had altered. This required the church to rethink the delivery of medical and educational programs and to establish a greater presence through the re-location of Mission headquarters to the new administrative and commercial centre at Honiara. Those who returned to the Solomon Islands in the immediate post-war years laid the sound foundation for the long-term growth of the Adventist Church in this part of the Pacific.

#### End Notes

<sup>26</sup> D A Ferris, "In the Solomons Once More!" *Australasian Record*, 4 Jun 1945, p.5

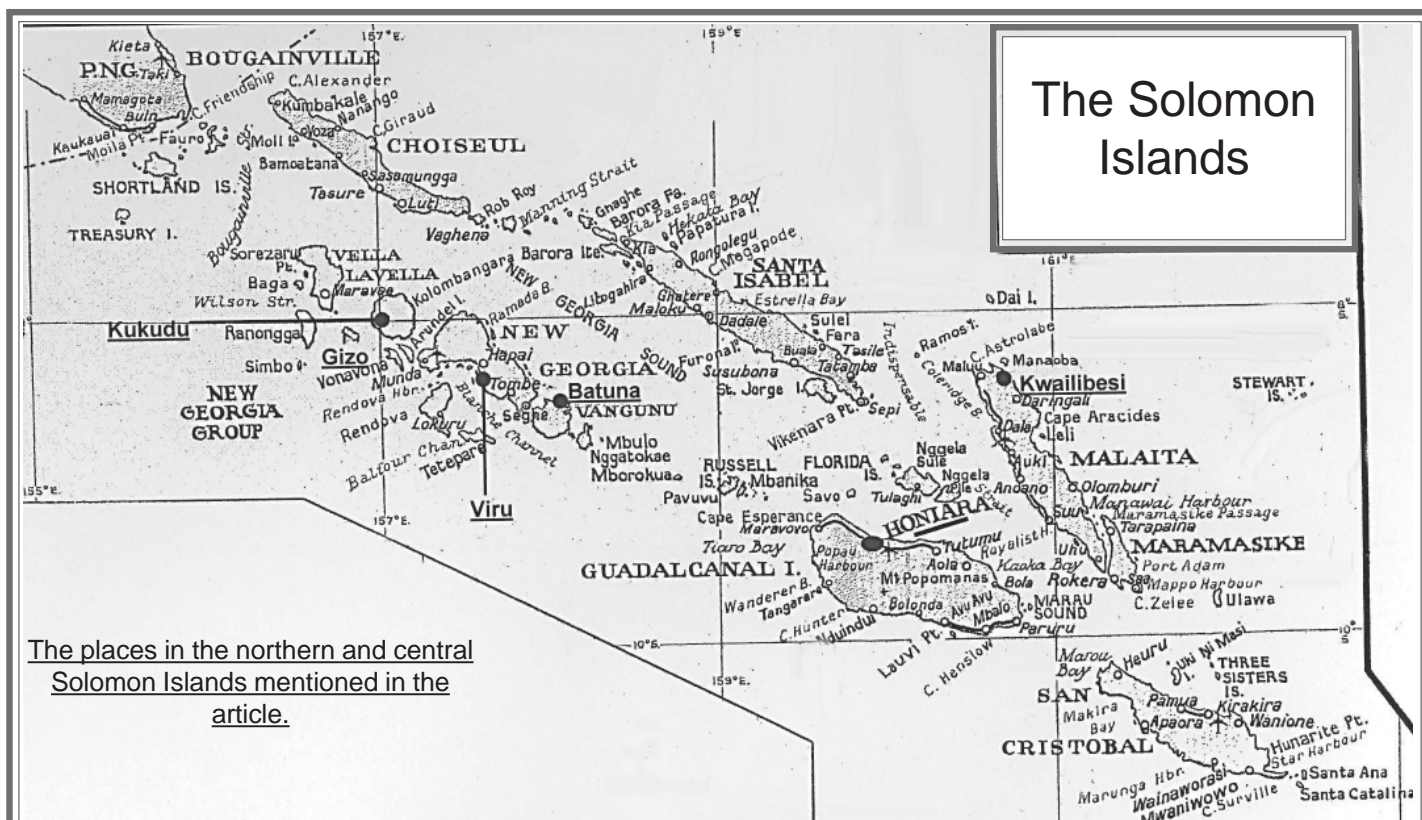
<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> John Miller, *Cartwheel: The Reduction of Rabaul*; John Robertson (1981) *Australia at War 1939-1945*. Melbourne: William Heinemann, pp.172-74. When A R Barrett passed through Torokina in November 1945, he noted that overnight a group of six Japanese soldiers had been brought in by the Bougainville nationals. See A R Barrett, "From Torokina to Batuna" *AR*, 25 February 1946, p.4

<sup>29</sup> Letter, N A Ferris to S V Stratford, 3 June 1945. Heritage Room and Special Collection, Avondale College. (HRSCAC)

<sup>30</sup> Letter, N A Ferris to S V Stratford, 5 June 1945. HRSCAC

- <sup>31</sup> Letter, N A Ferris to S V Stratford, 11 June 1945. HRSCAC
- <sup>32</sup> D A Ferris, "In the Solomons: Renewing Acquaintances and Picking Up the Threads," *AR*, 30 July 1945, pp.3-4
- <sup>33</sup> Letter, N A Ferris, 3 August 1945. HRSCAC; Kata Ragoso, "War Years in the Solomons," *AR*, 6 May 1946, pp.4-5
- <sup>34</sup> This account is based on the report by Norman Ferris and differs in some detail from the brief account given by Kata Ragoso. Ragoso wrote that the *Vinariotokae* was sunk by Japanese gun fire. Letter, N A Ferris, 3 August 1945, HRSCAC and Kata Ragoso, "War Years in the Solomons." A more fanciful account was given in a letter by Reuben Hare to friends in California, quoted in "Seventh-day Adventists Finance 39 World Missions," HRSCAC.
- <sup>35</sup> Letter, N A Ferris, 3 August 1945
- <sup>36</sup> AUCOM, 24 May 1945
- <sup>37</sup> Letter, N A Ferris to S V Stratford, 11 June 1945. HRSCAC
- <sup>38</sup> AUCOM, 17 July 1945. Also, through Norman Ferris the Resident Commissioner urged the Church to staff Amyes with a doctor. The AUC officers in turn requested that the Resident Commissioner make this a formal and written request so that they might use it to gain the release of a suitable doctor from military service. AUCOC, 17 July 1945.
- <sup>39</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1966, s.v. Batuna Mission Hospital
- <sup>40</sup> Norman Ferris, "Faith Strengthened in the Solomons," *AR*, 14 January 1946, p.5
- <sup>41</sup> Phone interview A C Reye with L R Thrift, 20 May 2005. See also, Lyndon Thrift, "Post-War Batuna: Revitalising the Morovo Station in the Western Solomons," *JAPH* 3 (2), December 2003, pp.10-13
- <sup>42</sup> A R Barrett, "Voyage to the Solomons," *AR*, 21 January 1946, pp.5,8; Interview with L R Thrift
- <sup>43</sup> A R Barrett, "Missionaries Delayed by Crippled Engine," *AR*, 28 January 1946, pp.4-5; and A R Barrett, "From Torokina to Batuna," *AR*, 25 February 1946, p.4
- <sup>44</sup> Barrett, "From Torokina to Batuna.," Lyndon Thrift, "Post-War Batuna"
- <sup>45</sup> See Arnold C Reye, "Adventist Responses to the War in the Southwest Pacific-Part I," *JAPH*, 2 (2) 2002
- <sup>46</sup> "Reinforcements for the Solomon Isalnds," *AR*, 7 October 1946, p.6; J K L Fletcher, "Sydney to Port Moresby per M.V. *Ambon*," *AR*, 28 October 1946, pp.4-5
- <sup>47</sup> H White, "A Survey of the Solomons," *AR*, 24 June 1946, pp.5-6
- <sup>48</sup> H White, "Items for Study from the Solomon Islands," Typewritten copy, HRSCAC
- <sup>49</sup> For an account of the establishment of Betikama High School see Lyndon Thrift, "Exciting Yet Purposeful: the birth of Betikama Missionary School 24.12.47-30.01.49." *JAPH*, 4 (1), June 2004, pp.18-21; See also, Ray W Richter, "Betikama Missionary School—consolidation and progress in the 1950s," *JAPH*, 5 (1), June 2005, pp.4-9
- <sup>50</sup> H White, "Malaita's New Order," *Missionary Leader*, July 1947, pp.7-8
- <sup>51</sup> AUCOM, 23 September 1943; 3 February 1944, 3 October 1944
- <sup>52</sup> Bill Lunney and Frank Finch, (1995) *Forgotten Fleet: A history of the part played by Australian men and ships in the U.S. Army Small Ships Section in New Guinea, 1942-1945*. Medowie, NSW: Forfleet Publishing, p.43-45
- <sup>53</sup> AUCOM, 22 October 1945
- <sup>54</sup> E E Roenfelt, "Mission Vessels Replacement Fund," *AR*, 12 July 1943, p.8; AUCOM, 11 December 1944; 24 June 1945
- <sup>55</sup> AUCOM, 11 September 1943. It would appear that translation of the complete Bible into the Morovo language was not completed until 1950. See Dennis Steley (1979) *Walkabout Long Canoe*. Mountain View CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, p.29
- <sup>56</sup> AUCOM, 1 May 1945, 17 July 1945, 21 August 1945, 29 October 1945



The places in the northern and central Solomon Islands mentioned in the article.

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# Turmoil, Peace, Rest, Recovery and Restoration in the Solomon Islands: the joy of missionaries returning

**YVONNE EAGER**



*Yvonne L Eager, bom in Christchurch, New Zealand, in November 1933, went with her parents, Pr Herbert & Mrs Vera White, and twin sister, Veronica, to New Guinea before World War II, and in 1945 to the Solomon Islands. Schooling was by correspondence until they returned to attend Avondale High School in July 1948. Yvonne graduated from the Secretarial Course at Avondale College (1951), the Nursing Course at Sydney Adventist Hospital (1955) and Midwifery at King Edward Memorial Hospital (1956) where she received the Award for Clinical Excellence. In 1957 she married Hedley J Eager in Perth, and they were blessed with four daughters, Narelle, Robyne, Carol and Jennifer. Yvonne completed further training at the Palmerston North General Hospital (1979), and the Certificate of Nursing Administration from Andrews University Graduate School, USA (1987). Her favourite nursing area was in neonatal care. She engaged in a variety of nursing responsibilities in Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan (1957-1989), and secretarial, management, and teaching in Pakistan & the Philippines (1987-96). Mission experience was both challenging and rewarding. She cherishes her fond memories of friends and experiences from many years of serving in other lands.*

**“Then the land had rest from war.”  
Joshua 11:23**

SORROW AND CONFUSION overwhelmed each person in Papua, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands when they first heard of the impending Japanese invasion. The speed with which the Japanese military forces moved southwards through the Philippines and South East Asia made it clear that they would not stop until they had conquered all that lay before them.

In early January 1941 the administrator of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate advised that all expatriate women and children should leave the Western Solomons as quickly as possible. Pastor Kata Ragoso recalled that a very speedy exit took place and on 8 January the Adventist mission boat *Melanesia* was used to take all the European women and children to Gizo from where they sailed back to Australia on the steamer *Malaita*. Ragoso lamented, “this was the last time we saw the white women of our mission in the Marovo Lagoon.”<sup>1</sup>

On January 23 the Japanese landed at Rabaul and two days later the message reached our mission headquarters at Batuna that all remaining Europeans should leave the Solomon Islands. Quickly our missionaries at outlying mission stations were advised to take their smaller mission boats to predetermined locations from which they would be picked up by the *Melanesia*. Meanwhile at Batuna there was a frantic effort to get the *Melanesia* prepared for the voyage back to Australia. For two days the missionaries worked around the clock, not even taking time for food or rest. Early Tuesday

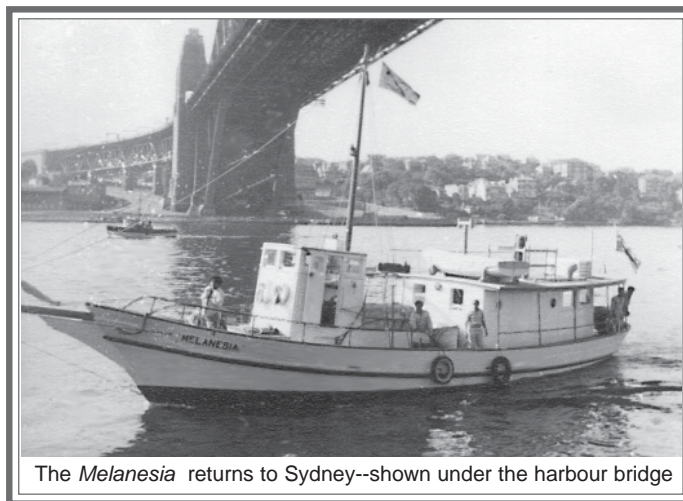
morning, 27 January, everything was completed for the journey and responsibility for the Adventist mission was transferred to Pastor Kata Ragoso and his Solomon Island assistants.

At 4.00 a.m. everyone at Batuna gathered at the wharf for a short farewell meeting. Prayers were offered on behalf of those remaining and for those who faced the perilous voyage back to Australia. Ragoso recalled “there was not a dry eye in this little gathering, for our hearts were sad and weak; our hearts were broken because of this unusual separation. Perhaps we thought, we would never see our friends again who had lived among us, who had worked for us, and who had loved us for so many years. . .” Ragoso continued, “not one left that wharf, nor did any speak, but we just gazed into the darkness and listened to the sound of the engine until the *Melanesia* passed out through the heads, and we could hear it no longer. Slowly we went back to our homes, but none could sleep, so we continued to talk over the strange happenings until the break of day.”<sup>2</sup>

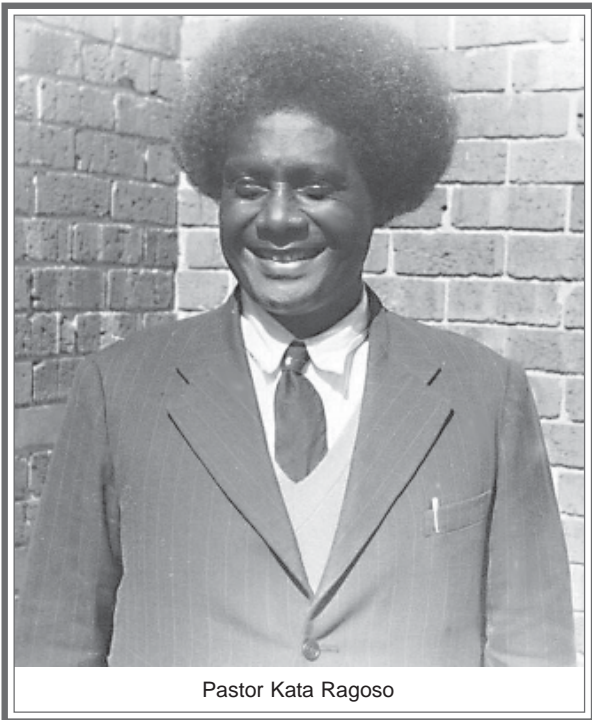
Even though Pastor Ragoso had been prepared for the challenge to lead his people should the Solomon Islands become involved in a war that required the missionaries to leave, he expressed his true feelings this way: “My faith and hope are centred in the fact that someday our missionaries will return.”<sup>3</sup> And return they did! Pastor David Ferris and Brother John Gosling returned early in 1945 and Pastor Norman Ferris soon after.

Out of this epic story of devotion to duty we may judge the calibre of a group of people led by a man who, for faith and courage, stands side-by-side with great men through the ages.<sup>4</sup> Kata Ragoso stood as a giant at the head of a very fine band of workers who were faithful in caring for the mission program and properties throughout the Solomon Islands during those difficult years.

Pastor Norman Ferris was concerned that not only had these faithful workers been required to cope with the Japanese invasion of their islands, but they were also forced to contend with



The *Melanesia* returns to Sydney--shown under the harbour bridge



Pastor Kata Ragoso

severe prejudice against the Adventist missions. He wrote: "A well-prepared plan by someone [in the BSIP administration] was being put into effect to close down our entire work, and Pastor Ragoso, as the natural leader of our mission, was subject to very severe persecution. At the same time, in all sections of the group, all of our national leaders with the exception of Pastor Rore, were ordered to leave their stations." He continued, "I have discovered that around the field our nationals have come through this experience with a stronger faith in God. Where the opposition was the heaviest, the tithes and offerings were the highest. In these areas there has been no backsliding, and throughout the Marovo and the Western Solomons during the past three years not one of our teachers slipped away. Though forced to close down the churches, and not allowed to meet for Sabbath school, yet in the caves on the mountainside our people never missed a meeting. With pleasure they tell that while for months they were compelled to live in the bush, each night finding them in some new place, without shelter, not once did it rain at night, nor was there any sickness among them. Our people in these places have great respect for the national ministry and leadership. They have been through deep waters, but have come through courageously. They are mighty men of prayer and faith. . . Batuna is all ready and waiting for the coming of the missionaries."<sup>5</sup>

### Missionaries Return

In a letter to Pastor Stratford sent from Torokina, Bougainville, in early June, Pastor Norman Ferris shared the experience of his return to the Solomons at the end of the war. "It was Sabbath when we finally anchored, and it was a rare experience landing with troops in one of those great landing-barges and jumping ashore through the surf. Lieut W. came ashore with me; his mother is an SDA in Sydney. He helped me carry some of my things, and also assisted me through the Movement Control. I was soon directed to an officer's quarters to await further move-

ment orders. So I waited for an hour, when a three-ton truck came and took me off."

"Arriving at ANGAU, [Australia New Guinea Administrative Units] the Major took me over to the mess quarters and gave me refreshments, and later allotted me a house to stay in. To my surprise, within a few minutes our leading teachers came running over. Poor old Tuti and Hoke were just overjoyed to see me. Okira and twenty of our teachers, beside many of our people, also came in. Soon Brethren Rod Fowler, Lawrence Gilmore, and Len Barnard (all ANGAU men) came up. It was a happy meeting indeed."<sup>6</sup>

"A few days later I finally met Kata Ragoso at Batuna and you should have heard the shouts and seen the expressions of joy."<sup>7</sup>

### New Appointees

The return of the missionaries to the Solomons sparked rapid planning and action for the work to begin in earnest. At the Session of the Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists held at The Entrance, NSW, on Tuesday, 11 September 1945, the following persons were appointed to the Solomon Islands: H White (Superintendent), J K Fletcher (Secretary-Treasurer), A R Barrett, J H Newman, W R Ferguson, F L Aveling (Engineer), L Thrift, O Lucas (Nurse), L Tonkin, and Lester Lock.<sup>8</sup> Time seemed short as each day the families prepared for their new adventure.

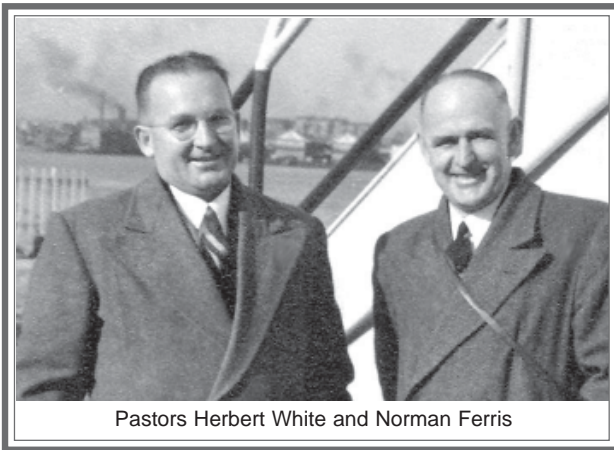
### Impact on the White Family

As a child I well remember the mixed feelings we had when my father, Pastor Herbert White, broke to us the news of his appointment to the Solomon Islands. Six weeks earlier we had moved into our first new home at 6 Strone Avenue, Wahroonga. Without hesitation my Dad accepted this new call as God's leading in his life and promptly prepared for a new chapter in mission service. Our first mission term had been served at Put Put in New Guinea, prior to World War II.

Now immigration permits and medical checks had to be completed. Arrangements were made with Blackfriars, the Correspondence School in Sydney, for our school lessons to be prepared so that we could take them with us. General provisions, groceries and all Sanitarium products had to be ordered and packed in airtight containers to preserve the freshness of the breakfast cereals, dry goods and flour against infestation of weevils and dampness in a climate that has high humidity. Shipments and mail deliveries were very slow and unreliable in those days. Communication with the outside



Vera and Herbert White with their twin daughters Yvonne and Veronica



Pastors Herbert White and Norman Ferris

world was limited.

### Travel to the Solomon Islands

The new appointees travelling with us on the *Montoro* were Pastor Archibald and Hilda Barrett, Frank and Ida Aveling with their two small daughters, Ann and Jeanette, Brother Lyndon Thrift, and Mrs Ivy Gosling and her two children. Learning to cope with farewells had been a part of my experience from my earliest years and continued to be that way throughout the rest of my working life. Likewise, adjusting to cultural and physical changes can be a challenge at times but the rewards of finding new relationships and making lifelong friends in distant lands makes it well worthwhile.

Our voyage north, except for the first few days, was excellent. We left Sydney on Friday, 16 November 1945. On the following Thursday, 22 November, Veronica and I celebrated our twelfth birthdays and to our delight the chefs on the *Montoro* prepared a surprise birthday party. That milestone marked the beginning of some of the most valuable years of our lives. Even though we were separated from our friends in the homeland, we were loved and accepted by the Solomon Island people.

It was Sabbath when our ship arrived at Milne Bay, PNG. Some of the soldiers we met were kind enough to drive us out to the U.S. 47<sup>th</sup> General Hospital which was operated by an all-Adventist medical staff. Returning from this place to the *Montoro*, we spent a little more time with the soldiers and then the sun went down. What a Sabbath! We were thankful for the experience that had been ours that day.

By 7.00 a.m. the following morning the ship's water tanks were full and the second stage of the voyage began. We continued on to Torokina, the major US and Australian staging place on Bougainville Island. As we neared land we could not help but reflect on the fact that this place had been reclaimed from the Japanese at a cost of the lives of over three thousand American soldiers. Now the foreshore was covered with many tents and a red cross station was visible at one end. As the *Montoro* slowly entered the harbour, we kept a lookout for any evidence that someone was there to meet us. We were delighted when one of our party recognised three of our Solomon Island boats: the *Portal*, the *G F Jones*, and the *Dadavata*. They were there and eventually Pastor Norman Ferris found us, as we knew he would.

Actually, Pastor Ferris had been waiting ten days for our arrival. He had planned to get to Torokina with time to spare, but then the *Montoro* was listed as overdue. What was unknown to the port authorities was our unscheduled call at Milne Bay to take on water. Their concern went so far as to send out a search plane and fortunately the pilot located us and was able

to confirm that we were safe and headed for Bougainville, albeit four days late. The waiting time was not wasted, however, for he was able to spend profitable time with Pastors Ragoso, Rore, Simi, Tati, and Hoke, as well as a number of other national believers. Furthermore, they were able to fellowship with a number of servicemen associated with ANGAU. These included Privates A E Hornsby and Russell Behrens who also found some old friends amongst the new missionaries.

### To Batuna

He had thoughtfully arranged for us to be accommodated at ANGAU headquarters. This gave us a little quietness away from the busy wharves while our goods and effects were transferred to the small mission boats. This was soon accomplished and we looked forward to the last leg of the missionaries return to the Solomons. These islands had experienced war, but now peace had come and, following a brief rest, the church could now direct its energies to recovery and restoration.

The Avelings, the Goslings, and Brother Thrift, were assigned to the *G F Jones* and they enjoyed an uneventful journey to Kukudu. We, with Reuben Hare, Norman Ferris and Pastor Ragoso set off for Kukudu. However, the Barrett family who were assigned to travel on the *Dadavata* to Dovele as their first port of call, had an unexpected adventure. Their vessel had been subjected to plenty of hard use during the war and while off the Shortland Islands its engine broke down. Fortunately the crew was able to sail the boat into a beautiful harbour to await rescue. Providentially the first boat to note their plight was the *Portal* with us all on board. We were not able to offer immediate help as our boat was not going in the same direction. On its return the *Portal* took the *Dadavata* in tow and eventually all of the missionary team found themselves at Kukudu.

At Kukudu we were given a true Solomon Island welcome. I can still remember the struggle my sister and I had as we tried to stand on the wharf and listen to the choir sing a well-known hymn as a gesture of love and greeting. Veronica and I had been troubled with seasickness and were feeling very weak and tired. However, Pastor David Ferris did his best to revive our spirits for he had arranged for a favourite Solomon Island dish to be prepared, musu-musu, a selection of food baked in a motu (stone oven), and a range of delicious tropical fruit. We were given a tour of the Kukudu campus and the Amyes Memorial Hospital clinic, where my Aunty, Nurse Elsa Zeunert, had worked for a number of years in the late 1930s.

This was the final destination for the Goslings. They had returned to their home once again and they would care for the hospital and the work at Kukudu. For the rest of us, how-



Pastors Herbert White and Reuben Hare





Nurse Elsa Zeunert at Aymes Memorial Hospital

ever, the stay was short and by midnight we started on the final section of the voyage. We reached Batuna early Wednesday morning, 5 December 1945. How glad we were to be there!

The wharf was filled with happy, smiling people on that beautiful sunny morning. Pastor David Ferris,

Pastor Norman Ferris, Pastor Kata Ragoso and all the workers at Batuna had worked hard to prepare the homes and the mission station for our arrival. God had been good. He was with us all the way and with the Solomon Islanders too. We felt the love and genuine acceptance of the local people at Batuna. Even the small children were delighted to meet the youngest members of our group, Ann and Jeanette Aveling. We had travelled for three long weeks. Ann, prior to leaving Australia, had been under medical treatment for a serious blood disorder. Baby Jeanette was just six months old so it was great for the Aveling family to arrive at Batuna, leave the cramped boats, and move into their new home.

### The Restoration Begins

Pastor Ragoso and all the faithful workers had done their best to protect the mission property during the war years. However, much reconstruction work and many repairs were needed to restore the buildings and the boats. This work com-

menced as soon as the missionaries returned. The fleet of mission boats had been reduced to a sad condition by the government, but thanks to Mr Aveling that situation was gradually changed. The *G F Jones*, the *Portal* and the *Dadavata* were restored to a good standard of seaworthiness thus ensuring the safety of those who would be travelling many miles on them.

The national leaders had stood faithfully at their post of duty during the war years. For their benefit refresher courses were commenced to improve their teaching and preaching skills. Sermon materials and other literature were provided for their encouragement.

Milton Hook noted that "By 1930 there were almost six hundred baptised members in the Solomon Islands. This figure doubled before the Second World War and increased more rapidly after the war. The Solomon Islands proved to be one of the most responsive groups in the South Pacific. . .

"From one village to another and from one island to another the advantages of the little schools as well as the medical assistance, became desirable. . . The islanders also grew to value the peace which came to their society when Christian love was practised."

This was confirmed by Pastor Ragoso, whose thoughts at that time were expressed as follows: ". . . and once more there is peace. We look back over the war years, and we have only one statement to make. Our hearts are filled with deep gratitude to Jehovah for his wonderful care, and for providing for our every need during this awful time." Ragoso continued, "I am happy to tell you that not one teacher left his post or let down the standard of the advent movement during this whole period. . . And now I want to say a big THANK YOU to all God's people, far and near, for the many prayers that they have offered to Jehovah for us at all times. We have not forgotten to pray for you too, though we know you not."<sup>10</sup>

### Planning for the Needs of the People

For the first four months of 1946 we saw very little of our dad. He, along with Pastors Barrett and Ragoso, spent those months visiting the people on the remote mission stations across the Solomons. The purpose of the visits was twofold: to encourage the people after what they had been through and to identify and assess their most pressing needs. In addition to the repair of the boats,

major building renovations were required. The medical work, however, had been blessed by the generous gift of equipment and medicines by the departing American forces. The needs of the education program were very high with teachers requiring a higher standard of education. Likewise there was a need to revive and rejuvenate the JMV and MV<sup>11</sup> programmes, and the work of translating the Old Testament into the Marovo language had to be completed.

Generally speaking, the spiritual tone of the church members had strengthened. The people had been encour-



The White family being welcomed on their arrival at Batuna

aged by the faithful national leaders and the generous help of the church leaders overseas. Two very important priorities emerged: sending a missionary to the people of Ysabel Island, and constructing better housing facilities for the lepers at Kukudu.<sup>12</sup>

When he reported to the Australasian Union Conference, Pastor White wrote: "I would say that I am keenly enjoying my ministry among the Solomon Island people. The mission staff are (sic) enjoying good health and appear to be happy in their work. We are all overworked trying to spread ourselves over the needs of the work, and all will be relieved when the remainder of our staff arrives."<sup>13</sup> The work was heavy. The demands were great, but those who were there spared no energy to get the work started and to lift the spirits of all the workers and church members throughout the field.

### In Conclusion

When we read the story of David in 1 Samuel 23:16, we are reminded of the importance of uplifting those who experience hardship and trial. This was evident in the genuineness of the friendship of David and Jonathan, when Jonathan went to Horesh to help David "find strength in God." Ellen White in writing about David and Jonathan's relationship said: "Precious were the moments which these two friends passed in each other's society."<sup>14</sup>

After all he had endured, Ragoso found strength and encouragement when the missionaries returned and he too counted being with friends as times most precious. That close brotherly bond of friendship remained between Ragoso and my father for the rest of their lives.

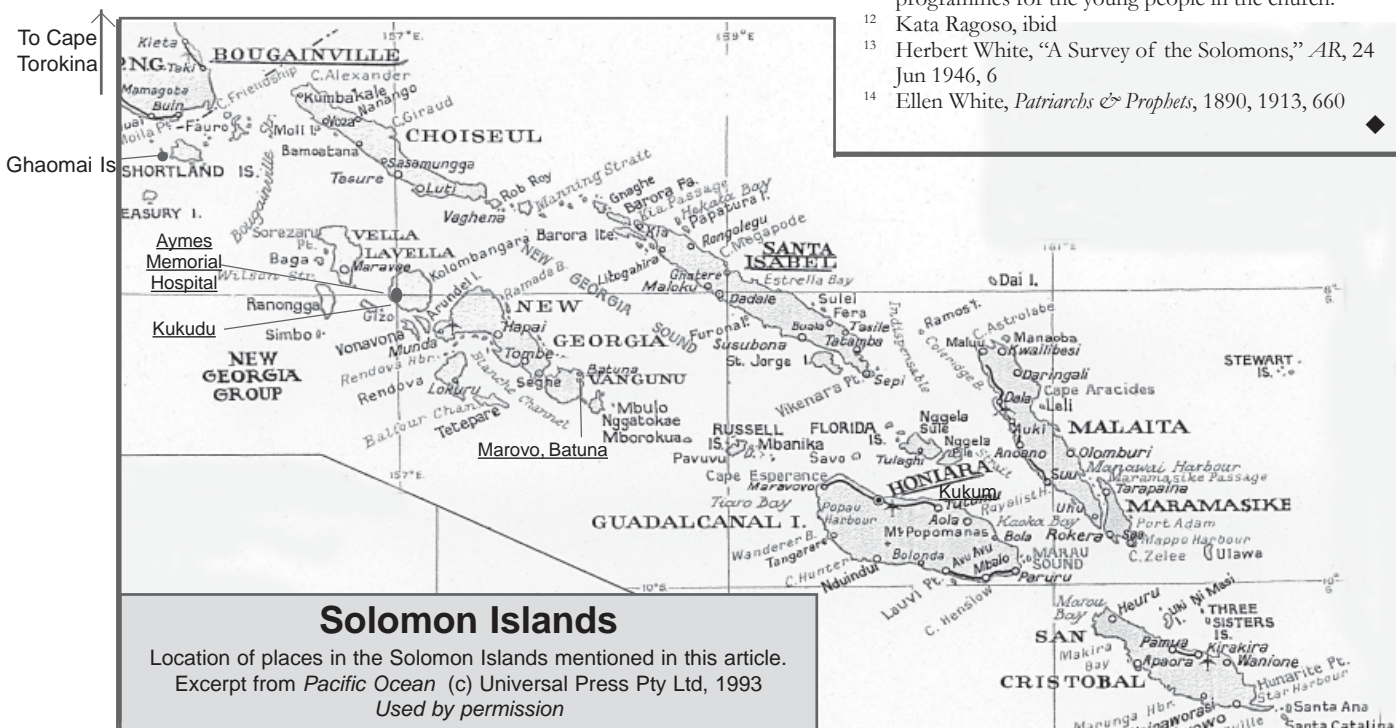
Kata Ragoso was highly respected by his people. He brought out the best in them. He was a faithful shepherd. I remember sitting at his feet as we travelled on the mission boats when he told us stories and explained why he had the deep scars on his face and back. Those moments, those special instances in a young person's life impact their understanding of other people and their world view for better and for always. He taught us that people from different cultures can be the best of friends and work together for the common good—the sharing of God's love and the joy of living together in peace—for he practised this at all times. Pastor Kata Ragoso demonstrated true humility. His genuine friendship to our family was an extension of the kind of man he was, and my father recognised his leadership skills and worked closely with him throughout the restoration period. Yes,

the Solomon Island people responded in dedication, energy and commitment to enable the spirit of love to grow among them more and more.

A few months later our family transferred to Honiara. The church officials had made plans for the commencement of new projects: the establishment of a new church and the mission headquarters for the Solomon Islands at Kukumu; and the building of a new school, later known as Betikama, at Lunga Point. Today the Betikama Adventist College is listed on the Internet as an interesting place to visit because of its proximity to the famous Henderson Airfield and because of the WWII relics it has on display. We, however, look forward to a better day when, instead of seeing war relics, we will see crowns on the heads of those students who have faithfully carried on the work that the pioneers laid down. May the work of God continue to go forward under His blessings in those beautiful Isles of Solomon.

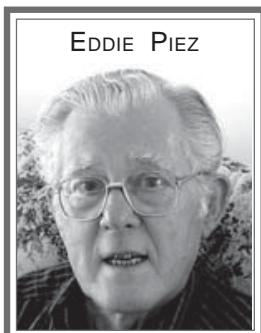
### End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Kata Ragoso, "War Years in the Solomons," *AR*, 6 May 1946, 4,5
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>3</sup> "Brevities," *AR*, 26 Mar 1945, 8; "Brevities," *AR*, 11 Jun 1945, 8
- <sup>4</sup> Eric Were (1970) *No More Devil Strings*, xxx, 69
- <sup>5</sup> Norman Ferris, "Faith Strengthened in the Solomons," *AR*, 8 Jan 1945, 5
- <sup>6</sup> Norman Ferris, "Back to the Solomons," *AR*, 2 Jul 1945, 4  
ANGAU was established in Port Moresby to maintain civil administration functions, such as preserving and controlling local labour and keeping law and order. Authority was transferred again to Provincial Administration on 23 June 1946.
- <sup>7</sup> "Notes," *AR*, 16 Jul 1945, 5
- <sup>8</sup> "Session Appointments," *AR*, 15 Oct 1945, 5
- <sup>9</sup> Milton Hook, *Vina Juapa Rane, Early Adventism in the Solomons*, Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series (29), n.d., Wairoonga: SPD Department of Education.
- <sup>10</sup> Kata Ragoso, "War Years in the Solomons," *AR*, 6 May 1946, 4,5
- <sup>11</sup> Junior Missionary Volunteers & Missionary Volunteers-programmes for the young people in the church.
- <sup>12</sup> Kata Ragoso, *ibid*
- <sup>13</sup> Herbert White, "A Survey of the Solomons," *AR*, 24 Jun 1946, 6
- <sup>14</sup> Ellen White, *Patriarchs & Prophets*, 1890, 1913, 660



# Atoifi Hospital, Malaita

—its planning, construction, and opening in the 1960s



EDDIE PIEZ

Eddie Piez came into the world in Gympie, Queensland, Australia. He completed primary education at Yandina, and secondary at Nambour in 1944. On graduating from the Business Course at the Australasian Missionary College (Avondale) in 1950, he served as cashier-accountant for the Victorian Conference for 5 years. While there Eddie married Nancy White on 5 December 1955.

He began his mission service in November 1956 as accountant at the BSUM headquarters in Rabaul, PNG. In 1959 he became secretary-treasurer there until 1966; at the CSUM in Lae until 1974—renamed PNGUM in 1972.

On returning to Australia Eddie continued serving as a secretary-treasurer, for the Victorian Conference 1974-1979, and for the Greater Sydney Conference 1979-1988.

During the latter year he was ordained to the gospel ministry in Sydney. Eddie then served as the treasurer for the Pakistan Union until 1994. He retired in July of that year and since that time has given volunteer service in island fields. The Piez' have three children: Wayne, Stephen and Glenda. Eddie and Nancy now reside in Melbourne.

*The article has been written by Eddie Piez, who as the secretary-treasurer for the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission (BSUM) from 1958 — 1967, handled much of the day to day work on this project, ordering supplies from overseas etc. Additional material for the article was supplied by Ellis Gibbons who was located at Kwailibesi Health Centre on Northeast Malaita during the original planning and development, and by Lester Hawkes who was the Health and Temperance director of the BSUM from December 1961. The early history of the area comes from details described in articles by Pastor John Anderson, "To Melanesia with Love", a book by Jonathan Fiji'i, "From Pig-Theft to Parliament: My Life Between Two Worlds", and various other articles and persons as stated.*

THE NAME ATOIFI CONJURES UP MEMORIES in the hearts of many people, not only in Australia and New Zealand but also in overseas countries such as the United States. Three expatriate missionaries have died there; one in a tractor accident, the other two killed at the hands of the volatile Kwaio people over specific disputes. This article endeavors to present the detail surrounding the establishment of Atoifi hospital on the island of Malaita.

Malaita was an island where the forces of evil appeared to have a strong control over the people. This was the third attempt the church had made to establish a hospital over a period of forty years. The church recognised that a hospital could provide the kind of help the people needed and also bring to them the good news of the gospel.

In the book *Mission, Church, and Sect in Oceania* by H M Ross<sup>1</sup> there is a chapter entitled 'Mission Rivalry on Malaita' which highlights the initial contact by Christian missions with the people. Each of the four main mission groups involved with this area met with strong resistance and open hostility right from the beginning.

The Roman Catholic Church opened a mission in the Solomon Islands in 1844 but after a number of their missionaries were killed they left the Solomon Islands in 1847 and moved to Papua New Guinea where they found the situation less hostile. In 1913 they returned to Malaita and opened a mission

on the western side in the Langalanga Lagoon area.

The Anglicans were the first Protestants to arrive in the Solomon Islands. They commenced work in 1847, and in 1876 opened a mission on Malaita and worked among the Lau people of Maramasike who lived on the southern tip of the island. In time, the Anglicans became dominant in the southeastern areas of the Solomon Islands.

The South Sea Evangelical Mission (now SSEM Church), began its work in Queensland among the indentured Solomon Island workers of the Fairymead Plantation. In 1892 one of their converts returned home to Malaita and established a Christian church among his relatives and neighbours. While some efforts were made from Australia to assist this work, by 1902 several men were killed and the project seemed to be a failure. In 1904 one of the founders, Florence Young, with two others, went to Malaita to oversee the work. By 1907 the SSEM was independent and managed plantations.

The Seventh-day Adventist Australasian Union Conference (AUC) in 1914 voted to establish a Solomon Islands Mission and later in that year Pastor Griffith Jones arrived at New Georgia in the Western Solomons.<sup>2</sup>

## Early SDA Church Work

However it was not until 14 September 1924 that the mission boat *Melanesia* departed from mission headquarters at Batuna in the Western Solomons to answer calls from the island of Malaita, for a teacher. On board were the John and Guinivere Anderson family who were to be located in the Uru Sinaragu (alternative spellings: Sinalragu, Sinalanggu) district, half way down the eastern side of Malaita.

They were aware of the risks but believed they were following the leading of God in accepting this call.

While many people on Malaita welcomed the work of the church, there were many who were strongly opposed to missionary activity. These people also hated the rule of the British officers who brought government control. The imposition of taxes on the local people of five shillings per head per year



John D Anderson



Gerald Peacock

was another cause of strong resentment. This resulted in the death of two British officers Bell and Lilies, along with eleven indigenous policeman assisting them in 1925.

The evidences of God's miraculous leading on many occasions were used to show that His power was greater than that of Satan's. Though John Anderson and Gerald Peacock had been working near the tax collecting officers, their only

syringe broke so they moved to the other side of the harbour to speak with a chief who had called for a teacher. After they left the massacre took place. Their change of location probably saved them. Later they were both involved in the burial of these two government officers on Kwai island not far from where Atoifi is now located.

During these early years the Seventh-day Adventist mission program was directed from Batuna in the Marovo Lagoon in the Western Solomons. The Anderson family remained working on Malaita until 1930 when they were transferred from Uru to Ranonga Island in the Western Solomons. However work on Malaita continued and in 1932 Simi, one of the mission workers, who was in the area of the massacre and whose wife was later killed at Uru Harbour was asked to establish a permanent presence at Kwailibesi, located on the northern tip of Malaita. Later, Simi married a girl from Malaita and continued his work on the island. His success there can be seen by the fact that in 1935 a twelve bed hospital, with Pastor Arthur Parker and his wife Dr Dorothy Mills in charge, was built at Kwailibesi.

The tensions, brought about by paganism, devil worship, and the Kwaio hatred for anything outside of their own culture, particularly the Gospel of Christ and the authority of the government, were very high. It seemed that the forces of evil were not willing to release their hold without a fight and the battle between the gospel and pagan custom was still to be fought. Despite this, workers were still willing to respond to God's call for service and answer calls for missionaries to other villages.

While located at Kwailibesi, Parker visited the areas of Uru and Sinaragu and saw the needs for medical work there. He went as far as finding the names of the owners, measuring the land needed for a hospital and marking boundaries, but when he left the area his plans were not followed through. No doubt those at the mission headquarters felt the time was not ready or the finance was not available to allow it to move back into the Uru area.

The Japanese invasion brought the mission work to a close for a while but it resumed immediately after the war. In 1949 church growth necessitated a change in organization. The total area of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands was placed under the direction of the Coral Sea Union Mission (CSUM) with headquarters at Lae. The work grew so fast that in 1952 the area was divided and a new Union Mission was formed with headquarters in Rabaul. The CSUM retained the mainland of PNG and nearby islands. The new Union called the Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission (BSUM), was given the Bismarck Archipelago comprising the Admiralty Islands, St Matthias Group, New Ireland, New Britain, Bougainville and the British Solomon Islands. Under this new

distribution of territory the work on Malaita was directed through the Eastern Solomon Islands Mission (ESIM) with its headquarters located at Honiara.

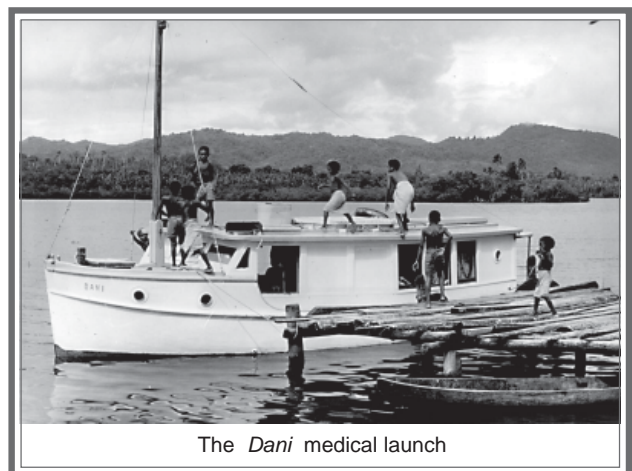
### The Need For Another Hospital

There were other hospitals or major clinics on Malaita: — the Anglicans at Fuambu on the northern side of the island, South Sea Evangelicals with facilities at Nafinua near Kwai Island on the east coast, and at Onepus near Booma on the west coast, Roman Catholics at Booma south of Auki on the west coast, Adventists at Kwailibesi on the north-east coast, and the government hospital at Auki, on the west coast. There were no roads over the mountains inland from the eastern side to the western side which meant that all people needing medical help must travel around the island by boat. It seemed that a medical facility in the area of Sinaragu would provide an opportunity to assist these people physically with medical help and perhaps, through it, give an opportunity to present the gospel. However many of these people had openly declared they were 'heathen', belonged to *tutak* (the darkness) and preferred to stay that way.

The final decision of the church to locate a hospital there did not come for several years. In 1958 Lance Waddington was in charge of the Kwailibesi Hospital and Pastor Roy Harrison was the newly appointed president of ESIM.. Waddington had requested that Harrison visit Malaita to enable the mission committee to consider a request from the Kwaio people to establish a clinic in their area. Traveling in the MV *Dani* with them was Lynette, a qualified national nurse. They planned to use the *Dani* to make a medical inspection down the east coast of Malaita setting up temporary clinics at various locations on the way.

When they arrived near Uru Harbour they saw a canoe paddling out to sea and people on the shore frantically signaling them to stop. The anchor was dropped and the canoe pulled alongside. In it was an obviously pregnant woman who, they were informed, had been in labour for five days and was now in a very weakened condition. Harrison suggested prayer. Knowing the Kwaio people's beliefs, this was a risky move because, if the outcome was unfavorable, the people could blame the mission. While Harrison prayed Lynette tended to the patient. It was a very simple but heartfelt prayer. Just as the word 'amen' was uttered, the baby was delivered! There was no crying from the mother nor fuss from the baby. Harrison saw it as a direct answer to prayer and the local people also saw it as miraculous. Consequently the family decided to name the baby 'Danilyn', a combination of the name of the boat and the name of the nurse in attendance.

Shortly thereafter, a delegation of Kwaio people



The *Dani* medical launch

approached Waddington to make an official request that a permanent medical outpost be located in their midst. This was the same area where Anderson had opened the work in 1924 and where Parker had searched for land for a hospital in 1935. The request was passed on through the ESIM to the BSUM. However, just at this point in the negotiations, the Waddingtons were called to other duties in PNG and Ellis Gibbons and his wife Patricia took over Kwailibesi.

### The search for land

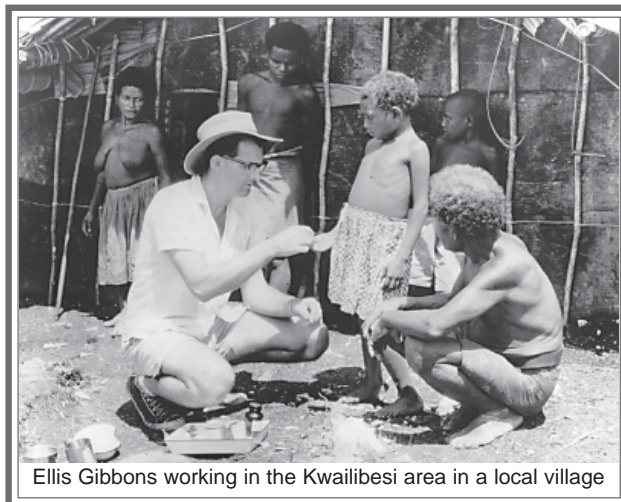
Gibbons and Harrison renewed the search for a suitable location. They searched from Nazareth Village to Sinaragu Bay but found all the available sites were either too swampy or had no deep water for boat transport. Eventually a man, Peter Marena Saki, (later referred to as Ma'unisafi and also Ma'nasafi) came forward offering land located in Uru Bay on the east coast. The land was elevated, with access to deep water for a wharf, had fresh water for drinking, land suitable for gardens as well as for the necessary buildings for a hospital complex. It was also close to a populated area where there was a large need for medical services.

Because considerable funds would be spent at this site, after Harrison and Gibbons had satisfied themselves that the land was suitable, plans were made for the union president, Pastor Eric Boehm, and myself as the secretary treasurer to visit the site at the time of the Malaita district meetings in October 1960 for further confirmation. Together with Gibbons and Harrison we waded through the mangroves growing by the shore and walked up the steep bank to the land being offered and were favourably impressed with the site.

On 7 December 1961 the BSUM Executive Committee in its annual meeting voted that the funds held for rebuilding the Kwailibesi Hospital be used instead to construct a new hospital in the Kwaio district. They also voted that a further inspection be made by the union officers with Australasian Inter-Union Conference (AIUC) representation to make a final decision confirming the recommendation to locate the new hospital there.

On the second official visit the union officers were accompanied by Mr Bill Zeunert the assistant treasurer from the AIUC. On this occasion a special trip had been arranged which completely circled the island of Malaita. We went through the Maramasiki passage at the southern end, then sailed up the east coast to Atoifi. While at Atoifi we were reminded of the attitude of the local people to unwanted outsiders as we visited the graves of the two British Government officers Bell and Lilies. After checking the various aspects of the site at Atoifi we continued up the eastern side to visit the hospital at Kwailibesi in the north and returned down the western side back to Honiara. We felt confident that there was no location on the eastern side of Malaita that was more suitable than Uru harbour. It seemed significant that the search for land again brought the mission to Uru in the Sinaragu district from which the Anderson family had been withdrawn approximately 35 years earlier, and where Parker had later centered his investigations in 1935.

A decision was made to purchase the land through the British Solomon Islands Government. Concurrently, there had been a dispute on ownership as another person claimed the land as well as Peter Marena Saki (Ma'unisafi) who had offered it for sale. Accordingly, the district officer went to a village across the harbor from the location of the land and gave an opportunity for all involved to make an appearance. Gibbons was also present to sign any necessary papers on



Ellis Gibbons working in the Kwailibesi area in a local village

behalf of the mission so the lease could be finalized. The District Officer waited until 3pm and when no other claimants appeared he declared that Peter Marena Saki was the owner. Following this it was agreed that the government would purchase the land from the traditional owners and the mission would pay the government an annual rent of 120 pounds.

The church officers were satisfied that everything was done as it should have been. However there were a number of local people that were dissatisfied with the outcomes. According to local historian Jonathan Fifi'i the district officer did not take culture/custom into account when the land had been awarded to Ma'unisafi. While Ma'unisafi, an Adventist from the village of Onifana, received his money and was happy, those who were left out were angry. He did, however, give a small amount of money to his mother's cousin, Endaie, a local devil priest who felt that his money was too small. This grievance appeared to us to form the basis for the tragic events that took place a short time later.

### Finance for the Hospital

The BSUM had already reserved the money it had been holding for rebuilding Kwailibesi. Knowing it would take several years to develop this project, the AIUC headquarters of the church in Sydney also known as the Australasian Division of SDA Church, allocated to the BSUM the 4th Quarter Sabbath School offering for 1965. When the BSUM received this information in December 1963 it voted £20,000 to Betikama school and £10,000 to be added to the funds already held for the new hospital at Malaita. Any amount received beyond that was to be allocated at a later date, after the actual amount was known. The New Zealand Leper Trust which had annually supported the work at Kwailibesi had donated A£3000 on 29 March 1962 for the construction of an infant welfare section and children's ward as a part of the hospital project.

Mr Eric Were, a talented and experienced film-maker, who made the film *Cry of New Guinea* for the Coral Sea Union Mission (CSUM), had been asked to produce a film which was titled *Devil Drums of Malaita* for the BSUM. This film, though made prior to the planning for Atoifi, did much to highlight the situation on the island and bring the needs of the people before the members of the world church. It no doubt aided in the promotion of the 13<sup>th</sup> Sabbath offering allocated to Atoifi.

### The Hospital Name

It was decided that the hospital would be called the Malaita Adventist Hospital with no reference to the local name Uru which some felt had bad connotations. However the new

hospital board requested that the name be associated with the name of the land where it was located rather than with the island of Malaita. The name they recommended on 25 August just after the opening ceremony was 'Atoifi Adventist Hospital, Malaita'. This name change was approved by the BSUM committee at their next meeting on 21 September 1966.

### Staff Training

Although a doctor from Australia was considered necessary for this hospital, the BSUM committee felt that finances would not be available for such a doctor, so on 7 January 1963 a recommendation was made asking the Australasian Division to locate a Fijian doctor to serve as the Chief Medical Officer for the hospital.

Considerable planning was also necessary to have local staff ready for the completed facility. Those graduates from the Honiara Nursing School who were Adventists, were approached to work at Atoifi. Seven youth who were interested in nursing were sent to Rabaul for training as nurses. They were Winona Salau, Ali Betokera, Elasi Zutu, Rossie Zonga and Mary Sasabule all girls, and two boys, Ressie Simba and Romio Jimuru.

While Eric Boehm and I were attending district meetings in the Western Solomons we were approached by men who remembered the days when there was a doctor at Kukudu and indicated they would like another doctor. Pastor Boehm encouraged them to send some of their own young men to train as doctors or paramedics at the Port Moresby medical school. The first of these was Haynes Posala who had just graduated from Jones Missionary College, Kambubu. He had been appointed to work in the Voice of Prophecy Correspondence School in Rabaul. On 6 December 1961 sponsorship for Haynes was approved for him to attend the Papuan Medical College, Port Moresby. After a good report by the principal he continued as a 2nd year student in 1963. Haynes eventually became the second doctor at Atoifi. Horton Sale went to Port Moresby as well and became a qualified laboratory technician. Horton married Esther Kove, a trained nurse from New Guinea. He later became the laboratory technician at the hospital and Esther also joined the nursing staff.

### The Planning Stage

Once the land was secured the BSUM committee asked Pastor Lester Hawkes the Health Director of the BSUM to work out a basic plan for an 80 bed hospital with Mr Brian Houliston of the Jones Missionary College near Rabaul. Houliston was in charge of the College Wood Products and

had been greatly involved with designing classrooms and other buildings for the various needs of the union. A design similar to that used at Sopas Hospital was considered most suitable. The two men were to present an overall plan for the required hospital facilities, with the necessary outbuildings and adequate staff housing. They consulted with others who could advise them and presented a concept plan to the committee.

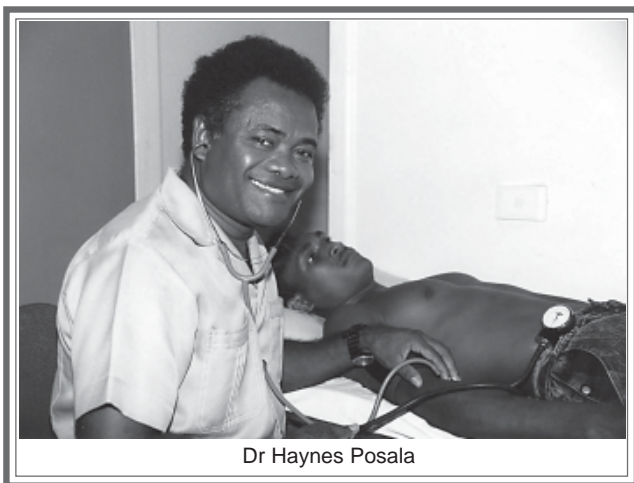
This plan suggested that as far as possible the buildings were to be constructed with materials available locally. This meant the buildings would be constructed of concrete block made close to the site, and with steel trusses fabricated on the site from galvanized pipe shipped in from Australia. These trusses would support the galvanized iron roof. Timber for the project was to come from the mission sawmill at Batuna. The floor was to be concrete.

The hospital design had to take into consideration certain customs of the local people. One of these was the need for each ward to be provided with its own kitchen area where the local carers who came with the patients could prepare food for both themselves and the patients. It was recommended that squat toilets be used instead of the usual pedestal and seat. Time and costs would not allow Hawkes and Houliston to go to the site on Malaita for this planning work, instead they used photos of the land and its location plus some basic measurements on which to design the complex. Hindsight may suggest that had they gone to Uru they may have been made more aware of other customs that were important to these heathen people. Their recommended concept followed the design used at Sopas Hospital with the various wards connected to, and on either side of a central covered walkway. The administration and outpatients section were located in the front row giving patients easy access to the hospital complex.

It has since been noted that this covered way giving all weather protection from sun and rain was a design insensitive to local custom. Joining the maternity ward for child-birth, to the rest of the hospital in this way meant, to the local people, that the whole hospital was contaminated. It has been suggested that some men did not attend the hospital for treatment because of this. While the people of other areas of the Solomons may have felt less intimidated by such breaches with local custom and accepted the advantage of the covered way giving all weather protection for both staff and patients, many of the local Kwaio men would not accept this break with their own culture.

Once these concept plans were accepted by the various committees Houliston then began preparing the working drawings for the builder to follow. In June 1962 Harrison, president of ESIM, was given approval to 1. start clearing the land, 2. plant gardens, 3. commence building the wharf, 4. make blocks ready for the construction. The final plans recommended by the union were passed on to the division for approval on 23 January 1963. Dr Sigi Kotz, the division medical director, who had visited the site and who had worked as a missionary doctor in several locations in Africa studied the plans and suggested several alterations. Dr Tulloch of the Sydney Adventist Hospital also gave suggestions for improvement. The final adjustments to the plans were accepted by the BSUM committee on 4 June 1964.

To provide facilities as they would be needed by the initial medical staff, the order of construction of buildings had been listed on 18 July 1963 as follows: outpatients section; toilets and kitchen; female nurses house; obstetrics ward; male ward; theater and utility heating room; female ward; child



Dr Haynes Posala



Dr Sigi Kotz

welfare.

### Preparing For Construction On Site

Before construction on the site could commence much work had to be done. Under the supervision of Ellis Gibbons, the local people were asked to assist in the following: to clear the land of trees and undergrowth ready for the buildings; to cut the mangroves along the shore so that a wharf could be built; to construct a road from the

wharf to the building site on the ridge so that building supplies could be transported there. Gibbons also was to start a team which could stockpile concrete blocks ready for the construction of the buildings. Most importantly there was the need for transporting the concrete blocks and other raw materials to the site. It was thought punts would be suitable for this work.

### The Wharf

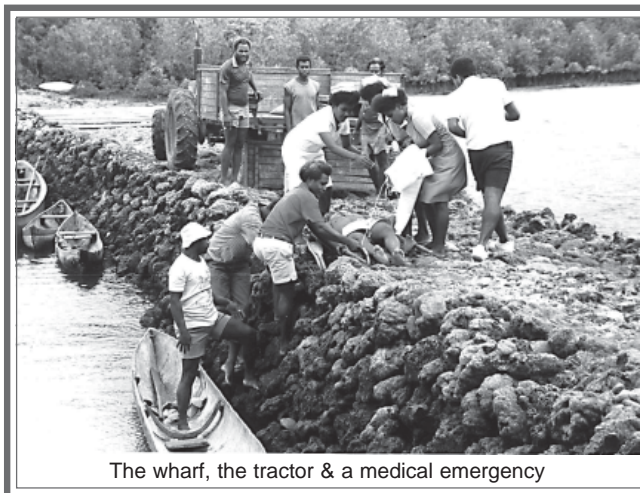
The 'salt water' people (those living along the coast who were familiar with building coral rock platforms for their villages and homes which they located off the coast away from the mosquitoes) were to construct the wharf from coral stones brought from the reef. It was to be approximately 122 metres (400 feet) in length and would reach from the shore to the deep water. It had been planned to make it 2.4m (8 ft) wide to accommodate the tractor but it was decided to make it 1.5m (5ft) in width to save time with the construction. This meant that the tractor could not be used on it and that all sand, gravel and other materials for the buildings would have to be transported along the wharf in a hand cart, or carried, before being loaded on to the trailer and pulled up to the site by the tractor.

### The Road

The road up the side of the hill was dug by hand without the use of any equipment. It was completed about the same time as the wharf. It had been planned to transfer the tractor from Kwailibesi to assist in this work but this had not been done. Loading it on to the *Lao Heni* and unloading it at Atoifi was probably too difficult. When the new tractor arrived it was loaded on to the *Lao Heni* at Honiara, then transported to the still incomplete wharf at Atoifi. The deep water end of the wharf had been constructed for tying the ship up and unloading, but the remainder of the wharf was still under construction. The tractor had to be unloaded from the *Lao Heni* on to the wharf, then later at high tide was transferred to one of the punts and taken to where it could be off loaded to the section of the wharf which was connected to the shore. It was then driven carefully by Ellis Gibbons along the narrow wharf and up the new road to the hospital site.

### Concrete Block Making

Gibbon's brother John had found a blockmaking machine and made a replica of it. He sent both machines out to Atoifi. This allowed Gibbons to establish two locations for making blocks close to the hospital site and near sand, gravel



The wharf, the tractor & a medical emergency

and fresh water so necessary for the blocks. He arranged with the local Adventist village to make concrete blocks at a cost of three cents per block. The sand and gravel were available at no cost and he arranged for cement to be taken to the sites as well as the delivery of the blocks to the building area. Houliston had designed a block-making machine at Kambubu for use throughout the union and several of these were sent to Atoifi to assist in providing the large number of blocks necessary for this project.

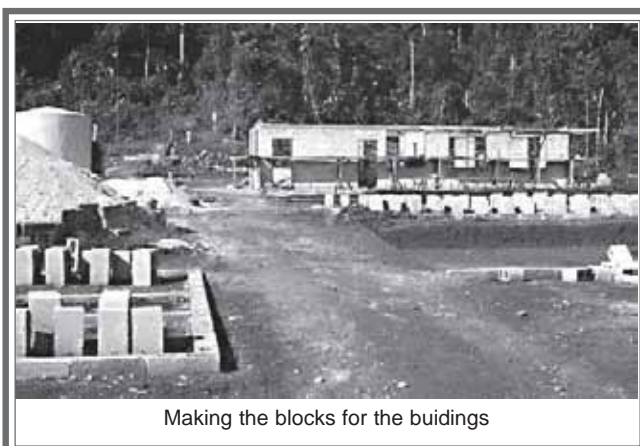
When sand and gravel were no longer available at the first site the men of Canaan Village were paid to bag sand and gravel so it could be loaded on to barges, a big canoe or on to the *MV Dani* so it could be deposited where it was needed. Jason's Beach, lying between the villages of Kwallagualla and Ogo, was another site where this activity took place.

### Two Punts Built to Transport Materials

Because the site consisted of slippery red clay and the shoreline was covered with mangroves, there was no sand or gravel which would be needed for cement foundations, floors and roads. In July 1963 the union committee approved the construction of two barges to bring the supplies to the location.

### Changes To Administration

After the building programs were underway Ellis and Pat Gibbons were transferred to Batuna in the Western Solomons to take over the Batuna district, re-establish the sawmill there as well as supervise the medical work at both Batuna and Kukudu. He later returned to Atoifi to install the 24hp Lister diesel powered 24 kw electric generating set purchased for the hospital. The Gibbons family was granted permanent return to Australia in January 1965.



Making the blocks for the buildings

Because of the growth of the work on Malaita, on 12 December 1963 at the BSUM annual meetings it was decided to organize the island as a separate mission no longer administered by the ESIM. Pastor Peter Cummings was called from the CSUM to serve as president. There also was a need for an additional boat to help service the island. The MV *Dani*, a 26ft boat had been used to care for this area but with the plans for the hospital to service the large population in the adjacent areas, it was obvious that a boat was also required for that specific work. It was therefore decided to purchase a new boat for Malaita Mission and make the *Dani* available to the hospital for its medical work. The *Raratalau* was then built in Rabaul at a cost of £12,700 to be ready for the Malaita Mission when the hospital would need the use of the *Dani*.

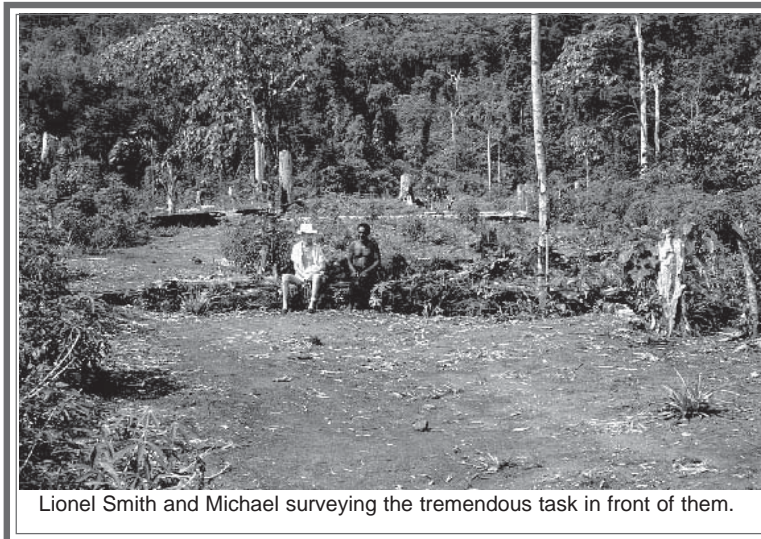
Unfortunately by January 1964 the settlement for the land was still not completed by the government and no funds had been paid to the land owner who had become a little agitated over this. To assure him and his family of the mission's intention to proceed with the purchase, as well as the construction of the hospital, an amount of 100 pounds was paid to the owner. He then agreed to allow some basic work to proceed before the final settlement was arranged by the government.

### Construction On Site

Lionel Smith, the carpenter, and his wife Gertrude were now able to arrive at Atoifi. While waiting clearance to start work there he had been working on some renovations at Kwailibesi. Unfortunately the trip which took them down the east coast from Kwailibesi to Atoifi on the *Dani* was very uncomfortable, one of the worst trips the boat had made. A Solomon Island carpenter, Michael, had arrived at Atoifi on 12 July 1963, to help with the project. His 11 year old daughter, Linda, had died of dysentery 11 days previously.<sup>4</sup>

Smith was now able to continue clearing the site for the hospital and building temporary accommodation for himself and his wife. This home was very basic, having a roof, walls and a wooden floor about 2ft above the ground. The many open spaces between these allowed air to move freely in the hot climate. Of course this also gave easy access to snakes and other creatures. Besides coping with their own needs, Gertrude also catered for the continuous flow of tradesmen and visitors.

George Rusa, of the Marine Service Department who was in Honiara working on ship maintenance, was asked to remain there to complete one of the barges approved in July 1963. They were 6m x 1.2m (20' x 4') and could carry a



Lionel Smith and Michael surveying the tremendous task in front of them.

reasonable amount of supplies. They were each fitted with 18hp outboard motors. The first of these was towed to Malaita behind the *Lao Heni* when Harrison took Houliston to the hospital construction area to get the plans set out on site ready for the building to commence. Houliston remained with Smith for two weeks as they worked at pegging out the total building area ready for digging foundations. The barges proved very successful. I remember being taken ashore on one of them when Dr Kotz made his visit to Atoifi to inspect the project.

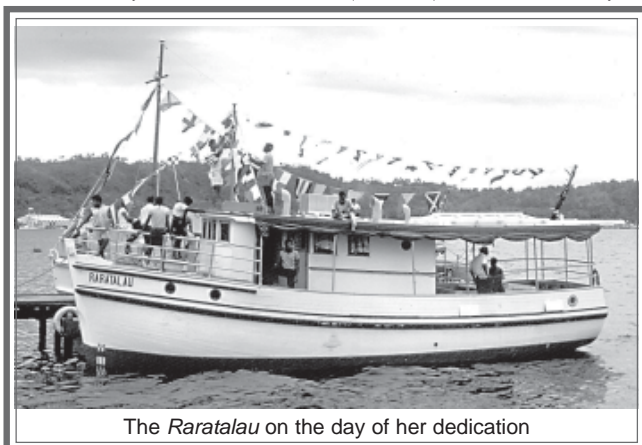
### Equipment for the Builders

While on furlough in 1963 I was given the assignment to purchase the equipment needed to complete the project: welding equipment; a mechanical hacksaw for cutting the steel for the trusses, bed frames and bedside tables; woodworking equipment for all the joinery needed for doors, cupboards and windows and furniture for both the hospital and the staff houses.

It was while arranging for these purchases in Sydney, that Pastor Aubrey Mitchell, the new union president, advised that the division had allocated the BSUM the 13<sup>th</sup> Sabbath offering for the fourth quarter 1965. This was good news. Additional good news was that the division would allow us to draw on those funds in advance to keep the building project moving. It was because of these additional funds that we ordered the new David Brown tractor for which we were given a 25% discount with freight paid to Honiara.

### An Isolated Building Project

For quite a period Smith was left on this lonely site with his local staff to continue the building program. Large quantities of cement, reinforcing rod, galvanized pipes etc had been ordered for arrival for foundations, blocks, roof trusses and other items. These supplies were all brought from the wharf at Honiara to Atoifi on the *Lao Heni*. The arrival of these supplies enabled the building work to begin in earnest. Men were employed digging and pouring the foundations, others were welding trusses for the roofs. During 1964 Malcolm Long was sent to Atoifi to assist Smith. At the end of the year Smith's term of service ended and he and his wife returned home knowing that the bulk of the work was completed. Their contribution in such a lonely place had been much appreciated. Early in 1965 Mr Mervyn Polley replaced Smith and he and Long continued the work. When Dr McMahon arrived Lens Larwood suggested that, as the project was nearing completion, they could supervise the work and thus save the wages of the expatriate carpenters who were sent to other places.



The *Raratalau* on the day of her dedication



## Starting The Medical Work

While working all day with his building program Smith and his wife also conducted a clinic from their living quarters for anyone who needed medical help. On one occasion Dr Sigi Kotz, the medical director for the division visited the area. The Smiths had made some prior publicity of his coming and a large number of people came to see him in the building work-shed which had been set up as a clinic for the occasion. Dr Kotz indicated that 35 different diseases had been diagnosed during his stay. I was there on that occasion and remember seeing one of the local men come out of the bush behind the house. He was carrying a large bush knife over his shoulder and was followed by his wife and children.

On 4 June 1964 the situation of the leper work at Kwailibesi was brought to the committee. It was voted that as Atoifi hospital was replacing the facilities at Kwailibesi a small section, separate from the general hospital, be provided for lepers. It was also later agreed to care for a limited number of tuberculosis patients on the grounds. Once the hospital was operational though, hospital staff, with compassion for the suffering, accepted all comers from the surrounding districts.

The time had arrived when it was necessary to give consideration to the needs for overseas staff. Calls were placed with the division for a doctor and two nurses. Brian Dunn and his wife Valmae accepted the call to serve as the first nurses at the hospital. Although several specific requests had been made for a doctor to take charge of the hospital there was no interest until June 1965 when Dr Lynn Mc Mahon accepted the invitation to fill this position once he could find a replacement to take over his medical practice. It was anticipated that he would be needed during 1966. However, the task took 12 months and he and his wife Maurine arrived in June 1966.

As there was considerable medical need at the site already, the Dunns agreed to arrive at the incomplete building project at the end of November 1965. They lived in the only completed national house which had a room added for them. They involved themselves in the medical work the moment they arrived there.

## The First Tragedy

Unfortunately, at approx 10.30 pm on the night of 16 December, Dunn was returning to his home after treating an urgent medical case when he was speared in the back by a person waiting near his house. The spear was thrown with such force that it went through his body and protruded through the front of his chest.

The news of the attack reached Rabaul and shocked the BSUM committee members who were conducting the annual meeting with division officers present. Brian had passed through Rabaul only a few weeks earlier on his way to take up his appointment.

From this remote site Brian Dunn began his long journey to get medical attention at the hospital in Honiara. Many people heard of the terrible happening over the radio and the response was immediate. The Catholic priest gave his small mission boat; Val Cummings, the wife of the president at Kwailibesi, arranged for the *Dani* to meet the boat to take the Dunns to the airport at Auki; the officer in charge of the Anglican Mission sent his boat which was bigger and faster than the *Dani*; at Auki, a chartered plane waited to take them to Honiara on its return trip. The plane landed in Honiara as darkness was setting in.

Dunn had been conscious during all of this time which would have been at least 18 hours from the accident and after

a busy days work. Although the removal of the spear in the operating theater appeared at first to be successful, sadly Dunn passed away on 19 December 1965. When news of his death was received at the BSUM office in Rabaul a plane was chartered to take the Solomon Island members of the committee home and others to attend the funeral in Honiara. Dunn was buried in the local Honiara cemetery and a plaque to his memory was later placed on the grave.

Pastors Aubrey Mitchell and Lester Hawkes went with the other members of the committee from the Solomons to Honiara for the funeral. Afterwards Mitchell returned to Rabaul with Valmae Dunn who was returning to Australia. Hawkes remained in the Solomons to take charge of the hospital for the immediate future.

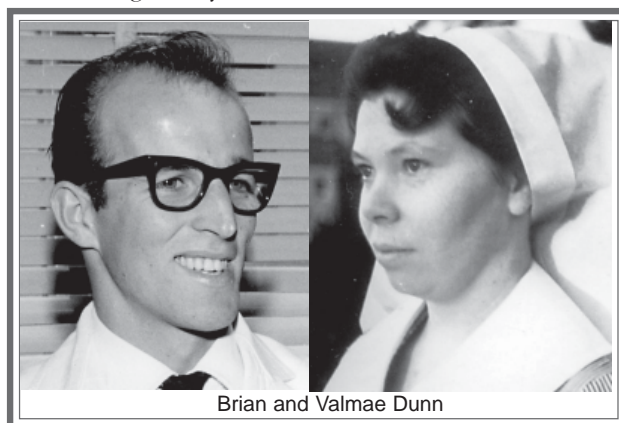
Sketchy details of what was happening at Atoifi came through to Rabaul from our various short wave transmitters. Early news indicated that the police had apprehended two suspects. One was a devil priest, Endaie, who we were told, had asked his nephew to kill Dunn. The motive was supposed to be that the devil priest, who considered himself an important person, did not receive an adequate share of the funds received for the sale of the land and was now taking out retribution on the hospital. The nephew was alleged to have admitted to the police that he had committed the killing.

I was present with other expatriate missionaries when the police case against these two persons was considered in the Supreme Court in Honiara in February 1966. Solicitors from Australia were brought in to defend the accused. The judge had newly arrived from South Africa. He did not understand pidgin or the local custom, so relied completely on the interpreters and wrote down his findings by longhand. At the end of the hearings his decision was that there was no case for the accused to answer. He stated there was no motive given and only circumstantial evidence was provided by the police. The accused were set free and the verdict had to be accepted. We were surprised, as it seemed that the motives given prior to the court case were not accepted as such by the judge.

The news of Brian Dunn's death just a short time before the 4th quarter's 13th Sabbath offering was collected, probably gave quite a boost to the offering. The amount of A\$104,096 was far more than we had anticipated. Atoifi received \$57,396 from it with the balance going to Betikama School for its building program.

In spite of the tragedy the building program continued. Hawkes, managed the hospital medical work through this tragic time until replacements could be planned for. He remained there for six weeks. Later on Lens Larwood and his wife Betty replaced Brian and Valmae Dunn. They, with Dr Lynn Mc Mahon, his wife Maurine and children made up the expatriate staff.

Although many of the standard ward beds were made



on site, Dr Mc Mahon arranged for some hospital equipment, including 28 beds with over bed tables on wheels, screens and bedside lockers to come from the hospital at Lake Cargelligo (NSW Australia) with which he had been associated prior to going to Atoifi.

### The Official Opening

Although I was scheduled to be at the hospital opening, I was unable to be there as I was in hospital in Rabaul. I had been inspecting a possible site for a new college on the Rabaul side of the Warrengoi River when the large tree-trunk on which Ray Richter and I were standing to get a better view of the area collapsed under us. Unfortunately I cracked two ribs which damaged my kidneys and put me in hospital for a week.

Dr Lynn Mc Mahon has provided the following detail of the events of the opening ceremony which took place on 25 August 1966. He reported that the BSUM committee recognized it was a major medical institution and had planned to make it a special and memorable day. Up to the day prior to the opening they had been working with only a skeleton staff. However on 24 August the new staff who had been training in Rabaul and Sopas arrived to start work. These newly trained personnel went about their work very enthusiastically as they prepared their new uniforms for the opening day.

Although the hospital was being opened in a remote area on the island of Malaita, the event was big news in the Solomon Islands and throughout the territories of the BSUM. The workers would serve among people who were still following heathen practices. They had no other medical facilities available. Invitations had been sent to government departments as well as to the various levels of church administration.

The visitors, numbering about 50 expatriates, included important people from the Government offices in both Honiara and Auki. The High Commissioner<sup>5</sup> for the Western Pacific was present as well as representatives from the government hospitals in Honiara and Auki. These folk arrived in their own government ship.

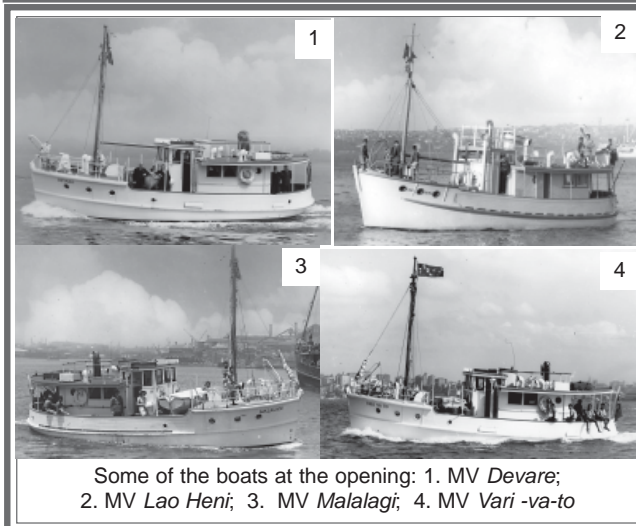
Pastor Robert Frame and Dr Sigi Kotz represented the Australasian Division, Pastors Mitchell, Hawkes and Ray Richter, the BSUM. In addition, all but one of the larger mission boats travelled to Atoifi from all parts of the union, each taking the president and his family plus other delegates for the occasion from their area; the *Malalaji* came from Kavieng, the *Devare* from Bougainville, the *Vari-vat-o* from the Western Solomons and the *Lao Heni* from Honiara. In addition there was the new boat for Malaita, the *Karatalau*, and the *Dami lo-*



Dr Lyn McMahon, his wife Maurine & their children



Betty & Lens Larwood at the back left, Dr Lyn McMahon at the back right with the nursing staff



Some of the boats at the opening: 1. MV *Devare*; 2. MV *Lao Heni*; 3. MV *Malalaji*; 4. MV *Vari -va-to*

cated at the hospital.

Roger Keesing an anthropologist from Santa Cruz University, USA, had spent more than a year learning the Kwaio language and befriending the people on the mountain above Sinaragu. At this time he had a medical team of twelve specialists including a professor of medicine at Harvard University staying with him for three weeks. All were invited to the opening ceremony.

A special event of the day was the sail past the wharf within the harbour for all the mission boats with their flags and bunting flying in the breeze. It was probably the largest display of mission boats seen at any one place. As all the visitors would arrive by boat the road from the wharf to the hospital site was decorated with white, crushed coral. All the invited guests stopped at the doctor's house for refreshments and were then given a tour of inspection of the hospital facilities.

This was followed by the opening ceremony and its pagentry which took about 2 hours. The Betikama choir of 50 neatly dressed boys delighted the large crowd present, with their singing. A special plaque commemorating Brian Dunn's death was unveiled. Speeches were made by the dignitaries present, the history of the development of the hospital was rehearsed and the aims of the institution were outlined. The High Commissioner commended the church for establishing a hospital in the area. He expressed his amazement at what the mission had been able to accomplish at Atoifi by manufacturing so much of its requirements for the buildings, (61 galvanized steel trusses), hospital equipment (beds for patients, and tables etc for general use), on the site. He also mentioned the sacrifice and effort by the mission in providing this facility, and he encouraged the local people to reciprocate by

making a bigger personal contribution.

All the visitors were very friendly and expressed appreciation for what had been done at the hospital in such a remote area. One result of inviting Roger Keesing and his group to the ceremony as visitors was that David Verlee an ophthalmologist came to Atoifi four days prior to the opening to do some eye surgery. Although they did not have all the necessary equipment needed for the cataract surgery, they did manage to do six other eye cases and Verlee taught Dr Mc Mahon the skills to do cataracts so that when the equipment was available he would then be able to do them.

After the opening ceremony those present enjoyed the special meal that had been prepared by Maurine Mc Mahon and her helpers. For the official guests this was served on a long table under the front awning of the hospital building. The table was covered with red cloth and decorated with paw-paw leaves. In addition there were 400 other nationals who were provided with a special menu including such things as massi massi (sweet potatoes and greens filled with nutmeat instead of fish, and cooked in a stone oven). This proved to be very popular even with the high commissioner.

Shortly after the hospital opened I was transferred from the BSUM to the CSUM and the last contact that I had with the Atoifi hospital was caring for the trainees sent to the CSUM Sopas Hospital at Wabag, PNG, to do their nursing training. Their own training program was still future and they took advantage of the program at the CSUM hospital. At that stage the Sopas training program did not include the 3rd year and the trainees were sent to Lae Hospital where they completed their third year. After they passed their final exams they returned to Atoifi to take up their appointments. This contact with the trainee staff during the year they spent in Lae until they graduated and returned to Atoifi provided us with pleasant memories.

The history of Atoifi does not end with the opening of the hospital. More could be told of successes there by those who followed on. There are no doubt countless stories of God's miraculous leadings in

this area. Over the years there have been many clashes with evil powers as Satan has done all he can to disrupt the work of improving lives and sharing the gospel. The death of Lens Larwood in the tractor accident and the tragic death of Lance Gersbach is evidence of how Satan does all he can to discourage those who are willing to answer a call and work for God in remote and primitive areas. I trust that these brief notes will inspire others to follow the example of the Andersons, Parkers, Waddingtons, Gibbons Larwoods and all those who have served in later years. The Gospel must go to the whole world and some have to be willing to leave the comforts of home, take the risks that may be involved, and share the Good News with others.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> H M Ross, *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania*.

<sup>2</sup> Over the years the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific has been organised as follows: from 1894 it was organised as the Australasian Union Conference. The church was reorganised as the Australasian Inter-Union Conference in 1949. From 1956 it was known as the Australasian Division. From 1985 it became the South Pacific Division. (However the church in the South Pacific was also granted division status from 1922 by the world church.)

<sup>3</sup> Ross

<sup>4</sup> SDA Encyclopaedia, Vol 10, R & H Pub, 127

<sup>5</sup> Because the High Commissioner, Sir Robert Foster, was on leave at the time, it is possible that the Acting High Commissioner, Mr M Davis was the person there. ◆



# Beginnings: Through Indigenous Eyes— the entrance of Adventist missions into the Highlands of New Guinea



**PAUL CAVANAGH**



*Paul Cavanagh was born in Invercargill in the South Is of New Zealand. After graduating from the University of Otago (NZ) with a BSc he went to Avondale College in 1969 graduating in 1972 with a BA in Theology. After 6 years of mission service at Fulton College in Fiji he went to the USA, where he graduated from Andrews University in 1979 with an MA in Religion (Missiology) and with an MPH from Loma Linda University a year later. After 4 years in Fiji, Paul transferred to Kukudu in the Western Solomon Islands. In 1985 he commenced a 17 year period of service at Pacific Adventist College (University), and in 1994 was ordained to the gospel ministry. Since 2002 he has continued to serve as the Field Secretary and Ministerial Sec. for the TPUM in Suva, Fiji. Notable among Paul's achievements at PAC/U were the following: designing and implementing plans for attractive landscaping; initiating the library's Pacific collection of documents and artifacts; conducting Bible studies with students, and exerting a positive impact on the spiritual tone of the college/university.*

ON SATURDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 1991, Paul Cavanagh visited Napapara Village, outside of Rabaul to record August Turten's memories on the entry of Adventist Missions into the Highlands of New Guinea.

August Turten was a boy in 1929 when the first SDA missionaries arrived in Rabaul. In this account he recalls his first dealings with the mission, his time in Mussau and his experiences as one of ten national young men who accompanied the first expatriate missionaries on the initial SDA penetration into the Highlands of New Guinea in the early 1930s.

August was therefore a pioneer missionary in his own right. He recalls this experience as he remembers it.

## First Contacts with the Mission

In 1929 Pastor G F Jones came to Rabaul with his party. He had two Solomon Island young men with him – Oti and Salau. They arrived in Matupit on a small boat. At this time I was at Napapara. Later, when I went to Matupit, I did not see Jones as he had already left. I did see Oti and Salau. Salau was stationed at Bai and Oti was at Rabuane.

This was the time when McLaren came from Fiji. He had brought with him a Fijian Family – Nafetalai, his wife Vasiti and their daughter Siana. There was also a young man with him. I cooked for this young man.

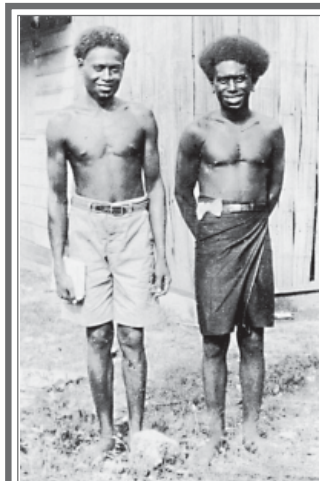
McLaren went to three new places—Mussau, Emira and Tench. He took Nafetelai and family with him. This occurred after I was

baptised at Matupit. I had no father and mother and was just roaming about so when the opportunity came, I went to Mussau with Ereman who later became a pastor. There he became very sick and was returned to Matupit by the mission ship. I stayed on for several months at a place called Loaua. The mission then said I should go to school so I returned to Matupit where I was taught by W W Petrie. It was a good school and I went as far as grade three. However, at that time I was twelve years of age and was not really interested in learning.

## Pioneering in the Highlands of New Guinea

Then came an exciting offer. I was asked to go with nine others to the Ramu<sup>1</sup>. The others were Oti and Salau from the Solomons, Kovaia, Kukuone and Laia from Mussau and Topaik, Pokai (also called Daniel Pokai or Toropal), Elisa, Iliesa and myself from Rabaul.

We caught a ship called the MacDhui at Rabaul and after one and a half days we arrived at Salamaua. Then after several days McLaren, Elisa, three others and I caught the plane that took us into the Eastern Highlands. The rest came up on the following day. We slept that first night in a tent near the aerodrome near the haus benzene<sup>2</sup>. We were told we could not make a fire. We were also instructed that if the kanakas<sup>3</sup> came we were not to run away or be frightened. We were just to stay quietly. They would come without clothes and would be carrying weapons. McLaren slept with the kiap.<sup>4</sup>



Salau & Oti



Nafetalai, Vasiti, Siana & Jose—Fijian Missionaries

It was planned that we build a haus boi<sup>5</sup> in one day. So the next day we got up, had worship and then went to get trees from near the river and grass (pitpit) to build the house. The trees provided the posts and the grass was for the roof and walls. When the house was finished we put our belongings inside. The haus boi was the first house finished. We then began on Petrie's house – it was much larger. We started it before he came. When McLaren left we were by ourselves. We bought food from the kanakas with shells.



Stanley, Greta & Gwen Gander with Pr A G Stewart

When Petrie arrived he told us that the committee wanted us to extend our stay. He talked and talked to us but Topaik, who was leading those of us from Rabaul said “No – I have to return quickly to school at Matupit.” Topaik was cross – he wanted to return by plane but Petrie told us we should walk out, saying “We should not waste money on the fuel for the balus.”<sup>6</sup> But Topaik was adamant that we should go out by plane: “Balus I kisim me kam, so balus I mas kisim me back long Rabaul.” (“The plane carried us here so the plane must carry us back to Rabaul.”) So Topaik went down to Salamaua by plane. (That, according to August, is why Topaik died of a big sickness soon after). Oti and Salau plus the Mussau boys, Kukone, Laia and Kavaia stayed a little longer.

I wanted to stay on but the other Matupit boys said, “No! We are going back now. The time is up.” We began our journey by foot to Madang. We got up on Sunday and walked down to the Markham Valley. Gander, who accompanied us a little way towards Madang, shot some pigeons for us to eat on the way. That night we slept in a small kanaka hut in the bush. We cooked the birds that night and then moved on. One policeman went with us and another went back to protect Gander. There were five of us. It took a week of travel and we arrived at Madang on a Friday. The following Tuesday, at 4 am, we boarded the Mac Dhui that took us to Rabaul.

During the seven months we worked at Ramu building houses we collected small and big trees for the frames and grass to cover them. Topaik and I would take turns with the cooking. Once, when Topaik was cooking, a kanaka broke into one of the houses and stole tools. He was seen by Kapul, a boy who worked for the Kiap. He came and told Topaik.

As for the mission work we did while we were in the highlands, sometimes we went into the villages near Kainantu. There was one small village we had to reach by crossing a big river to a small island. The water came up to our chests. On this island the inhabitants were safe from attack. They did not understand pidgin so all we could do was point. We had a

picture roll and pointed to Jesus and called his name. We also had two guitars – one for Topaik and one for Oti. Salau had a ukulele.

**Note:**

This interview gives us insights into the initial entry of the Seventh-day Adventist mission into the Highlands of New Guinea in the early 1930s. It was the time to acquire land and establish a mission station. It shows the dependence of expatriate missionaries on young national men in the establishing of the work of the church in a new and dangerous area.

**Footnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> This is not the Ramu Valley. At that time the Kainantu District in the Eastern Highland Province of PNG was referred to as the Ramu. Here the main stream of the Ramu River originates.
  - <sup>2</sup> Fuel storage shed
  - <sup>3</sup> kanakas are unsophisticated bush people
  - <sup>4</sup> kiap — district officer
  - <sup>5</sup> house in which boys lived
  - <sup>6</sup> balus — plane
- The names of the missionaries mentioned in the article: Pastor Griffith F Jones; Gilbert McLaren; William W Petrie; Stanley Gander



# Five Years in the Sepik — resourceful, practical and competent ministry

## Part 1: a new land of opportunities



**ROY ALDRIDGE**



*Roy Aldridge was born in Auckland New Zealand, and completed his primary and secondary schooling there.*

*He studied pharmacy at Auckland university. Two years later he went to the Australasian Missionary College at Cooranbong.*

*Four years later Roy graduated as a nurse from the Sydney San and Hospital in 1958.*

*On 28 April 1959 he married Mary Porter.*

*After working for a year at the Warburton San and Hospital, he and Mary arrived at Ambunti in the Sepik district of the Territory of New Guinea in Feb 1961 to serve as the district director. In 1964 he transferred to a similar position at Habari in the Tari district for a period of 2 years.*

*On returning to Australia Roy commenced a 23 year period of service at the Warburton San and Hospital (WHCC from 1980) where he served as a male nurse and radiographer. Roy retired from church service in 1990, and from 1999 he and Mary have lived in northeast Victoria where they assist in the work of their local church. The Aldridges have three children—*

*Karl, married to Sandra (nee Rosenberg); Jeanette, married to Mark Martin—Brisbane; Sebastian—Melbourne.*

### NEW GUINEA ENCOUNTER

MARY AND I STEPPED DOWN from the DC 3 aircraft that had brought us from Madang to Wewak on the last leg of our journey. A blast of hot, dry wind greeted us, but after the confinement of the plane it was almost welcome. We had sat for over an hour on steel-framed, canvas-covered benches along the sides of the plane that was packed full of New Guineans and their goods and chattels. Crammed into their bilums (net bags woven from coconut fibre) was an amazing assortment of their basic needs: cooking utensils, bedding, sewing machines and edibles. The aroma of cooked food-stuffs and other unfamiliar smells did not help to make the trip pleasant. It was a relief to find ourselves in the terminal building at Wewak.

A handful of Europeans were there to meet the main flight of the day but none looked familiar to us. Enquiries at the desk did not help. Pidgin, the lingua franca, was new to us so we sat on our bags and waited. Suddenly, an ex-army jeep came screeching to a halt outside the terminal. A tall red-haired, red-faced Australian jumped out and came striding into the building. We asked him how we could get in touch with the Adventist Mission.

The 'Sevendays', as he called the Adventists, happened to be his neighbours and he assured us that he would let them know that we were waiting for someone to come and pick us up. With that, he collected several nationals and drove off.

Some time later, when our stomachs were

reminding us that it was well past noon, a Land Rover arrived. From it emerged two neatly dressed Australians and a short, rotund and very black Buka Islander. Relief at last!

We instinctively recognized them as 'Sevendays'. (If only we had asked for the 'Sevendays' on arrival, we would not have had this long wait). Pastors John Keith and Elwyn Raethel were all apologies. The third man was Pastor Tati, whom we learned to love greatly. They simply had not received our telegram; nothing unusual in this 'land that time forgot.'

The annual administrative meetings were in progress at the mission headquarters. The compound was beautifully set out on the west side of the hill overlooking a long, curving, tree-lined beach lapped by gentle surf. Coconut trees, fragrant frangipanis, hibiscus and deep-hued bougainvilleas added a tropical charm. It was a delightful spot. With Phyl Raethel's kind hospitality, we soon relaxed and forgot the circumstances of our arrival.



A pig in a bilum

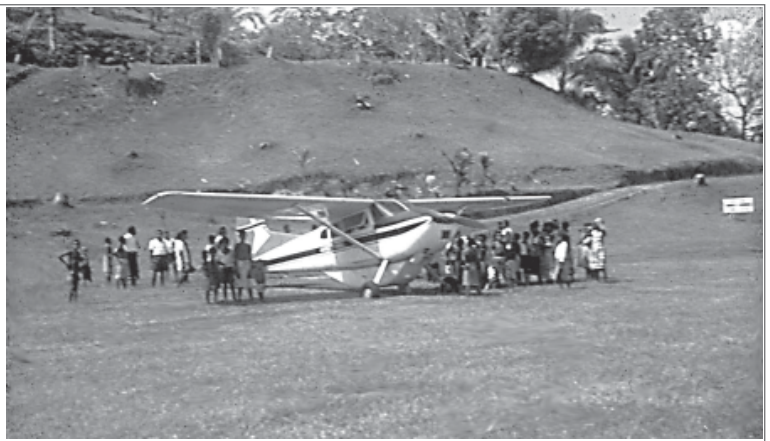


Above: Mary & Roy Aldridge; Right: Pastor John B Keith





The Lelaman



The Ambunti airstrip

### Acclimatising

That evening, Elwyn Raethel the President of the Sepik Mission and my new boss, approached me with a proposition. The mission ship, *Lelaman*, was about to leave for Madang for its annual certificate of survey and he wondered if I would like to do the trip with him. I tried to hide my pleasure and assured him I would find it interesting. I did not stop to consider that Mary, in such a completely new environment, would be anything but happy. Nor did I realise that it would be six weeks before I saw her again.

Pastor Keith took a personal interest in us and we came to love and respect him deeply. "Roy," he said, "there are three very important qualities we look for in a missionary. They are adaptability, adaptability, and adaptability!" I was to remember this first lesson for years to come.

The voyage to Madang and the next six weeks passed quickly. There was so much to learn, so much to do, and a new language to pick up. Pidgin is not just broken English, but is made up of Malay, German, and English words. It is a very idiomatic language. The locals often use these idioms to obscure their real meanings from expatriates. Pidgin is very colourful and descriptive but circumlocution is needed when they have to deal with modern technology. Here, a lot depends on the ingenuity of the speaker.

I had to learn Pidgin quickly. The President of the Madang Mission, Pastor Syd Stocken, saw to that. He arranged my first church service after only a few weeks. Fortunately, my audience had a sense of humour and was very understanding.

The Madang District Mission headquarters was situated on the harbour at Biliou, directly over the water from the main township; a three or four minute trip in an outboard-powered dinghy. Here, coconuts, frangipanis, wide-spreading ficus and calophyllums made an idyllic setting. Workers from outstations, particularly those in the humid and mosquito-ridden river areas, found the scenery and climate of this spot a welcome relief.

The return of the

Lelaman to Wewak was an occasion of great excitement and rejoicing. Families, both national and expatriate, stood waving and calling from the beach. Those waiting to come ashore in the dinghy were bearers of gifts and goodies.

And so Mary and I were back together again. Still ahead was our introduction to the mission station that would be our home for the next five years. We were learning that you couldn't hurry things along in New Guinea. We were slowly becoming acclimatised and learning to love the New Guinea people. We were beginning to understand their customs and converse in Pidgin. But we were rearing to go.

On graduating from the nurses course at the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital in 1959, we had first received a call to the Solomon Islands. This did not eventuate. Then Daru in the Papuan Gulf was mentioned. When we were finally packed and ready to move, it was planned for us to go to Eastern Highlands of New Guinea. Now here we were in the Sepik District. But with all this changing of plans, we never doubted that God was leading.

In the Sepik District, where there were both ocean and inland waterways, I felt that my experience with small boats would be put to good use; to what extent would subsequently be revealed.

As we had both trained as nurses someone had the foresight to arrange night classes in theology for us men. The material presented proved invaluable in facing the entirely new and different situations we were to encounter.

A new name now entered our vocabulary: Ambunti. This

was where we were to locate. Ambunti was a small government outpost on the banks of the long and winding Sepik River. The Raethels had served there for some years and were able to provide vital information. Suddenly it was 25 April, the day we were to leave Wewak and fly to our new home. The waiting was over at last.

### Settling In

The ancient Norseman winged noisily over the plains far below. Although the butt of many jokes (eg, Why did the Norseman crash? It ran out of noise), the single



Beryl & Syd Stocken with their family

radial-engined high-winged monoplane had a good safety record. We had no qualms about flying in this, the smallest plane we had ever been in. (As I write this, Mary wryly comments, “You mightn’t have.”) The terrain below was spread out like a moth-eaten carpet as far as the eye could see. The river plains were pock-marked by numerous small lakes. Muddy creeks followed slow, serpentine courses toward the mighty Sepik River. Burnt patches stood out on the landscape where the inhabitants had set fire to the kunai grass to drive out bandicoots, snakes and pigs. These were used for food.

Very few trees grew on the plains but the Sepik River could be traced by the coconuts and other taller growth that lined its meandering course. What a river! Here, some 320 kilometres (200 miles) upstream it was still half a kilometre wide. Huge billabongs had formed where the main river had changed course.

Descending to around 923 metres (3000 feet), we could pick out canoes like matchsticks, manned by insect-like figures. We flew over clusters of the thatched roofs of native houses and marvelled at the flocks of white cockatoos that were flushed out by the noise of the ‘balus’ (Pidgin for both aircraft and pigeons).

In the distance we saw the river winding its way between steep banks in more mountainous terrain. The nose of the plane dipped till we were only a hundred or so metres above the water. The aircraft made a hard left-hand turn, and dead ahead on the opposite side of the river we saw the tiny airstrip stretching back to the foot of the mountains. We struck a patch of turbulence over the river then the pilot gunned the engine briefly and cut it for a perfect touchdown on the grassy strip. Although I was to approach this strip scores of times in all manner of aircraft, I never ceased to admire the expertise of the pilots who used these small one-way strips.

We were surprised by the large crowd waiting at the parking bay. There were hundreds of local people, several Australian patrol officers and the Assistant District Officer (ADO) and his wife. Welcoming us? All these people? How naive can one be! It was Anzac Day. These people had come from miles around for the celebrations. The ADO made his way to the plane and sheltered in the shade of its wing, a habit that we quickly acquired. Six feet tall and resplendent in his uniform, he introduced himself as Des.

Quickly he told me that it was nearly 11 o’clock and that everyone was waiting for the Memorial Service to begin. Would I come up to the flagstaff in front of the District Office and conduct the service please? (The only other padre in the district was an Austrian for whom Anzac day had little meaning.) Don’t even ask me what I said. There was so much noise from

the crowd that I doubt whether it would have mattered anyway. I remember the local police in navy blue flannel shirts and black felt berets, standing rigidly at attention with reversed rifles. Someone played the ‘Last Post’ on the bugle. The occasion had all the solemnity of a dawn service at any capital city in Australia. I was surprised, when it was all over, to find it was not yet midday.

We enjoyed lunch and a relaxing hour or two at the home of the Assistant District Officer, and the entire Australian population of the Ambunti district. Mary immediately made friends with Pam, the ADO’s wife; a friendship that proved of mutual value in such an isolated place.

The mission station lay astride a ridge that sloped up from the river to the horse-shoe shaped Waskuk hills. Our home commanded a magnificent view both up and down the river. We also looked down onto the airstrip and main jetty. A small thatch-roofed church stood just below our house. This doubled as a school. Further up the ridge were the homes of Baungasi, the pastor from Mussau, the teacher, the boat crew, and the girls dormitory. Lower down and at right angles to the main ridge was the boys dormitory. On the thirty-acre flat between the ridge and airstrip were the gardens. Some coconut trees grew beside the paths and around the houses. At our own jetty was berthed the *Durua* (Papuan for help), a nine metre launch used to travel the long distances of the Ambunti Mission district. We were quite happy with the station and it didn’t take long to settle in.

### Medical Needs

From the start we had good relationships with the government personnel. This was no doubt largely due to the influence and example of our predecessors, Les and Fay Parkinson. There were areas where government and mission responsibility overlapped; the most noticeable being in the medical field. We had a small clinic on the mission station, a kilometre or so from the hospital, and we also conducted clinics in the villages we visited.

In some villages the people accepted us more readily than the government officers, so we were able to treat the sick and if necessary, bring them back to the hospital. Because of this co-operation, the medical officer was happy to provide us with a large range of medical supplies.

On one trip upriver we called at the small village of Kupkain that had grown up around a trade store. We looked for but did not see a fellow we’d noticed on a previous trip. We were told that he had ‘gone’. Later, when the crowd had dispersed, a local told me that the fellow was in his house but his leg was no good. We went to see him.



The house the Aldridges lived in—built by Elwyn Raethel



The MV *Durua*



On entering his small, dark hut we were met with a nauseating stench. As our eyes became accustomed to the poor light, we saw a pathetic sight. There lay the man; dirty, smelly and listless from the infection. Flies swarmed on his leg and already maggots occupied the crater of the huge ulcer. The village people had told him that he would die, so he had gone to his room to wait. We cleaned and dressed the leg and took him back to Ambunti, a day downstream by launch.

We saw him in the hospital a few days later. Penicillin injections and hospital care had worked wonders. One hardly recognised him as the same man. On his return to the village he told everyone how the mission and the government hospital had saved his life. This helped to convince these superstitious people that we were there for their welfare. It also showed that the missions and government were working together.

Twins were born in the village of Avatip. Superstition dictated that one twin must be allowed to die but the grandmother had taken the neglected boy and was endeavouring to rear him. She was not succeeding very well. We persuaded her to come to the Ambunti hospital where she was taught how to make up powdered milk and properly care for the little fellow. Thankfully, he survived: another instance of the co-operation between mission and government.

### The Trusty Toolbox

Soon after we had settled in, the ADO asked me if I knew anything about outboard motors. They were all twin cylinder Archimedes. I told him I had worked with these and he took me down to have a look at them. There were seventeen, of which only two were operational. They were all recent models, whereas those I'd worked with had been much older. "I'll see what I can do," I told him, and went and got my toolbox. Fortunately, most of the problems were simple ones. Some just needed adjusting, some needed new spark plugs and fresh fuel. Some were damaged by striking submerged logs or had overheated and seized up. Out of these we managed to make several goers. By the end of the afternoon I had eleven running

The ADO was delighted and asked how much he owed me. "Nothing," I replied. "Glad to help."

"Break it down, mate," he said. "Surely there's something you need, if you won't take cash?"

With this I asked if he could spare us a drum of fuel, either diesel or two-stroke mix. Drums of fuel had to be shipped in from Wewak or Madang and the cost was exorbitant.

"No trouble at all, old chap. Have it right over."

This was to be delivered by the kalabus (low security prisoners in gaol for minor offences) and I went down to our fuel shed to open up.

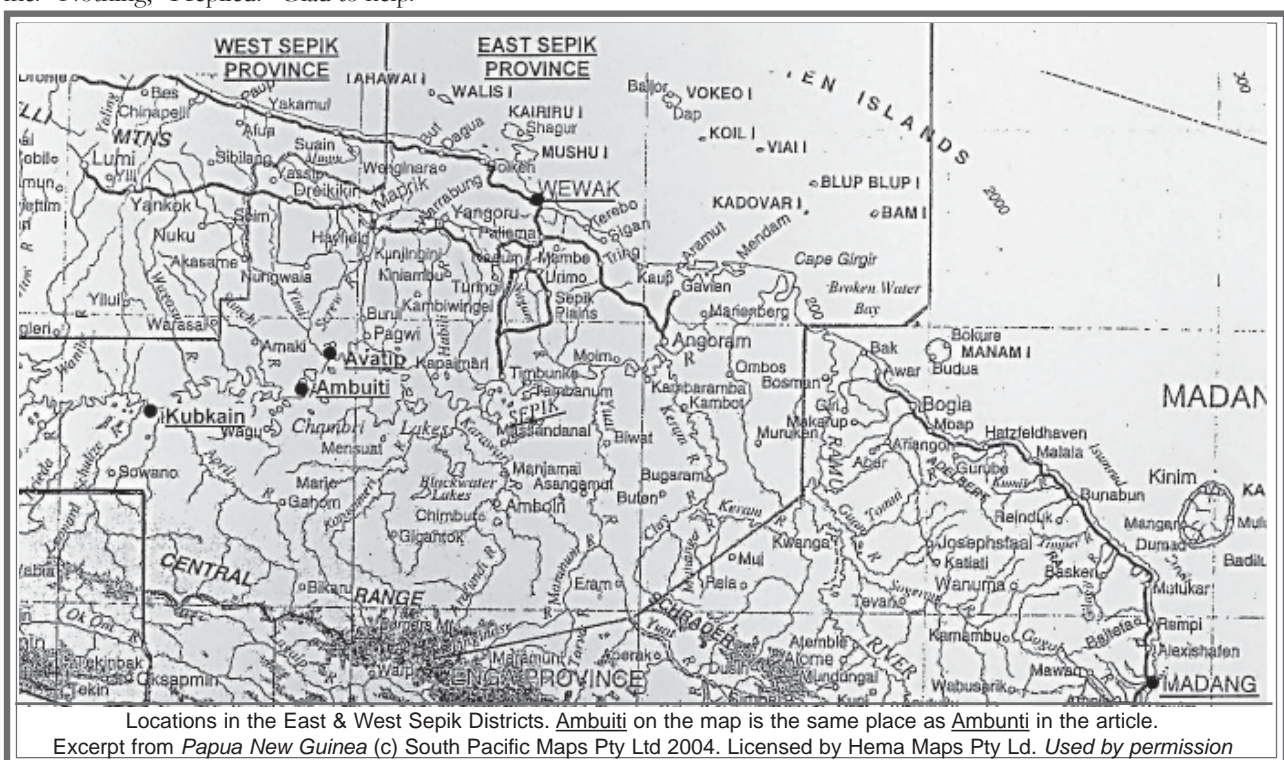
Then up the hill came the shouting men, carrying not one but five drums of much needed fuel. With their own boat and other motors out of action, their stocks had been accumulating.

Some time later, the government work-boat limped into Ambunti, running on only two of its three cylinders. The government engineer could not come out for several days and the vessel was due to return to Madang. Could I please help? I found that one of the three head gaskets had blown. There was a new one in the ship's tool-box; the rest was easy. With assistance from the crew we had the engine running again that afternoon. Again the ADO was generous. We had run low on food for the mission's indigenous staff, so when asked what could be done to repay us, I suggested that maybe they could spare a bag of rice. The kalabus arrived with three!

On another occasion the ADO urgently needed to send about a ton and a half of supplies to the May River outpost 336 kms further up the Sepik. No government ships were due. Could we help? Of course we could! The *Durua* was filled with government fuel, the supplies loaded and even a policeman was detailed to help on the long, three-day trip upstream.

On the return trip, we called in on all our local missionaries; we had saved at least two drums of precious fuel. A further surprise awaited me on my return. In our mail was an official envelope containing a cheque for 54 pounds in payment for the charter of MV *Durua*.

Time and again, when the mission budget was strained, relief was at hand. God was always there to care for our material needs. ♦



# Meeting a Need for Homeland Education

## —operating a successful ‘A’ school in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea



**BEVERLY MILLER**



*Bev Miller (nee Wallace) was born in Wagga Wagga, NSW Australia.*

*She graduated from the Primary Teaching Course at Avondale College in 1965.*

*After two years teaching at the Adventist School at Glen Huon, TAS, she served as first principal of Kabiufa primary ‘A’ School, Goroka PNG.*

*On returning to Australia she taught rural schools at Mt Gambier and Millicent in SA for the following three years.*

*In 1973 Bev married Geoff Miller. For the next few years they lived in Tasmania where five of their six children were home schooled.*

*After returning to Wagga Wagga in 1994 Bev taught part time at the Adventist Primary School for a number of years.*

*In 2005 they moved to Lake Macquarie where she does some tutoring.*

“WE USED TO THINK OF AUSTRALIA as the foreign land. For six months every three years we would try to fit in with people who had absolutely no concept of experiences that were just normal to us.”<sup>1</sup> ... a former student of Kabiufa Adventist ‘A’ School remembers her childhood in the Pacific Islands.

Families considering relocation to a different cultural setting must consider the impact on their children. Many experienced missionaries have made the heart-wrenching decision to return to the homeland for their families’ sake. This article discusses the efforts of one community to address this problem.

The need for appropriate education for expatriate students in the Territory of New Guinea was recognised by the Australian Government and some mission bodies prior to Independence. They provided ‘A’ schools (‘A’ as in Australian) in the major cities and towns.<sup>2</sup>

### Big Plans

Concern for their children drove a group of Seventh-day Adventist parents in the Goroka Valley, New Guinea, to establish an Adventist Primary ‘A’ school.

Goroka, from being a small Australian outpost station in the 1950s, had developed into a modern commercial and administrative centre for the Eastern Highlands District by the late 60s. This rapid growth, together with good employment prospects, attracted a number of Australian Adventist families.

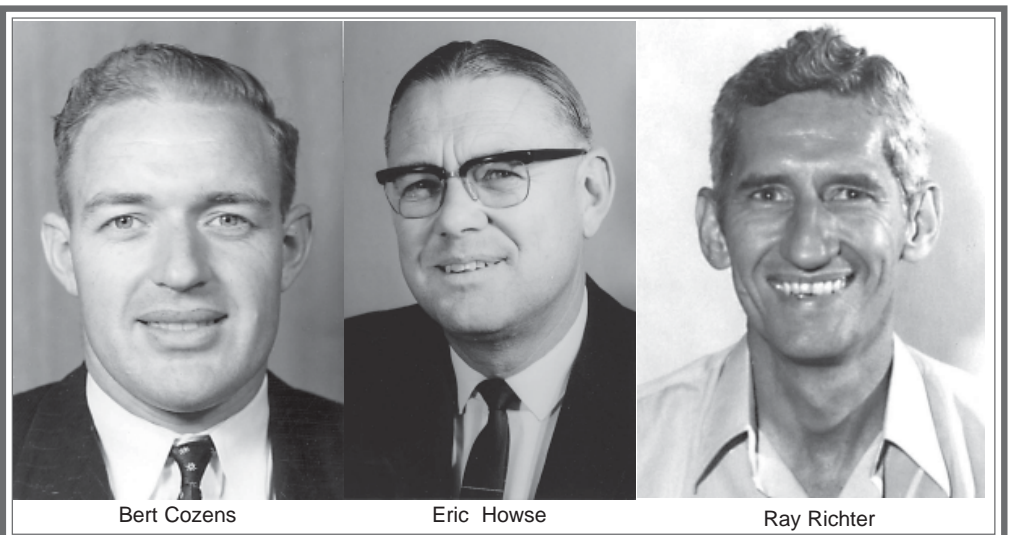
There were several other young Australian families at Kabiufa College, twelve kilometres from Goroka. This co-educational boarding school had an enrolment of about 300 national students in the first four years of secondary school, together with a local primary school. Pastor Bert Cozens was the principal. The entire staff of 12 Australians and 12 Nationals lived on the 100 ha property which had been purchased by the Adventist Mission from nearby Kabiufa Village in 1947.<sup>3</sup>

Norma Summerscales and Bev Pahl first suggested the idea of an Adventist ‘A’ school. They counted seventeen children at Goroka and Kabiufa who could benefit from a school of our own. Betty Murray, at Kabiufa was supervising correspondence lessons for Marcia, John and Lester, while expecting her fifth child. “You can be a mother and you can be a teacher, but it’s very hard to be both to your own children.”<sup>4</sup>

Other primary aged children of Kabiufa staff members were travelling by bus from Kabiufa to attend the Goroka ‘A’ School. Their parents were putting all their energies into a Christian education for the New Guineans and sending their own to a secular school — it just didn’t make sense.<sup>5</sup>

Why not build a classroom on the grounds of the College!

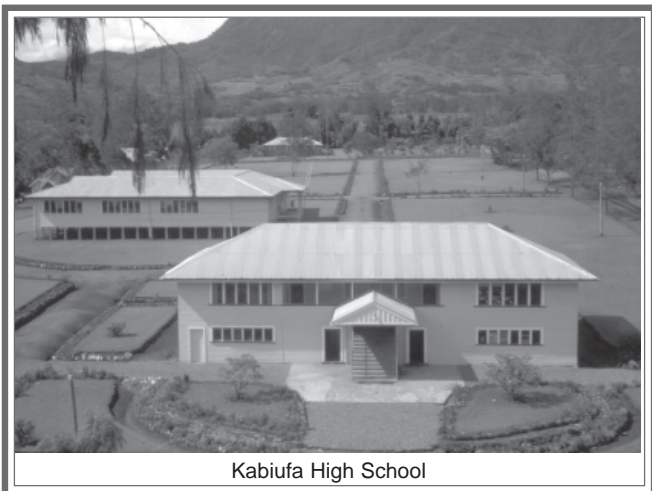
In late 1967 the Coral Sea Union Mission, being the administrative office for the area,



**Bert Cozens**

**Eric Howse**

**Ray Richter**



Kabiufa High School

requested the Australasian Division headquarters to provide finance to build an 'A' school at Kabiufa and to fund a teacher. While in Sydney, Bert Cozens discussed the project with Pastor Eric Howse, division treasurer. He argued that it would be easier to attract and retain experienced expatriates if their children were well provided for. Despite initial scepticism the division acceded to the request, provided there were thirteen entrants.<sup>6</sup> No worries—there were seventeen!

### Great Expectations

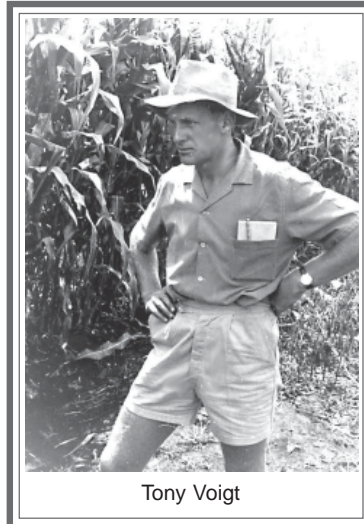
I felt excited and challenged when in December 1967 I was invited by Dr Edward E White (Education Secretary of the Australasian Division) to be the first principal of Kabiufa Adventist Primary 'A' school. At the age of twenty-one, I was equipped with two years experience as principal of a rural school, a brand new driver's licence and, most importantly, a firm belief in God's leading. Only a few years before, as a teenager in Wagga Wagga, I had been inspired by Pr Len Barnard's account of flying to visit tribes who had never seen a white person, let alone an aeroplane. The documentary film *Cry of New Guinea* had already introduced me to the mile-high Goroka Valley – land of eternal spring. I was off to Paradise.

### Big Surprise

I was amazed to find myself at Lae rather than Goroka when the plane landed in late January 1968. Coral Sea Union Mission (CSUM) Education secretary, Ray Richter, was glad of the opportunity to tell me first-hand that plans had changed. Due to the John Wilson, Wilf McClintock and Rex Tindall families being transferred to new appointments<sup>7</sup>, the school would not open—in fact it wasn't even built. Never mind, when Bob and Rosemary Sutcliffe came with their family after furlough, we would have enough students to make a start. In the meantime, how would I like to teach high school for six months?

When I arrived at Kabiufa High School I was impressed by the beauty of the place. The red poinsettia bushes lining its paths made a spectacular foreground to the brooding blue mountains. A goat was making itself at home on a concrete slab in the middle of a wide green lawn. "There is the first kid in your school," quipped my new friend. I knew then that flexibility and good humour would be required on this job. While waiting for the Sutcliffe family to arrive I supervised correspondence lessons for the Murray children and taught primary and secondary classes. I had been 'mothering' twelve students in a rural Tasmanian primary school. Now I was one

of ten on a team caring for three hundred boarding students from dawn till the generator was switched off, ready or not. With classes of fifty students, some older than me, it was a seat-of-the-pants job. I enjoyed the challenge of teaching English as a second language. Although we worked very long hours, there was a team spirit, remembered with affection by staff I have recently contacted.



Tony Voigt

### Small Beginnings

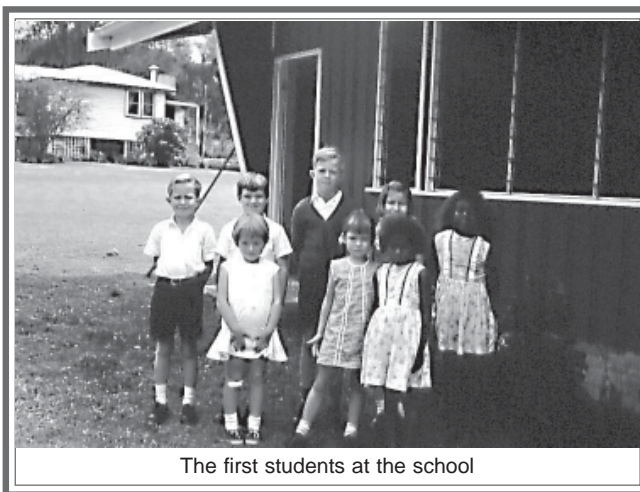
During this time, Ralph Murray, Kabiufa's builder and maintenance man, built our six by eight metre classroom. Its mission-brown aluminium walls gleamed like polished timber after each tropical downpour. Louvre windows in the east and west walls allowed good ventilation.

On 3 September 1968 the first eight students arrived at school from nearby homes. Lester and John Murray continued their Queensland correspondence courses. Rosslyn and Linden Sutcliffe and Julie Tutuo used a variety of NSW workbooks. Robyn Sutcliffe, Julia White and Encie Tutuo were our small beginners. I was privileged to teach the grandchildren of Sasa Rore, Solomon Island pioneer. Esther and Ivan Tutuo sacrificed to give their children a future.

In the afternoons we dug and planted our school garden, did craftwork or went on rollicking nature walks on the nearby hills and through the vegetable gardens that Tony Voigt had made famous throughout New Guinea for their fresh produce. We were excited to be in our own classroom even though the walls were unpainted, the concrete floor collected stains and the homemade wooden double desks borrowed from the secondary school were over-sized.

### Great Preparations

The parents who had envisioned this school worked together to have it ready for the 1969 school year, when we would be joined by students from the Goroka 'A' school. Letters to my folks<sup>8</sup> record interesting details;



The first students at the school

School starts in two days time. Today we had a working-bee to paint the internal walls shadow grey. All we want now are some desks (the fathers are making them) and water for the toilets. Then we can get underway.

Our bolt of Adventist uniform fabric was mislaid for two weeks and all the mothers were anxiously waiting for it. I've been doling out fabric and 'supervising' the sewing of uniforms. [At the time Australian schools were in the process of designing new uniforms so we chose our own style.]

Tomorrow Colleen [Buxton] and I move into the transit house on the mission compound in Goroka so we can drive the local children to school at Kabiufa. It has been beautifully renovated by the Goroka families. We will share one room and visiting missionaries will use the other room.

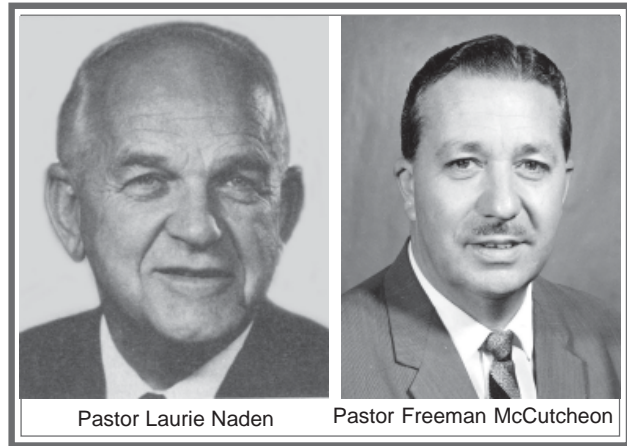
We are expecting a station wagon in a few months. In the meantime Mrs Dickins has offered the use of her Volkswagen. Colleen and I will tuck our 6 little passengers in around us and breathe in. They are John, Sheryn and Tricia Pahl, Jillian and Cherry Dickins and Gael Summerscales. We are to leave Goroka at 8.00 am so I will have 30 minutes at each end of the school day for preparation.

I went to get a public vehicle licence and because my Tasmanian Licence is provisional I have to wear 'P' plates for a year! Imagine a car full of children and 'P' plates! Pr Cozens might be able to talk to them.<sup>9</sup> [He did!]

### Official Beginning

Provisionally, on 4 February 1969, seventeen students lined up in full uniform. Eight of them were in Grade one, including Tracy and Kelly, whose parents taught at the nearby Iufa-Iufa Primary 'I' school,<sup>10</sup> and Janine Voigt, just returned from Australian leave. With ages ranging from 5 to 12 it was necessary to use workbooks for graded instruction in basic skills. Eric White gave weekly swimming lessons in the new pool. I was very grateful for parent support. Stars on a chart were enough incentive for the little ones to work hard. Jillian earned a week's trek in dangerous Kukukuku territory with her Mission President father, Hugh Dickins.

Bert Cozens chaired the first meeting of the school board. The budget basically consisted of: school fees in and percentage of teacher's salary out. We used workbooks, wall charts, chalk and a typewriter with carbon paper. The Home and School Association, with Bev Pahl as president, raised money for: floor tiles, sports equipment, a flagpole and outdoor benches. Library books were donated from America.



Pastor Laurie Naden

Pastor Freeman McCutcheon

A little opening ceremony was arranged to take advantage of a visit by Pr Laurie C Naden (Division President) at 7.00 pm on 19 May 1969. He was assisted by Pr Freeman McCutcheon, Pr Hugh Dickins and Bob Sutcliffe. With twenty-one names recorded on the roll that year and at least six babies born, the future of the school looked bright.

### From Little Car to Big Carrier

In April two new students arrived, Kevin Godfrey, whose grandfather was building the new girls dormitory, and Alison Murray whose dad was a government administrator. We managed to squeeze Alison into the car. By this time it was showing signs of wear. We had to stop to change to first gear three times on the trip and grind up the big hill at about 7 mph.

That year the first astronauts travelled to the moon in a space capsule. Our Volkswagen capsule transported two adults, seven children, all the school bags, and the large mailbag along one of the world's roughest highways, without seat belts. One memorable morning we'd left later than usual to collect the children from their various homes. It was market day and we passed groups of tribal women carrying large string bags of produce on their backs. Just after we crossed the rattly one-way bridge over the Asaro River, we had a decisive moment. Sitting on Colleen's lap in the front of the Volkswagen, was five-year-old Gael, clutching her pet pigeon in her hands. It escaped from her grasp and flew around the cabin accompanied by delighted squeals. I kept on driving while many hands groped for the escapee and finally caught it. Thankfully we had quite a few guardian angels with us.

I wrote to the Coral Sea Union Mission asking for a better vehicle. A dual-cab Toyota Dyna that had been involved in an accident was sold to Ron Pahl, who had it panel-beaten



Kabiufa 'A' School 1969



Going to Cherry's party



Pastor Hugh Dickins - Jillian's father

and prepared for service as a school bus.<sup>11</sup> So we all travelled comfortably until Kym Lambert and Stephen Murray enrolled and we overflowed to the back tray. Yet even the Dyna wasn't perfect:

Pr Cozens worked on the Dyna for most of the day. We had to be towed to start as the battery was flat. He put the new muffler on, [the old muffler had dropped off onto the road], so the Dyna is

much quieter now.<sup>12</sup>

This week another door on the Dyna went bung. That meant two doors wouldn't shut and another wouldn't open. Pr Cozens fixed that too.

Even though travelling was difficult at times, there was a good spirit and always something new to see along the way.

### Plenty of Fun

I really enjoyed our strong link with the Kabiufa and Goroka Adventist communities. We worshipped together in the big thatched church with its earthen floor, plank seats, woven bamboo walls and fresh air. On Mother's Day these white kids and two black ones delighted the boarding students, so far from home, as they recited their 'parts' and lit candles to honour motherhood. Staff and their families floated down the Asaro River together on inflated car tubes, shrieking as we hit the rapids. With picnics, parties, concerts and even a weekend campout, we were more than a day school; we were part of the family.

The Pathfinder curriculum (similar to the scout movement) was included in our studies. In October, the Sutcliffes and Eric White helped organise the campout at Kotuni, so the senior students could learn bush-craft and leadership skills. Teenagers from Kainantu, Bena Bena, Goroka and Kabiufa brought the total to twenty-three with five staff.

There was no rain for two days before the date and that made it possible for the Dyna and the College truck to travel up the 8 km steep, slippery track. We girls enjoyed sleeping in a new iron-roofed timber hut that later became a village school.



Linden, the kanaka at Kotuni

The boys pitched tents and constructed a bush shelter (cheating with plastic to keep out the short tropical downpour). With tanket leaves tucked into the back of his pants, Linden looked like a local. Making a campfire and cooking their own meal proved very educational to those used to having student helpers at home. Sliding down a steep muddy bank into a water-hole in the very cool mountain stream was the highlight for some. Listening to Kerry Winch recount her father's adventures in the mission plane was more my style. I was glad enough to drive the Dyna back with the baggage while the children hiked home.

### Just Normal

In a very real sense we were part of the indigenous community. As the school grounds straddled the Highlands Highway, all traffic between Mt Hagen and Lae passed by our door: passenger trucks carrying dozens of wailing warriors on their way to a ceremony; hundreds of pedestrians trudging to Goroka market, popping bubble gum; road-building machinery heading up to Daulo Pass to clear the latest landslide. To the children these scenes were 'just normal life'.

But even better than roadside encounters was the opportunity to meet people in their own villages. Under the leadership of Eric White, conducting local Sabbath Schools was an important facet of Kabiufa education. Early Sabbath mornings I would collect three or four of my Goroka students in the Dyna and drive to Faniufa, a village at the end of the Goroka airstrip. Typical round bamboo huts with conical thatched roofs circled a central area. We would visit each hut and call through the open door, "Morning, you like come long Lotu [worship]?" Forty people would squat around the picture-roll for a Bible story and illustrated songs. Pirinave, a church elder who lived in that village, translated our Pidgin English into their local place talk. Then school students would distribute pictures and coloured pencils to everyone; old men, mothers with a baby on one knee and naked toddlers. Colouring-in was a new experience and these artistic people enjoyed it very much. They now have their own Adventist church.

For us living in PNG, the weeks branch-Sabbath School attendance tally carried the excitement that the cricket or footy score raised for our contemporaries 'back home.' It was gratifying to me to see the values of missionary parents being transferred to the next generation.

### Impressive Future

I was able to trace nineteen of my former students and I am thrilled to see what the pioneer Kabiufa Adventist Primary 'A' School students have achieved in the intervening years, given a normal range of abilities:

Jillian Thiele: (MA ED PhD) educator, Pacific Adventist University, PNG

Cherry Mitchell: restaurant proprietor Dora Creek, NSW

John Murray: (Matriculation) motor mechanic, Benalla

Lester Murray: radiographer, entrepreneur, Warrnambool, VIC.

Kym Duffield: (Bachelor Nursing), clinical research assistant, Brisbane, QLD.

John Pahl: (building certificate), nurseryman, business proprietor, Leongatha, VIC

Sheryn Martin: (B Nursing), ICU nurse Lilydale, VIC.

Tricia Pahl: (B Nursing), retired ICU nurse, Saudi Arabia.

Rosslyn Rosenberg: (Dip teaching), teacher, Frankston Primary School, VIC

Linden Sutcliffe: (Dip Applied Science, Agriculture), sales manager, Burpengary, QLD.

Robyn Gao: (Dip Applied Science, Nursing), Ourimbah, NSW

Alison King: (matriculation), home duties, Gladstone, QLD.

Stephen Murray: industrial electrician, electrical engineering student, Yeppoon, QLD

Julia Young: (Dip teaching, Primary, BA Ed), Director of Learning, Sydney Adventist College, NSW.

Janine Brown : (BA Ed), Manager, Family and Children's Services, Knox City Council, VIC

Julie Tutuo: (MA Nursing), Director, School of Nursing, Pacific Adventist University, PNG

Encie Dionie: (BA Ed), teacher, Betikama College, Solomon Islands

Gael Summerscales: (matriculation), carer for developmentally disabled, Sydney, NSW

Kevin Godfrey: (matriculation), Proprietor, K&B Security, Gold Coast, QLD <sup>14</sup>

The initiative and faith modelled by their parents must have been 'catching'.

Coming 'home' after years in a radically different culture requires major adjustment but the overseas experience is definitely worth it. Kabiufa Primary 'A' School played a part in giving a Christian focus to an active social life and in helping to minimise the isolation often experienced by the children of missionaries.

When the school closed at the end of 1973, due to insufficient students, the classroom was used by the college.

In the early 1980s Kabiufa staff parents operated another school themselves. It was whimsically called the 'Z' school.<sup>13</sup>

From 'A' to 'Z'

Principals of Kabiufa Adventist Primary 'A' school were:

1968-69 Bev Wallace

1970-71 Marion Liggett

1972-73 Lyn Bottrill/Blundell

1972-73 Heather Bruce supervised correspondence lessons for 5 secondary students.

**Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Jillian Thiele, Phone conversation 3-1-2003

<sup>2</sup> Now called international schools. Currently 60% of students at Goroka International School are citizens of PNG.

Reference: www.ica.ac.pg

<sup>3</sup> *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia*, p 714 (1st edition)

<sup>4</sup> Lois Voigt, phone conversation 20-1-2003

<sup>5</sup> Norma Summerscales email 23-1-2003

<sup>6</sup> Estimated cost \$1000. Bert Cozens interview early 2003

<sup>7</sup> Kabiufa College became a secondary school in 1968 and training courses were transferred to Kambubu.

<sup>8</sup> Bev Wallace, letter 2-2-1969

<sup>9</sup> Bev Wallace, letter 12-11-1968

<sup>10</sup> "T" as in Territory schools for indigenous students.

<sup>11</sup> Ron Pahl, phone conversation 27-1-2003

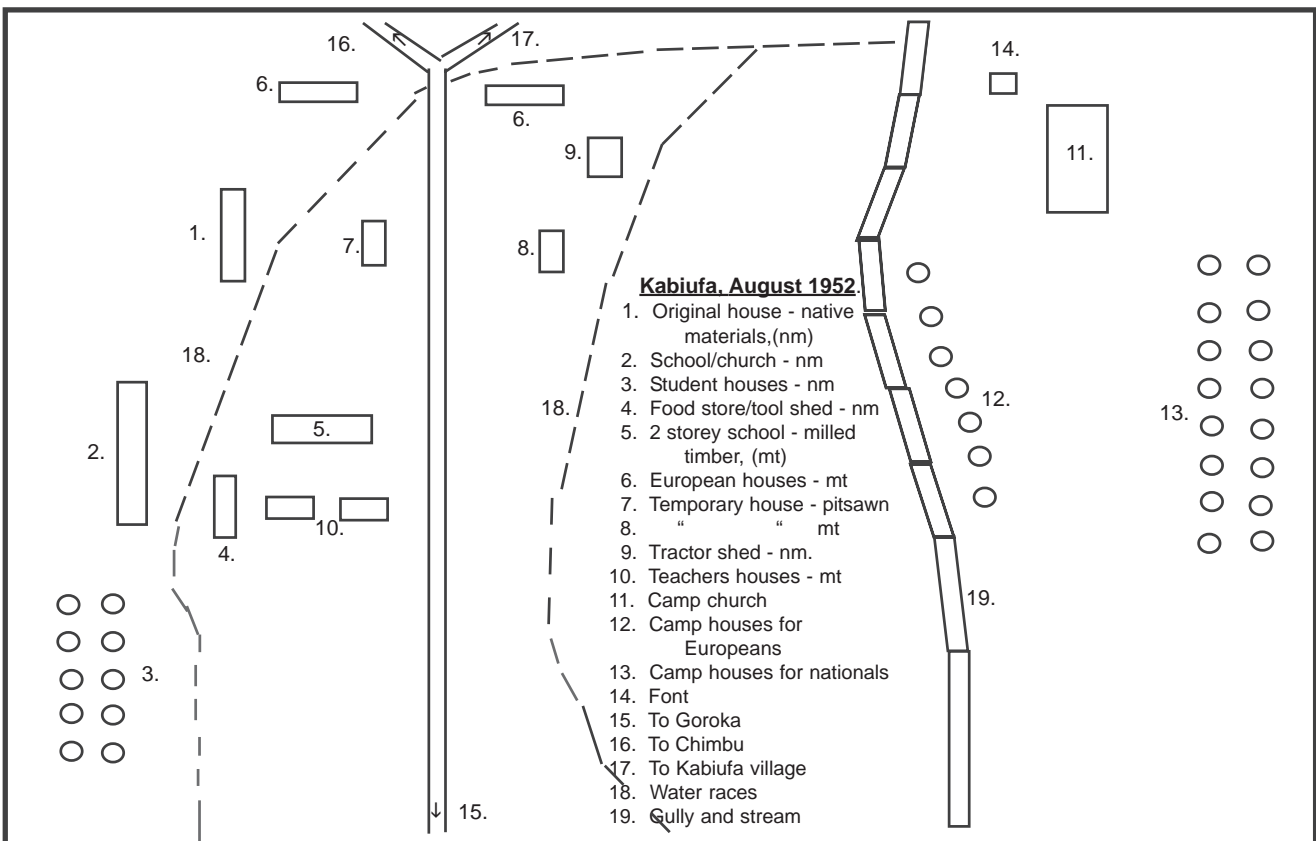
<sup>12</sup> Bev Wallace, letter 20-7-1969

<sup>13</sup> Julie Cozens, phone conversation 3-3-2003

<sup>14</sup> These were the positions held by these people in 2006. ♦

**Kabiufa**

A diagram of the campus at Kabiufa, at camp time, just before Lyn Thrift finished his term of service there, some years before Bev Miller arrived there.





# A Triumph of Improvisation

## —establishing Kabiufa Missionary School in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, 1949-1952



FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY IN 1927 of considerable quantities of gold in the mountains of New Guinea there was a flurry of prospecting for the precious metal. At the same time church missions started to penetrate the mountainous areas, seeking to bring the gospel to villages and to establish churches and schools there. Seventh-day Adventists set-up three bases in the eastern highlands. David and Dulcie Brennan pioneered at Omaura, Alex and Emily Campbell at Kainantu and Stan and Greta Gander at Sigoiya. Prospects for

development were promising. But the southern advance of the Japanese war machine during World War II halted progress. Expatriates were evacuated, leading to a hiatus in the work of the church. houses except Jim Leahy's trade store were kunai thatched. The high cost of airfreight had retarded the use of galvanised iron as a roofing material. Apart from this incomplete house the main buildings were the church/school, the food and tool store and the Grieves' residence which was large enough to cater for many other purposes as well. All the teachers and students were accommodated in round houses, as built in the local villages.

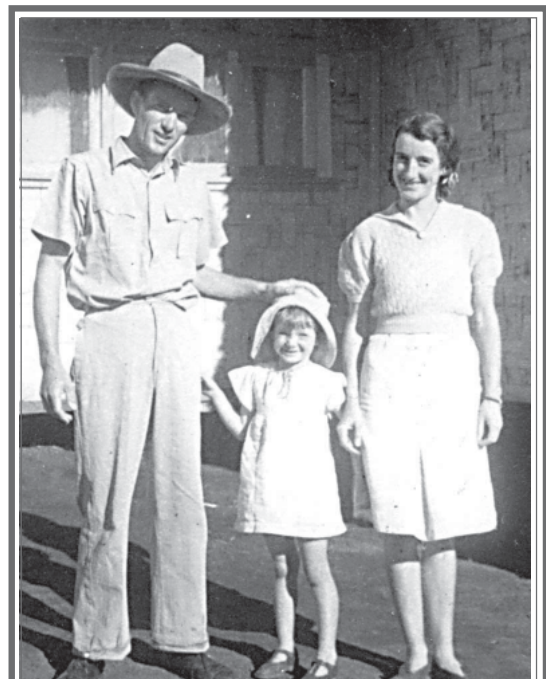
development were promising. But the southern advance of the Japanese war machine during World War II halted progress. Expatriates were evacuated, leading to a hiatus in the work of the church.

With the cessation of hostilities these three stations, particularly Sigoiya/Bena Bena, became launching pads for future efforts. It was not long before our Mission was represented at Wabag, by Frank and Liela Maberly; at Moruma, by Joe and Lucy French; at Yani, by Lawrence and June Gilmore; at Kumul, by Calvin and Beryl Stafford, and at Kabiufa, by Louis and Ora Grieve. Ormond and Winsome Speck were operating the school at Omaura; the Campbells had returned to Kainantu and Laurie and Gwen Howell were busy at first at Sigoiya and later transferred to Bena Bena.

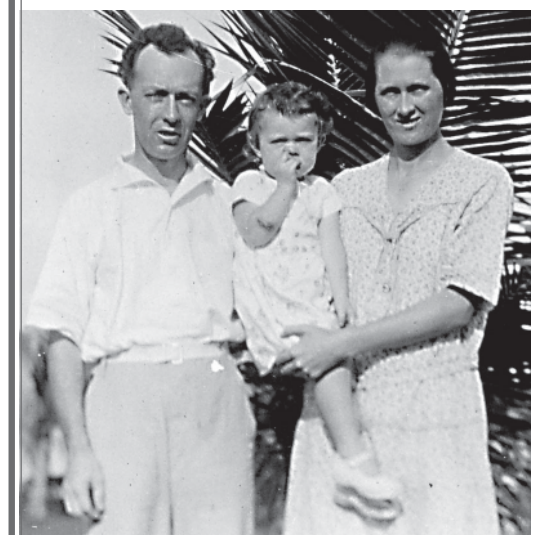
During 1948 the educational needs of the North East New Guinea Mission were considered and the decision was made that the staff at Omaura should be increased. Eric Gane was asked to become manual arts instructor and we transferred there from Betikama in the Solomon Islands. However Omaura, on the eastern edge of the area it was intended to serve, lacked both adequate land and the quality of soil needed, and this indicated that expansion on that site would be limited. So a Mission Committee meeting was held at Kabiufa in August 1949, and the decision made to transfer the school from Omaura to that location. The Grieves were appointed to open a new station at Mendi, in the southern highlands. Omaura later developed as a centre for giving basic training to comparatively uneducated nationals to fit them for village evangelistic work.

### Kabiufa in 1949

My first glimpse of the mission station at Kabiufa was from the window of a DeHaviland DH 84 (Dragon) plane, piloted by the notable Bill Passlow when he buzzed the place to inform the Grieves that they should go to Goroka to pick up passengers. The mission site was on the floor of a valley at an elevation of about 5,500 feet (1650 m), about 6 miles (nearly 10 km) west of Goroka and straddled the main Goroka to Chimbu road. The Grieves had worked tirelessly in primitive conditions. All the buildings were of native materials except one that consisted of a framework of pit-sawn timber with an iron roof. This latter feature was quite notable at the time for all the Goroka



David, Dulcie Brennan & Frances at Omaura



Alexander, Emily Campbell & Heather



Frank and Liela Maberly



Stan Gander with local people at Kainantu

A mission lease and occupational rights to a sizeable area of land had been secured. The soil was deep and fertile and adequate water for irrigation flowed from a creek through water races that had been dug under Grieve's instructions. As he was a keen gardener he had laid the foundation for a programme that greatly benefitted the school both while he was there and after he had left for his new mission station.

Kabiufa village was less than a mile away and its people, especially the headman or luluai, Oopasira, alias Greasy, were frequent visitors. Numbers of them came to church and their presence, while welcome, was particularly obvious a couple of weeks after a sing-sing, at which time copious amounts of pig fat were used in anointing the hair and skin. Such action is understandable considering the scarcity of warm clothing and the coolness of the climate. But even the low temperatures did not guarantee that the odour of the unguent continued to indicate freshness. Another custom that increased the olfactory assault was the tying of strips of pig skin, with the bristles and underlying fat, around the daughters' wrists when a pig was slaughtered. The greater the number of these 'bangles' the more it indicated that the family was rich and hospitable. Some girls wore enough to go nearly half-way to the elbow and, as they stayed there until they fell off, they tended to make themselves obvious and the need for air freshener more urgent.

When we arrived at Kabiufa in September 1949, the Grieves had a number of young people to whom they were giving a largely practical training under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS). This meant that government-provided rations, etc. were being received and it was soon evident that having these recipients and school pupils who were not thus subsidised, in the same institution could lead to

problems. As a result the CRTS was phased out.

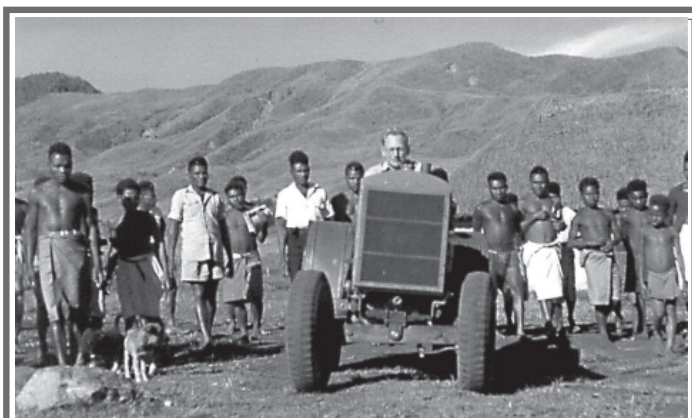
### The Urgent Needs

**1. A guaranteed food supply.** As already noted, Kabiufa had good, fertile soil and there was an abundant supply of itinerant labourers coming through from Chimbu if we had wanted to hire them to wield shovels. But there was a definite preference for working toward self-sufficiency. Then there were the local pigs. Their invasions constituted a real problem that could not be solved without adequate fencing. But we were without timber and the high cost of airfreight made the bringing in of fencing materials prohibitive.

So it was quite a relief when Don Eisenhower, the government patrol officer, came to do the survey for an agricultural lease. He arranged for an estimated 360 acres to be bought and leased to the mission. This enabled us to set about 'pig-proofing' the land by digging a trench 5 feet (1.5 m) wide and the same in depth across the flat land as well as cutting a vertical section of the same height where the land fell away into gullies. Then we could engage in agriculture with a reasonable assurance that we, and not the pigs, would do the harvesting. And there were good harvests of the staple crop of sweet potatoes—usually about 15 tons per acre. The largest tuber I saw weighed 20lbs (9kg).

And then more help for the garden programme arrived in the form of a tractor—not a bright shiny new one; just a heap of rusted metal by the side of the road near Goroka's 'top airstrip'

Near the end of the war the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) had brought in a Howard DH22 tractor and rotary hoe, and, later, this had been handed over to the government administration. After comparatively little use it had been run without adequate oil and the engine seized. It had been dismantled and abandoned by the roadside and small pieces had been souvenired by passers-by. The remains caught my eye and George Greathead, the district commissioner, was happy to have it removed with a token



The "new" tractor from the RAAF. Laurie Howell who worked on it.



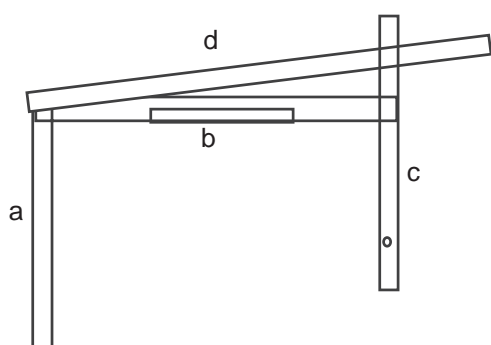
payment of ten pounds.

Howell of Bena Bena, an excellent mechanic, came to our aid and with Urue (0o-roo-e) a schoolboy from Kabiufa village, the machine was stripped down, cleaned and painted where necessary. Essential parts, including a new motor were ordered from Sydney and soon we had a tractor, almost as good as new, at about one quarter the cost of a new one, and with the added bonus of no airfreight, then running at one shilling per pound.

The increase in sweet potato production also helped the building programme considerably. When we had to charter a plane to bring in building materials or fuel for the jeep or mill we were able to backload and the price differential between one penny a pound at Kabiufa and threepence a pound in Madang was strongly in our favour.

**2. Permanent buildings.** A lot had been done with pit-sawn timber on our mission stations, and probably the outstanding example was Kainantu, but Kabiufa needed to expand quickly. So a sawmill was necessary. A Macdonald diesel engine, rated as 17 horsepower, was purchased in Sydney and shipped to Madang, dismantled there, flown to Goroka and taken by jeep and trailer as far as there was a road. Then it had to be carried. The base weighed an estimated half ton, and it was walked three miles up a track that climbed 1500 feet (450 m). A total of 6 miles of roads and bridges had to be built so that the timber could be moved by jeep and trailer

The building of that road presented quite a challenge. Most of the actual labour by pick and shovel was done by itinerant Chimbu workers, and the first three miles of comparatively flat going presented few problems. But the steeper second half was cut by several narrow, deep gullies and in some places there were hard granite rocks that could be neither avoided nor moved. Each of the gullies required the cutting of a graded shelf approaching the watercourse, then the building of a bridge and the cutting of another shelf leading out. No theodolite nor dumpy level was available but the difficulty was solved with the 'gradient machine' a construction built with four pieces of wood, a spirit level and several bolts and nails.



- a. The fixed back leg
  - b. The horizontal board with spirit level attached.
  - c. The adjustable front leg, enabling b to be adjusted to true horizontal.
  - d. The sight board that could be set to the required gradient, for our purposes a climb of one in ten.
- Primitive, but it worked. Problem # 1 solved.

And the Chimbu labourers solved the rock problem. Solution: they lit a fire over each rock, making them very hot, and then poured water over them. Large flakes split off and

the process was repeated until the obstacles were removed.

Cavanaugh, a forestry officer, arranged a timber lease with the Kotuni villagers and it was not long before materials for house framing were being produced. Later, the addition of a three header planing machine enabled us to produce flooring and weatherboards.

A builder, Harold Rudd, had the use of the mill to cut timber for the two European houses he constructed and the main school building resulted from a cooperative effort by the expatriate workers and some experienced local workmen.

The method of bringing logs to the mill may have been primitive but it was effective. Trees were felled pointing downhill. When they were barked and the tops cut off they slid rapidly down the steep hillside into the creek where they were cut into lengths and dragged over skid logs, using vines for tow-ropes. Larger logs were broken down using a pitsaw. The best day's milling that I remember produced over 4,000 linear feet of 3 x 2 inches timber, (over 1,200 metres of 75 x 50mm timber).

**3. Supplementing the Budget.** The budget was always very tight and we were always on the lookout for ways of supplementing it. The fertile soil and irrigation possibilities made the production of 'European' vegetables, such as lettuce, cabbages, peas, beans and carrots a logical first step. Operating a trade store was out because of official church policy and the proximity to the stores in Goroka.

When the mill became operative there were opportunities to sell excess timber and also to convert some into lock-up boxes that were regulation equipment for labourers on plantations, etc. Also the mill provided boxes for the export of garden produce to Madang.

These finance producing activities resulted in the formation of what came to be known as Kabiufa Mission Industries and, at the time that the 6 miles of road to the mill had been completed and that facility became fully operative Ken Mitchell, from Western Australi, was appointed to take charge.

**4. The School.** Moses and Masibau, two Mussau teachers, did their best with, I am afraid, minimum help and supervision from me. At the time our major aim was to get a facility that would be more conducive to teaching and learning, and that took most of my time. It was a great relief when the Maberlys transferred from Wabag and his specific interest was in the school. This left me with general oversight and development plus the additional roles of education and Missionary Volunteer Director for the NE New Guinea Mission. When the Maberleys moved to Manus, Lester and Freda Hawkes joined the staff for a while, to be replaced later by Stan and Ivy Gillis.

### The Kabiufa 'Bung' or Camp-meeting

In 1950 a camp meeting was held at Bena Bena, it being such a success that a second one was planned for two years later at Kabiufa. By that time there was plenty of food but the provision of accommodation for both Europeans and nationals became quite a task. No tents could be brought in as in homeland camp meetings. Local materials—saplings, bamboo, pit-pit and kunai grass were our materials, tied together with vines.

Poles for the framework of the church, the longest being 38 feet (11.5 m) were brought from the mill by jeep and trailer. The church was 105 x 60 feet (31.5 x 18 m), seating

1200 people, and it was estimated that when green the kunai thatch would have weighed 45 tons.

Speakers at the meetings included some from Australia, as well as expatriate workers, and when someone who did not speak pidgin was taking a meeting there was an interesting performance.

The people in the audience were seated in 9 language groups, each with its own interpreter, and if you had known pidgin and one of the dialects it would have been possible to have heard the speech three times. First, it was spoken in English, then translated into pidgin by one of the expatriates or a senior national worker, and then the nine turn-im-toks all translated at once. It sounded like pandemonium but, in at least one respect, it was Pentecost, for everyone heard in his own tongue.

Camp-meeting ended; it was August 1952. Furlough in Australia was overdue and we were unable to return to New Guinea. But we were able to live with many memories of how God had directed in the planning, guided in the implementation of what had been decided, and protected those who worked during the early days of what was then known as the New Guinea Highlands Missionary School.



Merlene —notice the plaited pitpit walls



Merlene with her mother Grace

## Snapshots of Kabiufa

Daughter Merlene reminisces:

At six weeks of age I flew with Grace and Lyn Thrift to Papua New Guinea to begin missionary life. Although I don't remember very much about the first year or two, I can recall some incidents from the time we were all at Kabiufa.

**1. Socialising.** I remember feeling at home with a group of indigenous people who were plaiting 'pitpit' walls for buildings. Pidgin was easier than English and I enjoyed playing with the children. When they laughed, I would laugh too. Then they would laugh back again. It was great fun!

**2. Being helpful.** Sometimes I was on my hands and knees with a small scrubbing brush, copying mum who used a larger one. Then she said, 'Quick, man coming,' and I echoed, 'Tick, man tumming.' I would also help out with bread making and the preparation of meals. But when a strange 'white' face appeared, I would burst into tears. Oh yes. I loved our dog, and one day I remember happily sitting astride on our brown dog's back inside his kennel stroking his soft, furry ears.

**3. Being saved from an un-**



Merlene and her doggie friend

**invited visitor.** One day I was standing in the kitchen of a dirt floored hut/house when suddenly I was confronted, eyeball to snout, with a large inquisitive pig which had wandered in from the garden. Overwhelmed with fear, and thinking I might be the pig's next meal, I yelled with gusto! Dad was at the kitchen sink and he quickly reached down, scooped me up in his strong arms and sat me on the sink, shaken but safe. Then he planted his boot squarely on the pig's snout, shunting it backwards and out into the garden. What a time it was.

**4. Learning a lot from dad.** I sat on a log with him at the sawmill and he told me that cannibals lived just over the next range to the sawmill. But that news didn't worry me then. And I saw him working with the students pitching the roof of the school. It was a two-storied building, and to me at that time it seemed so huge and very tall like the silos at the Sanitarium factory at Cooranbong. (This was my nappy perspective).

**5. Something Special.** I really enjoyed cooking jaffles for breakfast in a small pot-belly stove. Oh they did taste so good. As we lived about 5,000 feet above sea level, the stove helped keep our hut warm on cold nights at the sawmill.

**6. Knowing God's care.** One day dad was driving our jeep pulling a trailer load of logs for the mill. I was sitting on his lap. Just after manouvering through a steep creek crossing, we were suddenly surrounded by a herd of wild pigs with several making their way toward us. As the jeep didn't have any doors one large boar placed his trotters on the running board as if he were at a table about to have a meal. One more step would spell disaster! Dad knew there was no more he could do as the accelerator was flat to the boards and we were moving forward only at a snail's pace. If the pig clamboured on board, dad wouldn't be able to drive and protect me as well. He prayed earnestly while I sat calmly on his lap blissfully unaware of the danger I was in. Suddenly

our dog which had often ridden the logs on the trailer caught up with us. And I know that there was nothing he liked better than to take a nip out of a fat pig's rump.

He sensed the danger we were in, and as quick as a flash, nipped the boar's rump and then went on a nipping spree meting out the same discomforture on the other pigs which ran off squealing into the jungle—much to dad's relief and thanks to the protecting hand of God.

# Pioneering on the Rai Coast adapting to fluctuating cultural attitudes in NW New Guinea—October 1948-1951



**EDNA GROSSER**



*Edna Grosser, nee Wilson, was born in Diamond Creek Victoria, Australia. She attended the State school in her area. From 1934-1937 she worked at the Signs Publishing Company in Warburton, Vic., and at the Sanitarium Health Food Café in Melbourne. For the next 4 years Edna attended the Australasian Missionary College (Avondale). For the following 2 years she was a nurse/doctor's receptionist. On the 23 December 1943, Edna and Bert Grosser were married, and from this time on Edna assisted her minister husband in his work: 1944 to 1947 in South Australia; 1948 to 1950 on the Rai Coast of PNG; 1951 to 1958 in South Queensland; 1959 to 1962 in North Queensland; 1963 to 1970 in North New Zealand; 1971 to 1978 in Sth Queensland. They retired in 1979. The Grossers have 3 children: Lincoln, Nerelle and Gavan. They now live at the ARV in Cooranbong.*

## Part 1

### A NEW CHALLENGE

In the late 1940s, as many of you will recall, there was a mighty exodus of young ministerial workers from Australia to the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Bert and I were at that time part of a city mission team in Adelaide under the leadership of Pastor J W Kent.

In the several preceding months we had heard of a number of our former friends from the Australasian Missionary College receiving their calls to island mission service, such as Gilmour, Maberley, Stafford, Stocken, Hawkes and others. I secretly hoped that we would not get a call; not because I was uninterested in missions, but because I did not think I was mission material! I disliked the heat, was terrified of snakes and spiders, and had been born with an impatient nature that did everything in a hurry and expected everyone else to do likewise. I knew enough about island life to know that the term “tomorrow he stop” meant that what does not get done today can wait until tomorrow; that was not my life style and so I thought the islands were not the place for me.

Early in 1948, February to be exact, my beloved came home one day and very excitedly told me we had had a call to New Guinea! Living as we were in the era when every appointment was considered to be a call from the Lord, we had no thought of refusing, regardless of personal preference.

Immediately the wheels began to turn. Our first direction was to forward to the office of the Australasian Union Conference (AUC) in Sydney, detailed family medical reports. This we did and immediately received a letter from headquarters saying, “We regret to say that due to your wife’s history of complicated child birth and the loss of your first child as a result, and added to that your wife’s current pregnancy, we must cancel your call to mission service. The area to which you would be going is extremely isolated and the risk would be too great.”

Bert was extremely disappointed. We talked it over and finally decided that we would suggest that Bert

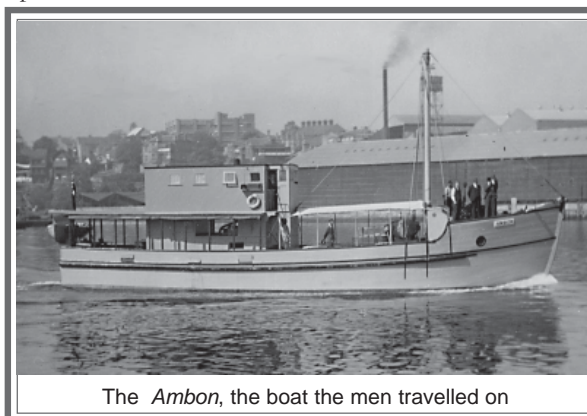
go out alone and I remain until after the baby arrived and then, with our two children, join him. The proposal was accepted, and so early in April we said goodbye in Melbourne and Bert flew up to Sydney, where he boarded a ship for Madang. My 15-month-old daughter Nerelle and I settled in with my sister’s family to await the September arrival of our new baby.

### A New Life Begins

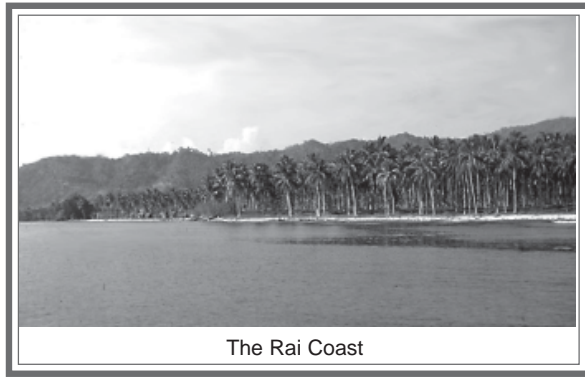
When Bert arrived at Madang he was initiated into Mission service by joining the labour line at the headquarters mission station in Madang. Weeks turned into months and no moves were made to direct him to the area where we were to establish a mission. Whilst delay is often chafing, in this case good resulted from it.

Len Barnard, Medical Officer at a Government Hospital and Leper Colony at Bogia, some distance along the coast from Madang, happened to be in town at this time, and he suggested to Bert that he come up to his hospital and gain some experience in treating tropical diseases and giving injections, and at the same time learn to speak Pidgin English. Bert jumped at the opportunity, and he spent two weeks with Len, gaining most valuable medical knowledge and learning the language from one who spoke it like the locals.

Finally on 15 September 1948, (the day our baby boy arrived) Bert, along with Pastor Stan Gander, the Madang Mission Director, and a group of national teachers and some carriers, boarded the mission vessel *Ambon* with Captain Jack Radley at the helm. They set sail down the north-east coast of New Guinea to



The *Ambon*, the boat the men travelled on



The Rai Coast

Finchhafen, where they were put off ship to do an exploratory walk of 275 kilometres back up the coast in search of a suitable site on which to establish a mission outpost. Halfway back, in the area known as the Rai Coast, they came to a village called Seure. The luluai (chief) of this village was very friendly, and when he discovered that he was related by marriage to the family of the Mussau teacher in the group, he expressed a real interest in having a mission established in his village.

### A New Mission Location

The site was selected, the appropriate 'dealing' done, and the group continued their walk back to Madang. After arriving there, the team for this new mission was selected, and equipment was gathered together and loaded on to the Mission boat *Lelaman* which set sail for Saidor, an anchorage closest to the new mission site but 24 kilometres (15 miles) away!!! Everything was unloaded and stacked into what once had been a shed on the airstrip but was now just a floor and a roof. Carrying just as much as they could, the group, consisting of Guano, a Solomon Island teacher, his wife and three children, three Mussau teachers and families, and Bert, began their 24 kilometre walk along a bush track. It led them through rivers and over cliffs—a most inhospitable terrain, that eventually took them to the mission site.

It was now close to the end of October and I was booked to fly out from Sydney on 24 November 1948, but as yet the mission station consisted of nothing but a piece of land covered with kunai grass and trees. The trees were cut and the rough bush timber stacked ready for building the houses. The kunai grass was pulled and placed ready for roofing. The five men worked feverishly from sunup to sundown in an attempt to clear an area to plant a garden for food and erect a roof over their heads; needless to say they were not five star houses that resulted. In fact the house I entered on 30 November consisted of two rooms and a verandah with walls of Sisalcraft (tar-centered paper), a grass roof, and split bamboo floor. Walls were only four feet high with no windows, and the floor was split bamboo which sprang up to meet you as you walked over it. I had to be lifted up into the house as the ramp had not yet been built. You see, with his family due to arrive at the end of November, Bert had to return the 128 kilometres to Madang and catch a plane to Lae to meet us, and so the 'finishing' of our house was left to the teachers and it just had not been done.

### New Arrivals

November arrived, and my father and sister escorted me and the children to Sydney by train, and on the 24th at 7.00 am I bade a tearful farewell to my family and boarded a DC3

plane and flew off on the first leg of the long journey to New Guinea. The looks on the faces of my dad and sister told me that they thought they might never see me again.

Our first day's flight got us to Townsville, where we spent the night at the Queens Hotel. At 4.00 am next morning we boarded a bus for the airport and flew to Cairns, Cooktown, and then Port Moresby. At each landing we had to disembark while the plane was refuelled. When I stepped out at Port Moresby I felt as if someone had thrown a hot wet blanket over me. So this was tropical heat! We flew to Lae, where the plane touched down at 4.30 pm. I had been telling my little daughter as we got close that we would be seeing daddy in a few minutes, and we were both looking eagerly out the window as we landed.

Stepping from the plane I was greeted by an announcement over the PA system, "Would Mrs Grosser please come to the office for a message." With the baby box under one arm and my toddler held by the hand, I made my way to the airport office where I was handed a telegram which read, "Unable to get to Lae today, await further message." It was all too much! Exhausted from the long trip I burst into tears. The kindly airport staff arranged for me to be taken to the Hotel Cecil.

Those of you who read this and were missionaries in New Guinea in that era will no doubt remember that the Hotel Cecil was army barracks during the war years and was constructed from three-ply and chicken wire. The room to which I was taken had three beds, each with a mosquito net, the only problem being the nets had holes large enough for me to put my fist through. Terrified lest my children get mosquito bites, I quickly found a needle and thread in my bag and began to mend the holes. Suddenly I noticed Nerelle was missing. A loud scream from the other end of the hallway indicated that she was in a room with a locked door. The dividing walls between rooms began some eighteen inches from the floor. She had crawled under and then found herself separated from me. No amount of persuasion could get her to crawl back again, so I had to leave her screaming and run to the office to get someone to come with a key to release her. A very terrified little girl, almost at point of collapse, soon drifted off to sleep. The day had been so long.

Morning came, and with it a call to be at the airport in half an hour. There would be a seat on a plane going through to Madang. Arriving at the airport I was escorted to a little plane, which seemed on sight to be made of cardboard and calico. Terrified of flying even in something as substantial as a DC3, I froze with fear at the sight of this little Dragon Rapide.<sup>2</sup> As we took off and flew up the valleys it seemed that any minute the wings would touch the cliff walls. Finally we landed at the airstrip at Madang. Standing nearby waiting its turn to take off was a similar plane and about to step into it was none other than Bert Grosser on his way to Lae to meet his family. Five minutes later and we would have crossed in the air.

It was now midday on Friday. The Mission Director and his wife urged us to stay in Madang until after the weekend, but Bert was anxious to get his family home, so he chartered a plane to take us to Saidor. He arranged to have carriers to help us the further 15 miles down to the mission area. When we arrived at around 3.00 pm the four teachers were there to meet us but where were the carriers? To that question came the response, "Oli laz along walkabout." In other words they



The first house--notice how high it is off the ground.



Stan Gander & Bert Grosser with the school boys

were too tired to come. So what now?

### A Rough Start

There was nothing else to do but camp in the open shed with only a roof and floor until Sunday, when Bert managed to get some carriers from the local area. We started off early, with one of our teachers carrying my precious baby Gavan in a box on his head and another with Nerelle on his bare shoulders. We began the long treacherous walk through rivers chest high, over cliffs, and sometimes out into the sea. Fifteen miles is a long distance, and it was close to setting sun before we reached the soon-to-be mission station. There was great excitement as the whole village rushed out to meet the white missus and the two white piccaninnies—especially the tiny one that was 8 weeks old. Every scaly hand had to stroke and poke that little white face! Mercifully the ramp up to the door of what was to be our home had not yet been made, and so when I was lifted up into the house no one else followed. They all continued to stand around though and through an interpreter we were told they were waiting to see me feed the baby. Sitting on a box I had to give a demonstration of baby feeding—white style.

Our house was furnished with two camp stretchers, the cot and the bassinette that had been carried down with us, a table constructed from boxes and bush timber, and two boxes on which to sit. All that mattered after that long journey was somewhere to rest our weary bodies but it was not a very restful sleep. Something kept running over my feet. Bert said it was probably rats! However, months later when I had become acclimatised to my living condition he told me it was most likely a snake. Although I never became ‘friendly’ with the creatures I did adjust to sharing my surroundings with them, sometimes in the rafters and one time entwined all around the frame of the baby’s bassinette. When we had passed through Madang we were assured that shortly the mission ship would come down and transport all the things that had been stored in the shed at Saidor to us; in the meantime we would manage as best we could.

Bert made us a stove from a 44 gallon drum cut in half with a chisel and chiselled holes in the top and placed it on a sandy bed outside. On this we cooked whatever we could find to eat, heated water for bathing the children, boiled the laundry in kerosene tins, and used the heat for any other purpose where heat was required. Day after day we watched the horizon for signs of a ship coming our way. Every day for nine long weeks we waited and watched.

During that nine-week period the biggest problem was food. Gardens had not yet come into full bearing, and so food for the nationals had to be bought locally. For our supplies every Sunday morning Bert and one of our teachers would walk the 15 miles to Saidor, and with back packs filled to carrying capacity bring back sufficient food from what was stored there to see us through the week. During these ‘trying times’ we began school. We were not rushed with students but slowly the numbers grew. Although we had limited medical supplies, we set up our primitive dispensary and there was always someone with a burn or a boil, a toothache or an earache, and it seemed the medicine from the mission dispensary cured everything.

### Part 2

#### THE LIFE OF THE UNEXPECTED

Late one afternoon we observed a little group of local people from the hills behind the mission standing a short distance away from our house talking quietly together and every now and then looking across in our direction. Finally they moved in closer and made the customary cough to announce their arrival, which is equivalent to a knock. The spokesman for the group said “Mipela got tok,” and then he produced a very dirty billum from behind his back and held it toward me. I peered into the bag and saw what appeared to be a skinned rabbit but what was in fact a tiny baby. Six weeks earlier his mother had died during childbirth and they had kept the baby alive by crushing sugar cane and pouring the juice into his mouth. You can look after him their eyes pleaded? No doubt they felt that if I had food for one baby then I would have no trouble feeding two. This little drama occurred while we were still awaiting the necessities of life, and although I did have a baby in the house he was breast fed; so the fact that we did not have the milkman calling or a cow in the back yard did not matter.

The Lord had seen this situation months before and had prompted Bert to purchase among other supplies a case of Nestles sweetened condensed milk (48 tins). Back in those days, more than 50 years ago, the paper label around the tin had a baby formula printed on it, so from those instructions and the contents of the tin we fed and saved the life of that little babe. Soon he was shiny skinned, putting on weight, and he was a bright happy little boy. His name was Terry.

A few weeks passed and at around the same hour a similar delegation arrived at our door, this time with a baby girl. Words fail me to describe the condition of this poor emaci-



Bert & Edna Grosser with their two children, Nerelle, 2½ and Gavan 9 months. Nerelle & Gavan with two local children

ated child. She was nothing but skin stretched over bone and was covered from head to foot with what appeared to be huge carbuncles bursting at the slightest touch and oozing pus and blood. She was running a temperature of 104° F and was too weak to even cry. The situation looked hopeless. We had not been there long enough for them to develop complete trust in us, but if we turned them away they would interpret that to mean we did not care. On the other hand if we took the child and it died they might say we had killed it. Through an interpreter we did our best to explain that we would take care of the child but they

would have to understand that she was close to death and they must not blame us if she did not survive. With much head nodding and words we did not understand they retreated, leaving us with a huge task. The passage of time has erased from my memory just how we treated this little one; suffice to say that I sat up all night dripping warm milk into her mouth with an eye dropper and swabbing her down with cool water to reduce the temperature. Miraculously little Ruby lived. Her harsh beginning had an effect on her mental development but she grew into a sweet little mite.

### Ship Ahoy!

When we finally saw the ship coming we all went wild with excitement. Landing the goods presented a challenge. With no anchorage the ship had to stand off quite a distance and the cargo was ferried to land in a homemade canoe. All was eventually landed but some had a salt-water bath before arriving.

Once the boat arrived and we had equipment with which to work life became much easier. A new and much larger house was built, equipped with an iron roof from which a tank filled, giving us a supply of water on tap rather than having to carry it from a running stream some distance away. A

bigger and better medical clinic was established and each day it seemed more and more people came for help. A boy's dormitory was built and each week saw more students arrive. Shrubs and flowers, which grew so abundantly and so quickly in the tropical areas, made the mission station look quite pretty. All was coming along well and everyone seemed happy and appreciative of what the mission was doing to improve their life style... and then a great wave of excitement swept through the area. "Yali is coming, Yali is coming," was on everyone's lips. Who was Yali?

Shortly after the end of World War II unrest developed throughout New Guinea and especially in coastal areas. The indigenous people living there had seen ships arriving laden with merchandise of all sorts. Shops were now being re-established as people returned to New Guinea. These primitive people, who worshiped the spirits of their departed ones, interpreted the merchandise as gifts to them from the spirits being intercepted by the white people, and thus developed what was known as the Cargo Cult.<sup>3</sup> Yali's visit throughout the island was to stir up the national people and urge them to get rid of these white people. They would then be able to take delivery of all this merchandise, which they felt was rightly theirs.

### Rejection and Retraction

Not long after this man's visit we received a letter from the Government officer stating that he had been informed by the headmen of the area that they wished the Adventist mission to leave. Somewhat shocked, but in control of the situation, we quietly told the village folk that if that was their wish we would certainly abide by it and just as soon as we could get a boat to come and get us we would leave. "Many places are calling for a mission to come and help them and so we will be happy to go somewhere else," we told them. We notified headquarters at Madang, but weeks went by and no ship came. Meanwhile we continued to teach school, operate the clinic, and befriend them all just as we had done before. This was such a shock to them. They expected us to close the school, shut the dispensary door and not treat their sick, and have nothing more to do with them. When this attitude was not evident they went back to the Government officer and said, "We want the Seven-day mission to stay. We will have no one to teach our children, no one to care for our sick if they are not here. Please tell them we want them to stay."

As the months and years slipped by many interesting and challenging events occurred, the telling of which would fill a book. Unlike the response to mission influence in many areas of Papua New Guinea today, results were not very encouraging. The gospel story, though told often, was not readily accepted on the Rai Coast. Generally speaking the people were not at all ambitious for a better way of life.

### Early History of the Area

Since beginning to write this story, I have been interested to learn of the origins of the Rai Coast population. It seems that in the early days under German rule this area was used as a penal colony. People who transgressed the code of living and were an embarrassment to their tribe were banished to the Rai Coast, where the isolation of this area prevented such people from contaminating others. This also answered a question I asked many times while living there: why



Freda (top) & Lester Hawkes (bottom) with their children and friends when they went into the 2nd house Grossers had been living in

had a road not been built between the Government station and the Rai Coast? In other areas of the Territory native style bridges had been built to span the rivers, but in this area no such provision had been made over any of the rivers. There was only one way to get to the other side and that was to wade through, and often the water was chest high. Not a pleasant choice when one knew that the rivers were crocodile infested.

### Uncertain Times

Seure, while accepted as a site in order to get a footing on the Rai Coast, was never considered to be an ideal spot for a mission station. A little further down the coast at a place called Kororo there was an ideal position with a good anchorage, and the government had agreed that this could be used for a mission site providing the organization built a wharf and



The opening of the new church on the Rai Coast in the 1990s. The old man, second from right at the back is an original member from the Grossers' time

some form of permanent building within a given time. Due to the lack of manpower and material, that was not accomplished. Pastor Lester Hawkes took charge of the Seure mission when we went on furlough in 1951, and he began to build a structure at Kororo, even taking the roofing iron off his own house. It was really the responsibility of headquarters at Madang to fulfil this requirement, but time ran out and the government reclaimed the property.

There was a short space of time between our leaving and Pastor and Mrs Hawkes' arrival to take over the care of the mission at Seure. When we left there was a school enrolment of around 40 students. When Lester and Freda arrived, however, they found the dormitory empty. The students had all run away. The school had not been left unattended; all the national teachers were still there with Guano, the Solomon Island teacher in charge, but obviously these primitive people did not like change. We heard that they had left a note to say that when Master Grosser came back they would return. It became increasingly evident that those needy people on the Rai Coast did not feel they had a need. Education for their children—yes, they wanted that; medical care for their sick—yes, they were grateful for that; but the story of Jesus and his love for them found no response. After some months, in consultation with headquarters, it was decided to withdraw the mission personnel from Seure and move to other areas.<sup>4</sup>

However, we do have reason to believe that there is still an Adventist presence in that area, for some four or five years ago we received a letter from the treasurer of the Madang Mission telling us that a new church was nearing completion in the Seure area and inviting us to contribute the necessary money to put an iron roof on it. This we were very happy to do and we pray that through its influence souls may yet be saved for the kingdom from that area.

A Volunteer in Action worker, Luke Lintut, is stationed at Seure. He reported that God has blessed the church at Seure for in 2007 there are now 187 members worshipping there. Also there are two branch churches, one at Bandit with 64 members and another at Atgemaing with 5. Near Kororo there is a new interest developing among the people at Malalamai.<sup>5</sup>

### What Happened to the Two Babies?

Maybe some one is asking, "What became of the two little babies?" The little girl went back into the care of older siblings when she was old enough to eat kau kau and the other local food. The government officer, who had taken a keen interest in what we had done for these two children, instructed the family that they must continue to live on the coast and not take the little one back into the hills, where it would be much colder at night. Her very harsh beginnings had left her physically weak. After we had left the area they disobeyed these directions and went back to the bush, with the result that little Ruby got a cold, which developed into pneumonia and she died.

Terry, the little boy whom they declared was to be a 'Piccaninny belong mission,' was snatched from us without a minute's notice when he was approximately 18 months old. Some people from the village from which he came arrived at



Pastor Bert and Edna Grosser with Nerelle and Gavan in recent times

our door one evening and said they wanted to have him—and right now! While I was ready to fight for the right to keep him, Bert pointed out that we could not do this; he was rightfully theirs as they declared they were his family; and so a weeping foster mother and a screaming little boy were torn from each other. There is a lot more to that story that I will not take time to tell. Suffice to say that little boy is now a man of 55, married with five children. He has obviously received an education, as he writes his letters in very good English, but sadly he does not communicate with us now. We responded to many requests for clothes for his family, leather belts for himself and his friends, a Bible in Pidgin English and small amounts of money, but when we had to say “No” to his request for \$4,000, he ceased to communicate anymore, and

also sent back the *Signs of the Times* that we were sponsoring for him.

Pioneering on the Rai Coast was not an easy assignment, but as we relive the memories they are precious to recall. The experience added much colour to our lives and we are grateful to have had a small part in taking the gospel to those who dwell in darkness.

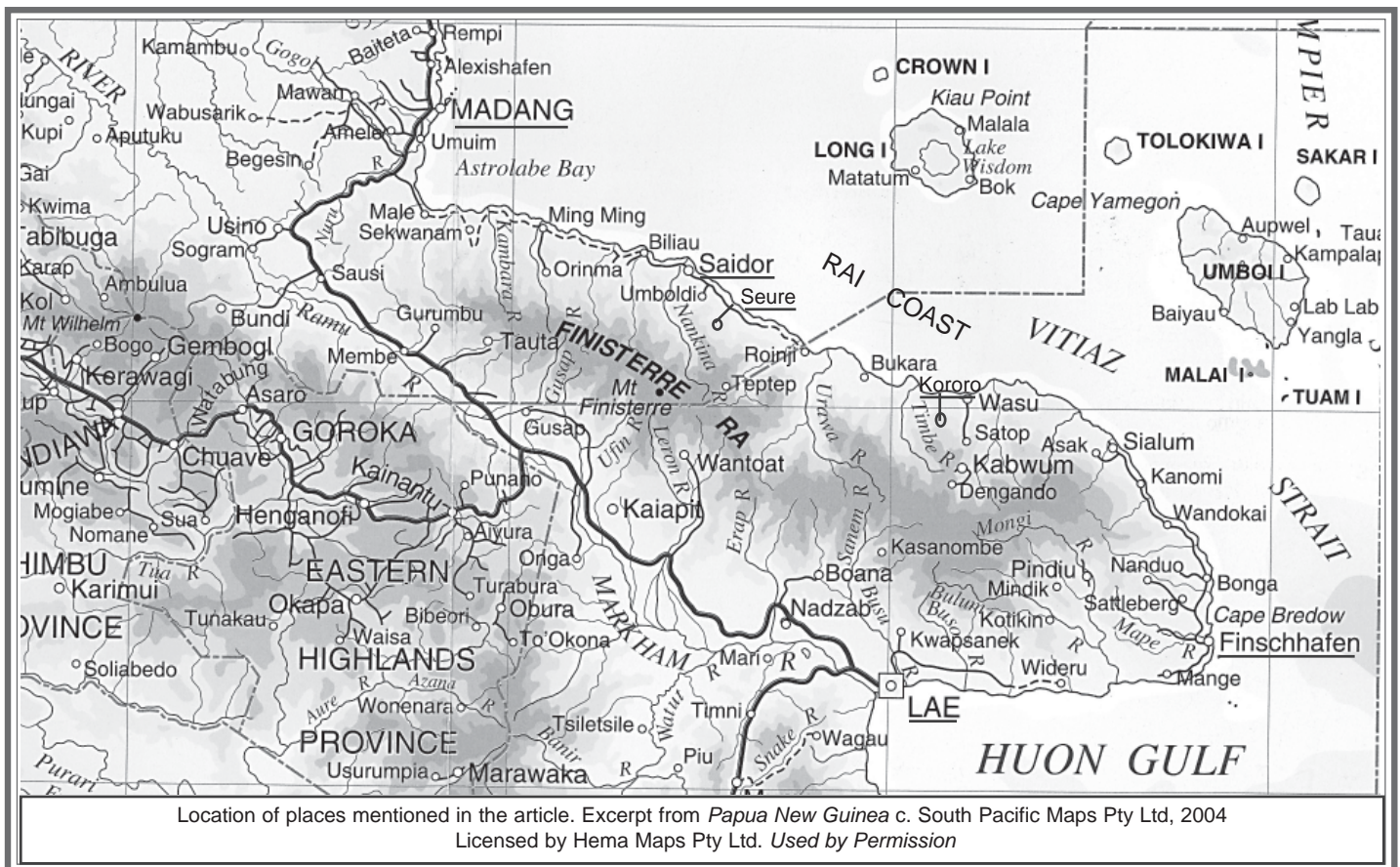
**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Although known as the Australasian Union Conference (AUC), the area covering Australia, New Zealand, and the Island Territories in the Pacific Ocean, had been designated a Division by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at a Session Meeting in San Francisco, California, on 24 May, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> ‘The Dragon Rapide’ was a biplane with very few features: it didn’t even have a radio!

<sup>3</sup> An example of ‘cargo cult’ thinking was a man named Batari who lived near Madang. In goods being unloaded from a ship, Batari noticed a box labelled ‘Battery,’ and was convinced it was meant for him!

<sup>4</sup> Pastor Lester Hawkes gave this report: “At the exact same time the other two mission [bodies] endeavouring to operate in the Rai Coast area also decided to pull out.” The minister of one mission became so discouraged, states Lester, that he shot himself a few weeks before they left the area. The other minister was reappointed to another area in the country, but decided to stay where he was. Headquarters told him they would support him as long as he stayed there, but he would not be replaced when he left. ◆





# The Influence of Music at Jones Missionary College and Beyond



## Part 1



**DOUG MARTIN**

*Douglas Martin was born in Kyogle, NSW. Over the years he gained a number of educational qualifications from Avondale College, Cooranbong NSW (known as AMC until 1963), — ministerial in 1952; LTh in 1953; BA in Theology in 1972; and an MA in Ministry in 1981. Doug also obtained an A MUS A in Voice from the Melbourne Conservatory of Music in 1976. He married May Shirley at Warburton, Victoria, 22 January 1952. Doug served the church for 37 years in a number of capacities: — 1954-1957 Singing evangelist North NSW; 1958-1965 Ministerial training and music at Jones Miss. College Kambubu near Rabaul, PNG, where May served as the college and district nurse; 1966-1968; church pastor, Ballarat, Vic; 1969-1970, Colac and Camperdown; 1971-77 Melbourne. In 1978 the Martins were called to Greater Sydney Conference and served in pastoral evangelism at Liverpool for three years; 1982-1985 Kellyville; 1986-1987 Ashfield, Lakemba and Tongan churches; and 1988-1990 continued at Ashfield and Lakemba. Following retirement Doug and May conducted music seminars in PNG and the Solomon Islands for several weeks for six years. The Martins now reside at Astonville Retirement Village in NNSW.*

### Part 1: RAISING MUSIC STANDARDS AT JONES

#### Call to Mission Service

I was attending a Seminary Extension School at Avondale College in the Australian State of New South Wales at the end of 1957 when I had the surprise of my life. I was leaving the dormitory on my way to class when Pastor Laurie C Naden, President of the Australasian Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church stopped me, and without beating about the bush announced, “Doug, church leaders would like you to go to Jones Missionary College [JMC] on the Island of New Britain in Papua New Guinea [PNG] as Bible teacher and music master.” Oh! I had never thought of being a missionary, although a little while before, when David and Fay Hay had spent a week-end with us in Newcastle, David had asked, “What would you do if you received a call to the mission field?” and I had replied, “I suppose I would pray about it.” When the call came I felt stunned. At my earliest opportunity I phoned May and continued the shock therapy. She had arrived home with our second son, Ray, three weeks previously and was not prepared to expose him to all the ‘nasties’ that might attack her precious babe. Lester, our firstborn, was very fair and easily sunburnt. How would he fare in the heat? “We cannot go up there” was her protective response. But we agreed to pray about it during the two weeks before an answer was required.

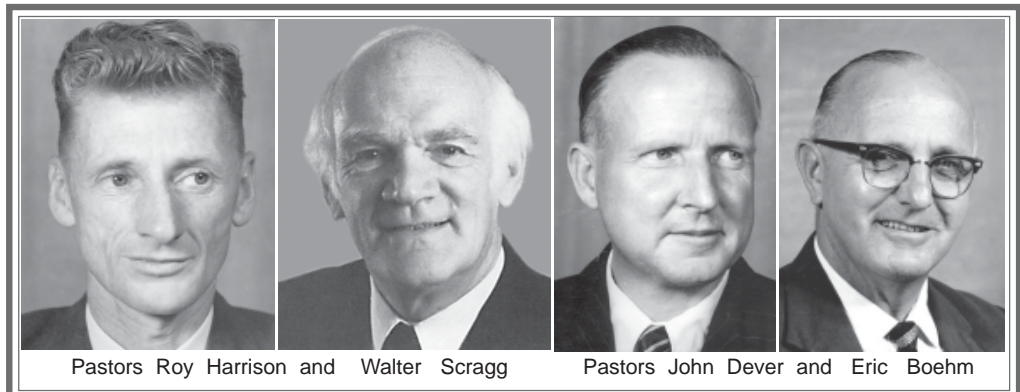
During those two weeks missionaries encouraged me to accept the call, while evangelists encouraged me to stay in Australia for sing-

ing evangelism. Then came decision day. Pastor William G Turner, a retired church administrator, in a prayer group that day, had encouraged me to accept the call. “I have always found that the call of the brethren is the call of God,” he said. “My sheep hear my voice” echoed in my mind, but I wanted to be sure that this really was His voice. That evening at worship time Pastor Roy Harrison, President of the New Britain Mission, spoke of his work there and especially of JMC, the Bismark Solomons Union Mission educational institution. This sheep heard a voice say, “That’s the place I’m calling you to work for me.” We stood to leave and my room mate, Pastor Walter Scragg, of the church’s Voice of Prophecy radio programme tapped me on the shoulder and said, “I think you have your answer now.” I agreed. May also agreed when I rang her. My studies would finish at the end of February, we would have a month’s pre-embarkation leave, and then farewell Australia for three years.

As we were packing in Newcastle I received an unexpected phone call from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation asking if I had received their letter inviting me to do a recital in just two nights time. We had not received the letter, and with such short notice I had to turn down the offer. Who knows what we might have decided if I had received that letter? We did not then realize how many lives would be affected for good in the new area of ministry to which God was calling us

#### Arrival in New Guinea

After our family farewells, we departed



Pastors Roy Harrison and Walter Scragg

Pastors John Dever and Eric Boehm



Pastor Liligeto, preceptor & church minister



Jones Missionary College and students

from Brisbane airport and were shocked by the heat when we landed at Port Moresby on the southern coast of PNG. On the plane with us between Finchhaven and Rabaul were Highlanders going to work on New Britain plantations. We arrived in Rabaul on New Britain in the eastern part of the country during the first week of March 1958, and were met by Pastor Eric Boehm, president, and Eddie Piez, accountant. Nance Piez was a great encouragement to May. "If she can leave her comforts and enjoy this, so can I," May thought. And we did. On Sabbath afternoon Pastor John Dever, secretary-treasurer and auditor, took me for a friendly stroll through a nearby Methodist village and on Sunday morning drove us up to Napapara, an Adventist village which grew fruit and vegetables for the market. The village was neat and clean, but my two year old fair-skinned boy almost melted under the tropical sun. We were being conditioned to life in the tropics.

My involvement in music started right there in Rabaul. I attended the first meeting of the committee planning the choir festival for 1958. On the committee were representatives of the Catholic, Methodist, and Adventist missions, government schools, and government administration. I learned that they considered the festival to be a very important part of the life and culture of Rabaul and its surrounding districts.

Later in the week we had our first experience of sea travel on mission vessels. We travelled on the *Kambubu* along the south coast of New Britain and passed the place Roy Harrison had referred to in his evening worship service. How excited we were to see the buildings beyond the coconut trees! Further on we came ashore at the Kambubu River. We were welcomed by staff and students conducted by Dan Masolo singing a welcome song,

We are glad to welcome you,  
Glad to welcome you to Kambubu.

The sound was harmonious, typically Pacific Islands, and my heart vibrated with a challenge, for this was the sound that I would be endeavouring to improve. Irwin Harvey, principal and a student spoke welcoming words. We met the teachers. David Sutcliffe, senior teacher in the high school was an Avondale college friend. New to us were Kevin Silva, teacher training master, and Edna Luke, preceptress, who had served as a missionary in Ethiopia with another mission organisation. A couple of weeks later Brian Houliston joined the staff to teach carpentry and joinery and direct the furniture making industry. The respected preceptor and church minister was

Pastor Liligeto, brother of Pastor Kata Ragoso, so well known as the leader of our Solomon Islands work during World War 11 days. We enjoyed our walk along the palm-lined, grassed road, past the village, then on to the college where we had a refreshing tropical fruit drink. There above the entrance to the chapel I was struck by the challenging words, "To give light to isles that wait." Then on to our home. Our goods had not arrived, but others shared their kitchen ware, bed linen, and anything we needed for the first few weeks. Many before us had gone through the same experience.

We loved living in the oldest home on the campus, previously the home of Pastor and Mrs Lester Lock during Lester's eight years as principal. Our home was less than 200 metres from the sea, which broke, sometimes lazily, at other times violently, on the reef. The sea breezes were always welcome.

Jones Missionary College began as Put Put Training School in 1936. The institution was built near the coast about forty miles from Rabaul on an 800 acre section taking in about a mile of coastland merging back into the rising wooded hill country. Here teacher-ministers were being trained as well as carpenters and office workers. The college enrolment was fed by the high school which at that stage finished at grade eight. Soon two more years were added. The students were eager to learn. Teachers must have enjoyed their work where classroom discipline was hardly needed.

### First Impressions

The worship singing impressed me. Surely earlier missionaries had done well to teach them to sing with such beautiful harmony. Their voices were flat but the harmony was pure. The first few mornings and evenings harmonious hymns cheered us as the boys met for worship in the chapel. Morning workshops always began with Isaac Watt's worshipful hymn,

Lord in the morning Thou shalt hear  
My voice ascending high;  
To Thee shall I direct my prayer,  
To Thee lift up my eye.

On the first Sabbath I watched a group sing an item for Sabbath School. After considerable hesitation, an indication of their humility, (or was it just habit?) a mixed group of about 30 sang. I observed that the women lacked confidence. They were shy and many looked down. Their voices were nasal and not properly focused, as they were not floating on the breath, but had a forced, harsh sound. The men's voices were more

pleasant. The group who had sung were mainly mill and garden workers and their wives, young married couples in their twenties and thirties. I noticed that the singing in the afternoon was not as good as in the morning. I thought that they didn't know the songs very well, so I was in my element as if leading an evangelistic song service back home. The principal later explained that they were listening to me. I'm sure it wasn't admiration, but an assessment of the voice of their new music master. I hadn't thought that I was being assessed, but I know that when I sang 'The Lord's Prayer' there followed an enthusiastic "Amen!" Glory to God! That was my initiation and acceptance into Kambubu's musical world.

### Forming Choirs

During the first week I auditioned the voices of the whole college student body, keeping a record of range, type of voice, and giving them a rating of A, B, or C. I remember asking one mature Solomon Islander what part he sang. In his rich bass voice he replied, "Soprano, Sir!" I asked him how he sang soprano with his deep bass voice and he demonstrated with falsetto. "In future you will be singing bass," I told him. "Soprano is for girls' voices!" That settled it. He became one of my best basses when I formed the male choir.

In those days many of the men were mature in years. Some high school students would have been in their early twenties, which meant that we had fairly mature voices to work with. The male choir of sixty voices, practised for one hour in the chapel (the only place with a piano) after work Mondays and Wednesdays, and also following worship on Friday evenings. We sang for the worship service most Sabbaths. The girls practice was on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I had decided that it would not be possible to form a mixed choir of any quality with so few girls. I had noticed their lack of confidence in the presence of men. My mind had been made up—I would form a male choir and tutor the girls separately. After three years, with about thirty girls now in the college, I taught eight of the girls conducting and chose one of them as the conductress of their choir. Their confidence was growing. David Sutcliffe, who spent many years at Kambubu, commented that the establishment of a Girls Choir did much to enhance the status of women enabling them to sing in a controlled manner without the natural screech many exhibited.

All ministerial students and teacher trainees were taught conducting so that they could lead song services more effectively and be prepared for the day when they could start choirs of their own in either schools or churches. Apart from conducting they learned simple rudiments of music and sight singing. Some displayed a natural talent to lead and inspire others. Dan Masolo, who was my assistant conductor of the male choir, was quite outstanding and very well respected.

### Training Difficulties

I soon found that Island people must overcome several obstacles to singing well. Generally they are lovers of harmony; but listening for harmony may also contribute to the slower tempo, which is very noticeable in their singing. In the singing of English songs pronunciation is another difficulty. In many dialects there is no 'f' sound; so 'fact' is pronounced 'pact'. Vowels also have variations. Pidgin English

follows phonetic rules; for example, 'i' is pronounced 'ee.' (Early on I found when marking the roll that the name 'Siso' had to be pronounced like 'seesaw.' That was only one of the names which caused quite a bit of laughter.) In singing the vowels are sustained, which makes these differences stand out, and constant reminders were necessary to overcome this and other difficulties.

Thought processes also influence interpretation and expression while singing. When the words are not appreciated there is a tendency to sing one word at a time, like first grade children learning to read 'a-cat-sat-on-the-mat.' This problem of understanding may distort appreciation of the message in the words and their ability to convey emotion. One example may suffice to illustrate this. We had learned the notes correctly. The harmony could not be faulted. The male choir was to sing 'Still, Still with Thee' for the Sabbath morning church service. But there was something lacking. For about ten minutes I endeavoured to convey the shades of meaning inherent in the words. What is meant by 'mystic shadows'? — not fog or misty rain, but the spiritual atmosphere created by the sense of God's presence. How do 'shadows flee'? They fade away gradually, not suddenly. Convey the idea with diminishing volume. We sang it again with sensitivity, doing our very best to convey the deep spiritual meaning of the message. The result was very gratifying. We were in the presence of God. The music was the medium for the message. Later when our competition songs were played over the Port Moresby radio station, people began referring to the Kambubu choir as the 'heart singers,' I was told. They experienced what they sang.

All students who were in teacher training and ministerial training in my time memorised Ellen White's statement, "Music was made to serve a holy purpose; to lift the thoughts to that which is pure, noble and elevating, and to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God" (Patriarchs and Prophets by Ellen G White p 593). I encouraged them to analyse music by its effect on the mind and spirit, rather than listing which piece of music was good and which piece was bad. I still recall coming unexpectedly on a group who were revelling in some 'wild' musical arrangement on the radio one evening. As I approached there was some embarrassment, for they realised that their revelry and enjoyment of the music was not in keeping with music's original purpose. They needed to learn to



May & Doug Martin with their children

make choices for themselves when no one else would be there to guide them, and hopefully such principles as I referred to would help.

### Success in Choir Competitions

Choral festivals were functioning long before my time at Kambubu. Lester Lock mentions Veringa, who had successfully conducted a mixed choir which won their section on a couple of occasions. We continued to participate in the festivals.

Every Queen's Birthday we travelled by truck to Rabaul to compete in the Queen's Birthday competitions. (No laws against riding on the tray of trucks up there.) The first year, after three months practice, our male choir was awarded third place. But as the director of the Methodist Mission said to me later, "We could tell by the quality of the choir that it would be very competitive in the future." For the following six years (1959—64) we were awarded first place in that section. This meant that we also opened the festival with the singing of the National Anthem, 'God Save the Queen', and then led a vast choir marchpast each successive year. There were about 5,000 singers in the various sections, including choirs from villages, primary schools, and boarding schools, and men's, women's and mixed choirs. They sang on various platforms erected around Queen Elizabeth Park. Their coloured uniforms of red, green, blue, yellow and white, made a beautiful display. Some wore lap laps<sup>1</sup> of various colours, others wore skirts and blouses or shorts. The Catholic Chanel College Choir was the first to wear shoes and white socks which seemed unnatural to me. But to them I suppose it meant progress. Few chairs were provided, but many locals perched in the trees which surrounded the park for a better view.

In 1960 we entered the ladies choir with 32 voices. They sang well and, like the men on their first appearance, were awarded third place. The choir was enlarged in 1961 and came second. From there on they were either first or second at each competition. There is no doubt that being in the choir raised the girls' self-esteem. Their confidence grew with their ability — and the boys recognised this and treated them with more respect, even if they did question whether they would make obedient wives!

### Letting Our Light Shine

After recording our choir for use on their broadcasts, Malcolm Naylor, acting manager for the Australian Broadcasting Commission at Port Moresby, thanked us, praised our performance, and arranged with me to do a special recording of the choir before the next competition. Those recordings have been played for many years over the national radio.

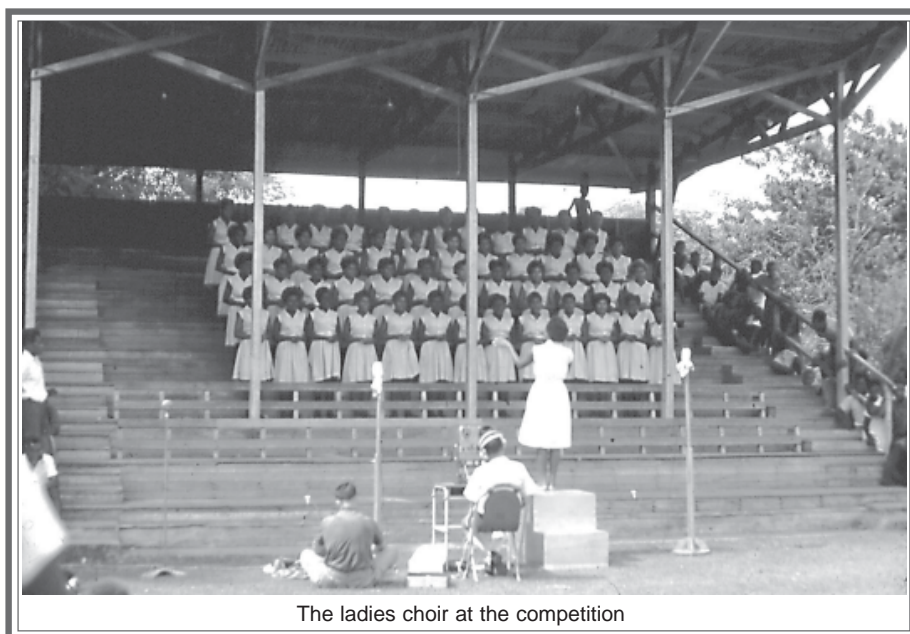
Choir competitions were an opportunity to witness and become acquainted with educators, mission directors, and business people. Students made friends with other students. It was a time of fellowship and cultural exchange. I stressed that competing was not the primary goal although it took time to impress this on choir members. For example, following the second year of our involvement, after we had been awarded first place in the male choir section, one choir member was asked by a brother of the Catholic Mission where he could find the director of our choir. He told me later that he pointed the brother in the opposite direction in case he might want to fight me. We met without blows the following year!

In those days choir competitions were conducted in many districts around Papua New Guinea. They were the main feature of the Queen's Birthday celebrations early in June each year. As students graduated and started their own choirs, reports came to us from many places of the rising standard of Adventist choirs. Sometimes the conductors received batons for being the outstanding conductor of the competition. David Sutcliffe writes the following assessment:

It did a great deal to give the students, even those not in the choir, a sense of identity. They belonged to the college that won the Rabaul Choral Competition! It also put Jones Missionary College on the map, so to speak... It helped break down the barriers between the 'Popies' and the 'Sevendays' even though the competition rivalry remained quite intense. Your training of choir masters to conduct the choir led to the raising of the standard of choral productions throughout the BSUM and the impact continues even today.

Spectators did more than listen to the music; they made assessments of the schools and colleges. Joseph from Wewak had married a woman of the Tolai tribe from round Rabaul. He said to some of his friends, "Kambubu is the top college.

I want you to go there." Not only did they apply to be students, but two of our students, Jim Tati and Titus Rore, used my little projector and studied with Joseph and others each Friday evening. He, his father-in-law, and another boy were baptised at the end of the year. An even bigger thrill came to us when we returned for Kambubu's Jubilee over twenty years later to listen to a choir from Joseph's village, the village of Gunai, and to hear that they were planning to build a church. When we returned to Rabaul again in 1993 I met the pastor of the Rabaul church, who turned out to have been a young student when I was at Jones. I asked about the church at Gunai and was told that the previous Sab-



The ladies choir at the competition

bath a new church had been dedicated with 70 members. That was one result of our choirs singing at the Rabaul Queen's Birthday celebrations and the witness that followed it.

Our involvement in the competition was not motivated so much by a desire to win, as by a desire to participate and witness for Christ in song and by our demeanour. After being placed first for three years I reduced the choir to forty voices.



Dr E E White from Avondale College

We could not lower our standard, but with fewer voices I thought it would give other choirs a better chance of winning; but we were still eight points ahead of the choir awarded second place. After being first for six years in succession, we were awarded second place during my last year. I had realised that we were not thoroughly prepared, particularly with 'The Lost Chord' but it was still an opportunity to witness. At the close of the day one of our choir members congratulated one of the Chanel choir members on their performance. His spontaneous response was, "This is different. When you win we feel cross. When we win you come and say congratulations and smile. Tell me, why do you keep the Sabbath?" The next morning on our way home we visited Chanel College. On alighting from the truck the two boys met again. The Catholic boy said, "Let us go to my room and talk. You don't need to see around the college do you?" They talked about Scripture, which ended with a request that a Bible be sent to him, wrapped in clothes to camouflage it, which we did. He was one of the three prefects there.

Dr Edward E White, who had attended the Port Moresby and Rabaul competitions early in 1963, later wrote in the *Record* of the influence of our choirs in the choral festivals. He spoke of "a wave of singing which is not mere shouting, but refined, polished, and controlled, and a mighty talent to be used in the service of God."

### Other Lines of Musical Training

All our students participated in the enthusiastic congregational singing which had stirred our hearts when we arrived. Harmonious hymn singing has inspired people for centuries and I hope it will never lose its power.

During the fifties and sixties some missionary wives also contributed to music education by teaching some students to play the piano. One of my wife's pupils was Kenny Tutua, who was so eager to learn that he practised with the soft pedal on after lights out at 9.15 each evening. He now plays quite competently for church services in Honiara. We have heard organists play in Rabaul and Port Moresby. Two young people played for us at

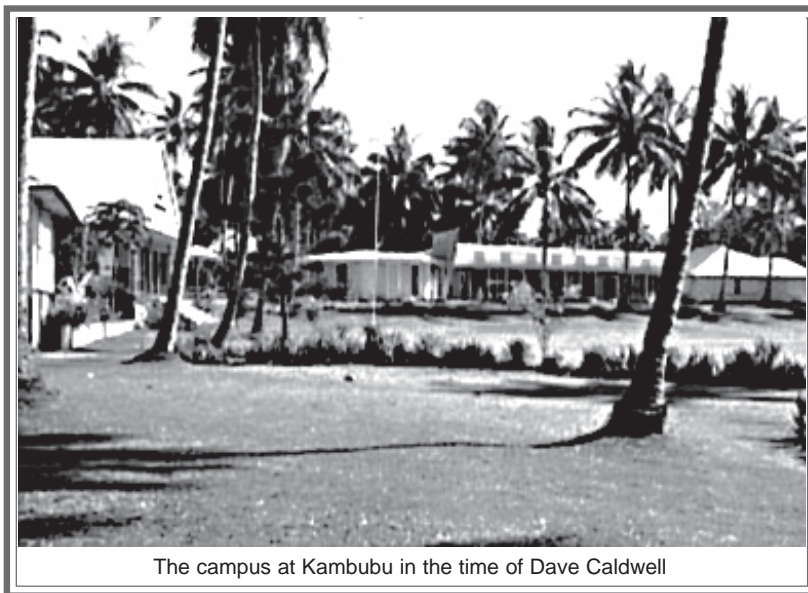
Lae. They were about twelve years of age and were taught by an Australian lecturer at the University of Technology at Lae. They would have been at a grade 3 or 4 standard at the time. As certain musical compositions require accompaniment, there is need to develop instrumentalists to add interest and to broaden the scope of choral music throughout the Pacific Islands. In later years Dave Caldwell conducted a music appreciation class one night a week, which he regarded as moderately successful.

Kambubu also had a brass band. Lester Lock, who had been principal of Jones Missionary College for many years and left a couple of months before our arrival, contributed the following information concerning the brass band which was still functioning when I arrived, a band of about twenty instruments:

An American, Dr Trotter, had visited Kambubu the year before I arrived and was quite impressed with the singing and the musical ability of the students; so at his own expense he purchased brass and woodwind instruments and had them shipped to Rabaul. They arrived soon after Edna and I arrived and it was our pleasure to unpack them and give some training in the playing of these instruments. While I was at college I had played in the college band for about three years, so had some idea about the playing of brass instruments. I conducted the band mostly, but for drill purposes Irwin Harvey, the headmaster, conducted it, and it was very effective. On a couple of occasions we took the band to Rabaul and played for some functions.

Samuel, a man from Inus village on Bougainville, was a member of the band when I was there. Back in his home village, with a lot of hard work he was able to raise enough money to purchase about 15 instruments, and he got quite a nice band together. On my last visit to Bougainville, the band played while I was at Inus Mission Station, and I thought they played rather well although somewhat stunted in some things. They were very popular with the government when they were called to play at functions at Kieta and Sohano.

The tropics are hard on instruments. The band Lester Lock referred to was almost beyond repair by the mid 1960s. However when Dave Caldwell became principal of Kambubu



The campus at Kambubu in the time of Dave Caldwell

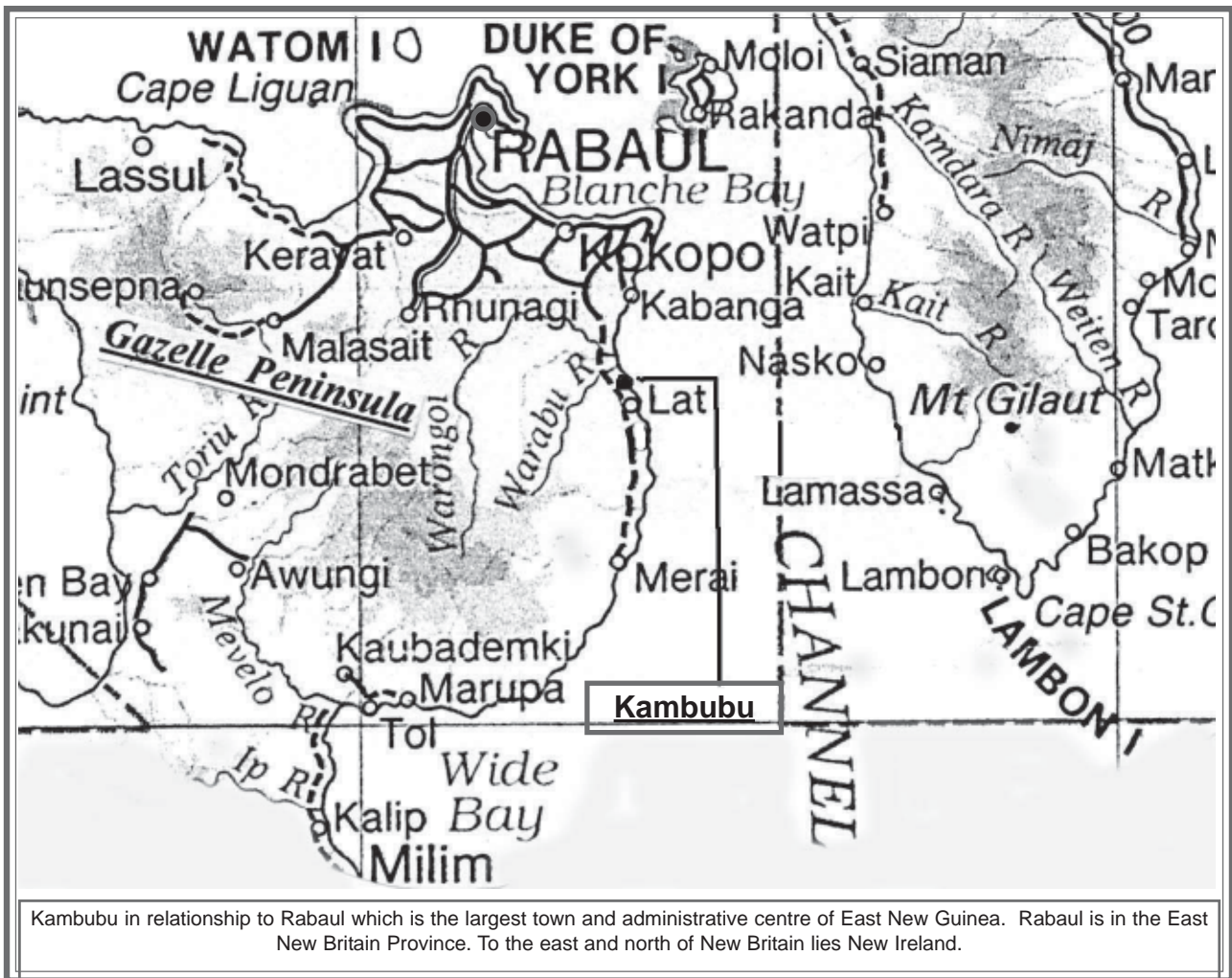
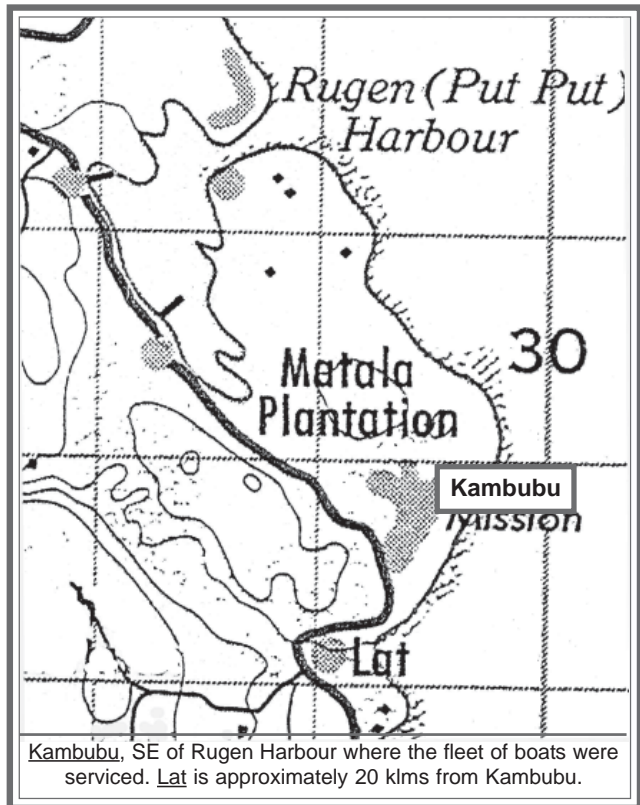
Adventist High School in 1973, having been a bandsman as well as being an accomplished cellist, he was able to begin again. He writes:

Having been involved in bands, I started one at Kambubu. Again, it became the exclusive domain of the Mussau lads with the exception of the Solomon Island chaplain. The band boys learned to read music by osmosis; those with reading ability taught the beginners. With help from Australian friends we bought instruments from the Salvation Army in Hong Kong. It took a couple of years to obtain a broad range of instruments. With the windfall of a batch of old uniforms from the South Australian Advent Band we soon looked smart and 'sounded' better. This band put Kambubu on the musical map of the Gazelle Peninsula. Sadly, a band's life depends on the leadership of some dedicated staff member, without which it withers and dies.

**Note**

The forerunner of Jones Missionary College was the Put Put Training School built on land purchased in 1936. During WWII the school was discontinued but Deni Mark continued teaching pupils in the bush. During the war it was occupied by the Japanese and all buildings were destroyed. Rebuilding began in 1946 with the school reopening the following year as the Kambubu Training School. In 1951 the institution became the Coral Sea Union College. With the Coral Sea Union Mission being divided into two unions, the college became part of the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission and was known as the Adventist Union College, a name which soon after was changed to Jones Missionary College in

honour of Captain Jones a pioneer missionary in the Islands. In 1968 the training section was transferred to Sonoma College, and the school continued as Kambubu Adventist High School. ♦



Kambubu in relationship to Rabaul which is the largest town and administrative centre of East New Guinea. Rabaul is in the East New Britain Province. To the east and north of New Britain lies New Ireland.

# Adventist Aviation in Papua New Guinea: bridging valley and mountain boundaries, 1964-1980



**WES GUY**



*Wes Guy was born in 1922 of missionary parents on the island of Samarai in Papua New Guinea. He obtained his education from Box Hill Grammar School and Wesley College, Victoria, Australia. He served in the RAAF for 17 years, graduating as a pilot, then serving as a flying instructor in Victoria and flying Dakota aircraft in PNG. On completing advanced training he tested RAAF pilots and in 1952 flew twin-engine Meteor jet aircraft in Korea where he was awarded the DFC. On joining the Dept. of Civil Aviation in 1959 he moved to PNG where he tested all pilots flying in the Territory. In 1967 he joined Territory Airlines as operations manager, and in 1970 joined Executive Air Services in Melbourne as their operations director. From 1975 to 1980 he also served as Chief Pilot for the Adventist Church in the Australasian Division (now SPD since 1985). From 1976 to 1983 Wes served as General Manager for a number of airlines, and retired in 1984. Wes married Pearl (Fisher) on 17 March 1945, at Preston Victoria. They had two sons — Peter (dec'd) and Paul. Wes and Pearl now reside in Melbourne.*

## Introduction

I WAS SITTING IN MY OFFICE at Essendon Airport<sup>1</sup> in 1976, working out the weekly program for the Air Ambulance operations<sup>2</sup> when the phone rang. The person at the other end was Pastor Lance Butler<sup>3</sup> calling from the Australasian Division (AD) headquarters of the church at Wahroonga, Sydney. He, the treasurer, and Pastor Robert Frame the president, had been exploring the feasibility of a much larger Aviation program for Australia and the Pacific Islands which would be under the control of the Division. Could I come up to Sydney and talk with them about the proposal? I booked a seat on the first available flight. The Church had been flying planes since 1964 but now in the seventies a more centralized system was needed.

After lengthy discussions, I was invited to be Chief Pilot of the new organization and ensure the safety and standards of all its pilots. I said I could not do this job full time as I was committed to Executive Air Services<sup>4</sup> but I would write the Operations Manual (later revised and updated by Pastor Colin Winch), and organise a Maintenance Manual. Selected pastor pilots<sup>5</sup> were then chosen. That left the problem of aircraft. There wasn't much use having an organization, manuals and pilots without more planes.

When Dr Hal McMahon, a local physician, heard about the idea he immediately donated four Cessna aircraft.<sup>6</sup> "I have been thinking about Christ's return," said Hal. "When He comes and asks me what I have been doing with my money, I will tell Him I decided to spend it buying aircraft for the Division Aviation Program."

## Early Years

Pioneer air missionaries Pastors Len Barnard and Colin Winch were well known in New Guinea. According to Col —

"In 1961, I was based at Oriomo, in the Papuan Gulf and with Elwyn Martin, my local mission president, laid plans to purchase an aircraft and commence air services in the Gulf

territory. These plans were only conceptual at that stage though. We had not even thought of what kind of plane we would need. While on furlough in 1961 I completed my Private and Commercial Pilots licences at the Wimmera Aero Club based at Nbill and Horsham in Victoria. Later I completed my Instructor Rating at Port Moresby under the late Keith Rose. The test for the Instructor Rating was done by Examiner of Airmen, Wes Guy."

Col was later transferred to Maprik in the Sepik District, and there he commenced correspondence with another aero enthusiast, Len Barnard, who had received some substantial monetary gifts. With the approval of the AD and the Coral Sea Union Mission (CSUM), a regional organisation with administrative oversight of the work of the church in Papua New Guinea, Len bought a brand new Cessna 180. It was named *Andrew Stewart*, in honour of the well-known Island missionary and administrator who had served in Fiji and Vanuatu, and at church headquarters in Sydney. The Division engaged the services of 'Black Jack' Walker,<sup>7</sup> a renowned pilot, who did the navigating on the trip to Papua New Guinea (PNG) while Len did the flying. In 1964 the church's aviation program began.

As Col states, "Len was based at Laiagam and we shared the aircraft between us. I used the Cessna to open up a brand new work at Pagei, ten minutes flying south of Vanimo and close to the Irian Jaya border. I would leave the aircraft at Pagei under the watchful eye of the Expatriate Patrol Officer and walk for many days visiting villages in the area. Pastor Silas Rausu, my assistant, was often left on his own for up to six weeks before being picked up



The very first plane, a Cessna 180, bought largely through the efforts of Len Barnard. He and Col Winch are refuelling it.

again. Seven villages were opened up as a result of Silas' dedicated work.

"Two days walk east of Pagei was the delightful village of Surnumuni where the people wanted to build an airstrip for us. I walked in to mark out the site and check its suitability. There was room between the river and a swamp so some shovels and picks were later dropped on the ground and work commenced. To encourage the enterprise we delivered Dorcas clothing which the mission teacher distributed amongst the villagers. On another occasion when a drop of clothing bags was being made, a young strapping lad, who had helped collect the bags, and noting how soft they were, decided to impress the local girls by catching one of them before it hit the ground. I was, of course, unaware of his plans as I was up in the plane with Elwyn Raethel sitting near the open door dispensing the bags. The young warrior positioned himself and caught the bag on his chest, wrapping his arms around it. He ended up on his back still clutching the bag, having been knocked some 10 metres across the ground. As you can imagine, the whole village was deeply impressed with his exploit. So apparently was he. He had been knocked unconscious and after a number of buckets of river water were poured over him he came to, blinked his eyes, and in the local vernacular, was reported to have said "One thing I know, I'll never do that again!"

"Our work really took off throughout the West Sepik district as a result of the introduction of the *Andrew Stewart*. At least a thousand people accepted Christ as their Saviour from this plane's services. The aircraft brought in local missionaries and provided them with regular visitation by myself and other district Mission and CSUM personnel. It was, however, the faithfulness of the local missionaries that produced the converts. But they would never have achieved such

amazing results without aerial support.

"A second Cessna 180, named the *Malcolm Abbott*, was donated by the 'Quiet Hour,' an American Adventist religious organisation involved in television ministry. In 1966 the plane came with me when I moved to Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands." Col Winch continues, "The use of the aircraft enabled us to reach the Kukukukus where we opened the Usarumpia airstrip and where I carried out the initial landing. From here we were able to enter Marawaka where Rex Tindall commenced the first patrol but again the advent of the airplane gave the spreading of the gospel a real impetus."

### Organising and Programming—1975

In Papua and New Guinea the organization and operation of our aviation ministry was the responsibility of Laurie Evans, the Union Secretary, who some years later, in 1998, was appointed President of the South Pacific Division of the church (formerly AD). In the Australasian Record dated 9/6/75 he made this observation:

"Today the program bears little resemblance to the way it started out. For example, one side of our program known as Transportation, saves our church thousands of dollars in avoiding commercial transportation costs. This is where our full-time pilot comes in, flying key personnel to appointments, students to and from school, and missionaries on transfer and furlough. (This part of the program becomes extremely busy at year-ends, and the pastor pilots come in to help.)

"Apart from transportation and the money it saves, there is that part of our flying program that is the most important of all—the front line work of the pastor pilot—flying to remote areas, landing on bush strips in order to visit with missionaries and carry the good news of salvation. The plane is the pastor pilot's vehicle for his personal transportation. He enjoys using it, but it is a means in his hand towards an end, that of furthering our outreach to otherwise inaccessible people."

### Maintenance and Engineering

The maintenance of our PNG aircraft was carried out by a full-time, fully qualified aircraft engineer. The first person to be appointed to this job was Hans Aeberlie. He was responsible for maintaining the three aircraft in the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM). These were a Piper Aztec P2-SRP, a Cessna 206 P2-FIB, and a Cessna 185 P2-SDF. He also cared for the West Irian Cessna 185 PK-SDB.

Hans was born in Switzerland and had worked in Australia with TAA for eight years as an aircraft engineer, servicing aircraft as large as Boeing 727s. We were very fortunate to have such a dedicated and highly qualified technician to service our aircraft.

Hans held a Private Pilot's Licence and flew the Cessna 206 and Piper Aztec in a relief capacity, but his primary task was to care for the aircraft in the PNGUM. He was based at Goroka, in the Eastern Highlands of PNG. Maintenance work in the Solomon Islands and in the Australian States was done by local aircraft engineers.

### Division Chief Pilot Visits Papua New Guinea—1975

The throttle was fully open, but the aircraft kept descending. The pilot worked hard on the emergency hand-pump. "I can't get the wheels pumped down," he thought. He looked at the left engine where the propeller remained motionless. The critical engine, which normally drove the Mission's Aztec hydraulic gear, was completely dead.<sup>8</sup> The aircraft was getting

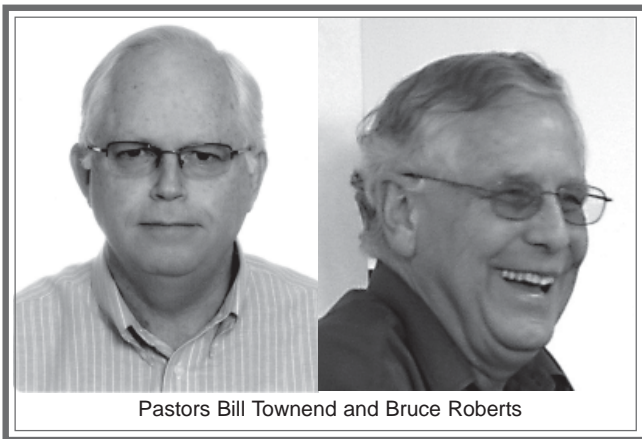


The *Malcolm Abbott* donated by the 'Quiet Hour'. From L to R: Robert Aveling, John Lee, Ormond Speck, Wayne Fowler, John Sherriff, Len Barnard, Colin Winch



The *J.L. Tucker* an Aztec, also donated by the 'Quiet Hour'





Pastors Bill Townend and Bruce Roberts

dangerously low, and the pilot, who was by now beginning to sweat, turned the plane in an attempt to land on the old American bomber strip, known as Nadzab.<sup>9</sup> “Wes, this thing won’t keep flying,” he said with concern. As the honorary Chief Pilot for the Australasian Division, Wes Guy was visiting Papua New Guinea checking and training all the PNGUM pilots. He had just come through the Solomon Islands, where he had done similar work with our two Solomon pilots, Pastor Colin Winch and Ray Smith. Now, with one engine out, and the wheels and flaps not down, a PNGUM pilot was in an emergency situation deliberately initiated by Wes.

On this visit, all six of the PNGUM pilots had come to Lae for a week of lectures, training and checking. Wes flew with most of the pilots in the single-engine C185<sup>10</sup> aircraft to assess their performance in the air (carrying out interesting things like stalls and even a spin when someone became a little too enthusiastic!) as well as circuit work. He gave two pilots, Bill Townend and Bruce Roberts, their Aztec endorsement. These two together with Ray Newman received advanced instruction in instrument approaches and departures, (DME homing and ADF work)<sup>11</sup> in preparation for a Department of Civil Aviation test for over water flights to Manus Island. All of the twin-engine pilots gained plenty of asymmetric checking as well.<sup>11</sup> One night our pilots took over the Lae Control Tower and facilities to practise night flying in the twin-engine Aztec and single-engine Cessna. Taking off into the pitch-blackness over the sea, in rain, made this a very challenging and interesting exercise.

Sandra, wife of Pastor Bruce Roberts, recalled the occasion and commented: “Wes Guy, who checks all our church pilots in Australia, does this work on a purely voluntary basis. A one time jet fighter commander from the Korean War, he is normally executive manager with an aviation firm in Victoria. He used up his holiday time on this trip to assist our church maintain high standards among its pilots. Fortunately, too, he was able to bring his wife along. Many were the happy experiences shared with Pearl in Lae while the pilots were preparing to fly, flying or talking about flying! — sitting out by the Lae airstrip at night watching the planes take off circle and land, until the rain came; shopping; working out the intricacies of the washing machine; enduring power and water failures (Lae was on power rationing at the time); sharing tea of bread and avocado (a pear-shaped tropical fruit) by candlelight (for obvious reasons), and marvelling at



Sandra Roberts

the blessings of God. How we wished all the wives could share the fellowship! The boost to morale that Wes’s visit gave—the raising of standards and the extra knowledge gained from the ground lectures, was all thoroughly worthwhile.

What happened to the pilot in the beginning of this story? He had thought his right hand engine throttle was fully opened, but it was the dead left-hand engine’s throttle that he had been looking at. It had been pushed to its normal, full-open position to get it out of the way. Wes pointed out his mistake, and he opened the throttle of the good engine. He learned a couple of good lessons, executed a smooth landing and gained his Aztec endorsement! Checking and training helps to establish a healthy prognosis for pilots, and it is good to know our church is not forgetting this important work of keeping up standards.”

### Those Magnificent Men

Here is another extract from the Australasian Record dated 9/6/75, and also written by Sandra. It has been condensed for the sake of space.

“Things aren’t what they used to be! This is especially true of our aviation program in PNG. Remember about eleven years ago when Pastor Barnard flew our first aircraft to Papua New Guinea? Today, although you might find it hard to believe, we have three aircraft and six pilots (one of them is our engineer, Hans Aebeli). These magnificent men in their flying machines brave the elements, mountains, and dubious airfields to spread the gospel in faraway places. Here they are:

#### John Bryant

He was a full-time pilot based in Lae who had trained as a nurse at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. Since flying for the church, John says, “Certainly, the Lord has an interest in our mission programme. It is a privilege to know that He is right beside us as we fly. His leading has been demonstrated so many times in the past.”

#### Ray Newman

He had the important position of Senior Pilot in Papua New Guinea. He held a Commercial Licence, had done instrument training and was endorsed by the Department of Civil Aviation as a Check and Training pilot for our organization. Ray flew regularly with our pilots to check their standards, and make sure no pilot flew into unfamiliar airstrips and areas. He was located as chief pastor in the Wabag Valley, where, interestingly enough, he lived as a child when his parents were missionaries. Because he was able to fly, he also cared for church interests in other areas hundreds of miles away, accessible only by plane. Ray once had an engine failure just out of Rabaul and said “I think the greatest evidence I have had of God’s providence and care was when the C206 engine failed on take-off at Rabaul... The engine began delivering full power again when we were only a few feet from the water, and we landed safely.”

#### Elwyn Raethel

Stationed at Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands District, Elwyn has given twenty two years service in PNG, but only took up flying late in his mission service.

To emphasize the true value of the aeroplane in our work here in PNG he said: “After serving fourteen years in both district work and administration in this land, I was convinced that our mission program could be greatly boosted by the use of our own aircraft. Recently I was thrilled to be able to fly into Efogi, Kokoda and Tetebedi. In 1960 I was district director for this area, and at that time it took three weeks hard

walking to visit our people in the district. Only those members who were physically strong and really energetic could hike over the famed Kokoda Trail to attend our annual meetings

“Since then five airstrips have been built entirely by hand labour and we were able to convene four separate district meetings each year, and almost all our members could attend, resulting in a much stronger work. This year I flew delegates and supplies in for the meetings and attended two of them. As I talked with men who had carried my cargo over those forbidding mountains in years past, we rejoiced in the progress the aviation program has brought to the area.”

**Bruce Roberts.**

As a pastor-pilot Bruce worked from Laiagam where our first mission aeroplane, VH-SDA was based for many years. He was convinced that “From where I am there is no other way for a pastor to visit his flock and his faithful local missionaries. I flew tremendous distances over otherwise impassable country, and often think how that, without a pastor-pilot, many more budgets would be needed to place overseas missionaries in remote areas one man can reach quite easily by air. The plane has proved a great blessing to our people; the remotest are no longer remote; regular visitation, regular camp meetings, a strong church and many baptisms are the result.”

**Bill Townend**

Bill came to PNG as a district-director-pilot. Previously he was Youth leader in Warburton, Victoria. It was quite a contrast to leave a busy outer urban parish for the loneliness and isolation of Menyamyama in the famous Kukukuku country. He reckons one of the greatest blessings of the aviation program is the time saved in district work. Often he had walked for two days to visit a place that could be reached in eight minutes by air. Flying allows more time to spend with people which strengthens and stabilizes them. For Bill “Flying in Papua New Guinea can at times be enjoyable, but at other times when mountains are close and clouds are low and it is difficult to find a way, it is amazing how often the Lord opens a path through the most difficult situation.”

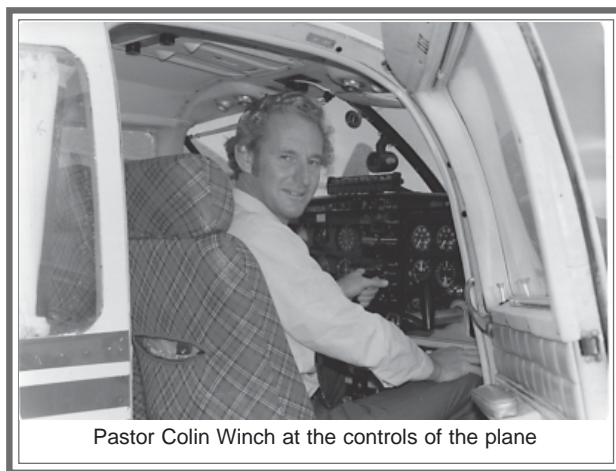
**Avondale Flying School**

In late 1976 Frame and Butler asked me to come to Wahroonga again to discuss another project they had in mind, this time to form a flying school at Avondale. At this particular time I was having severe medical problems and thought I might lose my flying licence. When I mentioned this to Lance he asked me if there was someone I could recommend for the task. Only one person had the required qualifications, and that was Colin Winch who was based at Honiara in the Solomon Islands. Lance told me that that was no problem, and Col was recalled in January 1977. I was asked to train Col to renew his Instructor Rating and to refresh his Instrument



Pastor Robert Frame

Rating. Since I had my own Charter and Flying Training School at Essendon Airport Col came down to Victoria, completed his courses and went to Avondale where he established the Flying Training School. In the meantime I had many medical tests which showed damage to the inner ear, which I sustained during an aircraft accident during my Air Force career.



Pastor Colin Winch at the controls of the plane

Fortunately I did not lose my licence. The recall of Col from Honiara was an answer to prayer. God certainly does hear and answer prayer. (Isaiah 65:24)

Once Bill Townend was returning in his plane from Port Moresby to Lae. The normal route was via Kokoda Gap in the Owen Stanley Ranges. A very important part of a pilot's training is to make sure all is clear of cloud before entering any gap in the mountains so he can see where he is going. In this particular instance Bill took all appropriate precautions before entering the Kokoda Gap. But suddenly, as is usual in Papua New Guinea, cloud descended and Bill was caught in the middle of the Gap. He could not see where he was going or where he had come from. He told me that he remembered some of my own experiences so he decided to let the Lord lead him. He let go of the controls and called out, “Lord help me.” It was as if angels guided the aircraft for in the next minute he was out in the clear blue sky. Bill too knows there is a prayer-answering God!

On another occasion Bill was visiting an isolated village near Marawaka. He had landed on this very small strip several times before without any difficulty, but this time something unexpected happened. The airstrip, as is common in PNG, was short, but it had a very steep slope for take-off. All our pastor-pilots had to be checked in and out of each and every strip, and they had to satisfy the pilot doing the check that it was safe for them to land and take-off by themselves.

During Bill's initial take-off all went well. But as soon as the aircraft was airborne a pin fell out of the control cable where it attaches to the elevator, making for an extremely dangerous situation anywhere, but particularly so in these wild mountain valleys. There was no hope of landing straight ahead, but slightly to his left Bill saw the commercial airstrip of Marawaka. He immediately used the trim control to right the pitching plane, called on God for help in time of trouble and turned toward this strip. Amazingly, Bill managed to glide to the airstrip and he landed safely with no injury to pilot or passenger.

**Personal Experience**

One Sunday I flew the twin-engine turbo-prop aircraft, Nomad, on a vegetable-passenger run through about five airstrips at the foot of the Owen Stanley Range about 50 kilometres north of Port Moresby. I had completed all the flights and had just landed at Naoro, ready to return to Port Moresby. A couple of passengers alighted and I was ready to take-off when five young Papuans came up to me and said: “Taubada (master), we are late for a football match at Manari. It will take us all day to walk there and we know that it will take only

a few minutes by plane. Please, Taubada, take us to Manari.” Incidentally, these young fellows knew I was a Seventh-day Adventist. Even though I was very tired I decided to take them. I told them to sit up the front of the aircraft and put on their belts. (The reason for the passengers to sit up front was because of the balance of the centre of gravity. The Nomad aircraft was very sensitive in its fore and aft areas, and loading had to be made up front first. If the load was aft of the centre of gravity the aircraft would be out of balance and would not fly properly. In fact, two weeks after this episode the Chief Pilot of Douglas Airways, Brian O’Sullivan, coming in to land at Manari, missed his approach and tried to go round again. Unfortunately, his load shifted towards the rear of the aircraft and he crashed, killing all on board, including himself.)

As I took off from Naoro I felt the aircraft was not fully balanced but I corrected the situation and flew on. We circled Manari to ensure all was clear for the landing. Then as I lowered the undercarriage I had to trim forward because the nose tended to come up. On base leg I put down a quarter flap. I had to trim nose down quite a lot. Then on final approach I put down full flap. Suddenly the nose of the aircraft came up and it took both hands on the controls to try to steady it. My main concern was to keep the airspeed at a certain point otherwise below that speed all control would be lost and the aircraft would crash. All I could think of then was to cry out, “Lord help me!” Within moments the aircraft’s nose lowered and I was able to take one hand off the control column, raise the flaps and undercarriage, and then return to Port Moresby where we landed safely. “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.” (Isaiah 65:24). How precious are the promises of God when we are in distress.

### General

When Colin Winch was asked to give his wife’s reaction to his being a pastor-pilot in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea he replied, “Melva was a wonderful support to me in my flying career and never complained that it took me away from home so often and for long periods of time, leaving her on a lonely mission station. She home-schooled the children, and at the same time listened to a transistor radio so she could hear me give my position and pass on landing reports to the Flight Control.”

Sandra Roberts, wife of Bruce Roberts, said, “Our husband’s work impinged on our lives all the time. We were constantly required to meet the plane, carry people and cargo to and from it, calculate weights, meet our husbands, see them off again and so on. Then we would be wondering where they were and how they were coping with flying in hazardous



Melva Winch homeschooling the children (Chris, Nerolie, Carol & Kerry) and attending to the transistor radio

weather conditions. Pilot’s children were virtually fatherless as their dads were away so much. (Bruce’s log-book shows he was away over 6 months of the year!) Other wives seemed to take it all in their stride and be quite calm and in control. I remember one wife was continually stressed and actually had a breakdown from the strain of the flying program on her life. It was demanding and it was dangerous work. It was probably harder for those wives left in remote situations as they had little else to think of but their loved one and would spend the day listening in to the aircraft frequencies on the radio, driving themselves silly if their husbands were euphemistically reporting to Flight Service that they were ‘circling’ or ‘doing a survey.’ For me it was a very tense time of life and I don’t think anyone who wasn’t a pilot’s wife ever really understood how difficult it could be.”

Colin summed up the contribution of the aircraft ministry in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands:

“The advent of the mission aviation program revolutionised the spreading of the gospel throughout PNG. It allowed us to place workers cheaply and quickly in distant outposts and then support them with frequent visitation and supplies. A day’s walk over formidable mountains would take only 5 minutes by air. Before we had planes we would see missionaries of other churches fly over our heads to be at their destination in no time while we footslogged for days to get to the same place. In the Solomon Islands the Aztec allowed our personnel to reach islands across the sea faster than commercial flights because we could fly direct, cheaper and hence more frequently. We flew students from the Solomon Islands to Sonoma and Fulton educational institutions far cheaper than commercial airlines could do. The presence of the Aztec encouraged villages and stations to build airstrips which we serviced, thus blessing the villagers as well as developing the work of the Church.”

### Public Relations

On this matter Sandra Roberts says, “Ministers used their skills flying the aeroplanes for administrators, presidents, district directors and the like who couldn’t fly themselves. This meant that whenever the plane landed at the hundreds of remote airstrips, people at those airstrips knew they could avail themselves of ministerial compassion and service. Usually the plane would stay for some time, even days, enabling the pilot, who was primarily a pastor, to carry out his ministerial duties and show the people they were personally valued and loved by their church. This gave the program high public relations value because non Adventists as well as church members benefited from such visits.”

Our aircraft were frequently called for medical emergencies which meant landing in places where Adventist planes would not normally land. Obviously goodwill was created when someone’s life was saved. There were also non-official rescues of sick and dying people, and sometimes people were evacuated, in fear of their lives from tribal conflicts. Doctors and nurses were flown to remote locations also. Such activities did indeed promote good public relations.

Bruce Roberts sums up saying, “Adventist pilots often helped carry people who wanted to go from one part of the country to another. I flew cargo for the government when they needed help to get urgent items to their colleagues in some remote patrol station. Sometimes this involved airdrops which we gladly made. I can recall picking up urgent medical supplies for government hospitals. We took police to trouble spots when there was no other way to get them there. I

carried Christmas presents to remote field anthropologists. We would airdrop mail when asked to do so by different organizations from our own.

Prejudice was broken down when our pastor-pilots flew non-Adventist village chiefs over their areas. Sometimes we would drop Dorcas bags and food gifts to break down their heathen suspicions. The goodwill built up from these actions often led to us being invited to come and share our message with them. For instance we took the chief from Paiala over to his villages in the lower highlands. Our generosity contributed to the strong work we now have throughout the Upper Sepik district.

Church members felt good about the fact that we were operating an Aviation Program doing all these things in PNG. This gave a great boost to their morale and I would suggest that it was an important part of internal public relations.

### Conclusions

The Aviation Program in the early 1970s not only provided pastor-pilots who used their aeroplanes as tools to do pastoral work, (eg. one pilot cared for six districts very efficiently because he had a plane while those without could only care for one), but at year-ends those pilots flew mission workers to their furlough breaks or their new assignments. The amount of money saved by flying our people in our own aircraft compared to the cost of commercial airfares, funded the overall operation of the program.

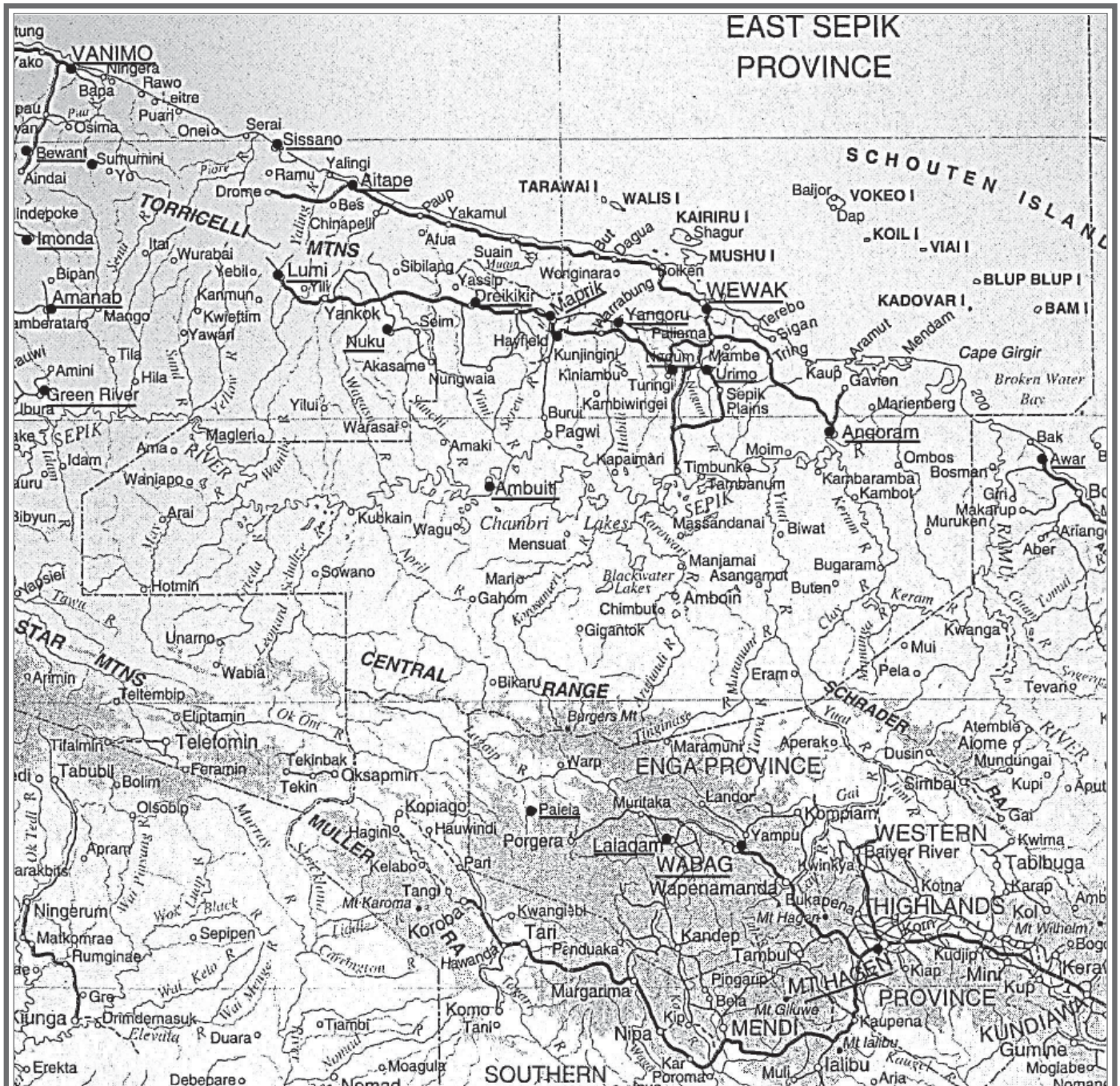
Finally, in 1980 I was contracted to the Papua New Guinea Department of Civil Aviation (based in Port Moresby) for three years to be Superintendent of Flying Operations, responsible for all flying operations of airlines and light aircraft including helicopters throughout the country. In this position I could not continue as Chief Pilot of the Church Program as it would entail a 'conflict of interest'. Reluctantly I advised Lance Butler of the situation. He asked me who I would recommend to replace me. Unhesitatingly again I replied that the only pilot capable and fully qualified was Pastor Colin Winch. So Colin was appointed Chief Pilot of the Division on 30 October 1980 and under his capable leadership the Aviation Program attained new heights of achievement.

### End Notes

1. Essendon Airport is located approximately 10 km South-East of Tullamarine, Melbourne's major airport.
2. The Air Ambulance, based at Essendon Airport, operated throughout the state of Victoria.
3. The Australasian Division of the church changed its name to South Pacific Division in 1985.
4. Executive Air Services and its ancillary, Executive Airlines, operated a Charter and Flying Training School, including the Air Ambulance. Its main operations as a charter company were:
  - a. the leasing of an aircraft to mining companies throughout all states of Australia.
  - b. making an aircraft available for the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, to fly him from Melbourne to the prime minister's homestead in Western Victoria, whenever it was required.
  - c. providing available aircraft to private and company personnel for charter flights throughout Australia.
  - d. the operation of the Air Ambulance.
5. Names of pastor-pilots were: Colin Winch, Len Barnard, Bruce Roberts, Ray Newman, John Kosmeier, Louis Parker, Russ Gibbs, Laurie Shields (later killed in an aircraft accident), Graham Bamett, Warren Price, Geoff Helsby, and Max Smith.
6. Initially no names were given to aircraft and they were located as follows: C 182—Lightning Ridge, C 182—Port Headland, C 182—North Queensland, C206—South Queensland named the 'Len Barnard.'
7. Brian Walker, famous ex-RAAF identity, better known as 'Black-Jack' Walker, had a long association with de Havilland Aircraft Co. He was seconded to the company from the Air Force in July 1944, to assist in overcoming problems that had developed with the Mosquito aircraft, and after he was demobilised he joined de Havilland as their test pilot. In a flying career that spanned 48 years, Brian Walker flew some 130 different types of aircraft.
8. The Piper Aztec was a twin-engined aircraft with 6 seats and a cruising speed of 150-160 knots. The two engines gave greater safety and enabled the aircraft to travel over the sea.
9. Nadzab airstrip, built during World War II, is located in the Markham Valley about 50 kilometres west of Lae.
10. The Cessna 185 had the same airframe as the Cessna 180 but it had the larger 300hp, fuel injected Continental motor as compared with the C 180 which had a 230hp normally aspirated motor. The C 185 could lift a larger payload.
11. DME—distance measuring equipment—a navigation aid measuring the distance to/from a particular ground station. ADF—automatic direction finder—a navigation aid indicating the direction to/from a ground station. Asymmetric checking —failing one engine on a twin-engine aircraft. The pilot under test is to identify the failed engine and take appropriate corrective action.



Some of the pilots who worked in PNG in times past at the dedication of the new plane. They are L to R front: Ken Weslake, Flying School student, Reg Litster, Flying School staff, Roger Millist, Linden Millist, Chris Cavella. L to R back: Colin Dunn, Glynn Lock, Colin Winch, Len Barnard, Elwyn Raethel, Aaron Jeffries, John Kosmeier, Russell Gibbs, Doug Robertson, Max Mulligan.



Many of the places in the north of PNG that were made accessible because of the Aviation ministry are underlined.  
 Excerpt from *Papua New Guinea* (c) South Pacific Maps Pty Ltd, distributed by Hema Maps Pty Ltd. Used by permission



The new plane. Mainly because of the vision of Pastor Roger Millist and his son Linden, the Aviation ministry has been restored. For 2 years the church was without a plane in PNG and the work languished. One plane has been rebuilt. This plane was bought with a world 13th Sabbath offering and donations. The aviation ministry in PNG has gone full circle, from Pastors Len Barnard and Col Winch and all those in between, to the Millists. We wish them God's blessing as they continue to work in the difficult terrain of PNG.

# A New Creation?

—the challenge of the resurgence of ancient rites

**BARRY OLIVER**



**SEE C V IN VOL 5 #1**

THE ADDITION OF A 28<sup>TH</sup> FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists is particularly pertinent for the South Pacific Division (SPD) given that the majority of people who now comprise the membership of the Church in the SPD have come from an animistic background. The new statement reads as follows:

By His cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit sanctifies every moment and every task.<sup>1</sup>

This brief survey will describe some examples of beliefs and practices held prior to acceptance of Christianity and Adventism in particular, which are outside the theological and practical framework of Seventh-day Adventism, but which continue to be held to a greater or lesser extent after alignment with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The discussion will confine itself to examples in the SPD; specifically to those areas in which animism was the primary belief structure before comparatively recent contact with Christianity. The areas from which examples can be drawn include Melanesia (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji) Micronesia (Kiribati and Tuvalu), Polynesia (Tonga, Samoa, French Polynesia, Cook Islands, and Maori New Zealand), and Aboriginal Australia.

Eighty-five percent of the church membership in the SPD is to be found in these areas.

## Spiritual Strength

Typically those who have become Seventh-day Adventists from an animistic background have a very highly developed spiritual consciousness and awareness of the supernatural. The sense of the presence of God is infused into all aspects of life and there is little evidence of the dichotomy between the secular and the sacred. This sense of the supernatural is not derived from rational argumentation. It is accepted a-priori as a given.

In such a context, sacred space, sacred place and ritual are very important within the spiritual psyche of the people. Traditionally the supernatural was encountered in a particular space or place. It was associated with complex rituals which were developed and passed down through the 'medicine man' and the story tellers. Each clan or tribe developed its own distinctive cultural norms and forms which identified and gave structure to spiritual expression.

When people from this background become Seventh-day Adventists they carry with them this a-priori spiritual world view of their traditional cultures. The reality and presence of the supernatural is accepted without question. The power of prayer, the reality of signs and wonders including dreams are such that their presence often renders people who hold other presuppositional world-view incredulous. To the onlooker, it appears that faith and belief are usually experienced in a simple but powerful way, without question or doubt.

## Residual Inherent Issues

However, the situation is not necessarily as it first seems to the casual observer. While there is indeed a strong



A sacred grove on the island of Malekula in Vanuatu



The cave of skulls—dead ancestors live on through the spirit world



The bones left after a cannibalistic feast

consciousness of the supernatural in the everyday lives of those who have accepted Christian faith, that consciousness is not necessarily grounded in a strong intellectual assent to a body of doctrine. Often in this context the cognitive foundations of the faith are not perceived to be the priority.

In addition the priority given to sacred space—sacred place—ritual can mean that it is often perceived adequate to be in or near the sacred space/place on Sabbath morning, close to where the ‘rituals’ are taking place. Participation and intellectual engagement are not at all perceived as the priority. Presence is the priority.

This lack of engagement, participation and intellectual foundation for faith together with the strong consciousness of the supernatural leaves the individual or the family/clan vulnerable to vestiges of animistic spiritism. In the rural areas of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, for example, fear of the *masalai*—the spirits of the big bush—and stories of the *tumbuna*—the gods of rock and wood—continue to strike fear into the hearts of far too many of our people long after they have become Seventh-day Adventists. People will habitually not walk on certain paths at certain times, nor visit specific areas, nor wash in specific rivers and streams because of the residual belief that those areas are the domain of the *masalai*. Too many people habitually resort to the ‘traditional’ practices of the local medicine man rather than utilise the services of conventional medical practitioners. While some of the traditional medicines may appear to be akin to natural therapies, in every case they also involve appeal to animistic/spiritistic powers which cannot be condoned by orthodox Christian faith. In far too many instances, church members who fall ill blame a witch doctor or ‘poison man’ for their malady (this person may

even be an Adventist) rather than realise that the cause may be malaria, tuberculosis or unhealthy lifestyle practices.

Tragically, in some areas which have long been almost exclusively Seventh-day Adventist, younger generations who in typical uninformed youthful exuberance have wanted to rebel, have reverted to covert animistic practices while appearing to maintain a veneer of Seventh-day Adventism. On the island of Mussau, Papua New Guinea, for example, there are reports of youth exhuming bodies in order to carry out traditional rituals. In the Solomon Islands, some are reinvigorating the ‘*pela*’ which is the ability to change oneself into a bird or a snake. In Vanuatu, some Seventh-day Adventists are getting involved in a practice where people ‘fly’ or ‘travel’ in the ‘spirit’ from one place to another.

The alarming feature of such examples is that in no case do the participants renounce their Seventh-day Adventist faith. Rather they hold to such syncretistic practices in the mistaken belief that they can be reconciled with their Seventh-day Adventist identity. Not all attend church, but they continue to regard themselves as Seventh-day Adventists.

Specific examples of what has been stated could be multiplied. It is sufficient to affirm that the Church does have work to do in affirming the power of God over the forces of darkness and emphasising a strong discipleship program which facilitates systematic teaching and study.

#### Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Biblical references: Ps 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Col 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil 3:7-14; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Matt 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal 5:22-25; Rom 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb 10:25

### ● The Editor is Listening ●

Master Ji—an Indian teacher’s service in Fiji (Vol 5 No 1, p29)

While Brian Townend’s correction of 2 dates on page 29 (Vol 6 No 1 2006 p 71) is accurate, the errors were not made by Kenneth Singh, the author of the article. *His dates were the same as Townend’s. The editor takes full responsibility for the errors and apologises to Kenneth for any inconvenience caused.*

Compassion and Treatment : Togoba Hansenide Colony (Vol 6 No 1 p 18)

Author June Macaulay is correct in stating it was ‘midday’ and not ‘midnight’ when the DC3 plane landed at Mt Hagen in PNG. *The error is regretted.*

A Missionary Nurse in PNG (Vol 6 No 1 p 32)

It was Bert and Edna Grosser, not the Pascoes, who lived in the two houses pictured at the bottom of the page. The location was Seure on the Rai Coast, PNG. We have reprinted pictures of both these houses in Edna Grosser’s story in this issue. They do show the conditions many of the early missionaries endured. *Our apologies to Edna and Bert.*

# This Noble Lady —Ellen Meyers in Fiji

**KENNETH SINGH**

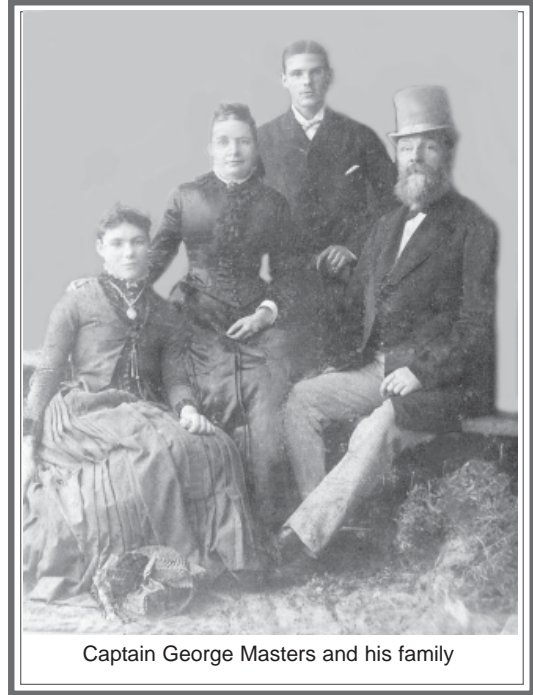


SEE CV IN VOL 5 # 1

ON A WARM TROPICAL EVENING in January 1928, the Suva Town Hall was crowded with well-wishers. They had come to farewell a much-loved woman missionary known to them familiarly as 'Mother Meyers'. On the decorated stage, religious leaders, government dignitaries and representatives of local organisations paid tribute to her pioneering work that began in 1912 and was now about to end.

The quietly spoken woman who rose to acknowledge the tributes was Mrs Ellen Meyers. Though her home was in Australia, she was born in 1865 at Barrackpore, near Calcutta, then the capital of British Imperial India. She was christened Mary Ann Ellen Hunt and finished her education at a private school in the hill station of Darjeeling. In 1881, she married Herbert Meyers in St Pauls Cathedral, a church that survives as one of Calcutta's Victorian landmarks. The bride and her optometrist husband were both Anglicans with family connections reaching back to the early days of the British Raj. Though they remained Anglicans for some years, Ellen and Herbert Meyers were destined to number among the earliest Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) converts in India. They were drawn to their new faith in the late 1890s through the influence of a Canadian missionary, Elder D A Robinson and Captain George Masters, an Adventist colporteur who gave them Bible studies.<sup>1</sup>

Herbert Meyers was eager to spread the Adventist

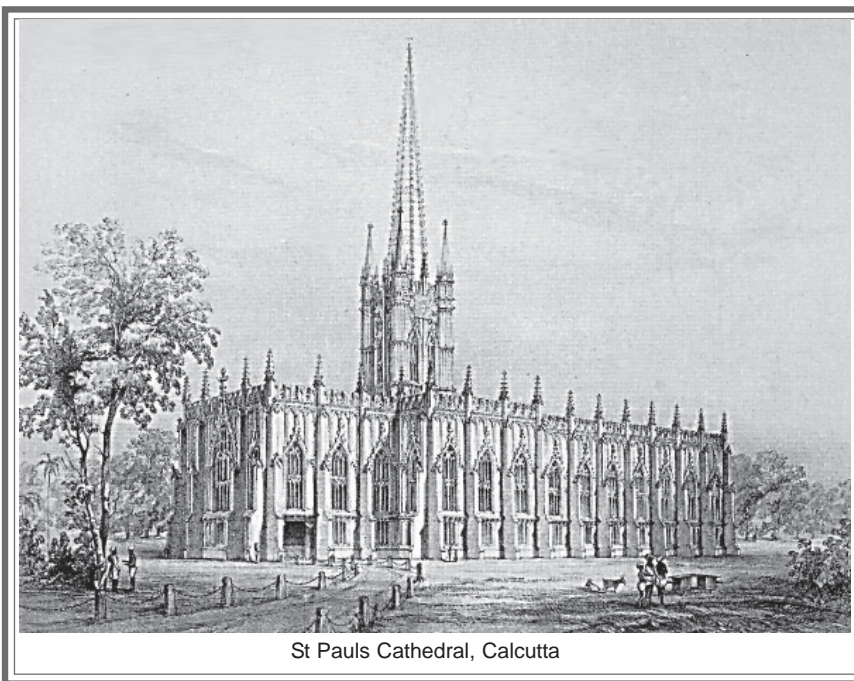


Captain George Masters and his family

message and before long had spent six months as a colporteur in Singapore. Such was his enthusiasm for the work that in 1901 he became a self-supporting missionary, taking his wife and family with him to Burma. While Herbert and his assistant canvassed and preached to the Buddhists of Rangoon, Ellen did not remain idle. She set up a day school in her home, teaching elementary subjects and Bible stories to local children. After two pioneering years in Burma, the Meyers family returned to continue their work in the towns and provinces of India.

Meanwhile, their eldest son William had successfully completed a ministerial course at the Avondale School for Christian Workers in Cooranbong (NSW). Ellen had evidently determined to have all her sons trained as Adventist missionaries and in 1906 she arrived at Cooranbong with her three younger sons Cecil, Dudley and Harold. Four years later, with the two eldest boys already engaged in missionary work, she returned to India to rejoin her husband. Sadly, the couple did not re-unite and no doubt their separation was made more difficult for Ellen when Herbert severed all connection with the SDA Church and the faith he had once so zealously promoted.<sup>2</sup>

On her return to Australia, she was approached by the Australasian Union



St Pauls Cathedral, Calcutta

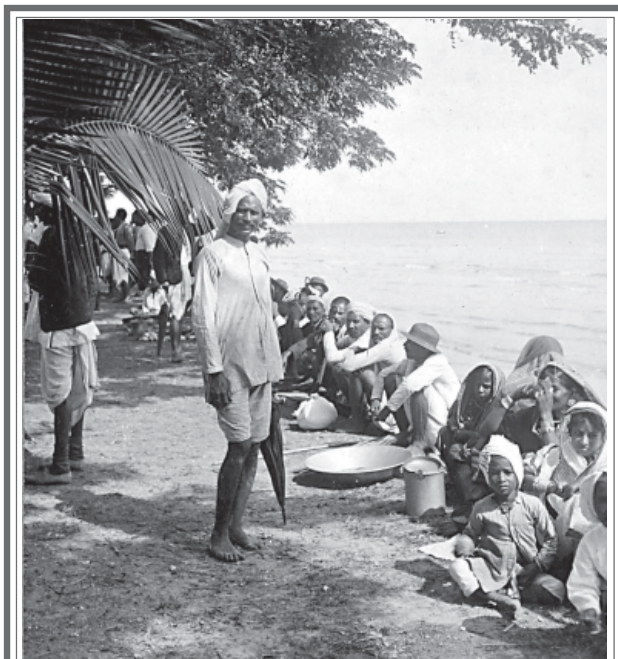


Conference to serve as a mission worker to the Indians in Fiji, a task for which she was well prepared. Born and raised in India, she spoke fluent Hindi and Urdu and was familiar with the ways of Indian people. Besides, she had already demonstrated her independence and capacity for mission work in India and Burma. Ellen accepted the call and without delay left Sydney with 16-year-old Harold, her youngest son who was to remain in Fiji for a year.

Arriving in Suva aboard the SS *Atua* on 18 October 1912, she was met by Pastor Andrew G Stewart, Superintendent of the Fiji Mission. After initial hospitality from the Stewarts in Suvavou, she moved into lodgings of her own—a rented flat in the predominantly Indian precinct of Toorak. It was actually a large house divided into sections; other tenants included three ladies working for the Pentecostal Mission and ‘an educated Indian’ who helped her to translate a sign announcing the first Seventh-day Adventist Mission to Indians in Fiji.<sup>3</sup>

Ellen’s educated Indian neighbour was an interpreter in colonial government service. Unlike him, most Indians came to Fiji under a scheme of contract labour that has come to be known as the indenture system. When the islands were ceded to Britain in 1874, Fiji’s first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, decided that the indigenous Fijians should be left to maintain their own way of life. However, he urgently needed to develop the country’s economy and Indian labour seemed to provide the answer—it had already been tried in other British outposts like Trinidad and Mauritius.

As a result, some 60,000 Indians were recruited over a 40-year period to work in Fiji for a shilling a day (ninepence for women). The agreement they signed (known in Hindi as *girmil*) was for five years and after five more years as residents, they could claim a free passage back to India. From 1879 to 1916, recruited workers were assembled in Calcutta and Madras where they boarded sailing ships and steamers bound for the South Pacific. After lengthy ocean voyages, they disembarked at the quarantine station on Nukulau Island near Suva. Most were then engaged for service in sugar mills and plantations where the work was exhausting and the rules pitilessly enforced. Indentured Indians (*girmityas*) commonly felt that they had been duped by the system but most of them survived the harsh living conditions to fulfil their agreements.



Indians of the day—"Hindoos on Parade"  
Mitchell Library, Sydney. Used by Permission

By the time Ellen Meyers arrived in 1912, the little colony of Fiji was in transition. In addition to Fijians, Europeans and Pacific Islanders, the population now included about 45,000 immigrant Indians who had elected to remain there instead of returning to India. These ‘free’ Indians were now finding for themselves in a



A girmity woman. Fiji Museum

range of occupations such as small farmers, shop-keepers, clerks and municipal workers. But what was to be their status as citizens?

Anthropologist John Kelly<sup>4</sup> observes that at this time, the European settlers felt that they had already created Fiji’s civil society and feared that it might be ruined by the intrusion of growing numbers of Indians. By 1912, the ‘Indian Problem’ or ‘Indian Menace’ was a subject of great public debate. Ken Gillion, a leading historian of the period, explains: ‘the European stereotype of the Indian was highly unfavourable, and most made few distinctions—to them all were ‘coolies’. It was taken for granted that the Indian had a lower standard of life and place in the social order.’<sup>5</sup> It seems that as an unskilled labour force, the Indians were recognised as an economic necessity but their aspirations for self-respect and social progress were dismissed.

Hostile attitudes were not the only difficulty facing the *girmityas*. There had also been no initiative from the government or from private employers to provide schools for their children. Rev Charles Freer Andrews, an associate of Mahatma Gandhi and an outspoken campaigner against the indenture system, had enquired into the conditions of Fiji’s Indians and reported:

It would hardly be an exaggeration to state that the policy of the Government of Fiji with regard to Indian Education has been, up till quite recently, one of almost complete neglect...With regard to Indian children, in spite of strong warnings from the Indian Government and the Home authorities, the expenditure has hitherto been nil. We have been told further, on reliable authority that for many years there was the strongest opposition on the part of the Sugar Companies to any education being given to Indians at all. It was said that such education would tend to take the Indian coolie away from the soil, and then make him ‘spoil’ for labour purposes.<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately, religious denominations stepped in to assume the burden of educating Fiji’s Indian children in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gillion reported that the Marist Brothers were the first Christian body in the field with a multi-racial school at Toorak in 1898. The Methodists began in the same year after the arrival of Miss Dudley who started a school in Suva

for day pupils, and later a night school for men.<sup>7</sup> Hindu (Arya Samaj) and Muslim schools soon followed but it was not until the passing of the Education Ordinance of 1916 that the government began to offer financial assistance to religious bodies for their educational work.

It was into this context of official neglect, anti-Indian feeling and urgent educational need that Ellen Meyers arrived to undertake her mission. Her first despatch to the *Australasian Record* acknowledged that she faced 'uphill work' but after a few frustrating months, she found the 'entering wedge': it was to open a night school.<sup>8</sup> Ellen admits that although the need for a school was obvious, she had shied away from the idea because 'the danger presented itself of placing the secular before the all-important, namely the teaching of God's Word'.<sup>9</sup>

The 'education or evangelism' dilemma that troubled Ellen was one that had already confronted other Christian missionaries. Referring to the early years of the Methodist Indian Mission in Fiji, Arthur Wood writes:

No issue was more keenly debated... Most felt that both objectives were needed... Thus the missionaries generally believed in education as a form of evangelism and did not set the two in opposition... With the failure of the Government for many years to provide any facilities for educating Indian children, it was natural that the Missions should supply the deficiency. There was no attempt to disguise a proselytizing motive as well as a desire to overcome illiteracy among the Indian population.<sup>10</sup>

But the question was by no means settled and serious differences on education policy were to emerge again within the Methodist Mission. The same issue was later to confront the SDA Mission in Fiji and a failure to resolve its competing demands led to the closure of a succession of Indian schools.<sup>11</sup> For her part, Ellen realised that by laying aside her initial prejudice against educational work, she had found an opening. It was probably a difficult personal step because she thought of herself primarily as an evangelist for whom 'the greatest and noblest work is soul-saving'. Nevertheless, as time passed, she took a more pragmatic view:

Educating the youth meets the mind of the Indians, and while they strongly object to Christian principles, still they place their children for education under its influences, manifesting the spirit of opposition each time one is converted to the Christian faith; but in spite of such conditions souls have stepped out of heathen darkness.<sup>12</sup>

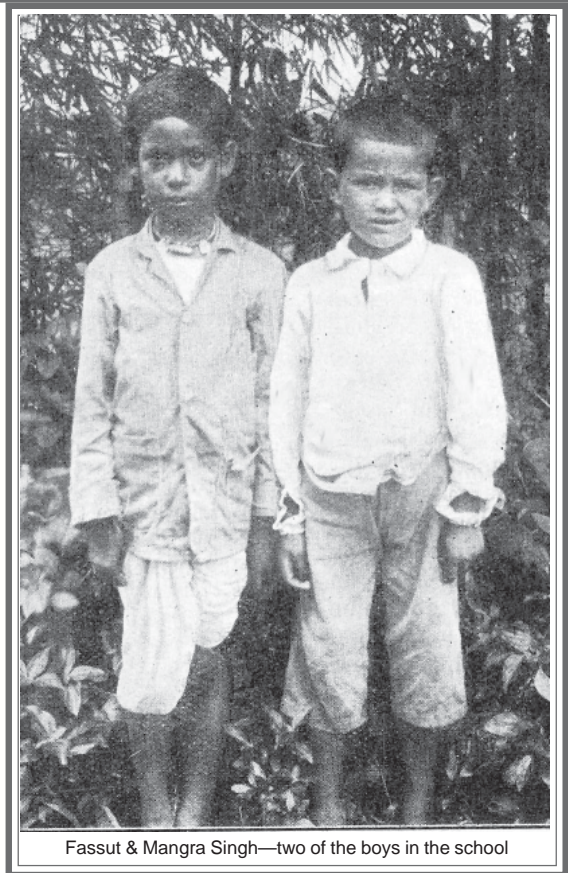
In practical terms, the scope of her early work in Suva may be judged from these lines:

My whole time could be spent in nursing the sick women and children and in doing general work in the home, giving out literature, and following up the work with Bible readings; but a school has to be maintained to bring us in contact with the people.<sup>13</sup>

Above all, Ellen realised the value of personal example in attaining her cherished goal: "Superstition and prejudice hinder the people from having any desire to know the written Word, so the Christ-life is essential".<sup>14</sup> In this she was certainly not



Mrs Meyers school on the verandah



Fassut & Mangra Singh—two of the boys in the school

mistaken and it is her bittersweet legacy that among the Indians of Suva she came to be revered more for her compassionate service than for her evangelism.

Ellen's night school began at Toorak in 1913 with a group of five young men and was soon followed by a day school for children and married girls (mostly under eighteen). As numbers grew, conditions became increasingly cramped on the little wooden veranda where she conducted her classes. Fortunately, land was then acquired about three miles away at Samabula. In 1914 a four-roomed Mission house was built there on a hill site enjoying trade winds and ocean views. Ellen welcomed the change; Samabula offered more teaching space (though still on the veranda), revitalised her health and gave her a sense of security when rumblings of war threatened Suva town. However, she missed the social contact of her old Toorak school where the children came from 'the best homes' and through which she had come in touch with 'the leading

Indians in Suva.<sup>15</sup>

Samabula was then a semi-rural site populated with squatter-type Indian settlements. It presented new problems of distance and isolation, and Ellen's plea for some form of conveyance was duly granted by the union conference in the form of a horse and sulky (two-wheeled carriage). The people there were poor and illiterate but the hunger for education was strong. Despite the disadvantage of not having a Hindi teacher, the new Mission school enrolled sixteen pupils, mostly boys aged 5-16 years. Ellen expressed reservations about the prospect of enrolling female students: 'I fear we will not find it so easy to secure the girls. The Indians are not eager to give them an education, but later the way may be opened to do something for them'.<sup>16</sup>

Early in 1915, Mr and Mrs Alfred Chesson arrived to assist in the work. Lillian Chesson, a nurse, soon began making medical visits, particularly to Indian women for whom there was no female doctor or nurse available at the time. In a despatch to the *Australasian Record*, she commented on the Indian response to contact with Christian missionaries:

Gratitude was seen among them when they received treatment, but their great failing was the scepticism with which they regarded Christianity. 'We had a religion before Christianity was first thought of,' said an educated Indian one day; 'not so with the Fijians, who only a century ago had no real religion, and that is why you get converts among them but not among us.'<sup>17</sup>

The attitude towards missionaries was by now familiar: the Indians were grateful for education and medical treatment but remained sceptical about Christianity. Rev John Burton, a Methodist missionary who spent nine years in Fiji, had noted this stubborn difficulty in his book *The Fiji of Today*.

Thus while the Fijian was predisposed to accept the teaching of the Englishman as that of a man intellectually his superior, *the Indian is predisposed to question everything the white man says*... Few people not in actual contact with the Indian—and only some of those—realise how hard it is to influence the race, especially in the realms of religion and philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

Burton's writings were influential and often found their way into the local and overseas press (including the pages of the *Australasian Record*). His graphic portrayal of horrors in the 'coolie lines' (rows of barrack-like sheds housing Indian workers) helped to influence the Indian government eventually to end the indenture system. At the same time, his impressions of heathen vice and immorality among the *girmityas* contributed to the negative stereotype of Indians widely held by Europeans in Fiji and abroad.

In accounting for the Indian indifference to Christianity, Wood<sup>19</sup> observed that since caste rules had been virtually abandoned in Fiji, there was no incentive for lower castes to reject Hinduism. Besides, family pressure and the threat of social rejection were powerful deterrents—Indians who became Christians were often regarded as traitors who had dishonoured their heritage. Gillion reminds us that personal experience also played a part:

Christianity was the religion of the European who was regarded with suspicion by those who had lived under the indenture system. Although many Indians did listen, ask questions, and debate with the missionaries, they were not prepared to accept a single incarnation as their saviour. A Hindu could agree with a great deal of what

the missionary had to say but remain unconverted, for did not all paths lead to God?<sup>20</sup>

Ellen was well aware of these difficulties—she often alluded to them and to the size of the task before her. Her response was based on the conviction that Indians would be converted only through the benign influence of Christianity in action. As she expressed it: 'In this pioneering work, we must minister to the physical needs of the people in order to gain their confidence. The fallow ground must be broken up, and love and service are the implements we are told to use'.<sup>21</sup> In this connection, she gave a touching tribute to Hannah Dudley, a pioneering Methodist missionary who had worked among Indians in Fiji:

I had the privilege of making Miss Dudley's acquaintance after she had laboured in this field for about fifteen years. Tired and worn-out physically, and heart-sick at seeing so little fruit for her labour, this servant of God retired from the field, taking with her some of her first-fruits— orphan girls whom she had mothered from infancy. I often come in touch with her work, and what she has sown in faith, we may reap when God waters and gives the increase.<sup>22</sup>

Within a year, the Chessons had left for India and Ellen herself was stricken with an attack of neuritis which deprived her of the use of her right arm for a time. In 1918 she began a much needed furlough spent in Wairoonga, New South Wales Australia, with her second son, Pastor Cecil Meyers.

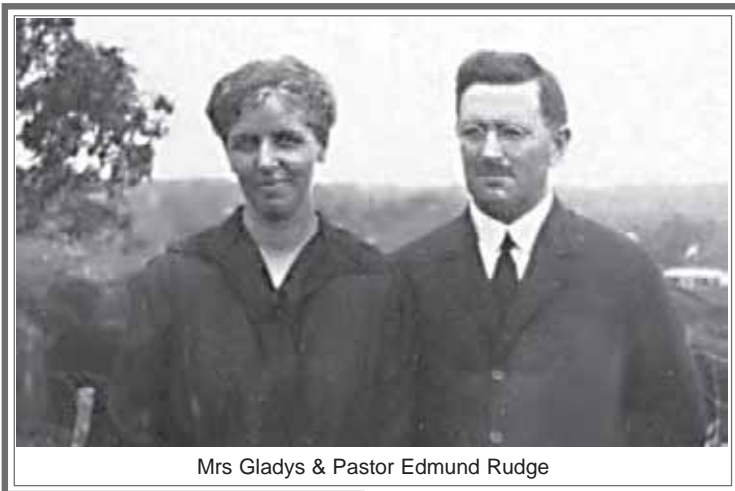
Her place was taken by her third son Dudley, who reported the baptism of the first three Indian SDA converts in June 1918; their names were Suchit, Ram Khelawan and Abdul Rahim. Another young man was baptised in August and he was followed in 1919 by two educated young men holding government positions. Four more baptisms were reported in 1920 leading to the formation of the first Indian SDA church at Toorak with a founding membership of twelve.<sup>23</sup> During the relatively short period that Pastor Dudley Meyers spent in Fiji, his fluency in Hindi and social ease with Indians gave him a degree of acceptance that few other missionaries enjoyed, especially among the younger generation.

Ellen returned from furlough in 1920. With the arrival of her youngest son (now Pastor Harold Meyers) and Pastor Cyril Palmer, there was a surge in educational activity at Toorak. This suburb had once again become the centre of the Mission's operations—the Samabula Mission house that had been Ellen's base for the past six years was dismantled and re-erected at Suvavou. Pastor CH Parker reported:

Our Indian work is growing slowly but surely, and there are a number of interested ones, besides those who have taken a definite stand. Brother Meyers finds his hands full. The school has grown from fifteen to over fifty and is still growing... Our school has had to be held in a private house, with no conveniences nor helps, and a scarcity of desks, yet the school grows... Sister Meyers Senior, has a girls school of twenty scholars besides Brother and Sister Palmer's school of over fifty boys.<sup>24</sup>

However, the strain was taking its toll and in 1922, enervated and unwell, Ellen returned to Australia for a year of rest and treatment at the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital. In her absence Grace Niebuhr, a medical worker, treated the sick and looked after the girls school. In the same year, Pastor George Masters arrived to take charge of the school for boys.

Ellen returned to Suva in 1923 and at the end of that year the union conference secretary's report gave her an



Mrs Gladys & Pastor Edmund Rudge



Centre: Grace Niebuhr, 1920

honourable mention. However, its overall assessment of the Indian work was blunt:

Sister Meyers Senior, who is our pioneer worker among the

Indians of Fiji, and who has again returned to the work in that field, is now earnestly engaged in Bible and medical work, and is greatly beloved by the Indian people. It is evident, however, that we must radically change our methods in conducting our work for the Indians, for the results so far are not encouraging.<sup>25</sup>

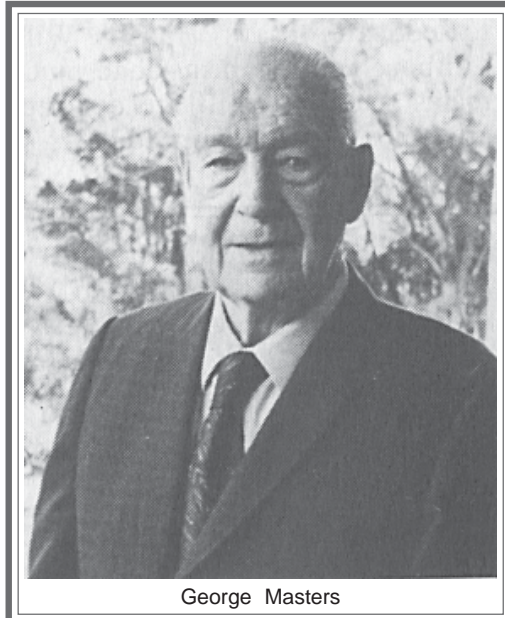
A sub-committee was appointed to look into the matter and its recommendations may well have included two developments that followed: the appointment of Pastor E B Rudge to lead the Indian work in Fiji and the search for a more spacious and suitable site for a permanent Mission.

Meanwhile, Ellen continued her labours at the Toorak girls school and in the community. When Suva was hit by a typhoid epidemic in 1925, her nursing skills were in constant demand. Pastor Rudge reported five cases at the Toorak mission, including his own son Neil. He wrote: 'Sister Meyers' home looks like a small hospital, three of her rooms being occupied by patients. From tonight on I will take care of the folk at night in order to relieve Sister Meyers.'<sup>26</sup>

During a visit to Fiji in the following year, Pastor John E Fulton wrote of his meeting with some of Suva's Indian community and the special place that Ellen Meyers had earned within it:

It was a good time and gave us an excellent opportunity to meet not only our Indian brethren and sisters, but also many Indian friends, some of them prominent Indian people... We were greatly interested to note that both young and old among these people refer to Sister Meyers, who has laboured so long among them, as 'Mother'. Thus our sister is accosted, not only at our gatherings, but as she passes up and down through the Indian sections of Suva and environs. The foundation Sister Meyers has laid, and the place she holds in the hearts of these people mean much to us. It has been won through fifteen years of love and sacrifice on the part of Sister Meyers.<sup>27</sup>

A major development took place in 1926 when the Indian Mission sold its Toorak property and moved back to Samabula, this time to an extensive site that had once been a pineapple plantation. It was eventually to comprise boarding and day



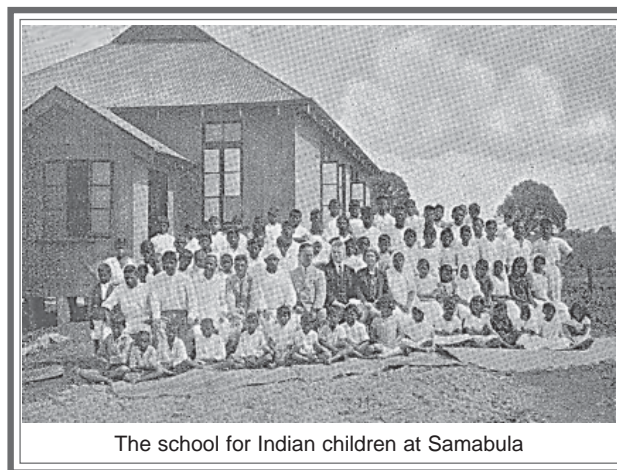
George Masters

schools with ample space for staff quarters and other possibilities. Initially, Ellen had charge of the school for girls. She had always maintained a special interest in the welfare of Indian girls and was glad to be able to devote herself fully to this cause. In recording the opening of the new school, she mentions some of the obstacles that Indian girls faced in getting an education at the time:

First, Indian mothers in general do not see the need of educating Indian girls. Second, girls are needed at home to help, and where there are large families it entails some sacrifice to send the girls to school. Third, there is considerable danger attached to their being away from their mothers' protection.<sup>28</sup>

Early in 1927, Pastor George Masters returned from India and his Hindi language studies. With energy and enthusiasm he began preparing the boys day and boarding schools which he was to head:

The new mission site cannot but appeal to one as a good selection. It is one of the most beautiful spots around Suva and, because of high altitude, commands a beautiful view. The soil is good and already the pineapples have proved a financial help to us...The boys school building was almost finished when I arrived... Yesterday we had a busy bee and all the young men of our Indian church gathered on the mission with the result that before lunch the whole of the outside of the school building was painted and several desks made.<sup>29</sup>



The school for Indian children at Samabula



Mrs Ellen Meyers

By May 1927 the combined enrolment of the new day schools had risen to 75 with 14 boarders (five female and nine male). Pastor Rudge noted: 'The work of the girls school falls entirely on the shoulders of Sister Meyers. Advancing years cause her to feel the burden of the work rather heavy, but she holds on steadily, looking for the coming of a worker to assist in the tasks of the school.'<sup>30</sup>

In October 1927 that worker arrived in the person of Miss Wanda Haberman who took over supervision of the girls school. She commented: 'Everywhere are evidences of a life of sacrifice and loving service, and surely God will not be unmindful of what Sister Meyers has done...As Sister Meyers leaves for her much-needed rest, the Indian community loses a real mother.'<sup>31</sup>

Ellen's last contribution to the *Australasian Record* offers a rare insight into her nature. Instead of the usual mission news, we read a lyrical description of a boat trip that led her to an almost mystical experience:

Fiji is a land of picturesque scenery, and the vision before me is more than I can describe: the coast line with its beautiful rugged hills clothed in rich verdure, a blue sky overhead, trimmed with clouds of all shapes and forms flitting and changing position. We are on a calm blue sea with just the little launch making its way to Navua carrying the good news of a coming Saviour to a family I love dearly and in whom I have a special interest. I feel overwhelmed at the wonderful works of the Creator...God truly speaks to men through his works as well as through his written Word. I never saw before the perfect unity in the two revelations of Himself.<sup>32</sup>

Her final statement is a serene reflection on her life and work in Fiji:

I am glad for the fifteen years and more of service with this people. I look back and thank God for all he has done for me. If I had my day again and the call came to work in Fiji for the Indian people, I would gladly accept

it. God has bound me to this people in family relationship as mother, and I love my children, and leave this field to return again, God willing. I am glad old age does not count with the Lord. It is the willingness to work that he approves. I only hope some trace of the Christ-life will be found in human hearts through my relationship to the human family.<sup>33</sup>

On 26 January 1928 a public farewell was organised for her by the Indian Reform League, a group of progressive, community-minded individuals of Hindu, Muslim and Christian backgrounds. It was held at the Suva Town Hall and attended by a wide cross-section of local society including representatives of the Indian Reform League, the Young Fijian Society, the YMCA, the SDA mission and senior government officials. The following excerpt is taken from a press report of the ceremony.

One of the very finest characters we have today, in the person of Mrs Meyers, missionary-teacher and nurse, is leaving Fiji on furlough. Mrs Meyers says she proposes to live in Sydney for two years and if her health permits, she hopes to return to her loved work in Fiji. For sixteen years she has ministered as a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Mission, chiefly among the Indians in and around Suva. Whatever the hour, whatever the weather, Mrs Meyers never failed to respond to the call of the sick or distressed. She had no motor car—this noble lady—so she had to walk miles and miles over rough country, to visit her patients. Her name will be enshrined in the hearts of hundreds of all classes and races, as an ideal of everything that is noble and good and loyal and true. She is known among her Indian friends as 'mother', and well she deserves the name.

Very feeling and appreciative reference was made to the splendid work of the guest, and the love in which she was held by all who knew her, by Pundit Durga Prasad, M S Raymond, Mrs Gurdutta, Miss Phulkuwar, Pastor Rudge and Mr Hakim Din (who arranged the programme).

Mrs Meyers, when she stood up to reply, touched all hearts by her simple sincerity, and she paid a warm tribute to the loving forethought and kindness of her Indian friends. Refreshments closed a notable evening.<sup>34</sup>

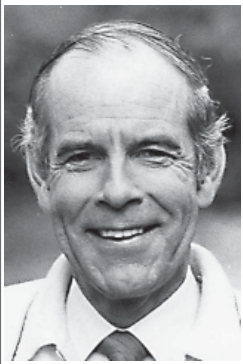
'Mother Meyers' was by now 63 years old and her hope of returning was never fulfilled. She returned to Sydney on 9 February 1928 and commenced a long retirement during which she remained an active member of the church and a regular delegate at meetings and conferences. Over the war period she spent eight years in India with her eldest son William and returned in the late 1940s to live in Balgowlah with a kind friend, Mrs Stevenson. Her final years were spent in the care of her son Dudley and his wife Stella at Westmead, Sydney, where she passed away at the age of 93.

When interviewed at Cooranbong in January 2006, Hilton Meyers (now in his mid-80s), remembered Ellen as the doting grandmother he first knew as a toddler. He came to know her better when his father, Pastor Harold Meyers, was attached to the Samabula Mission in 1927. He recalled, 'She was a very committed Seventh-day Adventist. She believed what she taught and nothing would shift her from it. She was a great believer in the Bible and a great Bible student. She was also a great believer in the Spirit of Prophecy.' Even when Hilton visited his grandmother as an adult, it appears that religious guidance was never far from her mind. 'She was not averse to



# New Directions in Youth Ministry in the Central Pacific Union Mission

**ROGER NIXON**



*Roger Nixon was born in Murchison, South New Zealand. He was educated at Carterton & Waiotahi public schools & then at the NZ Missionary College (Longburn College)*

*On 25 May 1959, Lew Lansdown married Roger & Elva Millist at Papanui Church, Christchurch.*

*He graduated from Avondale College NSW in 1963 with a Theological Normal Diploma*

*Roger's 40 years of service for the church commenced in 1964 as a teacher in the North NZ Conference.*

*Subsequently he held the following positions: 1967-1970, MV & Education Assistant, NNZ. Then for some years he worked in the CPUM in various capacities: 1970-71, MV & Education Sec; 1972-75, MV Health & Temperance Sec; 1976-1980, Director MV, Health & Temp.*

*From 1980-85 he was Youth Director, NNZ; 1986-90, Dir Dept Church Min, TAUC; 1991-92, Family Mins & Pastor, Warburton, & 1993-96, he was president of the Fiji Mission. From 1997-2002 he pastored in NNSW. He began his retirement in 2003 but is continuing service as ADRA Director for the NNSW Conf.*

*He was ordained in the gospel ministry in 1970. The Nixons have 2 daughters, Stephanie & Kim.*

THE PATHFINDER YOUTH MINISTRY emerged in the Australasian Division<sup>1</sup> of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the late 1950s to early 1960s. It took some years to become firmly established because of the already existing Junior Missionary Volunteer (JMV) program that had started in the 1930s. Because Pathfinders contained many secular elements it was felt by many to be in competition with JMV's which was mostly a program for Sabbath afternoons.<sup>2</sup> So, for a number of years JMV's became the Sabbath afternoon (spiritual) program only and Pathfinders the outdoor, non-Sabbath ministry for the 10 to 16 year olds.

Many churches felt that they didn't have the human resources to run both and often the JMV & Pathfinder leaders were the same individuals. Gradually people began to view Pathfinders in a more positive light and saw how it could actually strengthen and complement JMV's. Eventually JMV's slowly integrated with Pathfinders until it, in name, became a matter of history.<sup>3</sup>

This was the situation in both Australia and New Zealand.

## In the Pacific Islands

Whilst this was taking place in the homeland, changes were also about to occur in the Islands of the South Pacific. In many localities JMV's was not only an integral part of the local church program but an important part of the church school curriculum. This being so, the union education director often was responsible for the youth portfolio as well.

## Departmental Changes

In October 1970, I was called to serve in the Central Pacific Union Mission (CPUM) to carry the dual responsibilities of both Education and Youth portfolios, just as my predecessor, Pastor Ken Gray, had done. This was about to change. Just as Pacific Nations were experiencing winds of change with political independence, it was becoming evident that, if we as a denomination were to hold the loyalty of our youth, then we would need to do some things differently.

## Tight Budgets

In 1971 the CPUM, with

headquarters in Suva, Fiji comprised the following islands—Cook Group, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati and Tuvalu (Gilbert & Ellis), New Caledonia, Niue, Pitcairn, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, (New Hebrides) and Wallis and Futuna. Our travel budgets were extremely tight. When union personnel travelled by ship or plane outside Fiji they were required to spend between a fortnight and up to a month on any given itinerary. This amounted to some five months away from home in any given year.

Travel budgets aside, the budgets for both Youth and Education Departments in my first year of office amounted to the princely sum of \$320; quite inadequate for developing resources. At this time union departmental directors were to visit Vanuatu, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Kiribati and Tuvalu and New Caledonia on a bi-annual basis.

As Youth Director there was maximum benefit in visiting the field during holiday breaks to hold camps and training sessions. As Education Director I needed to visit schools during the term. Fortunately it was not long before the two portfolios were separated in all three union missions (CPUM, WPUM and PNGUM). In 1972, Vanuatu, Kiribati and New Caledonia became a part of the then Western Pacific Union Mission.

## Cultural Differences

Pathfinders, as it was being developed in Australasia, needed to be adapted to Island cultures. Those responsible for developing and improving curriculum for the homeland lacked both the time and the understanding to do this for the island field. For example, the Pathfinder Fair manuals were often quite meaningless and impractical in the islands and needed to be written in simple English. We needed events like coconut husking and basket weaving. Nature honours focused on Australian and meant little in the Pacific. In Australia, outside expertise was readily available in developing honour materials. This was almost impossible to find in the Pacific, particularly in the preparation of written information. Affordability was another factor.

## Adult Pathfinders

A unique situation had developed in the CPUM and



**Pastor Ken Gray**

elsewhere in the Pacific. Pathfinding became adopted by adults. Events would be held on a Sunday or two in a year and featured mainly marching. Much of what took place, although highly entertaining and skilful, with a measure of good fellowship, had little resemblance to the real spirit and meaning of Pathfinding. The 10 to 16 year olds on these occasions were often relegated to the sidelines to care for younger ones while the adults enjoyed themselves. Regular Pathfinder meetings were virtually non-existent. To be fair, this was hardly the fault of the local leaders. There was a desperate need for training and resource materials.

In the CPUM, as elsewhere, serious and conscientious effort was made to change course and develop a strategy that would:

1. Where appropriate, elect new and younger mission youth leaders.
2. Require union & mission youth leaders to conduct regular practical training events at all levels.
3. Provide relevant resource materials in simple English for youth ministries and Pathfinders.
4. Encourage older members to support youth, involve them in decision making and to be less invasive of events.
5. Prepare a more indigenous curriculum and resources in simple English.
6. Encourage young people to continue leading out in Voice of Youth evangelistic campaigns.
7. Produce song books with music particularly suited to youth for Friday evening and Sabbath afternoon meetings.
8. Have union and mission youth directors conduct demonstration programs for local leaders.

### First MV Council

The first Missionary Volunteer (MV) Council for the CPUM was held in Suva in mid-December 1971.<sup>4</sup> Six of the eight mission youth directors were new to the position but all were eager to learn. It was encouraging that several mission presidents also attended. Practical demonstrations were given in conducting Pathfinder Club meetings and MV programs. Of an evening Pastor Clem Christian, the Division Youth Director, with his accordion, introduced many new songs.

There were open discussions of regional problems and one of the main decisions reached was that leaders and local musicians work towards producing a suitable MV song book. Our first song book, *Keep Singing*, with music, sold 13,000 copies. In a ten year period three different song books were printed, the other two being, *Sing & Rejoice* and *Sing*. Seventeen thousand copies of *Sing* were sold. These song books and many other resources were printed by Rarama Publishing House in Suva which later became Trans-Pacific Publishers. Manager Roger Stokes, to his credit, was able to keep the price down to a very affordable level. Composers such as William & Gloria

Gaither and John W Peterson were extremely generous with their copyright charges. Ralph Carmichael, God bless him, allowed us to use many of his songs such as 'Reach Out to Jesus' free of charge. Raymond H Woolsey of the Review & Herald Publishing Association was also most helpful in securing copyright permission from a range of publishing houses. Consequently there were many favourite songs enjoyed at MV meetings, camps and Friday evening vespers. A few that come to mind were 'Farther Along', 'Where Could I Go', 'There is More to Life', 'He's Able', 'How Long Has It Been?', 'Leave Your Heavy Burden at the Cross', and 'The Family of God'.

In all of these plans arising out of the Suva MV Council I was very much affirmed and encouraged by a number of expatriate missionaries and local leaders such as Filimoni Bera (Fiji), Lazare Doom (French Polynesia), David Hay (Samoa), George Porter (Fiji), John Lee (Tonga) and Don Mitchell (CPUM).

### Implementing the Change

In 1971, I became involved in establishing several Pathfinder Clubs in Suva, Fiji, and applied the new strategies. When it came to aiming the ministry at 10 to 16 year olds and relegating the adults to the roles of leaders and counsellors, one Fijian brother wrote to me demanding to know what this new philosophy was all about. I am happy to report that this brother, Inia Tui, a local artist, was to become a close friend and also assistant to Fiji Mission Youth Director, Pastor Ilimo Tulevu. Inia was a tireless volunteer worker with us in ministry to young people of all ages.

### Divine Intervention?

On 17 September 1972, a Pathfinder Fair incorporating these new objectives was held at the Raiwaqa Sports Field. Some five clubs from Nausori, Raiwaqa, Suva English, Suva Fijian and Suvavou participated. Leaders in each club had received manuals outlining the programs and there had been thorough preparation.<sup>5</sup>

Some 140 Pathfinders, mostly in uniform, participated in events such as knot tying, Bible memory work, coconut husking, marching, pancake making and fire lighting; all encompassed in a fun setting. Much was at stake. The emphasis was now on the juniors and teenagers. A successful fair would help to consolidate the Pathfinder program.

But there was the weather. Reports were unfavourable. There had been heavy rain on the Sabbath and it continued on to Sunday morning. The clubs arrived in faith in hired buses. Fiji Mission Youth Director, Pastor Tulevu, invited us to earnestly pray that the rain would cease for the duration of the Fair. I shall never ever forget what happened. It was a humbling experience for all of us.

The Opening Ceremony began at 9:30 and the rain stopped.

District Director, Pastor Jim Lansdown, gave the official welcome. Keith Watts, Treasurer of the CPUM, briefly spoke to parents about the value of Pathfinding. Speeches were made and we swung into the busy program. Heavy cloud threatened until 3 pm. Immediately

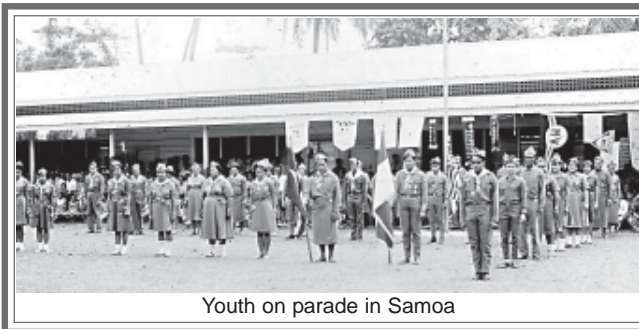


Those at the MV Council: Back -L to R; T Doom, D Hay, E Winter, A White, C Christian, K Gray, R Millsom, ----, E Espisito, R Nixon, Front - L to R; A Mulitalo, I Taburimai, M Joseph, T Pokura, S Katoa, I Tulevu



Aileone Penese, Youth Director of Samoa Mission, with Pastor R Nixon





Youth on parade in Samoa



Youth leaders: L to R Francis Flohr, Ilimo Tulevu, Roger Nixon, Graham Miller, Fonua Ofa, Sinapate Ausage, Teina Taiveranga

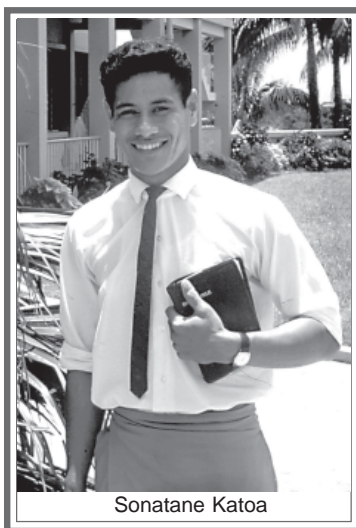
following the closing ceremony the heavens opened. Never had I witnessed such a rapid exodus from a Pathfinder Fair.

The fair had been very successful though not perfect. "It was evident that all clubs had been faithfully practicing the events... On the whole a very high standard was achieved".<sup>6</sup> We never looked back. The older members came on side. Thanks be to God.

Pathfinder Fairs now became regular calendar events. Successful fairs were held in Samoa and the Cook Islands where the presidents, David Hay and George Porter respectively gave excellent support to the local leaders, Ativale Mulitalo and Tungane Pokura.

A very successful fair was held at Beulah College, Tonga. Concerning this first fair in Tonga, Youth Leader Sonatane Katoa wrote the following as reported in the *Australasian Record (AR)*, 18 Dec 1972 "...the fair was held at Beulah College, August 25. There were nine events. All the Pathfinders wore uniforms... The arrival of the Mizpah Club members, who had travelled by boat a distance of 140 miles from the island of Vavau, really stirred enthusiasm."<sup>8</sup>

Pastor Don Mitchell, writing in the *AR*, 1 May 1972 reported, "Perhaps one of the highlights of the Session [in Kiribati and Tuvalu] came for most of the folk in the instructions given by Pastor Roger Nixon on MVs and the organizing and running of a Pathfinder Club. Young and old seemed to vie with each other to perform the best in the marching and flag raising and other events." At this Session the Kiribati and Tuvalu Youth Leader, Pastor Ioane Taburimai was ordained to the Gospel ministry.



Sonatane Katoa

### Pathfinder Camporees<sup>9</sup>

Camporees as conducted in Australia were a new idea in the Central Pacific. In January 1975 almost all our mission youth directors were able to join me in attending an Australia-wide Camporee held at Yarramundi on the outskirts of Sydney. Pastor Leo Ranzolin of the Youth Department of the General Conference (GC) was the honoured guest and speaker. This wonderful event opened the minds of our island leaders to some exciting possibilities for the Central Pacific.

Over a period of time and on a large scale we were able to import tents and tarpaulins from 'Great Outdoors' in New Zealand for each of our missions with the exception of French Polynesia who already had good quality tents imported from France. Pathfinder Camporees on a district and mission-wide scale became an integral part of each mission youth department calendar. Furthermore, many Pathfinder Fairs became an important part of Camporee programs.

David Faull, principal of Navesau Adventist High School

(Navesau Junior Secondary School) in the Wainibuka District on the main island of Viti Levu, reported in the *Australasian Record*, September 1976, regarding a successful inter-district camporee in Fiji. The camporee followed a training seminar for local mission youth directors. Pastor Graham Miller, Australasian Division Youth Director, was the guest speaker. David Faull comments about teachers, Pathfinder leaders and children busy pitching tents and there being so many Pathfinders present (700) that the supply of tents was exhausted. This camporee "was most enjoyable and profitable due to strong parent support, the growth in numbers... and the enthusiasm of the Pathfinders."<sup>10</sup>

Subsequently, a number of successful camporees were conducted in French Polynesia, Samoa, the Cook Islands and Tonga. Many decisions for Christ were made at these gatherings. In 1979 at one very large camporee held at Waiyala in the Sigatoka Valley, Fiji, I witnessed over 200 Pathfinders respond to a call to accept Jesus and prepare for baptism. A camporee in Western Samoa attended by Pastor Leo Ranzolin was nearly washed out by an offshore cyclone and it really tested the grit of the Pathfinders.

In 1976/7 the newly appointed youth leader in Tonga, Pastor Fonua Ofa, conducted two mission-wide camporees involving eight and sixteen clubs respectively. "Pastor Ofa organized a good program. There were the usual picnics, concerts, recreation, new things to learn and spiritual meetings. On Sabbath afternoon they even had the opportunity of walking in the out-of-doors in groups, meeting such characters from the Bible as John the Baptist, the Woman at the well, and Zacchaeus in the tree. The Pathfinders really had lots of questions to ask these illustrious people. The grand climax to the camporee came on Monday with a Pathfinder Fair. The writer was pleased to observe that not only did all Pathfinders have the official uniform, but for the fair events they also had their own individual club tee-shirts."<sup>11</sup>

### Pathfinders at Fulton College

The Missionary Volunteer Society<sup>12</sup> and later the Adventist Youth Society (AYs) had always been strong at Fulton our senior college. Under the leadership of Allen Sonter, the principal, during the mid 70s, Pathfinder and the Master Guide courses became an integral part of ministerial and teacher training. The Pathfinder Club at Fulton served as a very useful model to young people planning to enter denominational employment.

### New Curriculum

New offering arrangements were introduced in the mid

seventies. The afternoon AY offering was divided into four parts with the local church, local mission, union and division each retaining a share. The union share was disbursed to missions and churches to subsidize a wide range of needs such as Voice of Youth programs, purchase of tents and other resources. A considerable portion of these funds were used to develop a new Pathfinder curriculum. This simple English manual contained all the material required for teaching Friend, Companion, Explorer, Voyager and Guide classes. The relevant honour booklets were also part of this manual.

### Youth Camps

During the 1970s there was a marked increase in attendance at youth camps in most of the missions. This was the result of much hard work and enthusiasm of both mission and local church youth leaders. These camps provided fellowship and helped to consolidate relationships with Christ and His Church. Guest speakers appealed particularly to the unconverted and backsliders and there was a renewed emphasis on witnessing and outreach.

The Easter Camp at Levuka, Fiji's former capital on Ovalau Island, was attended by some 400 youth, including many students from Fulton College. Following a spiritual feast on the Friday evening and Sabbath morning the youth visited every home in Levuka, distributing Voice of Prophecy cards and praying with the people. They also visited the local hospital, the women's prison and the police station. Invited speakers from different parts of Fiji, including Dr F Taukave, Pastors G Bradford, I Tulevu and Ross Baines dealt with matters of health, witnessing, effective Bible study and relationships. There was a splendid concert on the Saturday night and the recreation on Sunday included water activities and soccer.<sup>15</sup>

### Youth Congresses

During my ten year term of office in the CPUM our youth had opportunity to attend three Youth Congresses. The Pan-Pacific Youth Congress was held in Canberra at the National University, 27 December 1972 to 2 January 1973. Some 35 youth from Fiji, French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga attended, the number reflecting the high travel costs. Our young people were greatly blessed by the preaching ministry of John Hancock, Youth Director at the GC, Pastors HMS Richards Jnr, R J Spangler and Dr H K La Rondelle. Pastor Robert Parr's Variety Hour was unforgettable as was the singing ministry of the 'King's Heralds' and 'The Commission'. "And the results of this Congress? The most satisfying ones are the stories of young people whose lives have been dramatically changed as a result."<sup>14</sup>

According to the *Australasian Record*, Roger Nixon reported that religious instruction, recreation and real witnessing were all part of the Central Pacific Adventist Youth Congress held in Fiji at Queen Victoria School, 28 December 1976-

2 January 1977. Pastor Dick Barron an Associate Youth Director at the GC, Pastor Jim Harris, Youth Director at the Australasian Division were present as was Ron Thomas from Australia. These leaders uplifted Christ and the Holy Spirit moved in remarkable ways on the lives of those present.

CPUM administrators and departmental leaders gave excellent support as did our mission youth directors. Pastor Saula Ratu supervised the culinary department and with a large group of Fijian helpers, did an outstanding job.

Ron Thomas' variety program in the big tent was an immediate success. Interviews, musical presentations, quizzes, gift handouts and his quick wit kept young people on the edge of their seats. Those present were able to participate in six out of the ten workshops on offer. These included, 'How to Stretch the Dollar', 'The Top Twenty', 'The Forgotten Drug', 'Ready for Action', 'How it All Began', 'How to be Happy Though Married'. Singing groups such as 'The Sovereigns' led by David Crabtree from Sydney; Auckland's 'Joyous Trio' (Jerry Wallwork, Tere Masters & Jack Stowers), 'The Tahitian Singers', and 'The New Life' group from Fulton added quality and spiritual depth to the Congress program. There was also a wide range of recreational activities, featuring volley ball, soccer, basketball, softball, boat rides on the new Mission vessel, Ai Talai 11. All these were entered into with usual island nation enthusiasm. On the Sabbath, Pastor Barron, in a dynamic sermon, painted graphic word-pictures of the three Hebrew worthies and their deliverance from the fiery furnace. Our youth were challenged to 'stand up' for Jesus.

On Sabbath afternoon there was a memorable, witness march down the full length of Suva's main thoroughfare. The young people were led by the Beulah College Band from Tonga and escorted by Fiji's Royal Police. They marched through the main street, commencing at the Suva Markets and culminating at the Suva Civic Auditorium. This march attracted much interest from the radio, press and public. On the lawn area beside the Civic Centre an outdoor program was conducted, which included singing, special music, interviews and testimonies. Also thirty-two youth were invested as Master Guides. That evening about 1500 people enjoyed a thrilling sacred concert and saw five young men from Fulton College receive Silver Award medallions. A donation was also given to the Fiji Crippled Children's Society. On Sunday morning in the final worship two singers from 'The Sovereign' group fittingly sang, 'If this could be the year when Jesus came'. Before departure the young people gathered in prayer circles and praised the Lord for His abundant blessings. They had come with expectant hearts and were leaving as changed people.<sup>15</sup>

Seventeen nations were represented at the 1980 Australasian Division Congress held at Haskell Park, Auckland, New Zealand. A Maori poi display and haka welcome was presented, especially to the speakers, Pastors John Hancock, Charles Brooks, Maurice Vendon and Robert Parr. A large delegation from the CPUM attended.

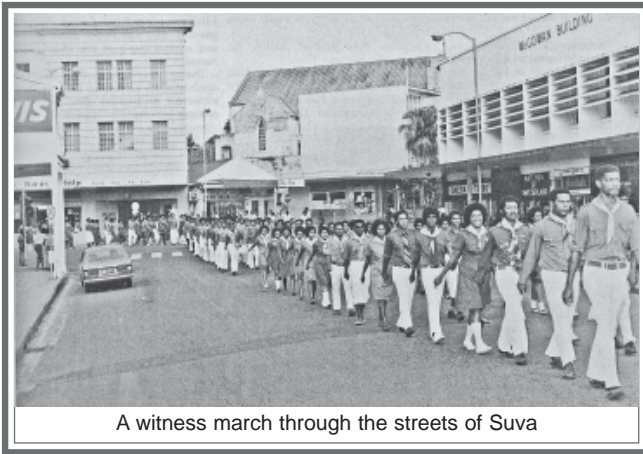
One unusual feature of the Congress was the writing by hand of the entire Scriptures. Some CPUM delegates participated and a number of youth wrote their portion in the vernacular of their country. This Bible was used during the Sabbath morning worship service for the Scripture readings. The handwritten Bible weighed about 25 kilos.



Preparing for the Pan-Pacific Congress



Pastor John Hancock



A witness march through the streets of Suva

This congress was of the highest quality and provided a real musical feast. The Beulah College Band, over 30 in number, acquitted themselves well by providing some splendid music. The Cook Islanders, Samoans and Fijians looked the part in their national costumes. The CPUM Polynesian and Melanesian delegates added something very special to this spiritually unforgettable experience.

### Health/Youth Seminar

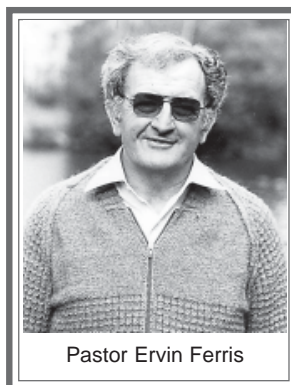
During the early 70s the youth work amalgamated with Health and Temperance, a move that was well received at Union and Mission levels. So we organized a training seminar and workshop for all involved. Pastor Jim Harris and Dr Ray Swannell, Youth and Health Directors of the Australasian Division were guest presenters. There were eight days of intensive study. At congresses and youth camps, I found our youth keenly interested in matters of health and ready to use in outreach programs.

### Outreach

A thrilling aspect of youth work in the Pacific was the Voice of Youth evangelistic programs. The enthusiastic and passionate preaching of lay young people won many youth to the Church. Pastor Ervin Ferris, CPUM Youth Director, reported that during 1983 there were 370 baptized from 30 programs.<sup>16</sup> Pastor Epeli Soro reported that, in successive weeks, 259 people were baptized through several of these efforts.<sup>17</sup>

It was not always an easy thing for youth to take a stand for Adventism. One young lady from the Wainibuka district was severely beaten by her parents and had her head shaved. Later her belongings were doused with kerosene and burnt and she was disowned. With help from an Adventist family she came through and was baptized. Similar stories came from Samoa and Tonga.

Mrs Lyn Dose, of Fulton College, asked the question, "Who said today's youth were not dedicated and could only think of themselves? After speaking with these young people I came away inspired, encouraged with a greater faith in the ability of our young people to finish the work of spreading the Good News."<sup>18</sup>



Pastor Ervin Ferris

Church to help understand the terminology used follows:

A group of local churches in the same geographic area are called a conference or a mission;

A group of conferences/missions is called a union conference/union mission;

A group of union conferences/missions is called a division;

Thirteen divisions come under the umbrella of the General Conference of the SDA Church—the world headquarters of the church. It has its headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. In brief it is called the General Conference (GC). There are officers and departmental leaders at each level.

The Central Pacific Union Mission (CPUM) belonged to the Australasian Division, now called the South Pacific Division.

- <sup>2</sup> JMV's—Junior Missionary Volunteers. Meetings for JMV's (10 - 16 year olds) were usually held on Sabbath afternoon in the local church. Typically the content of this meeting would include a welcome, prayer, offering, singing, story/quizzes. The latter part of the program was usually given over to JMV classwork of which there were six classes catering for each age level:

10 years - Friend class      11 years - Companion class

12 years - Explorer Class    13 years - Ranger Class

14 years - Voyager Class    15 years + - Guide Class

Each class covered a range of activities and requirements which, upon completion, entitled a JMV to a badge awarded at a special service called an Investiture. The badge was pinned to their uniform. Sometimes JMV classes were taught in church schools, in particular island nation boarding schools.

- <sup>3</sup> Pathfinders. Pathfinder clubs started in Australia and New Zealand in the late fifties, early sixties. However it really wasn't until the 1970's that clubs proper were established in the CPUM. Pathfinders usually catered for the same children but met in secular time and on a regular fortnightly basis. Club meetings would include a welcome, devotional, prayer, the raising of national and Pathfinder flags, marching exercises, nature and craft activities, Pathfinder Fair practice and any other secular requirements of JMV class work.

- <sup>4</sup> Roger Nixon, *Australasian Record*, 20 March 1972, p 13

- <sup>5</sup> Pathfinder Fairs. Annually Pathfinder Clubs meet together on a District or Mission-wide basis, usually on a Sunday, and engage in a series of non-competitive events which have been provided in a manual form some months in advance to Club leaders. The scoring is not based on 1st, 2nd or 3rd but rather on points based on accuracy, time and teamwork as well as standard of work done through the year. Banners of different grades are awarded. However, if all clubs do really well it's possible for all clubs to receive the same top award.

- <sup>6</sup> Roger Nixon, *ibid*, 27 November 1972, p 8

- <sup>7</sup> Sonatane Katoa, *ibid*, 18 December 1972, p 10

- <sup>8</sup> Don E Mitchell, *ibid*, 1 May 1972, p 1

- <sup>9</sup> Pathfinder Camporee. Annually clubs camp together for about five days. Pathfinders engage in a range of outdoor activities such as worships, water sports, fun memory events, bush obstacle challenges, etc. Sabbath is always a special day and a highlight. Sometimes there is a guest speaker and in some camporees, Missions may choose to include a fair.

- <sup>10</sup> David JFaull, *ibid*, 13 September 1976, p 13

- <sup>11</sup> Roger Nixon, *ibid*, Vol 82, No 46, 1999

- <sup>12</sup> MVs - Missionary Volunteers. Missionary Volunteers for 16 - 30 year olds began in North America in the early 1900s and soon followed into the South Pacific. During the 1970s MVs changed to AYs (Adventist Youth). The AY meeting was held on Sabbath afternoon and was also quite well supported by parents and senior members. A typical AY meeting consisted of welcome, prayer, singing, special items, quizzes, offering, drama and a main presentation, i.e. guest speaker, discussion on a timely topic, or Bible play.

- <sup>13</sup> Ross Baines, *ibid*, 4 August 1975, p 8

- <sup>14</sup> Clem Christian, *ibid*, 21 May 1973, p 8

- <sup>15</sup> Roger Nixon, *ibid*, 4 April 1977, p 1

- <sup>16</sup> Ervin Ferris, *ibid*, 19 November 1983, p 1

- <sup>17</sup> Epeli Soro, *ibid*, 19 November 1983, p 4

- <sup>18</sup> Lyn Dose, *ibid*, 24 July 1978, p 9

### References & Notes

<sup>1</sup> A brief explanation of the administrative structure of the SDA

# The Changing Face of Mission in the Pacific Islands

**DAVID POTTER**



*David Potter was born at Mildura, Victoria in 1959. He was educated at Gol Gol Public School, Red Cliffs High School and Mildura High School. He was awarded a Diploma of Business (1981) and later a Bachelor of Business (1988) from Avondale College Cooranbong. David married Lenore Hartwig at Dural on 26 September 1982. He began working for the church as a clerk at the Greater Sydney Conference (GSC) in 1982.*

*Subsequent appointments were as follows:  
1983-84 Assistant Accountant GSC;  
1985-87 Asst Treasurer PNGUM, Lae;  
1988-90 Assoc Treasurer PNGUM;  
1991-93 Treasurer WPUM, Honiara Solomon Is;  
1994-96 Senior Accountant SPD Wairoonga;  
1996-2000 Secretary-Treasurer Northern Australian Conference Townsville;  
2001 Associate Chief Financial Officer, SPD  
The Potters have two grown children, Matthew and Jasmine*

AT THE MISSION PROGRAM held in conjunction with the 2005 General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at St Louis, Missouri, in the United States of America, the General Conference President Pr Jan Paulsen made the statement, ‘The church is alive when it is engaged in mission’. Given that this is true, then by implication the opposite must also be true – when the church is not engaged in mission, it is no longer alive.

For over 100 years missionaries have been sent to spread the Gospel in the territories that make up the South Pacific Division. The church in the South Pacific has been and remains committed to being alive in Christ and fulfilling the Gospel commission in every part of the division. There is a cost, however, in fulfilling that commitment. The pioneering missionaries and church leaders understood that sending an expatriate to unentered or newly entered countries was a considerable expense and that is why from the very outset, the expatriate missionary was charged with the responsibility of training and mentoring local leadership. The cost today of sending and maintaining an expatriate family is still a significant cost. That is why the church continues to have a strong emphasis on local leadership training and development.

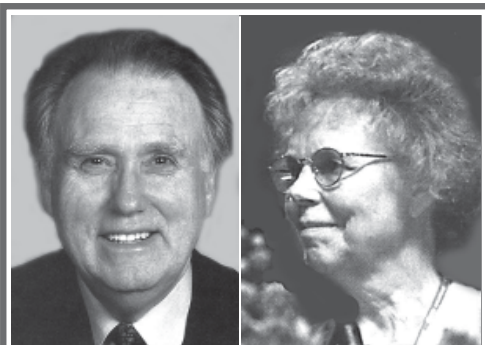
The church has always had strong focus on training local leadership in our mission territories. The work of the early pioneer missionaries was primarily focused on educating and training local people for leadership, either as missionaries to unentered areas or teachers in newly opened schools. In his article in the last edition of this magazine, Alfred Chapman clearly shows that education “was not offered as an end in itself. There was a definite relation established between education and missionary service.”<sup>21</sup>

Over the twenty-one years since I became involved in the expatriate missionary program, first as a missionary to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and now as part of the administration of the program, I have seen many changes. Indeed, the face of mission within the Pacific has changed even over that relatively short time, let alone over the last 100 years, in a number of ways and for a number of reasons.

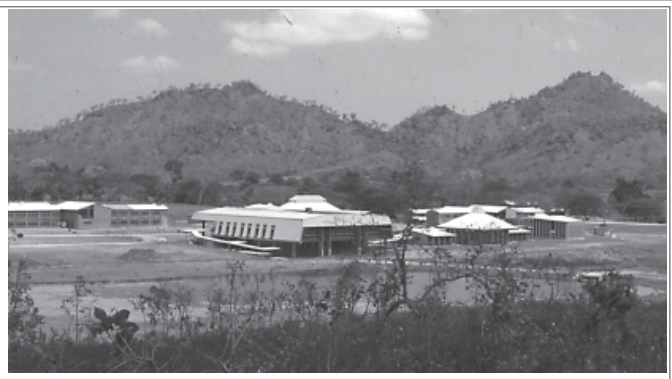
Firstly and significantly, the number of expatriate missionaries has declined across the Pacific. The division, in its annual budget, provides the funding for the expatriate missionary program, and administers the program to ensure that the work is able to progress in all areas within the division. This program cares for all the costs associated with recruiting, supporting and repatriating expatriate missionaries and their families to the Pacific from Australia, New Zealand or from countries outside of our division. In 1995 there were 123 expatriate budgets funded by the division, of which 112 were filled during that year. The total cost to the church for that year was A\$7,780,490. Just twelve years later, in the 2006/2007 financial year, the budgeted cost of the program is A\$10,079,112. While this represents an average increase in overall cost of only 2.5% per year since 1995, the total number of expatriate budgets supported in 2006/2007 is just 67, almost half the number supported in 1995.

Why is it that costs have increased so much? And what is the cost of supporting an expatriate missionary family? There are a number of reasons for the increase in costs apart from the normal increases that we would expect such as increasing wage and wage related costs, travel and transportation costs and insurance. These reasons include changes to policies supporting our expatriate families, the added cost of supporting expatriate families who come from countries outside of the division and the lower average number of years served by families.

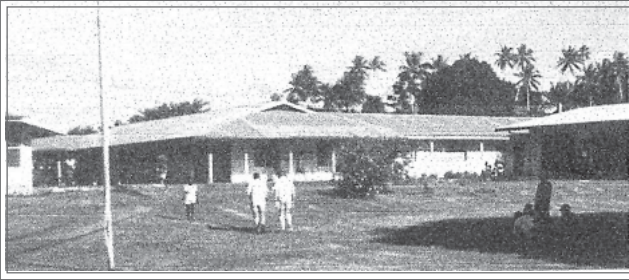
The division is responsible for recruiting, supporting and repatriating expatriate families and the foundation of this program is the



Pastor Jan Paulsen & his wife Kari



Futon College (Fiji), Pacific Adventist University Papua New Guinea, and bottom—Sonoma College (PNG)



policies that have been developed and reviewed over many years and that outline the terms and conditions of expatriate service. Needs change over time and our policies must respond to those changing needs. A couple of examples serve to illustrate this point and show how this has added cost to the program. For many years expatriate families served for six years before having the opportunity to return home on furlough, which was usually for six months. During this furlough time as well as renewing connection with family, the missionary family was in high demand to promote the mission work in the 'homeland' churches. The difficulties of travel as well as the cost were factors that contributed to this policy. There were no airlines and travel by boat was time consuming. With the introduction of airline services to many Pacific island nations, travel times to Australia and New Zealand were greatly reduced and so the need to have families out of the mission field for six months at a time disappeared and furloughs of three months after three years were introduced. This also helped families with school age children as the shorter furlough did not disrupt their schooling as much as the longer furlough. Often the children were enrolled in school in Australia or New Zealand for the duration of the furlough only to be uprooted from school after six months to return to the mission field. Within the last twenty years, the policy has been reviewed again and now missionary families are able to travel home every year end for their annual leave. Of course sending families home annually costs more in travel than sending them home once every three years on furlough, however over time the needs of families and the convenience of travel throughout the Pacific have warranted a change in our policy.

Another change in policy that has been developed in recent times is in the area of support of spouses of missionaries. Changes in society over the last half of the last century saw the growth in dual income families. As a result, it became difficult and can still be difficult for families to accept a call to missionary service where there is not the ability or funding for the spouse to work. To respond to this change and also to acknowledge the role of the spouse in supporting the expatriate employee, an allowance for spouses was introduced for

spouses who are not able to be employed. The allowance is given in two parts. One part provides funds to assist the spouse with keeping professional qualifications current, to undertake study programs to help them maintain contact with their chosen profession and make a return to that profession easier upon return from mission service or to travel with their husband/wife. The second component provides a contribution towards a retirement fund in recognition that during the years of missionary service they are not able to work and have retirement fund contributions accumulate.

Interestingly, the face of mission or rather missionaries has changed literally, with expatriates from countries outside of this division becoming more common. Today, a number of families serve in the Pacific from countries such as India, the Philippines, Argentina, Mauritius and the Seychelles. In the recent past families from the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada, Africa and Bulgaria have also served as missionaries to the Pacific. This of course has meant a greater cost to the program as we transport families from and to places right around the globe.

Another significant change and reason for an increase in costs is seen in the average number of years served by expatriate families. Over time the average length of expatriate service has declined as shown in Table 1 below. In 1980 the average length of service of families who returned permanently from mission service in that year was 7.31 years. In 2005 the average length of service of families who returned permanently was 5.33 years. Taking out those families who served more than ten years (the long term missionaries), normally only a small number of the total families taking permanent return, a clearer picture emerges of the length of service for the majority of our missionary families, with the average length of service 5.45 years in 1980 and 3.44 years in 2005.

Average length of service for permanently returning families						
Year	No families on PR	Total No of years served	Ave length of expat serv in years	No of long term expatriates	Total No of years serv long termers	Average length of expat service in yrs exclud long termers
1980	13	95.0	7.31	2	35	5.45
1985	15	89.0	5.93	1	22	4.79
1990	26	145.5	5.60	1	15	5.22
1995	17	84.5	4.97			4.97
2000	17	68.0	4.00			4.00
2005	12	64.0	5.33	3	33	3.44

So what is involved in supporting an expatriate missionary family? That is perhaps best answered by looking at the



Dr Barry Gane

expatriate program budget. Table 2 is taken from the 2006/2007 expatriate program budget and summarizes the main areas of expenditure. Obviously wages and wage related costs is the most significant cost area but other areas of significant cost include travel

and transportation, subsidies for children's education, insurance, providing cross cultural training through the Institute of World Mission program each year, medical care and support and the provision and maintenance of housing.

But cost is not the main reason we now have less expatriates in the field. The main reason is the growth and development in local leadership. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the development of local leadership has always been a high priority for the church. Fulton College, Sonoma College and Pacific Adventist University were all established to train and equip young local leadership and over many years these institutions have done just that and continue to do so for the church. Also the division has, over many years, placed emphasis on the ongoing development of leadership within the Pacific. Dr Barry Gane currently heads the department of Leadership and Professional Development for the division and is involved, in conjunction with Pacific Adventist University, in conducting a leadership course for current and potential leaders within the Pacific. This program, along with the work of our training institutions is bearing fruit as we see local people taking positions of senior leadership in the administration of the church throughout the Pacific, positions previously held by expatriate personnel.

Table 2

South Pacific Division  
Expatriate Support Service  
Budget Extract, 12 months  
ended 30 June 2007



Expenditure	
Wages and allowances	7,141,65
Subsidies	567,447
Travel and transportation	1,061,000
Tithe percentages	71,415
Cairns Office expense	22,000
Other expenditure	901,100
Housing expenditure	314,500
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>AU\$10,079,112</b>

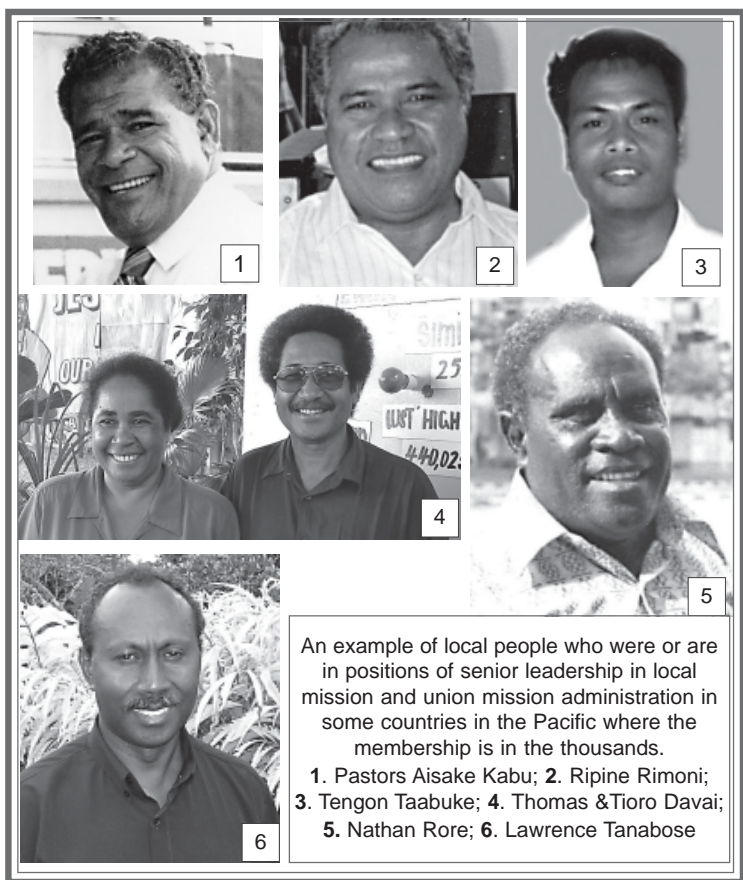
There will always be a need for expatriate missionaries in the Pacific and I believe this is necessary for the ongoing development of the work throughout the division. Indeed, we now see leaders coming from Pacific countries and serving in

Australia and New Zealand in ministry and other leadership roles and this is also a necessary development, broadening the growth and development of these leaders.

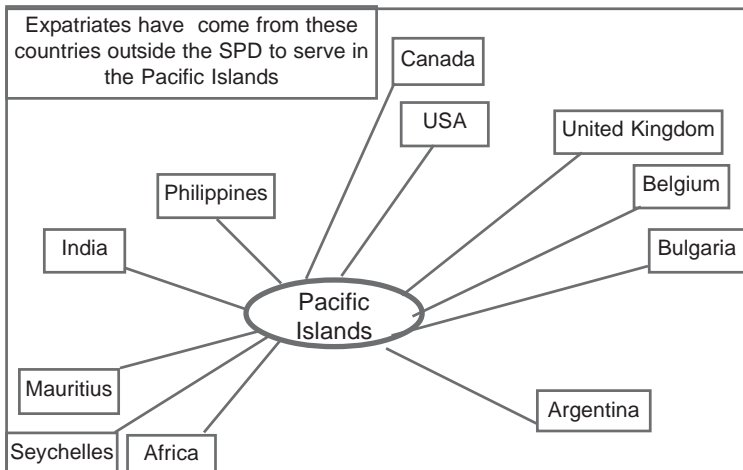
In addition to working within the expatriate program at the division, I also have various other duties and one of those is in the area of the church's private health fund in Australia. On one occasion I attended a meeting with other fund leaders and I was talking with a gentlemen involved in the private health insurance industry and he asked me what work I did. I was telling him about the church in the Pacific and the institutions we operated throughout the Pacific, why we operated them and that our main source of funds was from the tithes and offerings of our church members. He said, "you know it simply amazes me how much your church is able to accomplish with relatively little". And it is true, by the blessing of the Lord and the guidance of His Spirit, we have been able and are still able to do much. And in the Pacific, where the church is alive and fully engaged in its mission, there is always much to do.

**Note**

1 Alfred Chapman, *Journal of Pacific Adventist History*, Vol. 6 No. 1, June 2006 ♦



An example of local people who were or are in positions of senior leadership in local mission and union mission administration in some countries in the Pacific where the membership is in the thousands.  
1. Pastors Aisake Kabu; 2. Ripine Rimoni; 3. Tengen Taabuke; 4. Thomas & Tioro Davai; 5. Nathan Rore; 6. Lawrence Tanabose



## Life Sketches



**Albert Anipoeni Noda** was born in the village of Saliu in the Laga Laga Lagoon area on the eastern coast of the island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands, in 1936. He attended Betikama Missionary School from 1951 to 1954, and graduated from Jones Missionary College on the island of New Britain in Eastern New Guinea in 1958.

In late 1959 Ani commenced a long and fruitful service in the financial sector of the Adventist church. For just over three years he worked in the office of the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission (BSUM). After a break of two years, he returned to the BSUM. He was then appointed to Bougainville Island where he carried out the duties of secretary-treasurer until the end of 1968. He served as the secretary-treasurer of the East New Britain Mission, and from 1972 in the same position for a further two years in the Western Solomons Mission (WSIM). He gained further experience in treasury and clerical work at the Western Pacific Union Mission (WPUM) in Honiara and at the Australasian Division in Sydney until the end of May 1975 when he returned to the Solomon Islands.

He resumed service as the secretary-treasurer of WSIM, and in 1979 took up the same position in the Eastern Solomons Island Mission (ESIM) at Kukum in Honiara until 1985. After spending the next 2 years as an accountant of the WPUM he returned to the ESIM as treasurer and remained there until 1994 when he retired from church employment. Altogether, Brother Ani Poeni Noda gave 32 and a half years of dedicated service to the church.

On 15 November 1967, Anipoeni married Miriam from his village, and the following six children, 3 boys and 3 girls, were born to this union: Kendall, Rendall, Revelyn, Keren, Crandall, and Darulyn.

Apart from his faithful work in administration, Ani was an excellent carpenter who helped to construct the Kukum Evangelistic Centre, now the Kukum Church, as well as homes for workers on the compound.

A Christian gentleman who loved His Lord and served Him faithfully over many years, Ani looks forward to hearing His Saviour calling him on the 'Great Day' saying: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34 (NLT). He passed away on 24 November 2004.



**Fuliese Maisa** entered this world at Tanugamanono, a suburb of Apia on the main island of Upolu in Western Samoa on 22 June 1940. On completing a form 2 level of education, he later became a student at the Samoa Laymens Training School at Vailoa.

Revealing a potential for ministry he was appointed in 1970 to care for three companies of members living on the south central coast of Upolu — Savaia, Fusi & Siumu. Subsequent pastoral appointments were as follows: Samatau 1973-76, Asau 1977-79.

Before taking up service in the Manua Islands, 1980-82, Fuliese was ordained to the gospel ministry on 4 August 1979. Then Nuuuli 1983-84, Lano 1985, District Directorship Savaii 1986-87, Fasitootai 1988-91, Matatufu 1992-94, Saleimoo, Satomai, Faleasiu-uta and Fasitoota 1995-96, Satomai 1997, Togitogiga 1998.

A well-earned retirement followed until his death on 19 June 2003.

During his second year of studies at Vailoa, Fuliese married Araisu Muuau on 27 March 1968. Two boys and two girls were born to this union.

He possessed a pleasing personality and being an energetic worker keen to share the Adventist biblical message, Fuliese nurtured members and conducted evangelistic meetings. Serving in so many churches and companies he was well-known by the members. Fuliese had a zest for life, enjoyed his family and on occasion, in his earlier years, a game of mu (drafts). He now awaits the call of the Master.

### Photographic Credits

**Adventist Heritage:** Summer 1979: 80, 1st row #s 2, 3. **Adventist Heritage Centre:** 1; 3 (5); 5bl; 6; 7; 8; 9bl; 9 (1); 10; 11; 20; 21; 22; 23 t; 24 b; 25; 26; 28 bl; 29; 30 t, br; 34; 35t; 36t; 37t; 39; 40m; 43; 49; 50; 51; 55; 56t; 58b; 62; 63; 66t; 68ml, tr, b; 71tl; 73tr, m; 74b; 75b; 77tr, m; 78 (1) (2) (5); 79t; 80, 1st row #4; 2nd r #1, #4; 3rd r #2, 3, 4; 4th r #1. **Adventist Review,** July 2005: 76; **Roy Aldridge:** 3 (30); 30bl, 31t, 32. **Andrews University Archives:** 80 2nd r # 3. **Australasian Record:** 5tr 28.5.45; 9 (2), (3), (4) 7.10.45; 12, 7.10.45; 40t 26.11.45; 72bl 20.3.72; 75 4.4.77; 80 2nd r #2 26.3.56. **Len Barnard:** 4 (62). **Irma Butler:** 4 (64). **David Caldwell:** 53b. **Yvonne Eager:** 3 (14); 14; 15; 16; 17. **EGW SDA Research Centre:** 2; 19. **Ellis Gibbons:** 23b; 24t. **Edna Grosser:** 4 (33); 45; 46; 47b; 48. **Lester Hawkes:** 47t. **David Hay:** 4 (71); 57tr; 72br; 73tl; 79m; 80 4th r, #s2, 3, 4. **Jo Lee:** 71b. **Glynn Litster:** 28br. **Makaso:** 4 (76). **Doug Martin:** 4 (49); 52. **Bev Miller:** 35b; 36b; 37b. **Elva Nixon:** 60; 61. **NNZ Conf SDA Church:** The Maori Work 1983. 80 1st r #1. **Barry Oliver:** 78 (4), (6). **Bert Pietz:** 4 (55). **Ray Richter:** 3 (19). **Wilf Rudge:** 61tl; 3rd r #1. **Kenneth Singh:** 4 (64); 64; 65; 66m; 69. **Beryl Stocken:** 31b. **SPD:** 78tl. **Alec Thompson:** 44. **Lyn Thrift:** 38; 40b. **Merlene Thrift:** 3 (39); 42. **Bill Townend:** 57tl. **Martin Ward:** 77tr. **E E White Albums:** 53t. **Colin Winch:** 56b; 58t; 59.

— They stayed,  
 — They served,  
 — They shared!

**Maori—New Zealand**



Joseph & Mrs Hare  
1885—1898?

**French Polynesia**



Hattie & Albert Read  
1892—1895

**Fiji**



Hannah & John Tay  
1891—1892

**Pitcairn Island**



Ida & Edward Gates  
1892—1894

**Cook Islands**



Joseph & Julia Caldwell  
1894—1901

**Tonga**



Edward & Ida Hilliard  
1895—1899

**Western Samoa**



Dr Frederick & Mina Braught,  
& Emily Mc Coy: 1895—1903

**Papua New Guinea**



Edith & Septimus Carr: 1908—14  
Peni & Aliti Tavodi: 1908—18

**Aboriginal—Australia**



Henry & Annie Cooper 1908—  
Mona Mona-Philip & Isobel Rudge  
and James Branford 1913

**Vanuatu**



Calvin & Myrtle Parker  
1912—1916

**Solomon Islands**



Griffith & Marion Jones  
1914—1920

**Niue**



Viola Kerisome Head  
1915—1963

**New Caledonia**



Griffith & Marion Jones  
1925—

**American Samoa**



Tini & Fuea Inu  
1944—1957

**Tuvalu**



Fetu and Tavita Niu  
1946—1949

**Kiribati**



Merle & John Howse  
1947—1950

These workers were the first to live among or nearby the people—

\* helping where there was a need, and proclaiming the 'Good News' for the times