

The Owen Outreach

Chronicling the Ministry of Todd and Angela Owen

Serving with Pioneer Bible Translators' Papua New Guinea Branch

Translating the New Testament with the Somau Garia People

P.O. Box 997 • Madang 511 • PAPUA NEW GUINEA • toddowen@pioneerbible.org.pg

"F" is for Flexibility

The journeys that missionaries make are many and varied. Some are relatively harmless—even fun: London, Tokyo, Singapore: places alive with culture, history, prominence in world politics. Some are routine: driving to Uria from town (usually an adventure, but routine, nonetheless). Other journeys are less fun, dark and foreboding, journeys into places of shadow and obscurity. Our family took one of these journeys into the shadow lands during the last three months.

Plans, the missionary usually says, are made in Jell-O. The plans we outlined to you in the last edition of *Outreach* were no exception. Friday, June 13, changed everything. We were in Madang, buying supplies and getting some rest, planning on going back to the village on Monday. We had gone to bed late on Friday only to be awakened at 4:30 a.m. with the news that Todd's dad had died suddenly at work. The exact cause of death has not been determined (or at least not reported), but it is suspected that he had a massive heart attack. Within twelve hours, Todd was on a plane, headed back to the U.S. . . . Meanwhile . . .

Angela and the kids were left behind in Madang. Angela (get ready for some major news, here) is *pregnant* and is expecting our **daughter** to arrive in late **January**. In June she was in her first trimester and having severe morning sickness (and afternoon sickness and evening sickness). Usually during her pregnancies (go ahead, say it, we've had a few) Todd does a lot of the cooking, cleaning, you know, the "Mr. Mom" work. Suddenly, she was with her four children and without her husband. He was on the other side of the world and she was on her own.

Upon discovering Angela's pregnancy, we had already moved up our departure date to September, but during those trying weeks of Todd's absence, it was decided to get home as soon as possible, so we were able to organize tickets for an August 11 departure.

Both our family and our translation team were reeling from the sudden shift in direction. The translation guys were suddenly aware that in a few short weeks they would be on their own, drafting the Gospel of Luke without their *yeuwap* (close friend, brother, blood relative) there to assist them. We were suddenly aware that we had a few weeks to cement our relationships *and* to pack up our house for furlough. We were tired, hurting, isolated, on the ragged edge.

Moving from morning to evening during those weeks was like trying to wade through wet cement.

A few days before our departure, Hannah developed a case of dysentery and only a few hours before we got on the airplane, she started with the vomiting. Six hours after departing Port Moresby, Todd developed dysentery. The 40

(Continued on page 4)

In This Issue . . .

"F" is for Flexibility

Getting From Here To There

Pray! Pray! Pray!

Fall 2003

Getting from Here to There

You feel as though a giant has taken a great magnifying glass and focused the beam on you—that is, while you are already standing in a sauna. Even behind your sunglasses you are still squinting as you look across Nunas Street toward Air Niguini, Papindo, Ho Kit. Vans, trucks, 4 x 4's race by you on a paved road with only a few holes. *Why would anyone need four-wheel drive around here?* you ask yourself as you climb into one with the missionary you are visiting. The diesel comes to life and you begin vibrating, bumping, and bobbling down the road. It's noisy—all the windows are down—no air conditioning—and the off-road biased tires roar on the pavement, like the old school buses used to do on the way to ball games when you were in school. About fifteen miles out of town you crest a hill and round an S-curve to ford your first river and leave the pavement behind. It is rainy season and the river is 50 yards wide and about knee-deep or so with a pretty swift current. This is the first stop of the day. Your missionary friend gets out and does two things: locks the front hubs and goes and talks with a bus driver who is stopped at the side of the river, wading in to test the depth and strength of current. He decides to cross and into the drink you go. You're loaded heavy enough today that you don't feel the rear end of the truck start sliding down stream.



For the next 20 miles you average 12 miles an hour as you slide through slime pits, climb through ruts as deep as your truck, pull less fortunate ones out of mud holes. Then you get to the really bad stuff. You leave the “road” for the four wheel drive trek that takes you into the village. The trek is anywhere from 6 to 8 feet wide, is a collection of ruts, land slides, fallen trees, boulders, streams and mountain sides. Your friend slides the transfer lever into LOW range and asked you to be quiet and pray. You're glad to have a hand-hold to white knuckle while you endure a mile-and-a-half adrenaline rush. Maybe it's the adrenaline which sharpens your senses as you notice the sheer beauty of it all, the rows of mountain ridges stretching to infinity,

the sheer drop off just beside your door, the lush green jungle and the main highway sleeping like a carpet python in the valley below.

You can imagine that the road can be a stressor to some. Now imagine that your vehicle is 14 years old, squeaking and torquing, vibrating, rusting, giving signs of its imminent demise. What do you say? “Hey, pal, can we help you buy a new four-by-four?”

Well, actually, I'm glad you asked. It's time to replace our aging and dying four-wheel-drive. Our vehicle is an essential part of our ministry—ambulance, transport, bus, etc. We have been putting back for a few years to replace it, but we are quite a bit short of what we need. The photo below is of a Toyota Landcruiser model 78 utility. It seats 10, it's an off road monster, and it is Toyota. It is also expensive. Brand new it costs K140,000 or about \$42,000. If we are fortunate enough to find one for K80,000 (used) that's about \$24,000. If we get *really* lucky and find one for K60,000 that's still \$18,000. A



used, beat-up rust bucket might go for K40,000 or \$12,000.

Please be praying with us this year that we will be able to replace our old vehicle for a more dependable one.

If the Lord is leading you to share in this need, you may send donations to:

Todd and Angela Owen
Pioneer Bible Translators
P.O. Box 52
Joplin, MO
64802

Please make checks payable to Pioneer Bible Translators and simply include a note in the envelope designating it for “Vehicle Replacement”.

We thank each of you for your prayer and financial support—for partnering with us in providing the written Word for the Somau Garia people.

Pray! Pray! Pray!

A week or two after we returned to the States, I was speaking to a Sunday School class. One of the class members asked the question, “What would you do differently if you knew 6 years ago what you know today?” I responded immediately, “I would have had a better organized and better recruited prayer team.”

Our training equipped us to physically handle the rigors of life in a tropical rain forest. It trained us to handle unwritten languages and to understand a vastly different culture (to an extent). The training touched on the reality of spiritual warfare and the spiritual nature of our work. But, unfortunately, training is training and is not life experience. I think I prefer training over the brutal realities of life ☺.

Over the last six plus years we have, quite frankly, had our teeth kicked in, spiritually. Every minor victory we have enjoyed has had immediate repercussions in the heavenlies that have served to wreak havoc in Garia society and in the lives of the men with whom we interact most. The enemy most often uses death and illness as a response to our advance, but he has also used backbiting, adultery, sorcery, demon worship, loyalty to elemental spirits, etc. You’ll notice in the photo on this page our friend and guardian, Patri Toroma. Patri wore a tradi-

tional loin cloth, called a *malo*, to church one Sunday morning. This is fairly unusual behavior, so I asked him, “Why did you wear your *malo* this morning to church?” His response was enlightening: “I wore it today because our fathers wore them when the first missionaries came and we **want to show devotion to the ways of our fathers.**” I was told later by others that what he meant by that was that he would die devoted to the gods of his fathers. Some of you will remember that Patri and his clan saw a false or demonic miracle some years ago and devoted themselves to the “gods” who brought about the miracle. Patri’s father’s jawbone hangs from the ridgepole of his house for use in sorcery.

We are building siege works against demonic strongholds in Garia culture through Biblical preaching, Bible translation, prayer, meeting physical needs, training, etc. But the walls are thick.

I liken our struggle against Satan for the hearts of the Somau Garia to that which is recorded of Jericho in the book of Joshua. Jericho was impenetrable. The Israelites could have sieged it for months to no avail. But God asked them to do some very strange things. Everyone was to get together, put the horn blowers out front and march around the city once a day for six days, then seven times on the seventh day. Then the horn blowers were to blow and the people were to shout and the walls would fall in. Can you



imagine if a ranking general gave such advice in order to take total control of Baghdad? What was it the Lord said? “See, **I have delivered** Jericho into your hands along with its king and fighting men.” It was the Lord who delivered Jericho, not the marching, not the horn blowers, not the adherence to a specific set of instructions (obedience was key, but it was the Lord who delivered). There was no book “10 Easy Steps to Defeating Jericho” or “Better Tactics for Winning Jericho for God” or “The Siege on Purpose”.

Our culture, our training, our expectations (“We

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 1)

plus hour return trip was made up of trips to the toilet, fever, being sickened by the smells that float around an enclosed airliner. At least we didn't develop deep vein thrombosis (blood clots in the legs caused by sitting too long)!

The highlight of our return, though, was definitely what awaited us at the end of our long journey.

A host of friends from Christ's Church of Oronogo, our main supporting church, donated furniture, money, and food and then a group of volunteers from the church set up our house and stocked our cupboards. We arrived at Tulsa International, rode to Joplin, and slept in our own house the first night back! We wish to say a huge "thank you" to our CCO friends!

Within three months our plans had changed from spending the rest of 2003 and half of 2004 in Papua New Guinea and finishing and printing the gospel of Mark to coming back to the U.S. twice (to Todd's Dad's funeral and for furlough), and spending mid-2003 to mid-2004 in the U.S., welcoming a new daughter into the family, and trying to find our bearings again.

As you pray, please pray that our time in the U.S. will be a time of renewal, restoration, and blessing.



Hannah and Angela catch a nap at Jacksons International Airport in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea as we were returning for home assignment. We had a six hour layover before going on to Singapore.

(Continued from page 3)

guarantee your church will have 500 members in three years or your money back") drove us to "work the plan". He who doesn't plan doesn't succeed. Work the plan. Teach more. Work the plan. Push more. Train more. Ask more questions. Reason with them. Make them believe. When Jesus started getting this kind of advice (usually unsolicited) he often just retreated to a quiet place and prayed. Before he chose the twelve, he spent the night in prayer. The Holy Spirit went with him into the wilderness where he fasted and prayed for 40 days immediately following his baptism. In the garden the night he was betrayed he prayed—and submitted.

With all of the good things we have done, we have not adequately organized a team of praying people who are committed to regular intercession. Part of the problem is simply logistics—no good way of getting the immediate needs out via e-mail (i.e., when we are in the village). Part of the problem is not having groups well organized. Part of the problem is depending too much on our other resources and not enough upon the One who is able to do infinitely more than we could ever possibly ask or imagine.

It is critical that we do not return to Papua New Guinea without a prayer support team in place, without groups of pray-ers meeting regularly, waging war on behalf of the souls of the Somau Garia men, women, and children. Be looking in future issues of *Outreach* for an update on the prayer effort. If you want to start a prayer group in your church for the purpose of praying for the Garia or other mission projects, please let us know what's up and drop us a line at:

P.O. Box 52, Joplin, MO 64802

or e-mail us at

toddowen@pioneerbible.org.pg.

As you pray, ask God to enable us to be Christlike in our prayer lives and in our submission to the will of the Father. Ask God to open our eyes to his grace and mercy and to allow us see his hand in these struggles. Ask God to grant us wisdom that we can be used of him to raise up a prayer team to go before, blowing the trumpet, encircling the Garia with prayer. Ask God to grant us wisdom in knowing when and how to tear down demonic strongholds which have so long held these people in bondage. Ask God to give perseverance both to our family and to our team of intercessors. Ask God to grant us insight, single-mindedness, wisdom to know when to retreat for prayer and when to go out and advance through His appointed means. Ask God to work powerfully, even miraculously in order to draw the hearts of the Somau Garia people.