



# The Owen Outreach

A Quarterly Update of the Ministry of Todd and Angela Owen  
Serving with Pioneer Bible Translators  
Making the New Testament Possible for the Somau Garia People of Papua New Guinea  
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## There and Back Again

*Eight there were in fellowship. Given a task of utmost import, they mounted on wings as of eagles and rode the clouds until, at last, they came to the end of the world.*

*There they found neither dragons nor a great waterfall spilling out into the vastness of the universe, but a land filled with the unexpected—exotic plants, animals, peoples, languages. Two of the eight were not experienced in such travels, yet carried along by their companions, they persevered . . .*

Sounds like the beginning of a great adventure? For some more than others. One such traveler is Ellen Owen, Todd's mom. She had never traveled outside North America before, then took the big plunge going all the way to the end of the world, passing through Tokyo, Japan en route. She's flexible and likes the new, so it was a great adventure to her. Perhaps her *greater* adventure was returning to the U.S.—alone.

The rest of us? Well, we were *there* among you all for a year and have come *back again*. What adventure have we returned to? We have come to a place where it is not unusual to say things like "Ai iyainikeri xuiapu kununukua xoyexoyeunuku nipurikiri pa xorixatia, akerek emisikimana, auwasikimanae irikimas wororia pa siri tue muri xinepinuku." Yes, that is one sentence. It's not unusual because the sentence describes people getting together and dancing at a funeral wake—funerals are frequent here. That is an adventure for the mind **and** tongue. We have come back to the place where you need four-wheel drive to drive on the "highway" and have to crawl into your village in four-wheel **low** or you might get stuck. That's an adventure for someone like me who doesn't much care for driving in rain, let alone on the side of a slippery mountain though dense overgrowth on either side of the road, through bogs, fording creeks, climbing over large stones that could disable my car if it slips just the "right" way. We have come back again to a place where to cross to another village you must often walk on slippery mountain trails that are inches wide and one misstep can put you either sliding down a vertical precipice or down a slippery mountain side filled with stones, tree roots, trees, thorny vines—in case you didn't notice, these are all things the break and tear things like bone and skin.

Yet, I feel that the greatest adventure we've returned to is not the physical environment, but the spiritual one. Our return signaled something significant in the heavenly places—that God's chosen are not so easily intimidated or dispensed with. Our enemy, long having held the Garia in bondage to fear and deception, wants desperately to destroy anyone who makes a serious attempt and giving the Garia a chance—the Word of God in their own language and the Mind of Christ to rule their lives. Our greatest adventure, then, is not to answer the question, "Will you die for me?". Rather, it is to answer the question, "Will you live for me, without reservation, regardless of your circumstances, with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind?"

## What You'll Find Inside . . .

There and Back Again . . .	1
Keepin' It Movin'	2
Oma Purinuku— Kenny's Story	3
Four Wheelin'?	4
Gap Corner	4



Todd's mom, Ellen Owen, holds Josie and sits next to Fransesca, a PBT employee who befriended Ellen during her days in Madang. They are pictured here at the Air Niugini terminal on the morning Ellen departed for the United States.

## Keepin' It Movin'

A few years ago we were having a problem with our four-wheel drive. The battery had gone dead in the village and the only way to get a replacement was to get 20 of my friends to help me push a 6,000 pound truck around a soccer field (that I had always thought was level until that fine day) and get it going fast enough so that we could pop the clutch and thus start the motor.

I suppose to the uninitiated it looked more like a group of clowns in the center ring of the circus than a serious effort at working together for a common



What do you do if your 4 x 4 trek is in too bad of shape to drive the empty fuel drums to the highway to be picked up by a truck? Todd and Ezekiel decided to lay two drums end to end, and tie them to a pole in the same fashion that pigs are carried.

Days like the day this photo was taken are part of the reason that Bible translation takes 25 years—some days you have to attend to needs other than your primary work—like fixing a road or carrying supplies on your back, or helping others with similar needs. Pray for a fixed road and a new vehicle.

goal. After about a half an hour we were able to get enough *momentum* that the weight of the truck helped us get it started. It took half an hour because every time we popped the clutch and it didn't start, it also stopped the car and interrupted the momentum, which meant that we had to start all over again.

The complexities of a Bible translation program also depend, very much, on momentum. We started working on the Gospel of Mark in September 2002 and made very good progress with the book until our momentum was interrupted by tragedy. (Most of you will remember Todd's dad's death in June 2003 followed by their return to the United States in August 2003). The challenge, of course, is that we have now popped the clutch and rather than starting the truck and taking off at a break-neck speed, the motor merely coughed and left us all standing there, legs sore, lungs hurting, loathing another round of pushing this thing forward.

When we first returned, most of our appliances were not functioning, our house was a mess (having set for a year, boarded up), and my Garia friends were in the midst of preparing new gardens, their primary source of food throughout the year. Thus, our first priority was to get the place cleaned up and get things in working order.

After getting things *somewhat* in order again, we were then beset with sickness. Sickness burned through our family for almost a month. Sickness then also began burning through the families of our Garia co-workers, so that they either were too weak to come to Uria for work or, in the case of Siramia, needed hospitalization.

The momentum that we had during the 2002-2003 season has yet to be re-established. As I write these words we are preparing to return to Uria for our second stay, this time for about three months.

We are hoping to establish some mo-

mentum. I am planning on working on **comprehension checking** on Mark chapters one through six in late-October, holding a training course on **Biblical exegesis** in November, and working on **back translation** of Mark's Gospel and initial revision on portions of the Gospel of Luke and a few chapters of Acts in December (all of course with the realization that "man makes his plans but God directs his steps"). Also, I am currently working on analysis and first draft of a paper describing the grammatical structure of the Somau Garia language, as well as working hard at increasing my conversational fluency of the language.

*Please pray for God to surround each of us (the Owen family and each of the Garia co-workers and their families) with his love and protection. Ask God to give us good health, clarity of mind and spirit, holiness in our lives, and a profound sense of direction. Ask God to raise up five Garia evangelists who will take this Word and fearlessly preach the Good News. Ask God to empower the Garia translators with his Spirit, that their lives and speech will persuade some to embrace Christ and to stand firm.*



Angela's friend, Korenime, and her new son Melchi, whom many of you prayed for during her pregnancy. This photo was taken at a feast held in honor of Todd's mom, who was visiting from America.

## Oma Purinuku— Kenny's Story

The Somau Garia language doesn't have a word which corresponds to our English word "life". They use the phrase *oma purinuku*, which means "we are new".

This seems fitting in the case of my friend, Kenny Maiya. For some years Kenny has been involved in the Somau Garia translation project at one level or another. He was coming to help quite regularly just before we left PNG for the States, but often went this way or that if he had a chance to make a little money here or keep his wife's complaints to a minimum there.

Before leaving for the U.S., I picked up a little devotional book for the Garia translators to use in my absence, called appropriately *Wara Bilong Laip*, that is, *The Water of Life*.

As the story goes, one day Kenny was in the translation office and grabbed this little book off the shelf to read, but what *really* happened was that this little book grabbed Kenny. Once he started reading it he couldn't put it down. He took it home with him and read it off an on for two weeks.

One day, Kenny was talking to Ezekiel Panawa, lead translator and told him of what happened. It went something like this:

"You know, Ezekiel, I started reading this book and couldn't put it down. As I read I realized that God's Word really is important, so important that I can't just walk away from translation when I feel like doing something else. I must give myself fully to translating God's Word into our language."

But it didn't stop with his commitment to translation. He is reported to now stand at the end of every church service and exhort the young people of his village to stop wasting their lives with trivialities and sin—to live their lives for God. *Praise God with us that Kenny is given to God for evangelism and translation.*

### A Reader's Glossary

1. **Comprehension Checking** — This is the process in Bible translation after the rough draft is made, the first revision (that is, the clean up process), and after the meaning is checked for accuracy, at which the text (in our case Mark's Gospel) is taken out into the village and read aloud to people. They are then asked comprehension questions to see whether or not they understand what the text says. Spots that seem to foul up several people are then rewritten to make the meaning clear to readers/hearers.
2. **Biblical Exegesis** — Literally, exegesis means to "lead out". Biblical exegesis is to draw the meaning of the text out. For our purposes, the translators must be able to "draw out" the meaning so that they can restate it into the Somau Garia language. Basically, Biblical exegesis is gaining understanding of the meaning of the text.
3. **Back Translation** — The process of translating the Somau Garia text back into English. The process helps the expatriate adviser (that would be me) to ensure that the text was properly translated to begin with. The final check is made by an outside consultant who doesn't speak the language—he/she needs the English back translation to be able to check the meaning.



Todd's mom, Ellen, sits in the back of the training center while her grandkids attend Sunday School inside. Our dog, Moose, was especially attentive and careful to look after Ellen.



Kenny Maiya, Somau Garia translator, had a life-transforming experience with God early in 2004. While reading a devotional book written in the trade language, *Tok Pisin*, Kenny realized his deep need to know more of Christ and to lead others to Him.

## Four Wheelin??

Faith is not sight. Faith is trusting the One who holds your hand and goes before, leading you to the places where you will mature, thrive, become Christ-like, be prepared for eternity. The places He leads us *through* are not places that we would ourselves choose to go, but places through which we *need* to pass.

For the missionary, faith testing begins with the very first task of establishing ministry partnerships—partnerships that provide prayer and financial cover for the Kingdom work to be done, in our case, remotely.

For the ministry partner, faith often begins with writing that first check, bending the knee in prayer, shedding the blood, sweat, and tears often involved in standing in the gap for the cross-cultural worker.

The faith of both run together and find similar challenges, especially when special projects come up that stretch both those giving and those receiving.

Our vehicle replacement is one such case of our mutual faith being challenged. For about a year now, you all have been praying, giving, and waiting with us, looking for God's providence in keeping our ministry rolling (sorry for the pun—no I'm not!). The money and/or the vehicle God has in mind for our ministry is not yet here. We continue to wait on God's timing and continue to pray regularly that He will somehow provide for this need.

To date, you all have contributed a little over \$15,000. Thank you. Your loving gifts and for some of you, sacrifices, are deeply appreciated. What a blessing it is to us that you all are pulling with us. Your gifts and contributions have literally saved lives as we have been able over the last few months to get people to the hospital *before* it was too late. But our old Nissan is more and more damaged every time we come

and go on our 4 x 4 trek and has already been in the shop for major repairs to the undercarriage.

We are asking you all to set aside some time for special prayer in this regard. Please gather other pray-ers and make intercession regarding this need. Challenge your missions teams or finance teams to put some funds in the 2005 budget to help cover this need. If you are able, please consider what you can do to help cover this need.

Please walk with us through the process of entreating God to provide for this need—and watch your own faith stretch and become more real, deep, and full, as together, we watch the Father break through with his good gifts from Heaven—and watch the Lord provide for the Garia people through use of this vehicle in getting the sick help, the translators supplies and training, and our family transport to and from Madang.

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## Gap Corner

How we covet your prayers. By the time you're reading this newsletter, we will have been more than two months back in Papua New Guinea. Our time here has been pleasant for the most part, though we are anxious to get things moving again at a good pace. You all have been praying for some years now that the various clans in and around Uria village would lay aside their differences (there are many) and work together, as one man. There are perhaps more disputes between people now than I can ever remember, and the community work which signals unity is not present. People just don't work with one another. This impacts our ministry. I end up carrying a pickaxe, shovel, and wheelbarrow down to the 4 x 4 trek and finding one or two other guys to help me make repairs. While good for my physical fitness, it doesn't help much with my office work. The community support the Garia men working with me need in able to focus their attention on ministry also is not there and they end up divided and thus only give partial attention to the work at hand. These difficulties quite often lead to men not attending church. Satan understands this—indeed, this strategy was birthed in his poisoned mind. We are being patient and hopeful, looking to God to open a door for his name to be glorified and honored here—perhaps through solving these very difficulties.

### Please Pray:

- That God will bring unity (of the godly sort) between clans so that the message of the gospel will be received and that people will once again work together.
- That God will open the hearts of unbelievers so that they can hear.
- That God will change the hearts of the Garia people so that they will support their own people in translating the Bible into the Somau Garia language.
- That, as Todd prepares materials for training Garia men in Bible translation, that he will have insight, wisdom, and clarity.

### Please Praise God:

- That all of our equipment is again functioning.
- That we are settling in well and readjusting to village life.
- That a core group of Garia co-translators have remained faithful and remain committed to the work at hand.