



The

# Storyboard

Summer  
2002

published by the  
Papua New Guinea branch of Pioneer Bible Translators

## Home Schooling by Todd Owen

“My name is Charles. I am a boy. My name is Susan. I am a girl.” This has often been heard reverberating around Uria village while young children attempt to learn English, the official language of Papua New Guinea. Unfortunately, at the village level of education, learning English doesn’t

progress far beyond these simple phrases. Those who are fortunate enough to have someone sponsor them go to boarding school where they learn math, science, or a trade (like plumbing or metal working). Such is the state of affairs for our national friends.

What about the MKs (missionary kids)? The MKs in Uria go to a very exclusive, highly specialized school—the Uria Expatriate Home School Academy, otherwise known as the Owen house.

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## Notes



Editor's

*Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck. (Proverbs 1:8,9 NIV)*

Missionary families on the foreign field have many hard decisions to make that affect every family member. Not the least of these concerns the education of their children. Should they home school? Send children to boarding school? Boarding school in the host country, the home country, or perhaps a neighboring country? Is there the possibility of the child living at home and attending a local International Elementary or High School? Considering differences in personality and emotional make-up, should the solution be the same for each child within the same family unit?

Our teams with schoolage children have all faced these issues and, as you will see in reading their articles, have chosen from a variety of options the solutions that best fit their individual needs and concerns. Each team would avow, though, that education begins in the home, and the Christian beliefs and values that they want instilled in their children's lives must be taught within the family circle.

Examine the children of our PBT teams—all ages, all branches—and you will see many garlands of their father's instruction gracing their heads and chains of their mother's teaching adorning their necks. Where could you buy more beautiful accessories?



Angela and Samuel, hard at work in the Uria Expatriate Home School Academy—tongue-in-cheek title for the Owen home

We have always been interested in home schooling our children. To be able to do that in the context of village life is a unique opportunity that opens the whole world to our children.

Andrew and Samuel start their day with traditional subjects: reading, penmanship, and math. Later in the morning they work on world history, science, Bible lessons, etc. Some days they have science lab. This year they will be studying United States history. One of their school activities is to learn about a different culture each week and to pray for that country (or group of countries). When the formal studies

# Ukarumpa International High School

by Linda Sweeney



One of the toughest decisions parents have to make when they come overseas is what to do about their kids' education. Most PBT families choose to home school their children during the primary school years. Especially for translation or literacy teams who live in isolated villages, their only choices are home schooling or boarding school. In Papua New Guinea, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) has a primary school, a middle school, and a high school at their center, Ukarumpa, in Eastern Highlands Province. Aiyura Primary School is organized so that translation teams can use the materials to home school their children when they are living in their villages, and their kids can go right into the classroom when the family returns to the center. Some PBT families have enrolled their children in this village program, using Aiyura's curriculum in either the village or Madang, with their kids attending the school whenever the family happens to be in Ukarumpa for workshops, translator training, or a work break. Other families have chosen to use regular home schooling curricula from the United States.

The school issue becomes more difficult as kids advance into the middle school years. Continuing to home school kids in the village or even Madang is complicated by social issues. Our children's interests begin to change from playing with marbles or bows and arrows to computers and video games. For most of their playmates in the village, the world will never be much bigger than

the part of the jungle they live in. Life skills revolve around gardening, house building, and hunting, for boys; and gardening, cooking, washing clothes, and *bilum* making, for girls. By their teenage years most village kids have finished grade six and have begun the transition to their adult lives.



Michael Davis waits for the starting gun

It is also difficult to home school children in an accredited high school program in a village situation because communication lags so greatly, and sending and receiving papers and materials takes weeks or months.

[*Editor's note:* In the past some of our teams in the village setting have elected to have an accredited teacher live with their family and continue their children's education through these years. Diane Miller, currently on home assignment in the United States, has taught all age groups, not only in remote villages, but also in Madang. This has been especially helpful for translator families who have served as Branch Directors.]

Because of these difficulties with continuing to home school our children past primary school, most PBT families choose to enroll their kids in the Ukarumpa Middle School or High School. In both these schools, boarding is required except when the family is spending some time at Ukarumpa.



Bethaney Butler and classmates

There are many advantages to having our children attend Ukarumpa International High School. One of the biggest is that our kids are so happy to be with other kids their own age who share similar interests and cultural backgrounds. Another is that they also experience a diversity of cultures by being in school with kids from Europe, Asia, Australia, Papua New Guinea, and North America. Their teachers come from many parts of the world, as well, and bring a broad variety of expertise that is difficult to match as parents. In the case of our own children, they had to beg us to send them to

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boarding school, and it has been great to see them so content with their schooling and with the opportunity to develop close friendships, as well as participate in sports, group projects, and youth groups.

PBT kids have been involved in band and choir at the school and have also played roles in the school's yearly drama productions. There have been PBT kids on softball, basketball, soccer, and track teams. In PE the kids have the opportunity to learn skills and participate in all of these sports, as well as volleyball, American football, Australian football, and rugby. Because the school is located at SIL's PNG center, there are various departments with which our young people are able to do work-study programs, such as computer services, the print shop, the clinic, the store, the auto shop, and non-print media.



Ryan Sweeney, David Davis, and friend

A large number of the high school teachers come from North America. American students, such as the PBT kids, are taught English, geography, and history courses that meet with American school standards and requirements. Often the foreign language

classes are taught by native speakers of those languages, who also teach mother-tongue studies to students

from their home countries. In addition, the school is able to make use of people on center who work in some other department, but who possess unique skills for adding to the overall education of the students. When the drama department put on the musical *Oliver* this year, many people from the community were involved in helping to build the sets, run the sound equipment and lights, do make-up and costumes, and perform many other jobs to get the play produced. All the kids in the play, from the performers to the backstage crew, benefited from working closely with all these people.



David making his approach...



...and OVER!

Ukarumpa International High School has very high academic standards and a good program for college-bound students. In the Junior and Senior years, Advanced Placement Honors classes are also offered, enabling teens to get a jump on their college requirements. In addition, the school offers standard courses in life skills such as home economics, computer classes, and wood working. Art classes are offered in various media, including ceramics.

Bethaney Butler, a gifted artist, will graduate from high school this year and plans to attend Johnson Bible College in the fall. She has served as co-editor of *The Silhouette*, UIHS's yearbook. Students not pictured in this article are Chris Sweeney and Ryne Urton.

It is always a difficult decision to separate yourself from your children in order to put them in a boarding school, but at least in Papua New Guinea we can feel as though our children are able to get an excellent education and are being cared for by Christian people.

Linda and Mike Sweeney live among the Mum people of Katiati village, where Mike translates the Scriptures. They have two teenage sons, Chris and Ryan.



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*Bringing the Word to Life*

**C**onsidering the fact that my husband and I are both MKs and boarding school veterans (Rift Valley Academy in Kijabe, Kenya), it seemed only natural to expect that our children would eventually attend boarding school in Papua

New Guinea. What we did not expect was that they would go as early as they did. We intended to continue for a few years with the home school routine we had begun while still in the US; however, our life in Papua New Guinea has been anything but routine. We started out the term in one house and moved a month later. Then our crates arrived, and before we could unpack them, we took off for

### Split Solutions

by Cindy Davis

the four-month-long Pacific Orientation Course that took place outside of town and involved five weeks of living in a village.

Actually, there were lots of things we didn't exactly bargain for. We were not prepared for the time it would take to adjust to the heat and humidity. We were not prepared for the boredom our children would experience with no extracurricular activities, such as sports, and the limited opportunities to interact with other kids. It wasn't long before our teenage sons Michael and David began talking about Ukarumpa International School and the things they had heard about it. Our family made plans to travel to the Eastern Highlands to take a look at the possibilities, and before we knew it, we were scheduling entrance exams and talking to prospective hostel parents.

The boarding school experience has been a mixed blessing, but on this side, looking back, it was definitely the right thing to do. It has been our commitment to make a mid-term visit four times a school year, which means a lot of packing, unpacking, disruption of work and other endeavors, preparing for and recovering from draining road trips, as well as wear and tear on our car.

This experience has been an emotional roller coaster for our nine-year-old daughter Keren. She regularly goes from grieving the fact that her brothers are leaving to enjoying being an "only" child; from anticipating our being together to the disillusionment of being the baby of the family again. Meanwhile,

she continues to home school in a classroom of one, while her brothers become involved in sports, school programs, and other extracurricular and hostel activities with all their friends. To balance the scales a little, we have opted to enroll Keren in the Aiyura Primary Village Home School program. We will use



Michael and Keren

their curriculum, and when we are at Ukarumpa she can attend classes with the other kids. This will provide the opportunity to interact with and get to know many kids her age, as well as benefit from the classroom experience. When we are in Madang, we will continue with the lessons at home, and she will have weekly telephone conversations with her teacher.

As we watch them grow and develop their niche in this school, we hope and pray that our children will come to treasure the memories and relationships formed during this stage of their lives—much like Jim and I did. After all, boarding school is where we met.

Cindy Davis, a gifted artist, is the wife of Jim, our Branch Director, and the mother of Michael, David, and Keren.



### Home Schooling ... continued from page 1

are done, out the door they go and enter into the *other* education. Andrew is learning to speak *Somau Garia*, the mother tongue of the people of Uria. Samuel usually climbs trees or poles—anything vertical (like most of the other village boys)—and makes fires and cooks traditional food with his friends. Abigail follows her brothers around, mostly, but does so carrying her dolls on her head in a string bag known as a *bilum*, in the same fashion as local ladies carry their babies. Hannah is at an age where a smile, a wave, and a "bye-bye" is about as much as she does. When the kids are out with their friends they are hearing and using two other languages (*Melanesian Pidgin* and *Somau Garia*). They are interacting in a culture with values very different from their own. When the MKs' parents call for them to come, they come. When the village kids' parents call for them to come, the village kids typically do whatever they feel like doing. The village parents shrug it off and attribute it to *kids will be kids*. The MKs wonder why this is so.

Some of the games are different and notable. One evening, the boys asked if they could stay outside with their friends.

Their friends had caught a couple of lizards and were fighting them against each other. When the entertainment was over, their friends roasted and ate the lizards.

In the course of traveling to and from the field, our kids have opportunity to visit some of the countries they have learned about in school. While coming back to PNG after our last home assignment, we visited England, Singapore, and Australia.

Home schooling our children while working in village ministry is challenging but rewarding. We were there when the boys read their first stories. We have been able to know them better by discovering for ourselves their learning styles, their strengths, weaknesses, and interests. You say you want to send your children to the Uria Expatriate Home School Academy? Sorry, we are not taking any more applications. Would you like to start your own village academy? Join PBT, come to Papua New Guinea and undertake translation ministry, and it can all be yours!

Todd Owen is a translator working in Uria, one of the villages of the Somau Garia people. He and his wife Angela, along with sons Andrew and Samuel, came to PNG in 1997. Daughters Abigail and Hannah have since joined the family.