



Summer/Autumn
2008

The Storyboard

published by the
Papua New Guinea branch of Pioneer Bible Translators

The Foundation Has Been Laid by Martha Wade and Eunice Herchenroeder

Crack! “Tch!”
Crack! “Tch!!”
Crack! “Tch!!!”

The night was deadly silent except for the sounds of the scourge being applied to Jesus’ back in the video *The Passion*. Each crack of the scourge was immediately followed by the collective click – a sound made by the tongue – of a couple hundred people sitting on the grass under a velvet black sky. As the scene became more and more intense, the clicks became more and more emphatic. Then one woman started wailing in loud, mournful tones that welled up from deep within her soul. Everyone was totally focused on the fact that Jesus had experienced so much pain on their behalf.

It was Saturday, July 5, in a small village tucked away in the tropical jungle along the winding Sogeram River in Papua New Guinea. This was the third night of a four-day celebration that would culminate in the dedication of a literacy building the next day. On Thursday and Friday nights the people had already



Engrossed in viewing The Passion

seen other Bible videos, projected using equipment hand carried into the bush and powered by a generator. *The Passion* was shown on Saturday night when the most

visitors were present. As the people sat and watched, engrossed by the action on the makeshift screen, Martha Wade explained what was happening in Apal, the only language most of them understand well.

The dedication of this literacy building in Angguna was the climax of a two-year effort that included a work team of seven from Southwest Christian Church in East Point, Georgia, Martha’s sending church. Constructing and equipping it required uncounted hours hand mixing cement, digging post holes, weaving bamboo walls, constructing bookshelves, and much more. Getting supplies from Madang out to Angguna was a logistical nightmare that threatened to bring the whole process to a screeching halt only weeks before the scheduled arrival of the work team.

The purpose of the building is to provide a home for the growing number of books in the Apal language – a visible testimony to the Apal people of the importance of learning to read. Without the ability to read, God’s Word, translated into their own Apal language, will have little opportunity for long-term impact on their lives.

After the screen went dark at the end of *The Passion*, most of the village people went to work preparing large quantities of food for a

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meal that they served mid-morning on Sunday. After the feast, everyone went up to the literacy building for a time of worship, speeches, and a sermon.

Jeffrey, one of the Apal translators, spoke about the fact that neither he nor any of the four other Apal translators had any formal education in English. They had only had a few years of school in Tok Pisin. Despite that, the translation work was moving ahead steadily and most of the longer books have been drafted.

Jeffrey then said that translation work was good, but that translation without literacy work and schools to teach people to read was like a house in which the posts on one side were very long and the posts on the other side were very short – a lopsided

house that was not very useful. He challenged the Apal speakers to use the building not just for storing books and medicine, but as a tool to help the literacy program move ahead so that when the translation is finished, many people will be able to read and use it.



Future Apal readers

Satan tried to stop it. Rumors abounded of people planning to come to the celebration not to praise God, but rather to fight with others who were also coming to the big event. Fears abounded that there would not be enough food and that everyone would go away hungry – a deep shame to the host village. People offered one excuse after another for not completing some of the details on the building.

But God answered prayers! Over 400 people – about half of whom were from the Apal language group – attended the Sunday dedication service. It was a calm event – one of the calmest Martha



Decorating the Apal literacy building for its dedication

has seen in over 20 years of ministering among the Apal. Guests had more than enough to eat. Everything went smoothly and, above all, God was praised.

As one speaker noted, the foundation has been laid. Now it is up to the Apal people to build on that foundation and use the building to glorify God. Please pray that God will use the two trained literacy teachers to train others and develop a system of schools that will meet the needs of the entire group.

The Passion exposed the Apal people to Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection on their behalf far more vividly than Scripture in another language will ever communicate to them. The literacy building helps pave the way for them to read God's Word in their own language. Your prayers help sustain Martha and the Apal translation and literacy teams.

Martha Wade is a Bible translator who has served among the Apal people since 1985. She also serves as our Director of Language Affairs. Eunice Herchenroeder serves as a Missionary Care Facilitator for our team. The first two photos in this article were taken by Emily Hand during her visit with PBT's Media Arts Communications team. We appreciate the resources PBT now has because of their visit.

Editor's Notes

It's been a busy summer for the PBT team here in PNG. Our schedule – and our facilities! – have often been full as teams of men and women checked translated Scripture in several languages. Additionally, the Apal people dedicated a literacy building, the Aruamu people hosted several Scripture-in-Use events, and we conducted an in-service course for literacy teachers

from five language groups. We hosted interns, members of PBT's Media Arts Communications team from Dallas, Texas, several former branch members who came to help check Scripture, and other visitors. And we welcomed our newest translation team, Derek and Sally Varejcka and their four children. As you read about some of these activities in this Storyboard, please praise God with us for all He is doing!



Wake Up Call

by Lindy Pate

I first came to Papua New Guinea as an intern in 2004. Last summer I returned as leader of the intern team. So this was my third time around the bush. Each summer I have spent time “playing” in the village, learning the people’s language and culture and chasing kids. I met some amazing women who became friends. Sometimes I have thought, “These people seem really happy, and they go to church. So why do they need a Bible in their language?”

During the second half of this summer’s internship, the three interns and I assisted with a Literacy Teachers’ In-Service course conducted by PBT. The participants were men already experienced in teaching people to read in their mother tongue. The course provided an opportunity to talk about challenges they face, be equipped to overcome some of them, and produce new Scripture-based books for use in the vernacular preparatory schools in their language group. Each member of the intern team worked with one language group. I was assigned to the Abu.

Working with them was a wake up call.



Fourteen men from five language groups participated in the PBT Literacy Teachers’ In-Service course

they did not know how to express key Scriptural concepts in their language.

I thought we picked easy enough stories, like when Jesus healed ten lepers and only one returned to thank Him. But translating *belief* and *leprosy* and *praising* and explaining what a *priest* is were anything but easy.

But the biggest shock for me was the account of Jesus blessing the little children. The Abu men translated *pray* literally as *talking with your eyes closed*. “No!” I protested. “You can talk to God anytime. Your eyes don’t have to be closed.” These educated, devout churchgoers were convinced that prayer is more than simply talking to God. After extensive conversations with multiple people, the men agreed to change the text in the story. But their understanding of prayer and God did not change.

I wanted to cry because their understanding of God was so wrong. Their faith was not based on a hope-producing, life-giving Gospel. They do not enjoy the security of knowing God as a loving Father who is always with them.

I asked myself, “These are educated teachers. If they miss the meaning of the Bible and the basics of their faith, what does the child or mother understand without Scripture in their language?”

Like a slap on the face, working with these guys has made me vividly aware of the need for the Gospel to penetrate the hearts and minds of Papua New Guineans. For that to happen, it must come to them in their own language.



Lindy assisting Abu teachers

It had sounded so easy. “Shells” for the books already existed, with pictures and pre-formatted text boxes. For each book, all they had to do was read the event or parable in the Gospels, simplify the story, match it to the pictures, and slap the text in there.

It was anything but easy for the Abu men. They do not have any of the New Testament in their language. Without Scripture in Abu as a starting base for the stories, they had to rely on the Tok Pisin Bible. Also,

Lindy Pate is a recruit who desires to serve long-term in PNG. She is currently a student at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in Dallas, Texas.

Using The Word by Marsha Relyea Miles

David, a young Aruamu man from Niapak village, showed me his New Testament, all marked up and smudged from constant use. He commented, “It’s like I’m married to my Bible. I read it all the time. I am *hungry* for God.”

It was such a blessing to be back in Papua New Guinea and visiting again in the Aruamu area. This was my first trip here since the Aruamu New Testament dedication three years ago. I experienced many happy reunions and joy-filled visits with my Aruamu friends. It was wonderful to be able to introduce my husband Nathan to the Aruamus – his 10,000 new in-laws! It was also wonderful to me to see Aruamus *using* the Word and to see how many are being faithful in their walk with the Lord.

Nathan and I were accompanied by Sue Ellen and Bobby Wrenn, sent to minister with us among the Aruamus by Cornerstone Christian Church in Dallas, Texas.

Our time in the village was very full. The main focus of our time was Scripture-in-Use. The Aruamus held evening crusade meetings and they asked me to speak for those.

About 400 people attended these meetings. Bobby Wrenn held leadership training classes for church leaders with a focus on how to study the Bible. Sue Ellen held a women’s workshop focused on chronological Bible storying. She introduced special scarves printed with pictures representing key events in the Old and New Testaments. At the completion of the classes, she gave each woman a scarf of her own to take home to use in telling



Marsha with Aruamu co-translator Steven Dazim

these stories to the people in her own circle of influence. Nathan taught guitar classes for both beginning and intermediate students. I led two literacy classes.

I was able to spend one full day planning and strategizing with the whole Aruamu Literacy Committee and Translation Team. Their concern? How to get more Aruamu New Testaments into the people’s hands – and how to get more people reading them.

The men devised a plan to divide into teams. Bobby Wrenn drove the 4-wheel drive truck to each of the 39 Aruamu churches. At each church the teams dropped a case of New Testaments to be sold. Arrangements were also made for teams of Aruamu Literacy Committee teachers to lead three different Scripture-in-Use workshops in August.

Before we left, the Aruamus had a feast to say, “Good-bye! We’ll see you next year, when we hold the 2009 Scripture-In-Use meetings.” When we come back, may we see many more New Testaments that are worn, marked, and smudged by eager readers who, like David, are married to God’s Word and always hungry for more!

Marsha Relyea Miles and her late husband John Relyea ministered among the Aruamu people until 2005. Marsha now serves as PBT’s Director of Church Mobilization in Dallas, Texas. She is facilitating the work of Aruamu translators working on the Old Testament and promoting literacy and Scripture-in-Use through visits such the one described in this article.

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Bringing God’s Word to Life!

Post Scripts

- ✓ *A few weeks after the dedication of the Apal literacy building (The Foundation Has Been Laid), Martha Wade learned that her village is now listed in plans for a government-sponsored school that uses vernacular curriculum. After years of asking and filling out forms with no results, Martha and most of the teachers had given up hope of ever having a government-recognized school. But one teacher, Sepa, kept on praying. God heard and, in His perfect timing, answered. Now they must find an Apal speaker who is fluent enough in English and committed enough to attend the government training course. The current teachers will continue to teach the children basic literacy skills, but the government-sponsored school must have a teacher who can transition students from reading only in Apal to also reading in English.*
- ✓ *Site preparation for our office extension in Madang is underway! We rejoice that about \$3,000 has been added*

to our building fund since March as we continue to pray for God’s provision of the remaining need. Financial gifts can be sent to Pioneer Bible Translators, 7500 W. Camp Wisdom Road, Dallas, TX 75236, with a note designating the funds for the PNG Office Extension. If you’re interested in coming to help with construction, contact director@pioneerbible.org.pg.

- ✓ *In 1992 Mike and Eunice Herchenroeder and their three children left Papua New Guinea for a year of furlough. In 1993 they accepted a one-year assignment in Dallas, Texas, so that Mike could serve on a software development team for Bible translators. They have now completed their Texas “year” and are back in PNG for two years serving as Missionary Care Facilitators for our branch. Mike also serves as advisor to the Akukem translation team and is completing his certification to serve as a translation consultant. Eunice pitches in with a variety of tasks, including helping compile and edit this edition of The Storyboard.*