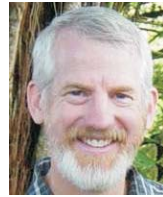


# Coping Devices

By Michael Sweeney



Whenever you talk to a missionary from Papua New Guinea, regardless of what mission he or she works with, the discussion will eventually come around to the topic of outhouses. You might say that we're all "privy" to insider information about them. (Sorry.)

It's just that outhouses have been responsible for many of our most memorable experiences. Nearly all of them are fun to look back on, although they were rather unpleasant to endure at the time, such as when a python dropped on my wife Linda. But that's not the story I want to share with you now.

When we moved to the village, one of the challenges we faced was training our two young boys in proper outhouse etiquette. There is one main rule: Always shut the lid. If you don't, the insect population will quadruple in your area within days. Unfortunately, our boys found this rule too complicated. So in a very short time the ambience of the little hut degraded severely, and you could hardly fight your way through the flies. Something had to be done.

Being a self-proclaimed inventor, I rigged up a system using string and nails whereby, when someone opened the lid, a sign would drop down in front of the door that said, "CLOSE THE LID!" Our 6-year-old, being hooked on phonics, was able to sound out the words and respond accordingly. Our pre-literate 4-year-old, however, simply walked out under the sign—even when I drew a picture on it.

So Mr. Inventor decided that it was time to play hardball. I extended the strings and made it so that whenever someone raised the lid, a board would fall across the outside of the outhouse door, trapping the person inside until he obeyed the sign.

It worked beautifully. For the next several months, our outhouse became a haven of tranquility (except, of course, for the snake that I'm not talking about in this story).

One day, our older son took a break during school to use the facilities. He seemed to be gone an exceptionally long time. Finally we heard his little voice calling up from the outhouse, "Daddy! Get me out of here! The string broke! I'm trapped! GET ME OUT!"

For some reason, Linda and the kids insisted that I remove the system altogether rather than replace the broken string.

Sigh. True genius is seldom appreciated by one's own family.

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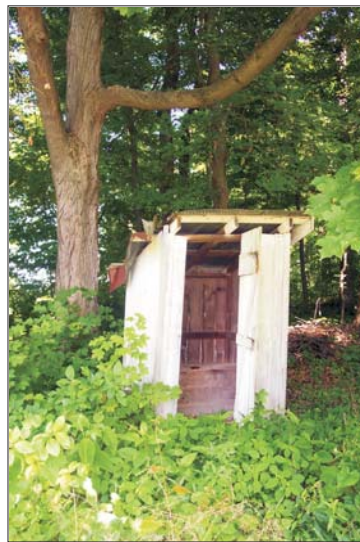
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Bringing the Word to Life



## Boats and Bats ... continued from page 3

charge in there, but by that time it would be on the veranda. Et cetera, et cetera, and so on. My humor, which had improved a bit when the boat finally started, began a long trek south.

Every now and then the bat would fly by, emitting little bat laughs while I flailed away with the rake. I was beginning to think that maybe I could just go stay with friends for the night when I heard it again on the veranda. I rushed out there in time to see it swooping around the light, eating bugs and mosquitoes. Nice bat. And as a reward for this exemplary behavior, I smacked it with the rake as it went by. It

hit the wall and dropped to the floor. I scooped it up and took it in to show Kathy. For some reason, she was not interested in seeing it. Instead she hid under the sheet and expressed her rather heated preference that I just take it out and throw it away.

Finally, it was back to bed, but by that time sleep was out of the question. So I lay there, listening to the sounds of the jungle and the footsteps of the animal walking around on the roof, and basking in the glow of my victories over machine and beast.



The

# Storyboard

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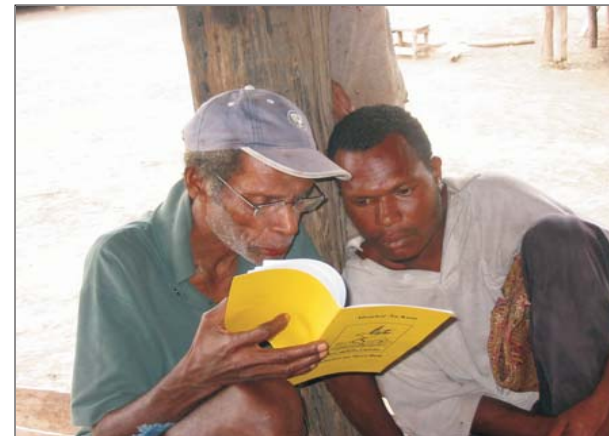
Autumn  
2003

## Another Milestone: The People of Marangis Read and Write Their Language for the First Time

By Kyle Harris

A young mother stood reading out loud from a storybook to a small group of children gathered around her. There is nothing particularly remarkable about a scene like that; it could have been story day at the local library. But here in Marangis, it was a revolution.

Until just a few weeks ago, the Marangis language was one of hundreds of unwritten languages in the world. An



alphabet had never been developed, and nothing had ever been written in Marangis. Many of the villagers knew how to read and write in Melanesian Pidgin, and a few even knew English. But nothing had ever been done in the vernacular.

In July, all that changed. Fourteen men from the village gathered together for a week to produce a Marangis alphabet. Each man started by using his knowledge of the English alphabet to write a story in Marangis. They then chose one of the stories and wrote it on the blackboard. Going over that story word by word, we listed on the board all the letters that had been used. Then, through eliciting examples of words containing each of those letters, we were able to fill in any gaps. There are several sounds in Marangis that do not exist in English. When these were encountered, the men were shown a range of possible ways that they could write those sounds. By the end of the week, all the

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- Coping Devices . . . . . 4

## Notes

Editor's

*Did you know that generosity is a gift of the Holy Spirit? Romans 12:6-8 says, "We have different gifts.... If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously." When we think of generosity, we usually think of someone giving, whether in abundance or something less than that, monetarily. But generosity entails more than just money. A generous gift may be one of time spent in listening and encouraging another. It may be providing a vehicle, or space for housing a workman of God in his*

*travels. It could even be sharing the Word of God with someone who needs to hear it.*

*I have had ample experience of being on the receiving end of this gift during my recent furlough time in the States. God has used family members, friends, and even people who scarcely know me among my supporting churches to bless and refresh my soul all along the way. These are people who regularly give financially to my work, but who also gave during the last seven months of their time, their space, and their ability to edify through the application of the Scriptures, speaking the Word of Truth in order to encourage and*

*uplift me. God has given a promise to those who use this gift with abandon: "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." [Proverbs 11:25] Thanks to all of you who have exercised your gift. Please continue to do so, for we all need those times of refreshing!*

*Some of the articles in this issue speak of the kinds of discouragement and frustration only those who are working in developing countries can know. But they also speak of the joys of giving from our abundance to those who have needs, especially in bringing the Gospel to those who do not yet have it in their own language.*

## Is It Worth It? by Lori Urton

I've seen the tears on my daughter's face as we've said goodbye.  
I've been told by family members that I'm depriving my children by taking them to PNG.  
I've been asked by friends why we can't work in the States, since there is plenty of work there.  
I've heard the tone of my son's voice, asking when we are going to be in Ukarumpa again.  
I've seen the look in my mother's eyes, wondering if she will ever see me again.  
I've had rats in my house, mosquitoes in my toilet, spiders in my shower house.  
I've given pain medicine and patched sores.  
I've had to learn how to make bread and not have fresh meat or cold water for weeks.  
I've had malaria, amoebae, headaches, chills, diarrhea, colds, and fevers.  
I've eaten things, smelled things, seen things, and experienced things that most people will never get to experience.  
I've been so homesick I almost couldn't breathe.  
I've been separated from family during the terrorist attacks in the States on September 11, 2001.  
I've seen a two-day-old baby grow into a busy toddler.

I've seen the smile on a child's face when I've given him a cookie.  
I've seen the gratitude in a young girl's eyes when I've given her soap or salt after she's carried water up the mountain for us.  
I've seen the joy in the Sob people's eyes when we came to Igoi for the first time.  
I've heard their prayers, thanking God for sending someone to them, and become overwhelmed to realize that it was my family they were talking about.  
I've seen the worried looks on their faces when we leave the village.  
I've seen their excitement when we return.  
I've seen them embrace Ryne and nearly smother him with their enthusiasm.  
I've seen the satisfaction in their faces when I've said a Sob word properly.  
I've seen the look of disappointment when I don't try to talk in Sob.  
I've seen the look on an old man's face when he saw his language on paper for the first time and read it.  
I've experienced the bad and the good. The good far outweighs the bad.  
Is it worth it? Do you need to ask?

Lori and her husband Chris have worked with the Sob speakers of Igoi village since 2001. They hope to start the Sob translation in August of next year. They are the parents of Stephanie, 21, and Ryne, 16.



## Another Milestone ... continued from page 1

sounds had been covered and decisions made for writing each letter. A tentative alphabet for the Marangis language covered the top of the blackboard.

The next step was to get more people writing in the language so that they could later test the alphabet and begin developing literacy materials. With that in mind, a writers' workshop was scheduled for the following week. Over the weekend, Kathy and I typed into the computer all the stories that had been written during the alphabet workshop. Kathy scanned in the illustrations that the men had drawn for each story. Once satisfied with our layout, we printed one copy of the storybook. This was, up to that time, the only copy of the only book ever produced in the Marangis language.

We were completely unprepared for the reaction that this little yellow book would have on the people. We had intended to just show the book to the participants of the writers' workshop as an example of what they would be producing. But as soon as we brought the book out, a group of men who had been sitting at the house next door to the meeting site grabbed it and gathered around as one of the men read the stories. It was the first time he had ever seen anything written in his own language.



A Marangis mother reads the first book ever written in their language to her children.

Then the book traveled around the village as it was passed from group to group. The next time we saw it, a group of ladies was gathered together, reading from the book. And, a bit later, the young mother was standing with her children, reading them the stories.

Finally, the book, a bit worse for wear by now, was returned to the house where we were meeting. In a few minutes, Charles Ked, one of the village elders (who, we later learned, was the first Marangis man to learn to read and write English back in the old colonial days) picked up the book, sat down, fished out his glasses, and began reading (pictured on page one). After reading a few pages, he asked if he could attend the writers' workshop, too.

During that week, eighteen men were taught how to write good stories in their language. For each story they wrote, they drew an original illustration. These stories have been collected into four Marangis storybooks. During August, Kathy and I printed and bound 35 copies of each of the books to take back to Marangis in September. We are looking forward to the day we can go out and distribute the books in the village. If one book made such a splash, think what 140 will do!

Kyle and Kathy Harris have started a multi-language translation and literacy program since their return to PNG in 2001. They live in Tambapmining.

## Boats and Bats by Kyle Harris

It was a beautiful cool morning, and I was lying in bed at 6:00, trying to decide whether to get a bit more sleep. Suddenly, there was a loud knock on the door, and one of the village ladies called out that during the night our boat had capsized and sunk. Hmm. Maybe I should get up.

I jumped up, threw on some work clothes, and headed for the river. To get there this time of year requires a lengthy hike through knee-deep muck and water. Between that and missing my morning coffee, I was in wonderful humor by the time I got to the landing.

When I arrived, the boat was floating upright and a bunch of guys were bailing frantically with buckets and pots. The boat was down at the stern, but was generally looking fairly good. Apparently, the river had dropped by a couple of feet in the night. The bow of the boat had hung up on the shore and the stern had canted back into the water. I had taken the drain plugs out so that the boat wouldn't fill up with water if it rained. But raising the bow like that had caused the water to rush in through the drain holes. As the boat filled with water, it listed way over to the point that, when the guys discovered it in the morning, it was resting on the bottom with one side completely under water.

We got it bailed out, but it was still way down at the stern; it was obvious that the bilge was full, too. Back through the muck and water I went to get some tools and the bilge pump. We set up the pump and got it going. In a couple of hours the boat was dry.



Now we were ready to start the engine. Outboard engines are not designed to be submerged. But it was obvious, looking at it, that most of the engine had remained above water. There was a bit of water in the lower air intakes, but I was hoping that nothing had gotten into the cylinders. We tried to crank it over, but after two hours of running the bilge pump, the battery figured that it had done enough for the day. Once more it was back through the muck and water to get the spare battery.

We tried to start the engine again, but now the starter would not turn over at all. It seemed that there was no power getting to the starter. I traced the problem to the starter switch assembly. Disassembling the controls showed a loose wire at the starter switch (where the key goes). This had nothing to do with the sinking. It apparently just decided that, if everything else was going down the tubes, it might as well join the party. In a couple of minutes we had fixed the loose wire and were ready to try again. Now the motor turned over, sort of, but it was acting weird and there was no way it would start.

"Well, maybe there really is water in the cylinders and it is keeping the pistons from compressing." I pulled the bottom spark plugs and turned the engine over and water gushed out. Okay. Got the water out, sprayed WD40 in the cylinders and tried it again. Finally, we got it started and ran it up and down the river a bit to charge the battery.



I was tired, so my wife and I went to bed early that night. But after we had lain there a few minutes, Kathy said, "There is something in the house."

"Well, duh," I thought to myself. Aloud, I said, "There are rats, geckoes, lizards, probably a snake or two, and about 50,000 mosquitoes in the house. And it sounds like some kind of animal is walking around on the roof."

"No," she said, "something is flying around in the house."

Then I heard it too—a bat. I told her, "Great, maybe it will eat some of these mosquitoes. Now go to sleep." For some reason, she didn't share my perspective. She burrowed under the sheet and told me to get out of the mosquito net and kill it before it bit someone. A biting bat seemed to me to be a good reason NOT to get out of the mosquito net, but I could see that she wasn't going to appreciate that bit of logic either.

Obviously, there would be no sleep until the winged vermin was disposed of. I got up, turned on every light in the house, grabbed a rake, and went forth to battle the forces of darkness (well, okay, force of darkness—and not a very big force, at that . . . maybe more like an influence of darkness).

I quickly discovered how difficult it can be to hit a radar-equipped, flying mouse with a rake while not destroying the house in the process. The bat was zipping back and forth the length of the house and seldom found itself in the same room with Rake Boy. I would hear it in the bedroom, so I would

Continued on page 4