



The Storyboard

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The Translation Trail has many steps along the way. Sometimes it may even seem that the entire trail is an upward climb. But none of the steps are taken without someone's life being touched in some way.

Inside you will read of the stages God's Word passes through from the first draft to publication. Some of our missionaries share the technical process as well as anecdotes of how they and a few of those working with them have been impacted by the gospel along the Translation Trail...



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**"Oh man!
If this one
book of Luke
makes me feel so
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going to be like to hold
the entire New
Testament?"**

-Apollon
Kire Speaker

MEET DAVID & CHRIS ROBINSON

Our newest arrivals are David and Chris Robinson. They come to us with a lot of life experiences, many of them centered around their former roles at Platte Valley Bible College in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. David also served on the PBT board of directors for over 12 years. David and Chris are the parents of three grown children: Scott is married to Kelly (they were 1998 summer interns and are recruits with PBT); Jacob is a recent graduate of Milligan College; and Sarah is a junior at Ozark Christian College.



When they complete their training in the Pacific Orientation Course in November, they will be working in an advisory role with the Papua New Guinea Bible Translation Association and serving in the area of support services in our office.

Rough Draft by Norm Weatherhead

The initial step of translation involves background research of the text we are translating. We look at the cultural background, read commentaries, pore over translation helps, and study the original Greek, several English translations, and the Melanesian Pidgin translation – doing all we can to understand the meaning clearly.

Two Papua New Guinean men and

one Canadian all sit around the table in the office ready to start translating a brand new Bible passage. All three of us share a desire for the scriptures to be in Nend. As we look at the passage, then stare at the blank sheet of paper in front of us, we pray that God will help us to make the translation natural and accurate.

One day we were talking about Genesis 15. Verse one has God telling

Every aspect of the draft is checked for many things — accuracy, faithfulness to the original meaning, good language style, logical connections, consistency with other biblical passages, smoothness, spelling, and punctuation.

Much of the rough draft is written by a national co-translator. An advantage of this is they produce a translation more natural and untainted by our influence. Regardless of how well we have analyzed and learned the culture and receptor language, we will never

have the command and creativity that our national co-translators have for their language. A disadvantage is that their cultural bias, lack of knowledge in Greek and English, and their resulting inability to benefit from the Greek text, commentaries, and translation helps may result in conveying an en-

Abram, “Do not fear, I am your shield and your great reward!” In light of the war and plundering in Chapter 14, what a great promise God had given to Abram (and by extension all Christians). But the word for shield in Tok Pisin is *hap plang* which means a half-piece-of-board.

The story went flat and the men did not catch the meaning.

So I went into theatrics trying to explain ancient warfare and how a warrior needed to hide behind the protection of his shield. The meaning suddenly came through and at the same moment the men stood up and shouted the words *ai akar*. This referred to a section of a strong tree which was cut out for use as a shield when there was a tribal war.

Exegetical Check by David Pryor

tirely different meaning from the original. These errors can be serious, minor, or humorous. For example, in translating “...the husband of one wife...” (I Tim 3:2) my co-translator had translated it accurately as far as having a word-for-word correlation. But in checking the meaning of the phrase in the Kire culture, I discovered that this was an idiom that would give a man license to have extramarital affairs so long as he only had one wife. That meaning would have seri-

ously damaged the integrity of the church eldership.

There is a tremendous spiritual blessing for both the translator and co-translator in the exegetical checking process. I, as a translator, have learned a great deal more about God’s Word, having to deal with each individual verse and its immediate and

They saw God in a brand new light. God Himself would protect them in the war against evil; He would be their *ai akar!* Now that is something to be excited about! Thank you God for giving us such freshness and joy and hope while we make this first rough draft of Your Word into the Nend language.



Working hard on a rough draft.

overall context. I have learned how to communicate the meaning of God’s Word more effectively in my preaching and teaching. My co-translator has also been blessed as we deal with correcting his misunderstandings or answering his questions. Seeing the excitement on his face as he exclaims, “Oh, that’s what that means!” makes this work very fulfilling. During the noon hour breaks or at the end of the day, my co-translator often shares with those in his part of the village what he has learned that day. Sometimes others come asking me to

explain more of what I told my co-translator. I am pleasantly surprised when more immediate blessings come from the exegetical checks rather than having to wait until scriptures are published.

Village Check by Marsha Relyea

The village check involves reading the passage out loud to two or three groups of village people not involved in the translation. We have them tell it back to us in their own words. We ask them questions about it, etc., in order to find out whether the passage is really communicating accurately and naturally.

Over the last several months we have been involved in “village checking” the translations of several Aruamu New Testament books. The Lord often uses this time of focusing on His Word to

touch lives in incredible ways. If you could have been a little mouse in the corner of our village house one day not long ago, you would definitely have observed the Potter at work.

We were checking the first chapter of Philippians. One of my village brothers had come to the checking session weighed down by big problems. His wife had left him and had been living in another vil-

One of the goals of translation is accuracy of meaning – does the translated text convey the same meaning to its audience that the original text did to its audience? In the peer-checking stage, two or more translation teams work together to check the accuracy of each other’s translations.

The missionary who is part of the host team usually takes the lead role in this session. Two questions need to be answered: *has the translation team correctly understood the original text and have they fairly represented that meaning in the translation?* Those of us who were the first to arrive in PNG with PBT had no “experts” to check our work because we had all started at about the same time and had the same amount of experience. Checking each other’s work seemed like a good idea. Not only would we be checking the quality of the translation but we would be broadening our experience and training ourselves to be more effective translators.

lage for the previous two months. He’d been caring for his five children on his own. His father was very sick, his oldest daughter’s school fees were overdue, and he was worried that she might have to drop out. Problems galore!

He listened to the reading. He joined in discussing what he understood each verse to be saying, giving suggestions for improvements here and there. And then we got to Philippians 1:21-22.

The Aruamu version, back-translated into English reads like this: “If I live on this earth, I will live with Christ. But if I die, my death surpasses this life of mine. If I continue to live and be here, then I will help many people. But which road shall I go on? I don’t know. I have two stomachs about this...”

As the other people on the village checking team discussed this section, my brother didn’t have anything to say. He let the others do all the talking. Then, when we were almost ready go on to following verses, he blurted out,

“I am hearing these words and I am asking myself this: why should I be discouraged? I am utterly a winner! Paul



John and Marsha with the Aruamu village checking committee

removes any excuse for me to have any other kind of thoughts. Listen! If I am alive, I am with Jesus Christ, and I win. But if I die, I also win. My death is good and even surpasses my life on this earth. So I am totally a winner!”

This dear brother left the checking session full of hope, comfort, and courage. (Oh, yes. His wife returned to him and his father’s health has much improved. The school fees are still a challenge, but he knows that God is in control.)

True confession: I really hate finding little mice in the corner of our village house....

Peer Check by William Butler

By the time a translated text is brought to a peer-checking session, the translator has already invested hours in it. He has worked with the team to translate it, revise it, check it, and revise it again. In most cases, the translator, especially when he is new at the job, is pretty certain he already has the very best possible understanding and translation of the text.

The other missionary sitting across the table in the session has invested an equal amount of time and effort in working with the text. If the two translators agree on the meaning and translation of the text, all goes well. But if they don’t? Remember these are two highly trained, strong-willed people who have invested a lot of time in reaching the perspectives they hold. You guessed it: sparks, or fireworks, or even nuclear blasts can occur. Martha Wade and I were involved in some of

the earliest peer checks and the *discussions* we had have become legendary – as an example of how *not* to conduct a peer check!

In those early sessions, we still accomplished the goal of checking the translation, but we also beat each other up. God used the pain of those experiences to change and shape us. We learned the importance of the Golden Rule in these sessions and to treat each other with more respect. We learned not to be so rigid in our understanding of the meaning of the text. We learned how to communicate truth with more love and less confrontation. Today, we still check the translations and confront the problems we see, but we do so with more kindness and less pain. In doing so we have become more the people God wants us to be.

Consultant Check by Mike Sweeney

A translation consultant is a kind of quality control agent for Bible Translation. Ideally, we are involved with translations from the beginning until the end, helping translators with difficult passages; providing advice, encouragement, and affirmation; and often just helping the missionary answer his own questions. What translation consultants are most known for, however, is the final check. As PBT's Papua New Guinea Translation Consultant and Honorary Translation Consultant for the United Bible Societies (UBS), I have found myself taking to heart James' injunction to 'pray for wisdom' quite frequently.

When a biblical book has gone through the previously mentioned checking sessions, PBT and UBS require the book to be checked by a consultant before it can go to

print. To do this, we enlist the aid of a *naive informant*. This doesn't mean the person is unusually gullible. It simply means he or she was not in any way involved in the translation of this book. Normally, we will

look at difficult passages, have someone read them out loud to the informant, and have the informant translate it back to us using the trade language, which in PNG is Melanesian Pidgin. We may need to ask clarifying questions. By this means we can often locate trouble spots: key terms not hitting their mark, or points of ambiguity needing work.

During one checking session with Steve Hayward in Yimnalem, our informant was one of the community leaders who happened to be feeling a bit under the weather at the time. He was having a very difficult time concentrating on the passages as they were being read, and he often wasn't able to follow my questions. Suddenly, in the middle of back-translating a passage to me, he stopped, announced that he had had enough, lay down on the office floor, and within half a minute, was sound asleep. I was dumbstruck. I looked at Steve, who smiled, shrugged his shoulders,

and said, "He's tired." Steve always has been one of our more insightful members.

Tiredness was certainly not the problem in the village of Garati where I was checking several different books in the Kire language. One very bright national co-translator working with David Pryor is Waisi. Since he was the person who translated these books, he could not be our naive informant. Instead, Waisi's job was to take notes and help us to figure out ways around problems that popped up in the session. But, as is the case with many of us who put our heart into a project, Waisi could not always manage to contain himself when I asked the informant questions. At the slightest hesitation on the informant's part, Waisi would explain the passage to me in full detail along with an involved justification for translating it in that manner. Of course, after such a learned discourse, the informant could do little but nod his head in agreement. Eventually, Waisi and I pretended that he had an On switch and an Off switch. If his switch was Off, he couldn't speak until I pushed his On switch. There were times that I feared he might injure himself trying to keep his mouth shut that week!

I once asked a UBS translation consultant what a person needed most to be a good consultant. He responded "A sense of humor." He was very wise.

Publication by Lori Witham

Because the Luke text in the Kire language was completely translated and checked, David and Sharran Pryor were in town working with me to have it typeset. They were making it into a book so that Apollos, as the Kire adult literacy supervisor, could use the book to teach scripture lessons during an adult literacy course.

What would it be like to long for something for a lifetime, and then finally hold it in your hands? Apollos saw the long progression of the scriptures being translated into the Kire language. We watched as Apollos was handed the completed Kire book. He slowly flipped through the pages, then held it to his chest and exclaimed, "Oh man! If this one book of Luke makes me feel so wonderful, what's it going to be like to hold the entire New Testament?"

After the final revisions, the translation is published with the assistance of our computer department staff. Publication includes choosing pictures, cover style, and printing options. It involves typesetting the text, and adding footnotes, glossary, study helps and maps. Then we have it printed at a local printshop or duplicated in our office.



God's Word in many languages, has gone from draft to publication – and into the hands of the readers.



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