

Coping Devices

by Mike Sweeney



The Doctor Is In

Somewhat accidentally, several years ago I found myself involved in basic medical work in our village. A very short time after that, a hypochondria epidemic swept over our entire region, easily octupling the number of patients I treated every week. The symptoms varied, but with one common feature:

Patient #1: "Oh, my head hurts. It's been hurting for days. I'm not sleeping at night."

Mike: "Okay, take two of these Panadol (Tylenol) tablets and see if they help." Patient #1 leaves and patient #2 enters.

Patient #2: "My knee hurts all the time. I have a hard time walking up hills. I'm not sleeping at night."

Mike: "Okay, take two of these Panadol tablets and see if they help." Patient #2 leaves and patient #3 enters.

Patient #3: "My back aches. It's hard for me to carry anything at all. I'm not sleeping at night."

Mike: "Okay, take two of these Panadol tablets and see if they help." Patient #3 leaves and patient #4 enters.

Patient #4: "I don't know what's wrong with me. I just seem to ache all over."

Mike nods his head and waits for more. When there's nothing forthcoming he says: "You're not sleeping at night either, are you?"

Patient #4: "Oh, that's right! I'm not sleeping at night either!" Patient #4 collects his Panadol tablets then goes outside and tells everyone, "That white guy is amazing! I didn't even have to tell him and he knew that I wasn't sleeping at night!" News of my special insight spreads rapidly. Soon the entire language group decides that it hasn't been sleeping at night and beats a path to my door.

Often the challenge with medical work, besides the fact that I am exceptionally unqualified to do it, is that people seldom tell me key information related to the patient's condition.

Man: "Mike, my wife has a terrible stomachache. Can you give her medicine for it?"

Mike: "Well, can you tell me more? Does she have a fever? Has she been throwing up? Does she have diarrhea?"

Man: "No, just a stomachache."

Mike: "Hmm, I'm not sure what I can do. Can you bring her to me tomorrow so I can see her and maybe radio in to a doctor for an opinion?"

Man: "Okay." He never returns, but two days later my neighbor Camilus points to him as he's walking through the village and says, "Hey, you see that guy? Yesterday his wife delivered quadruplets!" (I'm not kidding; this actually happened.) I don't think Panadol would have helped her too much, but who knows? Next time I'll try to remember to ask other questions, like: "Is your wife nine months pregnant and about to have four babies?"

Then there are those people who go overboard, not only with the symptoms, but with the 'obvious' causes:

Woman: "Six months ago I ate a bad smoked fish. Now I've got this big sore on my leg. I need some bad-smoked-fish medicine to make it go away."

Mike: "Golly, I'm a bit low on bad-smoked-fish medicine right now. Maybe you could take these Doxycycline tablets instead."

Woman: "Okay, but make sure you order in some bad-smoked-fish medicine as soon as possible. This could happen to anyone, you know."

Mike: "Right."

Now, after years of handing out Panadol, we finally have a full-time medical worker in the village. She and I are trying to work together to develop a new vaccine for hypochondriacs. Wish us luck.

PIONEER BIBLE TRANSLATORS

P.O. Box 178
Madang 511
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Phone: +675 852-2440
FAX: +675 852-2506

E-Mail: erohrer@pioneerbible.org.pg
Website: www.pioneerbible.org.pg

Editor: Ellen Rohrer
Typesetting: Lori Witham



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Stap Isi Bubble

by Kyle Harris

To the south of us, stretching from horizon to horizon, lay a line of towering thunderstorms. A few miles to the north, also stretching across the horizon, was a line of low rolling black clouds—a squall line of the type that in Kansas would have had us diving for shelter. Between these two systems was *Stap Isi*, the 30-ft. sailboat on which we were traveling home to Papua New Guinea. Watching these two systems, Kathy and I thought we might know a bit of how Moses had felt passing through the Red Sea. We watched and prayed that everything would stay put long enough for us to clear the area and put the ugly weather behind us. Our prayers were answered, and by evening the storms had passed or disintegrated, leaving us with a star-filled sky for the night watches.

We were about 1,500 miles from Madang, Papua New Guinea, and we were looking forward to finishing a journey that had begun many months and 12,000 miles ago in Moline, Illinois. In that time we had traveled down the rivers to the Gulf of Mexico, then across the Gulf and the Caribbean to Panama. After traversing the Panama Canal, we set out across the Pacific Ocean, island-hopping towards Madang. The goal, besides getting back to our work among the Lower Ramu people groups of PNG, was to bring this boat to Madang, where we would use it as a means of traveling to and from the area where we work and as a home while we were there.

As the coast of Panama disappeared astern and the Pacific Ocean loomed ahead in all its immensity, our biggest concern was heavy weather—high winds and the accompanying large seas. Yet, as we made our way west, first to the Galapagos Islands then to French Polynesia, American Samoa, and Tuvalu, we encountered little more than the occasional squall. Only twice had we seen winds higher than 40 knots, and each time they lasted for only a few minutes as a squall went over. And only once had we been close enough to a thunderstorm to actually hear thunder, even though often we could see large thunderstorms all around us. Other boats making the trip west would check in on the daily marine radio nets with hair-raising stories of the conditions they were experiencing, while we sailed blithely on. By the half-way point we had begun referring to the "*Stap Isi Bubble*" as that area of clear weather that seemed to follow along with us.

We are convinced that the *Stap Isi Bubble* was nothing more than the protection God afforded us because of the prayers of His people. For some reason our journey seemed to have inspired people.

Friends, acquaintances, churches, and people we had never met before were praying daily for a safe and quick passage to Madang. And those prayers were answered in regular and obvious ways.



Kyle and Kathy on the Stap Isi

Nine months after leaving Mobile, Alabama, *Stap Isi* motored into Madang Harbor and dropped anchor. Those nine months had produced some uncomfortable times and even a few scary times, but nothing really dangerous. There was regular maintenance to do but never a serious mechanical breakdown. Other than a bit of sea sickness now and again we were never sick. And beyond an occasional squall we never saw the heavy weather we had feared. God answers prayer. Any time we might have doubts about that we just think of the *Stap Isi Bubble* and the day we had our "Red Sea" experience. Our prayer now is that those people who supported us across the Pacific through their daily petitions might continue to support us and the rest of the Pioneer Bible Translators family in the much more daunting task of bringing the Gospel to the people groups of Papua New Guinea.

View the Harris' entire journey at www.flyingfox.org.

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Peace, Unity, Impact by Todd Owen

Try this on for size: Sit down and read through the epistles in the New Testament. Note how many times people

are encouraged to value others as greater than themselves, treat each other gently, carry one another's burdens, stop arguing over nonsensical things, put their own interests aside in lieu of greater interests, control their tongues. Having done that, read through the gospels and observe how Jesus interacted with others. Finally, consider how you interact with those in your home, your church, your community.

Now consider this: the letters of the New Testament weren't written to the tavern owners, the occult practitioners, the rabble-rousers of that day. They were written either to the Church or to church leaders. Hmmm . . . is it possible that these exhortations were written because they were *needed*? Experience teaches each of us that we still need those exhortations today. Mankind hasn't changed much over the last couple of millennia—the tongue is still a restless evil, the throat still an open grave. There is an adage that asks the question: *What do you get when you put two people together?* Conflict.

Missionaries are no exception. If you bring a lot of highly-motivated, strong-minded, focused people together and put them on a task, you have a lot of creative energy . . . but also a lot of potential for conflict.

Recognizing this, the international administration of Pioneer Bible Translators has begun presenting Ken Sande's Peacemaker's Seminar in each of our branches and projects around the world. The seminar was held in Madang over September 25-27, followed by two days of worship and Bible study. David and Alice Parrish (Director of Field Operations), Gerald and Ruth Denny (Director of Missionary Care), and Mike and Eunice Herchenroeder (International Service Center Staff) came from the U.S. to present the seminar and lead the retreat.



PBT/PNG's hope in having had the training and the time together in worship is that we might honor Jesus' prayer found in John 17: *"My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me . . . May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you*

sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:20ff, NIV)

Unity, peace, incarnational ministry all add up to one word: impact.

Todd is the PBT/PNG Branch Director and the translation coordinator for the Somau Garia. He and his wife Angela keep busy with their five children: Andrew, Samuel, Abigail, Hannah, and Josey.

"Litimapim nem bilong God i save stap antap tru. Na long graun ol manmeri i ken stap bel isi. God i belgut long ol."

(Luk 2:14, Tok Pisin Baibel)



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Delivering a Baby by Lori Witham

I do believe I have one of the best jobs PBT has to offer! I imagine myself as the doctor who has the awesome job of delivering babies.

He has the joy of being there to see the miracle of new life. He is able to see the ecstasy in the faces of Mom and Dad as they see their newborn child being born after waiting nine months. He watches their expressions while they see their baby's face for the first time. The doctor is the privileged one who hands this God-given life to its parents. The doctor must thrill at imagining where the life of this child will take him or her, and how God will use him.

Over and over again I am blessed to watch the miracle of life—in print—take place as translators watch the birth of their translated Scripture arrive as a typeset book. This week I saw it again, when two Somau Garia translators were in town with Todd Owen as I was finishing the typesetting of the Gospel of Mark in the Somau Garia language. This book has taken quite a bit more than nine months to arrive, but Todd has been experiencing the birthing

pains as he and the Somau Garia men spent years translating and checking and checking again, and then as they proofread every 'jot and tittle' before it was ready for publication. There were also delays for the Somau Garia, because Todd and his family were the second PBT family to live and work among them. Satan certainly attempted in many ways to prevent this



Stanley, Todd, and Siramia holding the title page and cover of the Somau Garia Gospel of Mark

precious 'baby' from being born! But God closely watched over the 'pregnancy' until its delivery date. As I watched the ecstasy on the faces of these men, I imagined how they were thinking of all the work that went before this, and how God will use this precious gift. (Just think—this little 'baby' already speaks Somau Garia!)

With a smile on my face, I handed this 'infant' over to Todd. As he and the two

Somau Garia men looked at the finished pages, complete with illustrations, headings, and footnotes, Todd said to Siramia, "Man! I'm going to cry!" A few minutes later, as we continued to flip through the pages, Siramia exclaimed, "Praise God!" . . . It's so exciting to witness the parents' joy!

As the Publishing Department Administrator for the PBT/PNG Branch, Lori has seen quite a few 'births' this year.