



The Storyboard

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A Good Reason To Come To The Mission Field by John Pryor

Most of us who are doing translation work came to the mission field with certain preconceived notions about what we would be doing, as well as how to go about doing it. The knowledge we had of the “field” was mostly what we had been told—not firsthand experience. In our training, we had been told that the translated Scriptures were the best evangelistic “tool” there was. Usually, by the time the book of Mark had been translated, half of the language group had made a decision for Christ, so we had heard. We had also heard that Mark was usually completed in the first term (approximately four to five years), and so a major portion of the work of evangelism would be accomplished in a relatively short time. I had visions of sitting in our

That is what I thought. It sounded great as we explained it to our supporters as we prepared to leave for the field.

Over twenty years have passed since those thoughts flitted through my mind. Most of what I had envisioned proved not to be reality on the field. Our meager training had not prepared us for the difficult job of learning another language, especially one that had not been previously reduced to writing. We had to develop all of the learning tools, hoping desperately that they were correct so that we would not be learning the wrong thing. We weren’t prepared for the relentless nature of the task—everyone we encountered was a language-learning challenge. Our inadequacies were always in the forefront—always a new word, a new construction, a new tense, a new discourse feature. And, since learning a language is actually learning a culture, there is always a new feature to try to understand and fit in with all the others we were learning. We were the minority—the only westerners for miles around. We were constantly being flooded with new cultural data, most of which was completely different from our western world view.

It became apparent that our vision of being the principal actors in the evangelistic thrust into the language group was not going to happen. The people were just too different for us to understand, let alone reach effectively. Finding the key to the best way to present the Gospel was not the only problem. Our Western point of view prevented us from coming to grips with the way Papua New Guineans think.

What were we to do? We would become equippers—hoping to enable local Christians with the knowledge of the Gospel message, so that they in turn

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could reach their own people. But how could we train these people as disciples—fully functioning members of Christ’s Church? Would we teach, or would we translate? Each could be a full-time job. If both were attempted, neither would be accomplished. The decision to translate was based upon the premise that vernacular Scriptures would be the best tool for helping people to grow in Christ, to become His disciples.

Although translation is the reason we came, it is only a part of “being there.” After twenty years, we have learned that “being there” is the essence of the Bible translation ministry. It takes a long time to translate the New Testament into another language, and longevity is the key to success on the field. When you live in a somewhat closed culture where change comes slowly, unless you are there for quite a while, your accomplishments will be short-lived because of the “out of sight, out of mind” reality. If you’re not around to reinforce what you’ve done, it will eventually vanish.



Bible translation is only a part of ‘being there’.

little grass hut translating contentedly, letting the translated Word change the lives of the local people. *I* was at the center of this scenario, everything revolving around me—*The Bible Translator*.

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World Mission Builders to the Rescue!

An Update from the Director

As we mentioned in the last *Storyboard*, Pioneer Bible Translators in Papua New Guinea is experiencing a severe housing shortage. New teams are on the way to begin work with the branch next year, but we will be hard-pressed to find them a place to live. At present, we have only one apartment to use for housing our translation and literacy teams when they come into town from the bush for buying supplies. It is not enough. The cost of renting commercially in Madang is prohibitive. Our best option is to purchase or build new housing for ourselves.

This past year, members of our branch were introduced to a group called **World Mission Builders**, based in Miami, Oklahoma. World Mission Builders specializes in helping missions with building needs. They have agreed to take on

three projects for our branch:

1. Add a two-bedroom apartment on to one of our existing houses;
2. Build a buyer-shipper building behind our office; and
3. Build a four-apartment complex.

The first two projects they hope to complete in 1998. The complex is scheduled for 1999. In addition to these three group projects, they have agreed to help one of our translation teams, John and Marsha Relyea, build a house at Ukarumpa where their children will be attending school.

World Mission Builders helps to raise the money for these projects by holding fundraising banquets in areas where churches are familiar with PBT. If you hear of a banquet in your area, please feel welcome to attend; but you do not have to wait for a banquet to donate to the building

projects. Any funds you would like to give can be sent to our International Service Center at: **Pioneer Bible Translators, SIL Box 255, 7500 West Camp Wisdom Road, Dallas, TX 75236.** Please mark the funds for "PBT-PNG building projects."

World Mission Builders will also be looking for experienced builders who will volunteer to come over and help with the construction work. Anyone who would like to help should contact **Edwin Thomas, Route 1, Box 20, Miami, OK 74354.** Edwin will evaluate each person's skills and decide how to fit them into the team.

Please be in prayer with us that God will touch people's hearts to give to this project and that he will raise up the right people with the necessary skills to do the work.

Believe It or Not

by Mike Sweeney



In my personal library, I have several shelves dedicated entirely to Mysteries. For sheer pleasure and withdrawal from the real world, there's nothing like a good "whodunit" to help me relax. I love walking alongside of Poirot, Holmes, Alleyn, Brown, Marple, Dalgliesh, and other great detectives as we, together, sort through a

mass of clues and red herrings in order to arrive at the "only possible solution."

It should be no mystery to those who know me, then, that I have gone into translation work. Taking a text in one language and trying to render it meaningfully in another provides ample opportunities to make use of my finely honed detective skills. Put on your gumshoes and walk with me as I relate one such experience to you.

My national translators and I were beginning work on the Gospel of Mark. From the very start we ran into some sticky translation issues. How do we say *John the Baptist*? What's a camel? How do we translate *prophet*? We discussed all these things at length and arrived at some tentative solutions. Then we came to verse 15 of Chapter 1: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." I expected problems with *time is fulfilled* and *kingdom of God*, and there were plenty. But it was the final clause (beginning with "repent") that took me off guard. They wrote: "*Kamata harum, nar mav nggimruta Avi Vanarum ndaya bilivim, vami.*" Literally, "*Because of this, you must turn (your) livers and believe the Good Story, he said.*" I stared at their word for *believe* – *bilivim*. "Now hold on there guys," I said. "That's not how you say *believe*. That's the Pidgin word for *believe*. How do you say *believe* in Mum?" They looked around at each other uncomfortably. "We can't say that in Mum," one of them finally replied. "What!?" I cried. "Of course you can! Why, if a man asked you if he could borrow five kina from you and assured you that he would pay you back tomorrow, but you didn't believe him, how would you say, 'I don't believe you?'" "We would say, 'No, you won't,'" they said. "Big help," I thought. So I proposed about four other

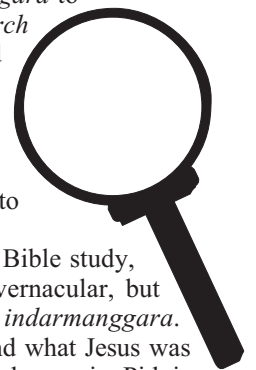
scenarios where someone had to trust someone else, just to find out how they would say it in Mum, all to no avail. I even had one of them close his eyes and fall backwards, showing him that he could *trust* me not to let him hit the floor. Still, they couldn't come up with anything beyond the Pidgin word *bilivim*. So we let the text stand as they had written it but highlighted in bright yellow to remind us that it still needed a lot of work. I decided to take my investigation elsewhere.

About two weeks later I was reflecting on the different forms of their word for *see* or *look*. The basic verb root was *ngga*, but I came across an instance where someone had said *nggamanggara*. I called one of my friends over. "What's this *manggara* thing doing on the end of the word for *look*?" I asked. Putting on his most scholarly air, he elucidated, "If you *ngga* something, you just see it, but if you *nggamanggara* something you really stare at it hard." "Can a person use this *manggara* on other words, too?" I asked. "Yes," he said, "it makes any word stronger." My little grey cells began churning. If you added *manggara* to the word for *walk*, it turned it into *march purposefully*. If you added it to the word for *hold*, it meant to *grasp tightly*. Whatever a verb root did, it did it ever-so-much-more-so with this suffix added to it. What would happen, I reasoned, if I added it to the word *indar* which means to *hear* or *think about* something?

That Sunday, after church, during my Bible study, I read Mark 1:15 to the people in the vernacular, but instead of the word *bilivim*, I substituted *indarmanggara*. No one batted an eye. "Do you understand what Jesus was saying here?" I asked. An old man spoke up in Pidgin, "He's saying we need to change the way we live and we must believe his good story." "So," I said, "when I say *indarmanggara*, it means to 'believe' someone?" "Of course it does," the old man said. "Anybody could have told you that. That's the way we always say it! You've lived here this many years and you didn't even know that?"

Some people have ways of deflating a great investigator's ego.

Mike is currently serving as PBT's Branch Director, and lives in Madang town along with Linda and their two boys Christopher and Ryan.



Having recently returned from the United States, this question is still very much on my mind. I was asked the "English" question nearly everywhere I spoke. Growing up a monolingual (one language) speaker in the American Midwest, I can certainly accept this as a valid and important question. It is hard to fathom the thousands of unique and complicated languages around the globe, especially when English is all that is known, and with the knowledge that it is so widely used in business and government settings. Below are some responses that a few co-workers and I use to answer the question, "Why don't you just teach them English rather than translating the scriptures into their language?"

10. **Pre-literate societies.** A high percentage of the people in the languages where we work are pre-literate. Neither reading nor writing in any language, they rely entirely on verbal communication — making the introduction of another language more difficult.

9. **Lack of culturally relevant resources.** Books and stories the people would use (traditions and ancestral stories) are not available even in English and much of their meaning would be lost in the translation.

8. **Time factor.** It would take decades for English to be totally embraced, if ever. Hundreds, or perhaps thousands, would die in the meantime. Remember the introduction of the metric system to the U.S.?

7. **Vernacular first.** Many village elementary schools are more successful if English is taught *after* the students become literate in the vernacular (local language). The Papua New Guinea government encourages this as well.

6. **Testimony.** There is value in having a mature Christian presence over a period of time to accompany the

emerging scriptures in the local language. (See *A Good Reason to Come to the Mission Field* on page 1.)

5. **No motivation.** Papua New Guinea villagers usually do not have the incentive to learn English. Besides, why would a non-Christian be interested in spending years to master English in order to understand the Bible?

4. **Unfair.** It is not fair and is egotistical to insist that people put aside their own deeply imbedded spoken tongue in order to know God's plan of salvation and grow in Him. Personally, I didn't have to learn Greek or Hebrew in order to read the Bible. It is human nature to feel that one's language is superior (isn't it?). The same is true for even the smallest of people groups.

3. **Difficult to learn.** English is very hard to learn. Ask most anyone who has had to learn it as a second language. Years of study often only yield the vocabulary of a small child who is a native speaker.

2. **Language is cultural.** Language is an integral part of each culture. They are forever entwined. One cannot fully grasp one without the other. How can the people, so much a part of their own culture, be reached without the language?

1. **People need God's Word in the language they know the best.** The *mother tongue* speaks clearly to the heart. Why deny this most important of literature to anyone? Jesus came to earth to present salvation on our human level. The work of bringing the gospel to others, no matter how difficult or tedious that may be, is minute in comparison.

Sandra has been serving as Administrator of Logistics to the Papua New Guinea branch since 1993.

A Good Reason continued from front page

Why? Because it takes a long time to work your way into another culture and earn the right to be heard.

What you do along the way is also very important. Years from now when we are no longer here, people will not sit around the fire and contemplate all those wonderful sermons I preached, all those insightful lessons I taught, all those years I spent in the office trying to untangle the intricacies of their language so they could understand God speaking to them. No, they will probably say things like: "remember how they used to give us medicine when we were sick"; "remember how he fixed our knife handles when they broke off our bush knives"; "remember how she would take our money and buy things we needed in town"; "remember how they gave us ice water when we were sick." On and on the list goes. Perhaps it does not seem to be a list of great missiological accomplishments, but it is the way that lives are touched. For example, we have lived here long enough to thoroughly model what Christian marriage and parenting is all about. One man once came and asked me what it would cost to get a woman from America to come to PNG and marry him. He went on



Newly repaired bush knives

to say that he had been watching Bonita and noticed that she didn't yell and scream at me, curse at me and beat on me. He wanted a wife like that.

Yes, lives of local people have been changed, even saved in the physical sense, through medical evacuations made possible by our connections to the outside world via the short-wave radio. People have been introduced to the ever-encroaching western world through the Christian world view, as opposed to the world view of the profiteers. People have been introduced to the God who created the universe. Eternal destinies have been changed.

Our lives have been changed as well. We thought that God had sent us here to help these folks, but I believe He sent us here to help us too. However, it never would have happened if we had not had a good reason to come to the mission field. Bible translation is a good reason for coming, but the bottom line is "being there."

John and Bonita are just starting their twenty-first year with the Ap ma language group.



CADA by Steve Hayward

When we surveyed the Tay speaking area in 1983, we realized it was a closely related language or a distantly related dialect of the Kalam language spoken nearby. The New Testament was almost completed in the Kalam language. After deciding that the Tay did need their own translation of the Scriptures, we also learned of a way that the Kalam translation could be used to help us do the Tay translation. It involves computers, and depending on which program you are using, it is called CADA (Computer Assisted Dialect Adaptation) or CARLA (Computer Assisted Related Language Adaptation). After studying the Tay language for a few months, we found that while the vocabularies were quite different, the grammars of Tay and Kalam were very similar. Because of that we opted to use the simpler CADA system of programs. This is how it works:

We first get a copy of the book of the Bible in Kalam that we want to translate into Tay. The computer program then orders the Kalam translation so that each word has a space under it to enter the equivalent Tay word. Once we have entered the Tay word under that Kalam word, we never have to do it again. Each time the program sees that Kalam word it immediately enters the Tay word for us. Actually, after a few chapters most of the words have been entered, so that we just push the button to send it on to the next verse or section that we are "translating." Once the book is done, we then have the program remove the Kalam translation, and we are left with a Tay translation of the book!

Of course, it's not quite that simple. Sometimes the grammars of the two languages are not the same, and we have to do a lot of reordering of the Tay to make it sound right. Or often the idioms of the two languages are quite different, and so we have to go through and insert the correct Tay idiom in place of the Kalam one. And sometimes we just decide that the Tay translation needs to be a little different in places from the Kalam translation.

Using CADA has helped us to be able to write a first draft of the Tay translation quickly, which we then work on to get the final translation for the people to use. There are still translation problems to solve, checking to do with the village leaders, revisions to make, and more checking and revisions with our translation consultants. But the hundreds of hours saved in producing the initial drafts of the New Testament books we have translated has helped us to move much further along than we would have otherwise.



The Tay language group is located in the Schrader Mountains, where Steve, Rhonda, Jason and Carissa live among the clouds.

LOOK OUT SHEEP! by Martha Wade

With the Christmas season upon us, millions of people will be turning to Luke 2 to read the story of the shepherds who were among the first to see our Savior come into this world. Martha Wade recalls some of the problems she and the Apal co-translators confronted in translating this passage:

In Apal, the generic term for all large animals is the word for pig. When the people look at pictures of cows, antelopes, or water buffalo, they call them *pigs*. To make things clear with foreign animals, they often borrow the English or Pidgin word for the animal and tack it on to their word for pig, so cows become *pig cows*, and elephants are *pig elephants*. So, every time you see *sheep* in your English Bible, the Apal scriptures will have the phrase *pig sheep*.

Having decided on the term for sheep, the term for shepherds was easy. They are "people who watch the sheep." From there it seemed like having the shepherds watching the sheep in fields by night would be no problem, but in our first round of comprehension checking I naively asked the question, "Why were they watching the pig sheep at night?" You can imagine my shock when one man said, "They wanted to shoot them with their arrows." I thought he must not have been listening, so I asked several others. Everyone else agreed. The term *watch* can mean both "care for" and "look at." When you combine the term for *watching* with *pigs* (an animal that can take

care of itself perfectly well in Papua New Guinea) and doing it at night (the best time for hunting), the only "logical" conclusion is that they were out hunting the pigs. Needless to say we had to completely revise our term for shepherds because they wouldn't be very good shepherds if they killed off all of their sheep. All the words were "right," but given the Papua New Guinean presuppositions about pigs we couldn't use these "right" words.

Martha is the translator for the Apal language. She is now studying in the USA towards her Ph.D. in Biblical Studies.



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