SIR VINCENT SEREI ERI (1936 - 1993)

The Crocodile, by Vincent Eri, was the first novel to be written by a Papua New Guinean, and was published in 1970 by Jacaranda Press.

Vincent was born in Moveave in the Gulf Province and later became Director of Education, PNG’s first Consul General in Australia, a Member of Parliament and Governor-General.

His novel is set in Papua New Guinea before and during World War II and is a coming of age story about Hoiri, whose life poses a continuing contradiction between traditional life and the modern world.
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Foreword

IT IS A CURIOUS FACT that progress often follows a crisis.

A lovers’ tiff sometimes does wonders for a relationship. Some people claim Papua New Guinea’s development was hindered by achieving independence so seamlessly. Others cite the positive things now happening in Bougainville as an example of the strengthening effects of a crisis.

The Crocodile Prize underwent its own crisis in 2013 but, rather than being a mortal blow, the national literary contest has emerged stronger than ever.

The Crocodile Prize Organising Committee, COG, established after last year’s near-fail, is delighted with this outcome – more than 600 entries, 130 writers, and the escalating quality of creative writing.

So, too, the sponsors must feel a sense of fulfilment. Their contribution to the success of the Prize is not to be underplayed: without them it simply could not exist.

Elsewhere in Papua New Guinea the all too familiar cycle of crisis and absolution continued. Political life in Papua New Guinea is mercurial. But, however you feel about that, there is comfort to be taken from the collection of essay, story and poetry assembled in this collection. This is the expressed voice of the people: clear, strong, insightful.

They represent an increasing crop of young, dedicated and idealistic citizens who are not afraid to tackle the big issues. It is something, we think, that everyone has been waiting to happen, and it will have impacts beyond the present.

As always the development problems of Papua New Guinea, and the reasons they exist, have been topics that have occupied the thoughts of many of our writers over the past twelve months.

Perhaps the huge surge in the number of writers entering the contest is a reflection of the increased numbers of people now
prepared to speak and act on social and political issues.

Some perennial themes are reinforced in each new edition of the Anthology: the meaning and relevance of the Melanesian Way; the dilution of traditional culture; the place of Asian people in Papua New Guinean society; issues related to women and children, such as domestic violence and sorcery; corruption; and the detrimental effects of the avarice of politicians.

Much creative effort is also expended on explaining and analysing what has emerged as the annual political crisis!

That said, such events are seen to inspire writers and are dealt with both seriously and, increasingly and encouragingly, in a humorous or whimsical way. Cynicism, particularly about politics, is on the rise in Papua New Guinea.

And then, of course, there are writers who happily ignore it all and produce enjoyable prose and poetry on simple and enduring themes like love and nature.

This year we received our first soft pornographic entry in the form of a steamy short story. This left us with a dilemma which we resolved by reminding ourselves about the readership of the Anthology. The story, despite its merits, never made it to print.

Taken together the entries this year inspires us to believe that a home-grown literature continues to develop in Papua New Guinea and that it has a firm future.

Sometimes I wish people outside Papua New Guinea, particularly in Australia and the Pacific, would pay more attention, but I guess we can’t have everything we want.

We have seen a writers’ association spring up in Simbu Province, and COG will encourage the emergence of similar initiatives elsewhere in the nation where a corpus of writers is developing.

We are sure you will enjoy the works in this Anthology, which have been selected from the hundreds received in the Crocodile Prize.

We are also delighted that in 2014, for the first time, literature has grown in strength and compass to a point where we have been able to introduce a Book of the Year Award.

We congratulate the winners of the Crocodile prize – it is becoming difficult to be a winner, the authors whose works are published in this collection and every writer (their names are listed at the back of the book) who entered the contest.
Foreword

Each of you is contributing to the well-being of Papua New Guinea’s national culture.

Phil Fitzpatrick

Editor
The Crocodile Prize Organising Group

Albert Schram, Vice-Chancellor, University of Technology
Ben Jackson, Director, Jackson PR Associates
Bernard Yegiora, Lecturer in International Relations, Divine Word University
Bob Cleland, Writer
Corney Alone, Head of Corporate Sales & Data Services Division, Telikom PNG
Francis Nii, Author & Poet
Gary Juffa MP, Parliamentarian & Governor of Oro province
Jane Awi, Lecturer, University of Goroka
Jimmy Drekore, Administrator, Simbu Children Fund
Keith Jackson AM, Journalist & Communicator
Leonard Roka, Student & Author
Luke Fitzpatrick, Director, Lead & Learn
Michael Dom, Agricultural Scientist & Poet
Phil Fitzpatrick, Author, Publisher & Consultant
Ruth Moiam, Communications Manager, PNG-Australia Health & HIV Partnership Program
Sil Bolkin, Senior Policy Analyst, National AIDS Council Secretariat
Steven Ilave Snr, Development Economist
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Papua New Guinea Chamber of Mines & Petroleum
2014 Crocodile Prize

Ok Tedi Mining Limited is proud to sponsor

The Award for Book of the Year.

This Award goes to a full length book chosen by an eminent panel of judges.
Leonard Fong Roka

I recently commented to Keith Jackson that someone needs to hose Leonard Fong Roka down before he spontaneously combusts. Captain Bougainville is like a machine gone mad, spitting out reams of text, all different and all stunning to behold. I often wonder when it will all stop, surely he has to run out of steam soon, but deep down I know he never will, at least not while he is breathing the fecund air of his great love, Bougainville.

He is the winner of the inaugural Crocodile Prize Book of the Year with his wonderful memoir, Brokenville, about growing up on his war-torn island.

What makes this award special is the stiff competition it was up against. Choosing a winner was not easy. Brokenville was stacked up against his other works, the collection of short stories, Moments in Bougainville, and his book of poetry, The Pomong Utau of Dreams, as well as Francis Nii’s compelling highlands novel, Fitman, Raitman and Cooks: Paradise in Peril, Sil Bolkin’s meticulous exploration of a Simbu diaspora, The Flight of Galkope, and the seminal collection of poetry by Papua New Guinea’s unofficial poet laureate, Michael Dom, At Another Crossroads.

All of these works deserve an award because they are very special in a very special year. Unfortunately there is only one prize and Captain Bougainville has carried it away.
2014 Crocodile Prize

Ok Tedi Mining Limited is proud to sponsor

The Award for a Lifetime Contribution to PNG Literature.

This Award is given for the most recognised person who has contributed greatly to PNG writing over a period of many years.
The Winners

Sir Paulias Matane

The former Governor-General Sir Paulias Matane will receive this year’s Award for Lifetime Contribution to PNG Literature.

Sir Paulias follows in the footsteps of novelist and poet, Russell Soaba, who received the award in 2012. There was, unfortunately, no award in 2013.

Now aged 82 and with 44 books under his belt, Sir Paulias is the most prolific published writer in Papua New Guinea. He is also a great advocate of books, learning and literature.

He was born in 1931, became a teacher and rose through the public service to become the eighth Governor-General of Papua New Guinea. His memoir *My Childhood in New Guinea* has been on the school curriculum since the 1970s, and for many years he wrote a column in a national daily newspaper.

One of Sir Paulias’s passions over the years has been writing and another has been encouraging other Papua New Guineans to write.

“Up to now, due to my encouragement,” he has said, “32 people have had their first books published here and overseas. Five have written their second books.”

The organisers of this year’s competition and award extend their sincere congratulations to Sir Paulias.
The Category Winners

People’s Award for Short Stories

Agnes Maineke

Writing short stories takes particular skills. They do not allow the luxury of exposition found in longer works. In a short story every word counts. Superfluous description has no place in a short story. Instead, they rely on sparking emotions in the reader. The best short stories appear deceptively simple but they are really like a finely honed blade made from quality steel.

Ernest Hemingway, the great American writer, summed it up when he wrote, If the writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things he knows, and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them.

Agnes Maineke’s short story, While war raged in Bougainville there was a miracle at Haisi, fulfils all of these criteria. Her story is simply and humbly told, yet contains much more than the sum of its parts. In it you feel the horror and reality that was visited upon an island in the Solomon Sea and which has scarred its’ people for generations to come. Read Agnes’ story on page 98.

Kina Securities Award for Poetry

Diddie Kinamun Jackson

In some ways, poetry is a second cousin to the short story. A poem seeks to create an emotional response in the reader using an economy of words. The analogy of painting with words is common to both forms but more so and heightened with poetry.

Poetry is like a thought that pops into your head and makes you sit up and think. It also involves the imaginative and often
unconventional use of words in verse and rhythms that are not only pleasing to the eye but pleasing to the ear. With so deft a form it is very easy to write bad poetry. Bad poetry is like a car with square wheels, downright uncomfortable.

Poetry is also about passion, the juices of experience concentrated into a heady and mesmerising mix.

Diddie Kinamun Jackson’s poem, *As a writer*, has all these qualities. It evokes and distils the poet’s passion into a stunning set of words that takes your breath away. Not a syllable is wasted and at the end of it you know exactly what motivates a writer. But if you were asked to explain it you would be lost for words; the poem sits in the pit of your stomach, not your head. Read Diddie’s poem on page 175.

**Papua New Guinea Chamber of Mines and Petroleum Award for Essays and Journalism**

**Kela Kapkora Sil Bolkin**

Kela Kapkora Sil Bolkin has been a consistent and popular writer ever since the *Crocodile Prize* began. He capped this off with the publication of his long-awaited book *The Flight of Galkope*. He never ceases to surprise with the range of topics he addresses in his essays.

In this he follows the classic style of the great essayists; his pieces are informative, topical, often funny or quirky and, very importantly, have a personal touch. He also writes in a style that readers are beginning to recognise as coming from the Simbu School of Writing.

This year he provided another thought-provoking crop; this time topped by his revealing story about the complicity between Asian businesses and the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary in Port Moresby, *Papua New Guinea as a banana republic: Chinese Li Wu suborns officials*.

These days’ readers look forward to the next Bolkin piece and we hope he continues to write for many years to come. Read Sil’s essay on page 304.
Cleland Family Award for Heritage Writing

Arnold Mundua

The Cleland Family Award for Heritage Writing received a record number of entries this year.

The judges whittled those down to six, which were then presented to Bob Cleland for a final decision.

In choosing the six finalists the judges were mindful of Bob’s original intention that this category contribute to the recording of cultural practices and beliefs that are fading in people’s memories so that future generations of Papua New Guineans can still appreciate their cultural roots.

Many of the entries strayed a little too far from this aim and simply recounted recent personal experiences.

Others presented material that was questionable in its authenticity, thus confirming that Bob’s original intention rings true.

Of the six that Bob received he said, “They all had heritage and/or historical content, but only one plunged straight into the subject and kept interest going with good, clear writing.

That entry was *Gag-gaumo: The baby cleansing ritual of the Upper Simbu* by Arnold Mundua.

Arnold is a forester in Simbu Province and already has a couple of books under his belt and is working on a third. They all deal with culture.

He is also a founding member of the Simbu Writer’s Association.

Read Arnold’s essay on page 413.
Buk bilong Pikinini Award for Children’s Writing

Iriani Wanma

Children should be read to from a very early age, ideally beginning around the time they begin to talk and comprehend words. Some people even suggest that reading to children while they are still in the womb can be beneficial. When they are able, children should be encouraged to read for themselves so that they develop reading as a lifetime habit.

Writing for children requires special skills. Most writers who write for children target their work towards particular age groups and sometimes gender. They also take into account the social environments in which children live.

Some of the material for children is written purely to entertain; some is written to educate and some is written for both reasons. A children’s writer also has to be aware of what is of interest to children in their particular age group.

These variables make it difficult to judge entries in a general competition for children’s writing. The judges have to decide the demographic of each work and then how it performs in those specific terms. In the end it could come down to deciding between a deceptively simple work for five year olds and a sophisticated piece for twelve year olds.

Judging writing for children in Papua New Guinea adds to these variables. What might be appealing to a child in a remote rural setting might not just click with their counterpart in a town area. A traditional story with a distinct cultural setting may appeal to the rural child but leave the town-dweller cold. In this sense, it is sometimes better to stick with universal themes.

With all these factors in mind the judges have decided to award the children’s writing prize to Iriani Wanma and her story *Oa Grasshopper and Kaipa Caterpillar.*
The story is simply told and does not require any particular cultural knowledge to appreciate it; nor does it incorporate tricky local words that need interpretation and thinking about. It is also subtly educational and entertaining at the same time. Lastly, it has a Papua New Guinean flavour, which is not overwhelming but sufficient to firmly fix it in place.

Iriani is the daughter of parents from Kairuku in Central Province and West Papua. She is a health science graduate and lives in Brisbane with her family.

Read Iriani’s story on page 470.
People’s Award for Short Stories

The original sponsor of the Short Story Award withdrew at short notice.

Through the generosity of an anonymous supporter, The Crocodile Prize Organising Group, COG, has been able to fund the Award.

COG thanks our anonymous friend.

And we dedicate these pages to the readers of Papua New Guinea.
Mickey and her mongrel ‘besties’: the duck that’s dogs’ best friend
EMMA TUNNE WAKPI

AS FAR AS DUCKS GO, Mickey is not much of a looker. Some might say she’s quite dirty and unkempt. However, as far as luck and fortune goes, well, she’s got it all.

Mickey was gifted to the Gimife family of 13/16 Bungi Street, West Goroka, two years ago. She was to be raised for meat but her downy duckling garb and disarming charm melted the family’s heart and she was bestowed with a name, put in a box and fawned over, even to this day.

She struts around the yard honking with the arrogance of one who knows she has the loyalty and unconditional love of an entire household. This includes her “besties” - Taylor, Broney and Brownie - three dogs of unknown breed who have adopted her as an honorary canine and would do anything for her, including defending her against bigger and stronger neighbourhood dogs.

Mickey and Taylor were brought in together as babes and introduced to Broney and Brownie who, together with Taylor, initiated Mickey into the ways of the dog. From the beginning, as with the human family, Mickey’s charm disarmed the dogs and even Taylor could not begrudge her the title of family favourite.

In fact, of all the dogs Taylor has a special bond with Mickey and lets her get away with antics that would have the other two nipping or growling at her (like eating the best morsels from her plate). Even as a puppy, Taylor couldn’t stand being without Mickey and would sneak over to where she was yarded and release her so that they could hang around together.

Mickey, however, is not all arrogance and snobbery; she has earned the loyalty of her canine family through loving grooming services where she spends time making short work of ticks from their bodies and fighting brave aerial battles when they go foraging into the neighbourhood borders to show territorial dominance.

On the nights when the moon is full and the dogs decide to sing,
tuneless bursts of honks blast through the melodic howls but rather than being perturbed her mates accept her crude contribution and allow her into their circle of the moon song for they know her heart, they understand that this is her expression of love and allegiance to their clan.

Because she has been coddled since she was a duckling and protected by both human and canine family members, Mickey has a false sense of security and believes she is as good a dog as any on the street and that everyone loves her.

This has led her into many scrapes that her family has had to rescue her from, yet there is a naiveté that blinds her to the dangers of life. She greets every situation with perpetual hope and cheerfulness, certain that her feathery frame and glaring honk will win everyone over.

Last week this naiveté nearly got her killed. It was around two in the afternoon and the humidity had everyone around the compound sapped of energy except Mickey of course. She waddled around looking for someone to play with but neither human nor canine would give her the time of day; all were resting in the house or under it trying to seek relief from the stifling air.

Giving up she honked her way over to the back yard garden where the compost is (her favourite foraging place) and started to dig around. To her delight she found a hole in the fence and behold there were two dogs that would surely play with her! Honking in greeting she started waddling over encouraged by their alertness and baring of teeth.

Fortunately for her, Brownie was resting in an alcove near enough to the garden to see what was happening. With a curt bark to the other two to alert them to the danger, she dashed after Mickey arching around to come between her and the two fast approaching attack mode neighbours. As she was distracting the assailants, Broney and Taylor raced to either side of Mickey and literally hefted her back into their yard depositing her on the compost heap and rushing back to help Brownie see off the enemy.

They then stood guard over their side of the fence arguing ferociously with the attackers until the humans who had observed all this came running to close the gap and Mickey-proof it.

Oh the scolding that dazed Mickey got from her siblings; it was so
comical it had the humans bending over laughing till their sides hurt and tears streamed from their faces but it was no joke to the dogs - they had nearly lost their beloved duck.

When it was over a chastened Mickey slunk after the three dogs under the house to rest quietly with them as they watched over her with disapproving yet relieved glances, probably thankful that the adventures of another Mickey episode was over and wondering what the next would be.
A true story: The good and ugly faces of Christmas
FRANCIS NII

CHRISTMAS HAS ALL KINDS OF faces. For Christians around the world it is the time for the commemoration of the birth of the Messiah; for the capitalists it is mega-buck commercialisation and for the atheistic poor in Papua New Guinea it is delusion and crime.

It was Christmas Eve in 1998 and my family and I and had just pulled up in front of Chris and Susan Kopyoto’s fast food outlet adjacent to the Shell fuel depot at Kainantu in our 4 wheel drive Toyota Hilux dual cab.

I wanted to pay Chris and wife Susan a courtesy call while on our way to Anamunafa in the Aiyura Valley to attend a Christmas Christian fellowship program.

Chris is from Enga Province and is married to Susan who is from Kainantu - mama graun.

Three years previously, I had been in Kainantu on a six weeks assignment when Chris and Susan were trying to buy the Shell fuel depot and the entire adjoining commercial premises, then owned by Wampna Group, the business arm of the Western Highlands Provincial Government, and I was instrumental in helping them make their dream come true.

Chris had asked me several times to give him a courtesy call whenever I passed through Kainantu but I never did until Christmas Eve 1998.

I got out of the vehicle and went looking for Chris and Susan. My family remained in the vehicle.

One of the workers led me to Chris’s office. We shook hands and he told me he was excited to see me.

Without asking if I had time to spare, Chris proudly took me on a one hour tour of the entire property. A very determined and enterprising couple they were. The way they changed what was once a rundown rats’ lair into a modern multi-commercial centre was very impressive.
After an hour, I returned to the vehicle with the lunch packs Chris had gotten for us. I gave the packs to my wife and got into the driver’s seat.

As I was about to insert the key into the ignition, a young man leaning against the tail of the vehicle turned and tried to grab the key from my hand. I twisted his hand and shoved it off.

At this point, another young man standing against the wall in front of the fast food joint pulled a brand new factory made pistol out of his dirty army jacket and pointed it in my face. ‘Key or life?’ he said and the message sank in.

The moment my wife and the children saw the pistol, they spontaneously got out of the vehicle and fled the scene.

I surrendered the key to the mugger and got out too.

As the culprits drove away, bystanders raised the alarm. The public responded by throwing sticks and stones at the driver.

The driver halted in front of the nearby Mobil fuel depot on the other side of the Shell depot.

The man with the pistol got out and fired two warning shots into the bitumen in the direction of the crowd. People ran in all directions.

Then both men held up the Mobil employees and emptied the cashier of all the takings for Friday and Saturday into the bilum that they had also stolen from us.

After firing another warning shot in the direction of the gathering crowd, they drove to the main highway and headed east in the direction of Yonki.

Not long after, a police vehicle came and gave chase.

About half an hour later the policemen came back with my vehicle. I felt relief.

At the Kainantu Police Station, the police explained that the gang drove to the dead end at the back of Kainantu Secondary School, left the vehicle with the engine running and escaped on foot to the other side of the creek.

The police knew the culprits. They were members of a gang that had been operating in and around Kainantu and their leader was the one with the pistol. His name was Nero, a man of mixed Engan and Kainantu parentage.

The criminals were wanted by police for various crimes and the
police assured me that they would eventually get the leader dead or alive.

The police got my personal details and particulars of the vehicle and then released it back to me.

The vehicle was in perfect condition. There were only few scratches here and there on the body.

The gang stole our two bags - one full of spare clothes and the other containing toiletries, bibles, a bunch of keys and other small things.

What worried me most were the keys. They included keys to all the doors of the entire National Development Bank offices in Elizabeth Street in Goroka. What if the gang found out?

Well, one advantage was that the keys had no name tags. Also I trusted what the police had told me. The muggers only wanted the vehicle to get away and that was the end of their mission.

I decided we should continue on and attend the fellowship.

Eventually we made it to Anamunafa, which is outside the Summer Institute of Linguistics camp a half hour drive from Kainantu town.

I told the host pastor what had happened, including that I was worried about the keys.

At the evening meeting, the pastor announced what had happened and asked people to pray for the keys to be returned. We held hands and all said a special prayer.

We prayed again during the morning session.

When the time came for the evening session, I sat with my back against one of the corner posts that held up the gigantic tent.

As we were about to worship, someone tapped me on the shoulder. It was the host pastor. He whispered in my ear, “There is someone standing outside the tent at the back of you. You need to meet him.”

I walked outside and there was Nero. I praised God for bringing him to me.

I said, “Good night Nero” and wrapped my right arm around his and introduced myself to him and told him about what he did to me the day before. I told him I forgave him for the holdup and, to be serious with my word, gave him a K10 note. In that short span of time, we became friends.
I asked him about the keys and he said they were in his in-law’s house, three houses from where we stood. I asked him if we could go and get them and he agreed.

We held hands and strolled together to his mother-in-law’s house. I stood outside and he went into the house. After some minutes he came out.

To my dismay he shoved something metallic and heavy into my hand. I held it up to the moonlight and it was the hand gun that he used to hold me up. It was a big hand gun with a long barrel.

“I don’t want this thing. I want the keys,” I said to him.

“They’re here,” he said, giving me the bunch.

“Nothing is missing?”

“Go and count them one by one,” he said. I praised God in my heart.

I said thank you and gave him back the gun. I felt he was showing off his gun.

As we walked back to the camp site, I asked him why he stole the money.

Nero replied, “This is Christmas and everybody is celebrating and for me and my friends, we need to celebrate too with some barbecue and beers.

“We didn’t have the money to buy lamb flaps, chicken, sausages and beer so we had to steal to buy them. We waited a long time for a get-away vehicle and you came. We couldn’t miss the opportunity so we held you up and got your vehicle.

This is the ugly face of Christmas I felt – delusion and crime.

“Barbecuing and drinking beer are not the only way to celebrate Christmas,” I said. “Look at us, we are singing, dancing and praising God and feasting on the Word of God. We are happy and we have peace and joy in our hearts. And this is the good way to celebrate Christmas because it doesn’t cost us any money. Why don’t you join us?”

Nero was reluctant.

“What if the police catch you?” I posed.

“Ha, they won’t. We know their tactics and they won’t catch us,” he said confidently.

The last words I left with him were, “If you live by the gun you will die by the gun. The only way to save your life is to turn away
from the gun and become a Christian,” and I went back to the fellowship.

At the end of the preaching, I told the host pastor to announce to the Christians that God had answered our prayers. The gang leader had returned the keys to me with not one missing.

The Christians roared into applause of praise and thanks to God when the pastor made the announcement. We all indeed believed it was a miracle.

The next morning on our way back to Goroka, we passed through the place where all the drama took place on that Christmas Eve and it reminded me of the ugly and delusive face of Christmas.
You are perfect. You will win!

DOMINICA ARE

WE MET IN THE CITY and fell in love instantly. We were an adorable pair. He is a doctor and I’m an accountant. He is a true friend. Someone to laugh and cry with, to hug and confide in. I never dreamt that I would find someone like him.

I am such a career-oriented person that finding love was the last thing on my mind. Being with him were the best moments of my life. He is everything I let myself dream of in a man. He is hardworking, kind, funny, charming and intelligent. And, added to the icing on the cake, he’s from the highlands. Ever since I was eighteen I have had a thing for highlands guys.

“You are perfect. You will win!” he smiles at me eagerly.

I wince, smile and roll my eyes. He has popped the question I dreaded the most. He wants me to meet his parents. Ouch!!! I just want to be with him. Just live with him with no plans for the future. But he thinks otherwise. He loves me a lot. He wants to marry me. He wants me to meet my in-laws-to-be. It is a spur of the moment decision.

I half-heartedly agree. I guess I am just not ready for something like this. I have to admit that I am too embarrassed to meet his parents. However, when he met my parents and family he won them over. They totally adored him.

I get on well with his parents on the phone. Whenever he calls home to check in I sometimes talk to them. I flirt briefly with the notion of impressing my in-laws-to-be. I don’t know how I will react in person towards the parents of the man I love.

He finally proposes and I have no choice but to accept gladly. I count down the days and contemplate how I will impress his family and win their hearts and their son’s heart more.

My sisters give me a good luck hug before we begin the long and tiring journey, first by plane and then by road, to his village to spend
the weekend. I really needed that hug though. We finally arrive at his village in the afternoon. It feels good to experience something different for a change. As we approach his parents’ house, my heart beats like it will burst.

I clutch his hands tightly as we walk. Everyone is there. I start greeting them brightly but not too much attention is directed back to me. They all greet their son with pride and respect and I stand there stunned. They acknowledge my presence but after that I am ignored. I feel like a stranger. They are not thrilled to see me.

I close my eyes for a second and imagine that I am somewhere else. But I am brought back to reality when he squeezes my hands and introduces me to his parents. After those phone conversations I thought they were nice people but maybe I am wrong. They just nod with fake smiles and shake my hand.

I ignore their negative reactions and try to be pleasant towards them and give them my utmost respect. I give his parents the gifts I have bought for them and start conversing with them.

Just then, his grandmother walks past, glares at me and mutters inaudibly to herself. My instincts tell me that something is wrong but I can’t figure out what. I am nervous. I feel unwanted. Why am I getting the cold shoulder from these people I have just met? We don’t even know each other. What happened to: ‘You are perfect. You will win!’

Is this for real. I am a real person with real feelings and needs. So many questions race through my mind. Maybe they just don’t like me. Maybe I have failed to come up to their expectations. What are their expectations anyway? Maybe I am not perfect for their son. Maybe they don’t like coastal girls. I try to think of other reasons. Why should they be like this?

I finally decide to make myself comfortable and try conversing with his relatives.

“This is a really great place. Will you show me around?” I ask one of his aunts and we leave the crowd milling around him.

I steal a backward glance and don’t like the look on their faces. I refuse to let their behaviour ruin my afternoon and weekend. I convince myself that it is the best thing to do now. I have to be calm. I try to regain some dignity by being polite and deal with the in-law issue. Maybe things will change.
That night in my room I hear them talking and don’t like the sound of it, even though they are speaking in their local dialect. I don’t have the heart to tell him how mean his parents and family are. I pretend that all is well with me when he asks how I feel about everything. I lie down on the bed and hold the pillow to my face. I feel comforted for a while. It isn’t a pleasing atmosphere but I force myself to sleep.

“Aiya-oohhhhhhhhhhh-aiya-oooooo!!” I wake up abruptly to the sound of women shouting and singing in their tokples. It is when I walk outside that I see her walking towards the house. The women are dressed in their traditional attire and are singing and dancing around her. I see his parents smiling away and talking nicely to the girl. I wonder what is going on. Just then he walks in.

“T’m sorry”, he says apologetically. “I never meant to hurt you. I am not involved in this. It’s my parents doing.” Tears sting my eyes as I put everything together. I only ask him, “Do you love her?” He nods confusingly. “I am not sure but it’s my parents wish and choice I can’t say no. I can’t go against their wishes after all they have done for me,” he says almost nonchalantly.

I totally forget the celebrations outside. I feel humiliated, rejected, hated, deserted and betrayed for the first time in my life. I feel nauseated. Then he does something I really wasn’t expecting. He leaves me and walks over to the celebration and gladly accepts the marriage arrangements.

I just want to get away from this place. I am out of sight and standing alone. I am really upset but I have to pull myself together. It has all happened so suddenly and unexpectedly. I believed what I wanted I hear. They too were judging. I have to accept it and put it all behind me. I can’t look back.

I don’t know why I, Sandra Jones, Monica and David’s daughter, the pride of my family, a beautiful and talented 27 year old university graduate and professional accountant with a large and well known company should be treated like this. I have succeeded in everything but this.

The man I love and hoped to be with for the rest of my life has been taken away from me by his parents.

The other woman lives up to his parents’ expectations and it is arranged for her to marry their son. I, on the other hand, don’t match
his parents’ criteria. I don’t even know what criteria they have applied. We haven’t even really met to get to know each other well.

I wonder if marriage is the only thing missing from my perfect life. Now one disastrous life decision has changed the life I want to live. I decide that happiness is living the life I want to live rather than the one I am expected to live.

I am on the next flight home.

Soon I ditch all the bad happenings and seek my own happiness.
As I lay dying

JP PRITCHARD

I AM SO COLD AND afraid, alone and lonely. It is silent now, no wind blowing, the hospital room is dull and depressing. I can see the head doctor to my right; his ID card reads-Dr Noreo, looking intently at the electrocardiogram monitor, a worried look on his unshaven face.

*Beep-beep-beep*, the electrocardiogram tracking the pattern of my heart beat. Sitting at his side is my mother, looking older and beautiful, I can see that she had been crying, her eyes puffy, she keeps sniffing while paying attention to Dr Noreo explaining the electrocardiogram patterns to her, which obviously is not good news at all; my heart will give in anytime now and death is inevitable. Mother couldn’t bear the thought so she keeps praying silently and hoping that the pattern will improve.

As I lay dying, I think of my beloved husband, Peku Jontei, I miss him and I need to see him right at this moment. I am bored of sleeping in this dying room so I decide to go for a little walk; I hope Dr Noreo and mother won’t mind. I slowly rise up and pull down the sheet. I am dressed in a clean, sky-blue hospital gown. I silently swing my legs to the opposite side and step onto the floor. Brrr, my bare feet absorbing the cold tiles, I feel so light. My tummy is flat—oh wait, my baby! *Where is it?* I remember following the nurse who delivered my baby via caesarean section and took it into the nursery. So I walk down the hallway, turn left, follow another hallway, approach the nursery and enter. I tip-toe to the crib and see it, see her, a beautiful baby girl. *Oh how beautiful she is, wiggling her toes and balling her little fist at me.* I smile and lean over the crib.

“You will grow up to become so pretty and have the strength of your daddy. *I will protect you with my life.*” I kiss her on the forehead, linger for a while admiring her then leave the room.

The hallway becomes dull, everything is in grey, no colours, no
life. I can hear the agonizing voices of the PMV truck accident victims moaning for me to join them in the afterlife. The truck accident is why I’m lying in there dying. I was fully pregnant and on the verge of giving birth, labour pain engulfed my body while travelling on that damned truck three days ago when the accident took place. It was awful, as if the labour pain wasn’t enough, then to die from the accident…I let the thought trail. Well not just yet, I have to see my husband.

I plod on down another hallway, out the door and enter the intensive care unit. Peku is in here. I come to a small room and when I look through the glass window I can see Peku there; his head heavily bandaged, his face bruised but visible, his right leg plus both hands are in a cast. I fight back tears when I see my husband in that shape. I enter the door and Peku senses me for he opens his eyes and smiles laboriously at me. I smile back and stand at his side. We stare at each other for a full minute then I break the silence.

“Daddy, you look like a wreck,” I smile with my hands reaching and touching his cast-bound hand. I know he won’t be able to feel my touch.

“I’ll live, now that I see that you’re well and alive,” Peku grimaces and tries to manoeuvre so he can look at me. “Vina my love, you look pale and frail but so pretty and so, so...oh my lord, where is our baby?”

I want to tell him that I am not okay but I just can’t do it; I can’t bear to make him stress out even more than what he is now. I smile even broader and announce, “Oh our baby is fine and it’s a lovely little girl, congratulations.”

Peku sighs with a little shudder. The room temperature seems to have dropped dramatically. “Baby I’m proud of you; you’re stronger than most girls I know. So what happened to you?”

“Well, when the collision occurred, I was thrown against the head of the truck. My spine was crushed, paralysing me from head to toe, my heart was beating slowly, I lost a lot of blood, I was unconscious when they wheeled me in and I had a placental abruption.” I force myself to look Peku in the eye when I say these words.

“Oh my god!” is his initial shock response. “What happened? How did you...they deliver the baby?”

“With those clinical difficulties, the only delivery option was through the
caesarean section, the C-section in short.” To his confused frown I add, “C-section is a surgical procedure in which one or more incisions are made through a mother’s tummy and uterus to deliver the baby—and yes the procedure was a success.”

“Sweet mother of god, honey that is...” Peku cannot finish the sentence; he turns paler than me and looks sick. He gulps down his pain and stares straight up at the ceiling, his eyes moisten.

I try to make amends with a sincere smile, “She will grow bigger, stronger and beautiful, and she will make you proud.” I can see colour starting to appear on his cheek as a shy smile plays across his quivering bruised lips.

“What happened to me? I can’t remember anything,” Peku tries to heave himself up but slumps back in pain.

“Slow it down honey. They found your unconscious body under the smashed hood of the truck, luckily it didn’t crush you.” Gesturing at his hands and leg I add, “With these fractures, right leg, both hands and a nasty head injury with severe concussion. It’s been three days today.”

“I was traumatized for three days? Wow!” Peku shakes his head only to make his head ache more. “I’m so sorry my love, it’s my entire fault. I should have been more prepared as an expected father but I screwed up.”

“Hush, my love, you were too young to understand; we were too young to face it when we rushed into this stage of life but the worst is over now; you are alive and so is our baby.” I want to hold him with my hand and assure him that everything will be okay.

“Hang on a second, but I don’t understand, you—you’re here with me, looking so fresh and every bit fine.” He stammers with a hint of uncertainty and suspicion echoing in his voice. “How did you get healed so fast?”

Oops. I can’t tell my husband, not now; he will figure it out when I leave. “Ssshh, I’m okay, I’m happy our baby is alive and I’ll be fine, and that’s all you need to know. Don’t stress yourself.”

Peku, still confused, relaxes nonetheless. “We’re a family now, a new circle of life. Not a great start but it sure is a cemented start,” he nods at his hands at the word ‘cemented’ and steals a weak smile.

I respond to his smile and shake my head, tears rolling down my cheeks, “I’m gonna miss you daddy. I want you to know that I love you and I will always. Get some rest okay?”
With that I fight the urge to touch and kiss him. I say *goodbye* and slowly turn and sway out of his room heading towards mine. I enter my room and see Dr Noreo and mother looking even graver. I climb onto my bed and rest.

Now as I lay dying, I am satisfied, I am at peace at last. I remember how it all started.

*It was early Sunday morning when the labour pain started. Peku and I left our house at Nawaeb Compound in Lae and dragged to Angau Memorial Hospital. On arrival, the nurse at the delivery ward wouldn’t allow us to get in without a mother’s clinical card or K100.00 for a new one. I had left my clinical card at my mother’s house up at Situm, 17 miles from Angau and we had no money except for K10.00. Was she kidding, with my urgency she wouldn’t let us in? Just one step through the door would have altered history.*

*I cried and when I looked at Peku, he tried to fight his own anguished tears back and kept screaming at the nurse to let us in. The hospital guards came and ushered us out of the hospital; can you believe that? Then a desolated Peku dragged me all the way up the hill to top town where we got on a Bumayong bus and started bouncing on the famous pot-boled Lae city roads, I swear I felt the baby’s head right there. From Bumayong we struggled onto another PMV truck, heading for Situm and off we drove.*

*But just as the truck full of passengers crossed the Busu River Bridge and started easing up the mountain, the unthinkable happened. A brand-new Toyota Land Cruiser sped down the slope out of nowhere and collided with our truck; there was a sickening boom, a hailstorm of shattered glass, fireworks of flying people, a roller coaster crash and roll of the truck down Busu bank and everything went blank…*

*Now I close my eyes and let out a sigh, my heart stops beating - giving up my soul. In the dying eight seconds, I say a little prayer in my head; ‘God I’m coming home, take care of my family.’*

*Dr Noreo stares one last time at the electrocardiogram monitor and bows his head in defeat. The beeping stops and the lines go straight. Vina’s mother starts crying; she caresses her daughter’s hands and weeps silently, tears of sorrow streaming down her face. Her husband had died three years ago and now her only daughter is gone too. She breaks down and cries, shedding sad, hopeless tears that only God can understand.*

*After a while Dr Noreo leaves Vina’s room and makes his way to*
Peku’s. He enters and Peku turns his head towards him.

The look on Dr Noreo’s face unsettles Peku, he knows something is wrong.

“I’m sorry Mr Jontei, I’m afraid your wife was not able to make it, she’s gone.” Dr Noreo tries to maintain eye contact and keeps a steady matter-of-fact voice.

“What? Peku shouts in alarm. “But she just came in and talked with me. She said she is fine, she looked fine and…”

“I’m sorry Vina couldn’t make it, she was practically dead on arrival when they retrieved the victims from the crash site. Amazingly her weak heart kept her going for three days before she gave in. We kept up a 24-hour surveillance on her; there’s no way she could have left her room without me or my people knowing.”

“But that’s impossible; I just talked to her a minute ago, we…”

Suddenly, realization hits Peku and everything comes into focus. Dead on arrival, C-section delivery, frail body almost lifeless, pale colour skin, cold room temperature…

Peku starts silently crying, Vina was right here with him - in spirit. He understands now; as she lay dying, her spirit was still strong, believing, holding on, waiting for him to emerge from the coma so she could see him, talk to him, assure him one last time before she went. He believes in every word she said. He turns his head away from the doctor, stares at the wall and with tears streaming down his face, he whispers, ‘I love you too, always and forever.’

Peku closes his eyes and rests.
When the fire went out
JP PRITCHARD

SAM WOKE UP AT 3:53 am, Sunday, on Motupore Island and couldn’t go back to sleep. The generator was switched off sometime after mid-night casting shadows over the lodge where the third-year biology students from the University of Papua New Guinea were sleeping. It was eerily dark and quiet. His three roomies were snoring calmly and dead to the world.

Lying in bed, he heard muffled female voices and footsteps coming from the front porch, then he remembered his course-mates earlier on in the evening talking about staying up late around a bonfire, into the morning hours. The fire must have been out by now and the girls were making their way back to their rooms. Sam heard the door across the hallway from his squeak open and knew it was Gima and her roomies.

Hell, Gima was hot; a beautiful Central girl from Keapara, if he had known earlier that she was out there, he would have cancelled sleep and hung out by the bonfire. He smiled wickedly and listened, silence, the girls had settled in. Some minutes later, he heard the guys follow suit, low voices and footsteps padded down the hallway. It was Pedi and his roomies. It had to be Pedi, of course, because Gima had been out there. He knew Pedi and Gima had this thing going on between them; the bonfire was another one of Pedi’s sleazy ideas to be with Gima. They had been inseparable since the students arrived on Friday afternoon for a weekend field excursion.

Not long after the boys settled in, Sam heard footsteps tip-toeing back into the hallway. He waited then tugged the door briefly open and peered out of the narrow gap and was surprised to see an unsuspecting Pedi just a few feet in front of him, pressing his ear against the door to Gima’s room with his hand gingerly on the door knob. Sam quickly eased his door closed and retreated back to his bed wondering what Pedi was up to.

Twenty or so minutes passed and then Sam heard strange click-clack footsteps coming down the hallway and seem to go into the
room next door, Gima’s room. Sam listened and then he heard someone moan strange unearthly sounds, he jolted up, his eyes bulging, his heart beating, he rushed to the door and that was when Sam heard it; an agonizing, blood-curdling SCREAM directly across from his room - Gima’s room. AAAAAHHH!

Gima, sometime after 3 am.

Ghostly fingers of flame danced on dying embers of glowing wood, the bonfire dimmed down as darkness crept around Gima and her other six course mates, three girls and three boys, sitting calmly around the fire chatting softly with drooping eye-lids. The rolling waves from the nambis washed the smooth, white-pebbled shore just a stones-throw away from where they were sitting. The humid July morning, coupled with the salty breeze, whispered sleepiness into their drowsy heads as Gima listened to the others talk.

The lively ‘shooting-the-container-game’ with its ridiculous string of singing and chicken-dancing had ended some two hours ago followed by harmonizing songs which eventually droned off into camp-fire stories. All throughout the eventful bonfire, Gima had been glued to Pedi or rather Pedi had been glued to Gima, whatever, it doesn’t matter. Wherever Pedi is there’s Gima, wherever Gima is there’s Pedi. Oh how she longed for Pedi, Pedi was just irresistibly handsome that night. Her thoughts were interrupted when she noticed her seven months pregnant friend Tori, a pretty Gulf girl, who kept throwing nervous glances into the shadows close to the foot of the hill near where they were sitting. What is she staring at? What could be so eerily captivating that it left a sickly look on Tori’s hypnotised face?

Carefully Gima tapped Tori’s arm and enquired: “Tori, Tori, you ok?”

Gima’s voice became edgy, “Tori, Tori?”

Gima slowly followed Tori’s gaze into the shadows and that was when she was hit.

Tori had been casting anxious glances over her shoulder into the darkness by the foot of the hill. Among the shadows of draping shrubs and short grasses she saw the faint silhouette of someone watching; she could feel it in her veins and smell it in the salty air. Something sinister was lurking back there observing, waiting. How long had it been out there? A sudden realization of danger dawned
on Tori as her eyes stared straight into whatever she thought she saw, a hypnotised look of fear crossed her pretty face. Then she heard it calling and summoning her.

“Tori, Tori...” And a cold hand grabbed her arm.

Tori gasped and swung around, almost knocking a perplexed Gima over.

“Tori, Tori, slow it down girl, it’s me!” a capsized Gima breathed sharply.

It took Tori a while to realize that it was Gima who was calling her.

Stunned, Tori whispered urgently, “Gee, I’m sorry Gims; we must leave now, something’s not right!”

Pedi the sleaze was right on cue, “Say, why don’t we all get some rest?”

Everyone yawned and murmured their agreement. Gima helped Tori to her feet and the four girls hurried back to the dark lodge leaving the boys behind. It was a good thing the four girls were bunking in the same room; Tori couldn’t imagine going back to bed all alone. On the front porch they paused and chatted about what had just happened, then they continued into their rooms. Ana and Irene, the other two girls, climbed onto their top bunks and were gone before their heads hit their pillows. Gima slid into her bed under Ana’s, turned her back to Tori and tried to sleep, thinking about how wonderful it would be to snuggle up naked under the covers with Pedi, till the sun came up. Tori lowered herself heavily into her bunk and stared up at a spot under Irene’s bed, not daring to watch the door nor the windows.

Gradually, she lost interest in the spot and dozed off into a welcoming slumber and just when sleep overcame her weary body, the locked knob twisted and the door slowly swung inward and a dark figure entered the room...

Pedi, 4:16 am.

When the fire went out, the boys, Pedi and his two friends, followed the girls to the lodge. Pedi walked down the dark hallway to his room, tried to catch some sleep but remembered that he had Gima’s cell-phone and decided to take it over to her room. It was an unnecessary excuse to see if she was still up. He tip-toed back into the hallway and stopped in front of the girls’ room, he inhaled deeply,
leaned close to the door and listened for evidences of a non-sleeping Gima. The girls were sound asleep. Bummer!

He thought he heard the door behind him creak but ignored it. A few seconds passed, he decided not to knock and headed into the lounge, pulled out a chair and sat silently in the darkness with his back to the kitchen. The main door was open, it always stayed that way. Outside it was a little lighter with no wind blowing. It felt like he was looking out of a cave. He looked out to the sea. Just a few metres from the front porch the tide was coming in.

He heard a door open and footsteps entering the lodge. At first he wasn’t concerned, thinking that someone must have woken up and decided to go to the bathroom. Then the footsteps continued and this time it was coming from the kitchen area and with that came an unsettling, disturbing sensation that sent icy cold shivers down his spine. Another door leading into the hallway opened and the soft click-clack of footsteps on the wooden floor approached. He stiffened, not daring to turn around and confront whoever or whatever was back there. He had never felt that kind of sensation before, or at least not for as long as he could remember. One half of him wanted to get up and run off into his room but his other half reminded him that his room was far down the hallway and whoever or whatever was back there was between him and his room.

A frozen Pedi sat helplessly and listened. The click-clack continued to move down the hallway as if aiming for one of the eight rooms in the lodge. A full minute passed, then two, and then the whole lodge erupted in a terrifying SCREAM that rebounded off the thin walls. AAAAHHHHH! The scream jolted him off his chair and without realizing what he was doing, he sprung up and bolted down the hallway to where the scream came from, one of the female rooms. Just then, something brushed past him in the hallway with a stench reeking of kawar, kambang and death. It was such a powerful force that it slammed him into the wall. He collapsed and passed out.

Tori, 4:22 am.

She couldn’t breathe, she couldn’t scream, she was numb to her core, his enormous fleshy arms pressed her down into the thin mattress with an extraordinarily powerful grip. His right hand smothered her mouth, suffocating her, while his left hand strangely caressed her bulging stomach as if searching for the unborn child.
This action paralysed her limbs and crippled her nerves. An overwhelming stench of *kawar, kambang* and *death*-filled the bedroom.

Tori couldn’t break free. Her attempts to do so only worsened her back pain; she squirmed relentlessly but never took her eyes off her attacker. That face—that horrifying black face with bloodshot eyes that glared with menacing intensity penetrated her mind. The room was solidly dark as if the attacker’s complexion had been reflected into the surrounding air. Through the thick darkness, that hideous face somehow looked vaguely familiar. Tori kept struggling to break free; *where are her other three roomies? Had the attacker killed them already? Were they aware of what was happening to her?* To answer her question, her eye caught Gima flipping onto her side. Gima must have sensed something and turned to look.

The attacker heard Gima’s movement and turned around and in that split second, his iron-grip loosened just enough for Tori to breath. She struggled to scream but could only moan strange unearthly cries like a tortured demon; the kind of horrifying sound that raises every hair on your head and makes your skin crawl.

Finally she found her voice and with a burst of adrenalin let out an excruciating blood-curdling SCREAM that shattered the night, slashing through the air like a Samurai sword with enough decibels to deafen the thirty adults sleeping in the lodge and causing Irene and Ana to jump down from their top bunkers shouting in unison, “What the ****!”

Tori caught a glimpse of black furry legs with animal hoofs where human legs should have been on the *thing* just as he or *it* stood and disappeared into the dark hallway. She fainted.
MAISY GOT ONTO THE RICKETY old PMV bus in Eriku and went to Top Town. It was 8:40 am, but the heat of the sun plus the dust from the half-sealed road was unbearable. The driver drove like a maniac; trying to avoid the deep pot holes and at the same time illegally overtaking other vehicles on the wrong side.

When the bus stopped in Top Town Maisy pushed her way out of the grim interior of her transport with its heavy smell of stale sweat. She squeezed around the huge bags of betel nut, which she suspected belonged to three women conversing loudly in their mother tongue and polluting all the passengers with their Cambridge cigarette smoke. She squinted into the blistering sun and quickened her pace. She placed a 20 toea coin in Samu the beggar’s out stretched hands but ignored the street sellers, who were trying to sell her Chinese made sunglasses.

She rushed on to BSP Bank.

She sighed as she was once again greeted by the bank queue and its talkers and complainers.

“Tiaha, pliso! Bai mpla sanap go nite nating lo hia yia,” (Goodness! Please! We will stand here till its dark,) a man who towered over everyone bellowed.

“Gaige lek! Ol teller yia blary schle osem tumbuna meri blo ol street!” (Eat leg! The tellers are as slack as their grandmothers), Cut Jeans, who looked like he was on an errand for his aunty, complained.

“Basta! Em moni blo yupla or blo mpla, hariap o!” (Bastard! Is that your money or ours? Hurry up!), a voice boomed right next to Maisy and she was startled to see a barefooted and long bearded man with a black brief case.

Maisy joined the queue and stood behind a man wearing Ghandi-like spectacles. He was reading The National and was engrossed in the report about the PNG Power entourage, gallivanting across Europe. His mouth was open halfway and he did see a lone fly whizzing back and forth next to his lips. Maisy lifted her right hand to swat the fly.
but then she smiled and felt like a total idiot.

“What is this blooming line for?” boomed a voice behind Maisy. “Is this an ATM queue? BSP yia, ol lain blo kamap wantaim kainkain play up!” (BSP is always coming up with all sorts of play up). Maisy turned around and was surprised to see that the powerful voice belonged to a little plump woman. She had beautiful grey curly hair and a pair of shiny reading glasses. There was no doubt that this woman was in the category of ‘little old grandmother with a blade for a tongue.’

“No, this is the normal queue for deposits, cheque accounts, withdrawals and overseas transactions. The ATM queue is over there,” Maisy briefed the woman. “What? No! No! Security!” Mama Shiny-Glasses called.

“Why are we standing outside, ha? Explain!” a powerful preacher-like voice demanded. Everyone murmured support and Mama-No-Nonsense, puffed herself up like a peacock and strutted back and forth.

“Look!’ Mama Shiny-Glasses yelled. “That security has just let an Asian in ahead of us!” She shoved her way out of the queue and faced the security guard.

“That Asian, is from a company and they made an early appointment, mama,” the bank security guard explained softly.

“Blary pipia excuses (Bloody rubbish excuses). You stupid Papua New Guinean! Playing at being a racist to your own people!” Mama Shiny-Glasses pointed her short chubby index finger at the guard.

“Sapose ol white man, bai yupla larim ol go insait hariap. Tasol mipla ol asples, maski, mipla animal ol!” Meri-Blouse Lady blurted. (If theye were white people, you’d let them go in quickly. But we the people of this land, forget it, we must be animals!)

“That's right! We are punished and have to wait outside as if we are not from this land!” Mama Shiny-Glasses roared.

Ghandi-like Spectacles never lifted his head once and wasn’t even stirred. The man in front of him had moved, but Ghandi was rooted to the spot; he was shaking his head and inhaling deeply the scent of the story in his paper.

“Brother-Reading-the-Paper, please move!” Mama Shiny-Glasses demanded as if she was the commanding queue-officer.

He moved without looking up.
The bank door opened and the next ten were called in. Maisy went in and joined the inside queue. The wall clock was right on 10. Goodness! She had waited for about an hour in the outside queue.

A mobile’s ringtone belted out Firehouse’s I am here for you and broke the unnaturally forced and blank stillness.

“Put off that mobile!” the security guard commanded.

Maisy did not move for the next fifteen minutes. The indoor queue was slower, colder and silent; like a slow sickly moving serpent.

“Please, hurry up! Hey! What are all these computers for? How come we have two tellers on all sides?” a man in overalls and huge dirty boots asked loudly.

“Please, wait patiently!” the security guard called out in a fed-up sort of way.

“Patience? Patience? You stupid man! How much money do you have in this bank, ha?’ Black Brief Case had somehow emerged ahead of Maisy. He turned and faced the security guard.

“I am employed to work here and uphold the bank policies,” the guard came over and challenged him.

“You close your mouth! This bank has stupid policies. You people expect us to stand for hours and hours, while your tellers dawdle and meander at this pace! We want to be served quickly! We need to get rid of this trend! Standing, standing, bah!” Black Brief Case finished off with a lot of murmuring, head nodding and “True, exactly, em nau,” (that’s it) from surrounding supporters.

By 10:30 am Maisy had moved only twice. She counted the people in front of her. Twenty five! Good grief! This was another of those unthinkable BSP queues.

She looked across to teller number three. Two years ago he didn’t have bulges but now he was heaving humps both front and back. He must have gotten married, Maisy thought. Now and then he would smile to himself and everyone could tell his mind was elsewhere. As she watched him he rolled his tongue over his lips and slammed the bank stamp simultaneously. This guy was as slow as a ninety-year-old papa.

Another mobile rang in the deposit queue and a woman answered with a very loud, “Hello!”

“Turn off the phone!” the guard bellowed again.

The woman ignored the guard and continued talking on the
phone until she had finished and satisfied. The guard announced, “Some you do not listen. You must turn off your mobile phones when you enter this bank.”

“That was my boss, instructing me to get a bank cheque. You shouldn’t yell at customers,” the woman told him coolly. The guard had nothing to say and stood there speechless.

By the time Maisy moved to the middle of the queue, it was 11 o’clock. Ghandi-like Spectacles was still deeply immersed in his paper. Maisy looked down at his shoes and saw that the guy was wearing his shoes on the wrong feet. She nearly laughed out loud, but stopped instantly. Even the shoe laces didn’t match. Had this guy been in a hurry because of the traditional long queue and had just grabbed what he could make do with? Maisy looked at his knapsack and saw a tag and furtively turned it around ‘Professor Wildenn Kanari. Unitech’. What the....! Maisy inhaled and then gave a deep sigh! That’s right, ‘Never measure someone by their physical appearance.’ She looked at Ghandi-like Spectacles and a sense of respect overwhelmed her.

“Great balls of fire! Another queue?” Shiny-Glasses’ voice boomed loud and clear as the bank door closed behind her.

“Mama, please just join the queue,” the guard kindly instructed her.

“Hey! Who are you? I stood in a very long queue outside in the sweltering heat and you expect me to be quiet?’ Mama Shiny-Glasses faced up to the guard.

There was a wave of complaints and murmurings that brought the bank manager out of her cubicle. But Mama Shiny-Glasses still continued on about her degraded rights as a citizen.

“No, no, this is inhumane. How can we stand in the scorching sun outside and then come into the bank and join another queue in this freezing air conditioning. I will not have it!” Mama Shiny complained loudly.

“You people take our money and then we have to suffer to get it back. Totally unacceptable to me. I think, I will start to bury my money in the ground like my papa did!” she continued.

Maisy heard giggles and smirks from all around.

“No, true! This banking system is worse than ever. We all should start thinking about burying our money,” Black Brief Case supported
her loudly.

Maisy looked at the clock on the wall. It was 12 o’clock.

The professor was the third from the front and Maisy was the fourth. The queue behind Maisy had gotten longer than ever but four more tellers were now in front of the empty computers. Oh well!

Maisy looked over at Number 2 teller. She was busy counting hundreds kina notes and handing them to Black Briefcase. Maisy looked at Number 1 teller, who was her favourite. He was fast and efficient and always greeted her before serving her. Maisy’s eyes moved back to Number 2 teller, who continued handing hundred kina notes to Black Briefcase. Then Black Brief Case detached a one hundred kina note and pushed it under the counter and said, “Buy your lunch.” The teller grinned like a Cheshire cat and pocketed the money.

At 12:45 Maisy reached the head of the long queue. She looked back and saw long, dismal and forlorn faces. Mama Shiny-Spectacles was now absorbed in a deep and meaningful whispered conversation with a young school student. Maisy looked across to Number 3 teller, who was serving the silent-as-ever professor. After he was served, the ‘next’ signal came on and Maisy walked over to the Number 3 teller. It was 1pm.

After fifteen minutes of watching Number 3 teller go through his ritual, she walked out of the bank at 1:45pm.

The bright sunlight reflected on the parked vehicles made her narrow her eyes as she walked past the outside queue.

She couldn’t help but overhear the people arguing with the security guard about the extra bank fees and charges and how their customer service totally sucked.

Maisy quickened her pace to the Top Town bus stop.

Another day, another queue.
I WAS 14 WHEN I left home to attend boarding school at Notre Dame High School in the year 2000. A Catholic girl’s boarding school run by the Sisters of Notre Dame, it is located on the outskirts of Mt Hagen city.

Coming from a staunch Catholic family, my dad proudly told me that it was the best school for girls and that surely father knows best.

The thought of going to a girl’s boarding school sounded fascinating. It felt good to get away from what was ‘usual’. The usual flow of things at home made me tired and I had to make a choice that would expose me up to new experiences, adventures, environment and people.

I was ready for a change but everything also has a downside. I had spent my entire childhood with my family and going away was a hard thing to get used to. I remember that I cried a lot and was very homesick in the first few weeks.

However, my elder sister, Savina, was a senior at the school, so I was not alone. As the weeks, months and years passed I fell in love with the school and it became my second home. I eventually settled in and made some great friends and we bonded really well.

Even so, I missed my family and friends back home like crazy. Mobile phones were not an accessory at the time so we’d communicate by letter and I’d always look forward to weekends when my family would visit and the holidays and free weekends when I’d go home.

Everything at school was routine and we moved at the sound of the bell. School rules were quite strict, from speaking English at all times to not going beyond the school boundaries. It was hard obeying some rules but it did make things run smoothly.

These rules also helped to mould and shape us. Every morning we’d have mass at the chapel, then breakfast. After breakfast we’d have a couple of minutes to rush back to our dorms to grab our
books and whatever else we needed for the day as the dorms were locked when we were in class. Then lunch.

After afternoon class we had just enough time to change out of our uniforms for work parades or other extracurricular activities. Then it was dinnertime. The mess prefects and duty teachers ensured the girls were clean and well dressed for meals. Food was never the same as home-cooked meals but we got used to it.

We studied at night in the classrooms and the duty teachers ensured we are all doing school work. Attendance was checked.

We wore school uniforms - a dark blue dress with collar and sky-blue sweater - on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesdays we’d wear a *meri* blouse and *laplap*. We sewed our own *meri* blouse in Home Economics class.

I felt awkward wearing this but had to agree that we didn’t have to care about what we looked like because there were no guys to impress! We dressed to impress ourselves in our wonderful uniforms and took pride in them.

The weekends were a bit more relaxed than the weekdays but there were still activities, such as work parades, a general clean up, sports, talent shows and of course Sunday mass for the whole school.

One talent show, my friends and I danced to the song *Rollercoaster* by the Irish pop girl band B*Witched. It was kind of funny but we totally enjoyed ourselves.

Everyone participated in school activities and this kept us busy and I was thankful for that. Boarding made me more open to new experiences. Being a shy, quiet and introverted girl, I did things that I thought I’d never do, including leadership roles.

I learned to manage my time and concentrate on important things. I didn’t have to worry about many things. Instead of flirting and being engrossed with clothes and fashion, boy-related drama and gossip, my priority was my schoolwork and studies.

There were personal and academic challenges I managed to get through. Boarding life also made me more independent and responsible. I got to grow up as my own person without feeling as though I needed to impress anyone or get their approval. I learnt to be myself and appreciate it.

The girls were supportive of each other and bonded closely. Living with them in one communal space was a challenge that helped
us become closer and form amazing friendships. I loved the moments when my best friends and I just lazed around, acted weird and talked about our future occupations and lives after school. The amount of fun we had was insane. There were, of course, people I didn’t get along well with.

Though schoolwork was quite tough, the teachers were exceptionally nice and helped us along the way. There was good access to teachers. Notre Dame had a good learning environment and passionate teachers and administration staff. The nuns were nice and caring. In class, everyone was open and participative, no one tried to ridicule another girl. Since there were no guys around, there was no male competition, relationship drama or distractions - that is the beauty of an all girls’ school. We learnt what it’s like to be a woman and attended horrifying lessons on puberty.

Every year, in May, which is the Month of the Holy Rosary in the Catholic Church, it was a school tradition to hold the May Crowning ceremony in honour of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. There was usually a poetry competition beforehand and the writer of the best poem was crowned Mary.

In Grade 10 I decided to try my hand at poetry and I was one of the lucky ones to read my poems. I appreciated the spiritual guidance from religious education class, daily mass and class retreats. This really helped a lot in my spiritual enrichment.

My hard work and dedication paid off, and it was there I developed my interest in writing. I am privileged to have met some of the greatest people I know and have some incredible memories. I graduated with my Grade 10 Certificate in 2004 among the top 10 students.

Notre Dame High School certainly lived up to its motto ‘Shaping and Nurturing Young Women of Tomorrow Educationally and Spiritually’.

With high school over, I continued to Grades 11 and 12 at Mt Hagen Secondary School. I felt proud of myself and happy that I would be living at home after four years away. But the thought of going to school with boys struck me as not fascinating at all. For the past four years my world had revolved around women and, except for my male family members, I felt uncomfortable around the male species. This may sound weird to some but that’s exactly how I felt.
Because of my limited contact with boys, they seemed like an alien species to me.

My mind started playing scenes of being bullied by boys, called names, laughed at and ridiculed as I had been at community school. I hated being teased and was scared the same thing might happen again. I didn’t know how it would work out but crossed my fingers that it would all be good.

On the first day in class, we the girls from Notre Dame High School cowered in one corner and spoke only to ourselves. As soon as the door opened, a stream of boys bustled in. I turned my eyes away. Too embarrassed to talk or look at them, or even sit next to one.

It was a culture shock going from a high school, where it was 100% female, to secondary school where the majority was male. We never interacted with them in a relaxed way. Some of us got nervous and giggled unnecessarily when around them. Whenever I walked past a group of boys, I told myself to walk by smartly but inside I was dying with embarrassment.

I became shyer and rarely spoke up in class. I’d stutter when given the chance to speak. My friends and I hung out together most of the time. I was a different person when I was with people I felt comfortable with. This continued for some time until our English teacher must have noticed so she announced one afternoon in English class that she was going to pair us up, boys with girls, and we’d write a biography of our partner.

That moment I froze. Oh no, no, no, no. This can’t be. Now let me get this straight. I am going to be paired up with some guy I don’t even talk to. We are going to sit face to face and have an interview. I can barely look boys in the eye. It’s really not that simple. I stayed up at night composing my interview questions and dreading the next day. I couldn’t pretend to be sick because we were going to be assessed on the interview.

I wriggled uncomfortably in my seat and tunnelled my eyes away from him. This was going to be complicated. My legs were shaking and I could feel my heart beating like a drum in my chest and sweat appeared on my forehead and nose. I stuttered when I tried to speak.

He must have noticed my obvious uneasiness and talked to me nicely with a sense of understanding. He encouraged me to be
confident and said that men and women had to work together in their working life and we should learn at school. Many things he said really boosted my morale. I felt at ease instantly and the interview went well.

He told me that he wanted to be a doctor in future and he did make it to the University of Papua New Guinea Medical School and I believe he is a doctor now. I said I wanted to be a writer or newspaper journalist. However, I took up business studies in university. The conversation got so interesting that soon we were talking like old friends. He was my first ‘guy’ friend. I always remember that biography lesson. It opened up a whole new world for me and I am grateful for that.

This happened during the first term of school. By the second term, friendship and communication with the boys became easier and we became more comfortable. I eventually started talking to boys, and hanging around with them and got involved in group work or study with them. It didn’t really hurt after all.

I developed a sense of confidence and interpersonal skills around them. The academic competition between boys and girls was enjoyable too. Life is co-ed after all and I’m glad I broke out of my shell and got prepared for the reality of life and the future. There wasn’t any replay of my experiences in primary school, although I was teased by boys sometimes. I met some good friends and teachers too.

But there were the distractions. Boy distractions. There was a lot of boy related drama and competition amongst the girls. I witnessed situations where girls tried to ‘dumb down’ another girl just to impress a guy. It was a good thing I was not a boy-crazy teenager so I was not affected or directly distracted. But I was glad to learn more about the opposite sex and their behaviour.

There was also the issue of dressing and fashion, which I had to get used to and develop good taste. And peer pressure. Schoolwork, homework and the assignment load was always increasing but, despite these distractions, I did well academically and got a bronze award in Business Studies at my Grade 12 graduation in 2006.

Then off I went to Divine Word University. I felt like I had already done everything before. I never felt insecure. I was open to new and more experiences.
Wart a parasite! Reflections on the life of a mole
MARLENE DEE GRAY POUTOURA

IMAGINE A PART OF YOUR body, a body that you loved and admired, suddenly becoming an issue of dispute….  

I looked in the mirror and hated the person staring back at me. I hated me for letting this mole grow on my face.

I realised that this mole above my right eye was hideously ugly, that it was a parasite and that I had been its host for as long as I could remember. It just sat there and grew and grew.

I had ignored it, thinking it was some kind of beauty spot. But, drat, it has labelled me as ‘mole face’ and ‘frog frontal’. Or others, trying to be polite, just say, ‘Wow, that mole on your face, it’s so in the front’.

Actually it is more like, ‘Dang, what an ugly black mass on your face.’

For a second, I lost it and thought that the person looking back at me was from some kind of bad photo. Then, for the second time, I saw how ugly it was. It was sponge-like, proudly perched on the top of my eye as if it had a mind of its own ….

Flashing, reclining, sunbathing and saying, ‘See me, I am so wanted. This woman has loved me for the last number of years. She has done nothing to destroy me. She thinks, I am some kind of beauty spot, but look at me, I have grown and I am growing. And my mission is to plaster her whole face. So people can look at me and say, ‘Ssshit ain’t that one helluva growth!’

The first thing babies do when I take them in my arms is reach up and touch my mole. When they touch it, they feel how spongy it is and giggle. Then they try to pull it off. Their little fingers grip onto this hanging black parasite and try to rip it off. And when they can’t, they suddenly burst out crying in a fit of anger. Later I realised that maybe it reminded them of a nipple.

Last year, I took my son to an Internet cafe to download some
Short Stories

games. After we bought our time code at the counter I was leading my son to a computer when I heard a woman’s voice.

“Hey, Christine! What are you doing here?” the woman shouted. I turned around and looked behind me, thinking she was talking to somebody else. As my son and I sat at a computer, the woman screamed right in the midst of all the Internet nerds.

“Christine, you mole face. I bashed you up in Moresby, what are you doing here? Are you stalking my husband?” she got up from her chair and faced me. I realised then that the woman was addressing me.

“Are you talking to me? Do I know you?” I stood up and towered over her. The look on her face changed and she cowered (I am 170 cm tall). She grimaced and shame filled her mousy face.

“Sister, I am so sorry. Christine has a mole exactly like yours and she is a Bougainvillean too. I apologise. Please forgive me,” she explained tearfully.

“Look sister, I am black, but I might not be Bougainvillean. I might be Sepik, Kavieng or Daru. Next time, use your common sense. Goodness, woman, grow up!” I was going to tell her more, like, ‘your husband is not a kid if he wants it with another woman how are you going to stop him?’

My son was upset and he said, “Mum, that lady called you a mole face.”

“Yes, darling, she did.”

“Were you ready to thrash her?”

“Yes, I was ready to chew the daylights out of her.”

“Why didn’t you Mum?”

“She mistook me for somebody else and she apologised.”

“I hate her for calling you mole face.”

Years ago, I was a relief teacher at Ela Murray International School. I was asked to relieve the Preparatory class teacher. I hadn’t been in that class before and when I walked in and said, “Good morning” a cute little expatriate boy looked up at me and the first thing he said was, “Yuck, there is a black wart on her face.” I nearly murdered that child back then, but the idea of Bomana was unspeakable, so I just smiled and read The Wombat Stew to them.

I once called a prominent real estate manager, who I had met in a BSP bank queue. I told him my name and asked him to fax me the
empty office spaces for rent. He couldn’t figure out, who I was and I kept trying to refresh his memory.

“We were in the BSP queue last Monday. You gave me your business card,” I said.

“Aaaaah yes, yes. I remember now. You have that black wart on your face,” then he laughed as loud as he could.

“Yeah, wart or not your memory sucks like your grandmother!” No, I didn’t say that, but I was quite embarrassed that he would label me like that.

I can go on and on and tell you how and what this repugnant mole has put me through all these years. As I look back now, I see that most of those supposedly positive remarks were merely sarcasm in disguise.

This revolting overgrown piece of ‘skin gone wrong’ is definitely getting extinguished in 2014. It has had an exquisite lifestyle, perched on higher ground. It has levelled itself with my brain and has started to ‘think’ that it is a contributing ‘part’ of my body.

But let me tell you, wart, you are going and it ain’t gonna be an easy ride. I will make sure Dr Florres laser beams you. And when you are dried out like some mutilated pubic hair, I will see to it myself that your roots are sawed out and bottled in hydrogen cyanide.

So, dear mole, enjoy your last week roosted up high on lofty shore. Because before long you will be erased.

As soon as I woke up on ‘Mole Extinguishing Day’, I got on Google.

It was because of the dream.

I bled when the parasite was smothered. Blood was dripping down my right eye and just kept on coming. The doctor had this chainsaw in front of me, getting ready for the second round as I had requested; ‘saw out the roots and drop it in hydrogen cyanide.’ The noise was unbearable.

I woke to the sound of the lawn mower outside.

Google did not exactly give, me what I asked for. There were so many articles on moles, which was totally unbelievable. And to really play with my head, Google said the study of moles is called Moleosophy. I don’t know whether this is some kind of scam, but check this out; Interpretation of Moles & Birth-Marks on Your Body. This was getting really interesting so I clicked to that page and just
couldn’t believe that this black membrane has a case of its own. This is what it said;

(DIV) The interpretation of moles and birth-marks depends upon two factors: their actual physical appearance, and the part of the subject’s body upon which they appear.

Did you know that a mole on either of your cheeks could classify you as serious, studious and solemn?

The location of a mole, its size, shape and colour can be interpreted as indicators of your character, as well as generalities for the future. Twin moles could have yet another connotation.

Moleosophy, when co-related with interpretations of other psychic sciences, substantiates personality and character readings, and provides a complete view of the subject.

Wow, and then it just got better. It went on to interpret moles based on their location. I scrolled down to Eyebrow and this is what it said; ‘If a mole is located on the right eyebrow, it signifies that these people will have a highly active life and will be successful in all ventures.

I looked up Gypsy Wisdom, ‘The mystical meaning of moles’ and this is what it says;

The gypsies of the world, whether they be from Romania, Spain, Ireland or America are superstitious people (yes, am Papua New Guinean and am quite superstitious too; keep going!) particularly when it came to moles on the body. They believed the appearance and placement of moles represent a personality characteristic of the individual or it is a ‘sign’ of things to come.

Again, I scrolled right down to Eyebrows. This is what it said; ‘If you have a mole on the right side of your eyebrow, it signifies great success, a wonderful marriage, many healthy children and wealth. If it is on the left side, it signifies cowardice, addiction, few children and bitterness in life.

Goodness today is my appointment day at Dr Florres Clinic! What am I going to do?

I thought of the weird dream I had last night and totally freaked out. Maybe, I should mull over this mole some more, when the feeling of the dream fades away.

Do I believe any of the stuff I read about on Google? Of course, I do. All of us Google every bit of information these days, don’t we?

Hmm! Was I having second thoughts? Perhaps I’d better see what the wart thinks? I shut my eyes and imagined what it might say.

“My life has not been easy you know. I have been cross-
examined, pulled, poked, measured, and nearly ripped and plucked off from out of where I am nested. It has been a long tedious journey and now I am destined to be extinguished by a dermatologist, Dr Florres. Sad indeed!

“Worse still, I am not a wart, as some people have labelled me to be. The difference between a wart and a mole is that a wart is a growth that is contagious and pink or white in colour and is caused by a virus. I am not contagious, I am black in colour and I am more of a skin pigmentation gone wrong.

“But what can I say? Many humans get us mixed up because we happen to be parasites, yeah, no doubt about that. But, between you and me, warts are more disgusting as they multiply in unbelievable numbers. Look at toads, they have warts, eew!

“I remember the times when I was loved and pampered. The extra hairs around me were plucked out, extra eyeliner was coloured over me and I was made to stand out. I was the distinguished black mole on the passport, identifying my host as a true citizen of Papua New Guinea.

“How did I ever swell out of the membrane to become the centre of attention? Well, let me tell you it was not my choice to be where I am, plastered high above on the right side of the eye. You’d think with all the yapping going around, that it was by my own will that I am high up here, no?

“The truth is that The Mole Case is broad. We are like a tribe of overgrown skin that has been recognised. A lot is written about us, but we are looked down on as if we are some kind of skin disease. But we may be more of a warning of some deeper ailment.

“The human skin is a miracle garment. It is soft, pliable, strong, waterproof and self-repairing. Just imagine what you would be like without skin; the answer is simple, a big squishy mess (hahaha, so there)!

“The skin is like a very large container, holding your insides in. It is the largest organ of the human body and without it all the delicate insides would spill right out. As I am part of the skin, I have to tell you that. So how have I become an excess piece of skin gone wrong? Well, I better let Google help me on that one, as the human race depends on it these days, so it is better for me to show you that my kind is talked a lot about on Google.
“Moles occur when cells in the skin grow in clusters instead of being spread throughout the skin. These cells are called ‘melanocytes’ and make the pigment that gives skin its natural colour.”

“There are many different kinds of us and some of us are quite dangerous. Google gave me information on our different classifications. I am sure I fit the category of ‘benign neoplasm’, which means I have none of the characteristics of a ‘malignant neoplasm’ (or tumour). I grow slowly, expand without metastasis (spreading of cancer cells from one organ to another) and usually, when I am extinguished I will not recur.

“The idea of getting rid of me is a very big deal as I am connected to veins beneath the skin and the aftermath bleeding is quite a sight (yes).

“I am not cancerous and you’ve had me for donkey’s years, so why remove me now? I hope it’s not for cosmetic reasons, as I truly hate this cosmetic era. Just look at Enrique Iglesias, he had the mole on his face removed and now everyone pokes fun at him and there’s even a Facebook account on Enrique Iglesias Mole and worse still his mole interviews him on YouTube. How shameful is that! I mean ain’t that good for his career?

“Cindy Crawford’s got a mole on top of her lip and she is mighty proud of it. Her mole has truly become her trademark throughout her modelling career.

“I believe having me is not at all bad. I am now labelled as ‘grown hideously ugly’, but is that my fault? I wasn’t born yesterday and I had to face this blistering sun in the unpredictable tropics. Not to mention the near death experiences I’ve encountered from those tiny fists and exploring fingers. Oh, and the unpleasant remarks and comments I’ve had to endure throughout has emotionally drained me.

“But think about it. I give you identity and uniqueness and it’s kind of exotic having a black mole perched on the brows of your right eye, level with your brain. How cool is that!

“You Googled ‘mole above the right eye’ and weren’t you pleased with what you found? The dream you had was a warning that doctors in Papua New Guinea will bleed you senseless and send you home looking like a zombie. The idea to extinguish sounds more like a fire extinguisher over me, so it doesn’t sound so depressing.
“Honestly, it’s the idea of hydrogen cyanide that sickens me to the core of my root. I truly despise this cosmetic era which disturbs the harmony of the skin by injecting, scraping and plucking. Just thinking about it gives me goose bumps. Why can’t people be content with the way they look? I mean I am just a skin, your covering for goodness sake.”

And with that mole won the day!
On Valentine’s Day, love is truly in the air

JP PRITCHARD

THERE’S THIS SONG THAT TELLS us ‘love is in the air’ and I’ll show you what that means.

It had to be perfect; I’ve been planning this for a month now. I knew the plan was not only insane and the first I’ve ever heard of in history but was also dangerous and risky. People’s lives and jobs were on the line; so was mine and my lovely woman’s, Cherie Manieka.

But I’m an adventure freak, a daredevil and a dammed good one. When I plan things, they eventuate the way I want. I knew Cherie loved me with her life and she would give anything to be with me in this life and the next.

I feel the same way too, I couldn’t imagine a life without her, I looked into the future and all I see is Cherie and I with our twenty kids living in a big old house by the ocean somewhere in New Zealand or somewhere else faraway.

Cherie and I went back as far as year 12 in high school. I was in the high-jump team for our school carnival and one afternoon I was practicing with my friend Sanjay. Sanjay knew Cherie through our mutual friend Vespar and it happened that they had invited her over to ‘check out the high-jump club’ and that’s when it all started. I liked Cherie right there. One thing led to the next and in two weeks we had our second date and in two months we were in love and in three months we had our first big fight followed by our first break-up.

University came the following year and we went our separate ways. She went to Unitech, I went to UPNG. Then after three months we got back together again, rekindled the love and were so in love that we started building all those crazy dreams of ours. Well, not all relationships are rainbows and butterflies, we had our moments and there were those awkward days and those fighting days. Then I was moving away to go down south to study, so we had our second break-up there and then; it was slow, painful and saddening.

A year went by and Cherie showed up on the radar again and still single so I decided to show up on her door-step with Chinese fast-food and soda cans. We got back again and grew stronger, more
mature with every new situation and we knew we could take the
world together, we knew that that was the pinnacle of courtship, we
were finally there and only one more aisle to go and it’s happily ever-
after; If you’ve ever been so in love, you know that feeling.

Five years on, two break-ups, one affair, and two make-ups later, I
walked into the jewellery shop in Vision City to pick up her ear-rings
and a stunning diamond engagement ring caught my eye, stirred my
soul and gave me a whole new meaning in life. Hell, I only have one
life to live and my heart told me to take the next big step right there
so I took it. I came home with her ear-rings and a grand plan. I called
up a couple of old friends from university days, two of them working
with Air Niugini: Captain Ilave- Q400 First Officer and good old
Sanjay, air-craft engineer. When I outlined the plan, they thought I
was crazy and I was like hell yeah! Sanjay got the flight technically
covered and Captain Ilave being in charge rescheduled a February 14
flight to Cairns and instructed the entire cabin crew on that flight
about my plans of course excluding Cherie who was in the crew but
was in for a surprise.

13 February 2013, one month later, everything was set and ready
to go. In the afternoon, I cooked a delicious dinner while I was
floating around whistling waiting for my lalokau to come home.

The drop-off bus pulled up at our drive-way in Korobosea and
Cherie hopped out with her work luggage. She just come back from
Nadi in Fiji. Being cabin crew with Air Niugini she’s always flying
around. I always wanted to be a pilot, she always wanted to stay
home and look after children, our twenty kids remember? But I
changed paths into biochemistry and she ended up in the air.

Anyway, I took off her heels and prepared a warm bath for her. I
shampooed her air and massage her body and serve her dinner in
candle-light. I did the dishes and we watched Pearl Harbor for a while.
Then we hit the pillows before the movie ended and made the
sweetest love ever. Sorry the details are for me to know and for you
to dot-dot-dot. That night, at around 11 pm Sanjay gave me a ring
and I sat up in bed.

“Vik, all’s good to go, get some rest it’s going to be a long day
tomorrow.”

“Thanks man, you the bomb!” I hung up. Cherie might be
listening so we had to be brief.
“Who’s that?” Oh dear, a muffled voice under the sheets. Cherie pulled the covers tighter.

“Ah… just Sanjay wishing us a happy Valentine’s Day,” I snuggled up to her. Her hair smelled so good, her soft skin makes me want to lay in bed forever. But I had big plans tomorrow, big crazy plans. I smiled and kissed her on neck.

14 February, I was still in bed when she got prepared and left at 8 am for that 9 am flight to Cairns, PX 090, and the same flight that I had booked to that same destination. I sat up, I heard her pick-up bus pull out, and then I sprinted into the shower, took a 3 minute shave, 5 minute shower and was out in 10 minutes. I wriggled into my best tuxedo, grabbed my ticket, cell-phone and wallet. Then I pulled open my suitcase, unlocked the latch and removed my little safe box. I pulled open the top and my breath caught in my throat.

The little maroon cushion case nestled right where I left it. I popped the cover open and admired the diamond engagement ring. It took my breath away every time I looked at it. I placed it carefully into my inner chest pocket and ran over to Sanjay’s place. Sanjay was ready with the engine revving. We drove to the airport, talking non-stop all the way.

I checked in at 0835 am, said goodbye to Sanjay and promised him to video the whole plan and emptied my pockets for the scanner. That dude at the scanner wanted to check my maroon cushion case and I assured him that that was my engagement ring. He understood and wished me luck. I strolled onto the plane. When Sylvia, another cabin crew, saw me coming, she pretended to pull Cherie into their cabin allowing me to slip into the plane and slump low in my seat. 20 minutes later after that same old boring safety routine and the plane was in the air, Cairns was another 2 hours or so away, there’s plenty of time on hand.

Sylvia started manoeuvring air-plane food down the aisle. Cherie wanted to push the other trolley but another crew member took over and asked her to stay put in the cabin to expect a call from the captain. Of course, Cherie wasn’t aware that all the crew had planned the occasion.

At the end of the aisle, Sylvia finished then slowly pulled out a video camera and motioned for me to go over. I slipped out of my seat and walked over, took out the maroon case and placed it on the
top front of the trolley. We had rose petals and scarlet ribbons around the case with a hand-written note that said: “Happy Valentine’s Day Mon Cherie, open this case, it’s for you.”

I steadied myself and pushed the trolley back up to the front with Sylvia at my toe, filming every move. Technically it’s dangerous to have your electrical gadgets on when the plane is taking off or is landing but it is okay to switch on in the air, thanks to Sanjay.

All the passengers were staring and mumbling at me. What is this fool doing with the trolley and this crew member doing with a video camera? You could be sure there’d be panic in the plane. We kept going, whispering and assuring the passengers that it was nothing to worry about. As if on cue, an abrupt announcement crackled from the intercom and Captain Ilave’s voice came through.

“Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. On behalf of Air Niugini and my crew, I would like welcome you all on board. It’s a really clear day up ahead so we’ll be flying through without any turbulence. The little show going on down the aisle is a Valentine’s Day surprise for one of our cabin crew. I can assure you, there is nothing to be worried about. So sit back, relax and enjoy the show with champagne and cake coming up, it’s on the house, for a very special friend on board, that idiot behind the trolley, happy Valentine’s Day.”

As I laughed and approached the front, Cherie and the other curious crew, who pretended to be surprised, bundled out of their cabin to see what was going on. When she saw me with what looked like a decorated trolley with Sylvia filming at the back, she was shocked. I parked the trolley right in front of her and nodded at the case.

She saw it, she got the message, she took the case and as she was opening it, I moved up to her and went down on my knees. Her jaws dropped open both at the sight of the stunning diamond ring and at me on my knees. I wasted no time; I firmly took her left hand, looked up into her pretty brown eyes which was glistening with tears of excitement and with a steady confident voice I spoke.

“Mon Cherie, I’ve always loved you and forever I will. I love you now more than ever. You’re my world, you’re my life and my everything. My sweet, will you marry me?”

In the split of a second she choked “Yes, yes and yes!”
The plane erupted in claps and whistles and cameras clicking everywhere. I thought, my god, we would either crash or Ilave was getting fired as soon as we landed.

I slid the ring onto Cherie’s ring-finger and kissed her hand. I stood up and embraced her close and planted a long cherishing kiss on her lips and her wet eyes and her nose. It was the most wonderful moment in my life - our lives.

My embrace told her that she belonged in here and that she would be safe, sound and home. I let her hug her colleagues as I turned to the passengers, winked at them and screamed, pumping my hands into the air, “She said yes!”

Captain Ilave’s voice came through again.

“Ladies and gentle, I would like to take this time to congratulate my good old friend Viktor Thron and his fiancée Cherie Manieka, congratulations on your historic engagement. Live long and prosper. And everyone please switch off your cameras, the show is over. Enjoy your selves and buckle up, Cairns is coming up.”

Fifteen minutes later, we rolled onto the tarmac. After everyone piled out, I said thanks to the crew, owe you all one big time and hugged Captain Ilave thanking him for his tremendous help in pulling my plan through with ease.

Captain Ilave turned to Cherie and beamed, “You’re officially relieved from duty until tomorrow morning when I return from POM. Go have fun you love-birds.

As we hugged and walked into the sunshine, nothing in this world seemed impossible to achieve with this wonderful women by my side.
The old man
JOHN KAUPA KAMASUA

THE MORNING AIR WAS QUIET for many miles around. The sharp cries of the cicadas somehow stopped for a while, and no wind blew among the leaves. A moment later children’s voices could be heard from the direction of the garden.

“Kemi stole the bananas! Kemi stole bananas from Kondo’s garden!” shouted the children as they dragged Kemi to the entrance of the hausman (men’s house) in the village.

“Usher in the suspect for he must speak for himself, and if found guilty pay for his sins,” commanded the village chief. It so happened that the men were still sitting on their beds and did not feel the need to hurry to their chores for the day, it being a weekend.

“He did not sin. He only stole some bananas from Kondo’s garden. We caught him in the act,” said the leader of the group. “Not like the sin in the Bible.”

“Whether you break the law of the Bible or steal from the garden, it is still sin,” old Ere-Yopa corrected the children.

“Will he be punished?” cut in little Sirua-Kainam sheepishly.

“Ah...yes he will receive the worst punishment for his crime,” advised the chief.

“What will be his punishment?” the child with the dimple wanted to know.

“OK that’s enough. We will deal with him but the rest of you can go out and play now,” said the chief as he looked at the small boy.

The children reluctantly formed into a line and left the hausman. Soon their playful voices could be heard above the cries of the cicadas. The elders turned to the boy sitting cross-legged in front of fire place, crying quietly.

“What can you add to this story,” the chief asked the boy.

“I was eh...hungry and took only some bananas from the bunch. I was going to pay her later. Honest,” stammered Kemi.

“Still taking things from people without asking is wrong. You must be punished,” advised the chief. The child flinched and dreaded the pain of the mukale cane that was going to come down on him.
hard. But the old men had other plans.

His immediate punishment, they decided, would be for him to fetch drinking water from the creek. Then he would collect dry twigs to start the fires in the night. And finally as penance for his stealing, he would help Kondo for a day in her garden. The old men gave him some water bottles and sent him on his way.

The old men decided that Kemi would move into the *hausman* and live with them. He would eat his meals with them and follow Ere-Yopa everywhere. Ere-Yopa quickly made a space for his bed, and found an old wooden box in which to keep his belongings.

The child was different for he did not have a normal upbringing. His mother was barely out of her teens when she befriended a carpenter boy from Finschafen who came to build new classrooms for the Primary School near the village. But the carpenter returned to his family when the classrooms were completed before Kemi was born.

At his birth, the nurse asked for his father’s name to enter on his card. His mother had thought for a while and blurted out Kemi; it was his maternal grandfather’s name. His mother left him when he was only ten months old with his grandmother, and ran away with a man from Tari. They never came back to the village. Thus the boy grew up with his grandmother until the age of six, when the old lady died from flu.

When the boy returned from the creek, Ere-Yopa was the first to meet him at the door to break the news: “The elders have decided that you will sleep in the *hausman* and take your meals with us. See, I have already found you a sleeping space, and a box to keep your stuff in.” It was next to Ere-Yopa’s bed.

Ere-Yopa took him under his wing and kept him close. They went everywhere together, and it was often quite a sight to see them returning from the coffee plots or the gardens.

Sometimes he cooked his meals and washed his own clothes but the boy found his new life adventurous.

He sold a bag of coffee after picking and drying the beans and bought a pair of sneakers. They were his first shoes ever, and they were genuine, original Dunlop’s. He loved his shoes but he loved reading even more, and spent all the spare time he could find reading.

He would come straight to the *hausman* from school and change
into his leisure clothes. Then he would collect drinking water for all
the old men, then collect wood and sometimes twigs for the night
fire. If he had time, he helped other old people with their water or
firewood.

He ran errands for people in the village and often asked others if
they needed any help. Because of his generosity he seldom went
hungry. The village folk would bless him with gifts when he least
expected them. And he excelled in school.

The years passed quickly and Kemi progressed through school,
and found himself in Grade Six at Mu Lutheran Primary School.

It was then that he started noticing a shy but beautiful young girl
in the lower grade. She would stare at him as if in a trance - a dreamy
stare - then would quickly turn away. He would think of her
sometimes but he was too young to understand anything. She was
from the nearby Bulagegau tribe. He heard that her father worked for
Ok Tedi Mining Ltd.

She came up to him once and rather shyly gave him a piece of
sugarcane during a lunch break. He had only managed to murmur a
thank you. He had met her gaze many times since but he was pre-
occupied with his own life to even strike up a conversation. He was
also quite shy with girls.

His life seemed to be climbing a mountain, racing towards
something in a strange and interesting way he could not explain.

But there were things still lurking within the dark crevices of his
mind that could not be explained. He did not know what they were,
but certainly there were things there that only others could help bring
to the surface.

An air of reluctance often surrounded him, and held him back
from being completely free like the other village children. Something
did not feel right, and this awareness came to him from deep within
the marrow of his bones. Children often mocked and bullied him.
His name would be called first if something went missing, or if a
child cried out in pain. He often became the village scapegoat, not
that he was ever completely blameless.

There was the time when the children played hide and seek and
did not include him despite his pleas. He had seemed almost invisible
to them. And then there was the other time when he played “Water”
with some children, and he was forced to sacrifice himself early so
that two of his mates could ‘drink’ and therefore remain long in the game. It was funny in a way because both members of the opposing teams had agreed that he should do it.

Ere-Yopa became sick around the time Kemi sat for his Grade Six exams. His condition gradually worsened as old age caught up with him but he still came to Kemi’s graduation with a walking stick accompanied by the other old men from the bausman. Kemi got three prizes and was among those selected to go to Muaina High School. The old men cheered and Ere-Yopa shed tears as he walked up to the grandstand when his name was called.

This time Brigita confidently came over to Kemi and the old man with some of her friends and shook their hands and admired the prizes. She wore a bright red dress and looked more beautiful than when he had last seen her.

School was over for a while and Kemi helped the old man to go to the doctor at Koge Health Centre. The doctor gave them some medicine and instructed Kemi to administer them at the right times and in the correct amount. He stayed with the old man, brought his water and food, and gave him his medicine. He also told him stories of what he read in books and what he wanted to do later when he finished his education. This pleased the old man and eased his pains.

But it seemed that the old man had already lived out his years. His conditions worsened and he succumbed to his illness one early morning, three weeks after Kemi’s graduation.

As usual, the village had a funeral for three days to allow the people to pay their respects, and for the pre-burial rites to be completed. People cried little and talked more about the incredibly long life he had lived, his generosity with his time and the things he owned. Then he was buried in the village cemetery where his forefathers had been buried before.

As his coffin was lowered into the ground, Kemi cried the loudest with a sensation in his heart that he had never felt before. Kemi remained beside his grave with the other old men when the villagers left. Brigita had earlier brought some food to the bausman with her mother, and now stood behind him. He stood up and after wiping his tears away came to thank her.

“He was your best friend,” said Brigita and hugged him for the first time. They talked little but sat beside the grave for a long time
while the old men just sat and stared into the distance.

After a while, Brigita whispered goodbye but said she would come and meet him at his new school. He watched her walk gracefully onto the main road, and then disappear behind a bend.

That night in the *hausman*, he dreamt that Ere-Yopa bought some balloons for the village children. He took the children to a clearing at the edge of the village and told them to blow up their balloons and release them into the air. Kemi struggled to make out if the dream was real.

As if reading his thoughts, the old man nudged him to make a wish and release his balloon. His white balloon raced into the air as soon as he released his grief and sailed above the tree tops, past the other balloons and raced ahead. It went further and further into the thin clouds and beyond.

The children shouted his name in jubilation and hoisted him above the ground. Then they carried him back to the village. The old man was gone.

He looked back to where the old man once stood. He was there again but this time with Brigita at his side. He motioned to Brigita to follow the children. She came towards him looking more beautiful with each step. When he looked again, the old man was gone once more.

Dawn was already breaking. A cock crowed twice, the morning birds chirped a chorus, and the cicadas’ sharp cries pierced the morning air - all adding to the sounds greeting a new day. Kemi slowly opened his eyes and a smile spread over his face. He looked across to where Ere-Yopa used to sleep and saw an empty bed but knew that the old man would always be with him.
One bright sunny day by the River Iora

GARY JUFFA

1980. KOKODA, ORO PROVINCE. ONE bright sunny Saturday a group of skinny village kids and their dog set off for a picnic trip by the river Iora, Kokoda. They romped through their parents’ gardens, deftly picking tomatoes here, shallots there, a clump of ginger and a bunch of bananas. All went into a tin pot and a *bilum* that carried the most prized of all picnic treasures: a can of Say’s Corned Beef, pure delicacy, heaven in a can.

It was a typical Kokoda day, crisp clean air and clear blue sky erratically dotted with white puffy clouds. The main road, dirt and well-travelled but neat, was clear and stretched silently and seemingly without end in sight.

The adventurous children ran, skipped and hopped nimbly through the forest, past cocoa trees and through plots of rubber and coffee all the while singing, each taking a position in their choir of happy voices.

The smallest boy, doggedly plodding along, happily carried a *bilum* full of prized essentials: matches, salt, a knife and two packets of two-minute noodles, happy to have been finally and grudgingly accepted by the rest of the gang of five, a collection of older brothers and cousins.

This was some picnic, a feast indeed. They had saved their share of proceeds from the sale of the family’s cocoa beans that Saturday and had planned this day well. The village dog was in front sniffing out possible prey to add to the picnic and bounding along happily. The children burst through the final stretch of cocoa trees onto the main road and walked along telling outrageous tales of fishing and hunting expeditions previously embarked on.

High above a team of parakeets streaked by in their red, yellow, green shrieking like demons, the boys scrambled for throwing rocks
too late. “They were surely mine!” boasted the largest and his main rival sneered with disbelief, “You couldn’t hit a gecko if it fell on your nose”.

On and on the conversation went as the barefoot adventurers romped toward Robroy’s Block entrance, the road to the picnic site along the Iora River, so cold that one could barely stay in it for longer than 20 minutes at a time.

Several kilometres away, a young girl and her younger brother finished breakfast and cleaned their yard, sweeping away leaves, picking up rubbish and depositing it into a pit for burning. The young girl would look at her wrist and check her new watch, a silver Casio bought only that Christmas by her proud father for having done so well in school.

“Soon father will be home,” she announced to her brother who stared at his sister with large brown adoring eyes. Since their mother had died, the family of three had become ever closer. Having left the rest of the village, the father had settled on a plot of land to cash crop, cocoa, coffee and rubber trees. And raise his two children, children he adored and loved.

He was a hard worker, a gentle man everyone respected. He was well on his way to becoming the proud owner of a store. He had a small chicken farm and a couple of cattle, all purchased with a loan from the Agriculture Bank that had serviced the rural people of Papua New Guinean in more optimistic times.

Ukoa had travelled to purchase the first supplies for his new store. He had worked hard for this day and finally he had the grant needed and his savings to start providing services for his community. He had selected presents for his children, snacks and clothes, a transistor radio, stationary and a soccer ball for the boy.

He had purchased an ice cream for himself and Kemo, a friend and neighbour from his tribe who had a block portion of land near his. Kemo and he were best friends and cousins and shared everything. They chatted away about politics and a new crop they heard of called ‘oil palm’ while standing under the rain trees in the small township of Popondetta awaiting the PMV.

Meanwhile the gang of five plus one and a dog had finally arrived at their destination. Whooping and shouting with glee they leaped into the cold crisp Iora that welcomed them like a happy mother.
would errant children who had returned home. Splashing and singing, diving and floating they played, taking short breaks to nap on hot boulders and tell scary stories of the monsters that surely live in the dark jungle further towards Mount Victoria.

A collection of twigs and dry wood was quickly brought to fire and the pot was cradled on a forked branch hanging, gently bubbling, a soup of epic proportions bubbling away, the scent of corned beef and shallots hung in the shade of a giant Jujuma tree as the boys sat exhausted, happily chatting and embracing their hunger. Iora bubbled along. A white crane slowly flew by and crows sat on a dried tree cawing lazily. Distant thunder rumbled and clouds gathered as the bright day suddenly became eerily dark.

The girl held her brother’s hand and walked to the main road. Showered and dressed well as their father had always taught them, they walked to the main road humming the latest song by The Oro Flames, a band of some repute in this hopeful Province in a recently independent pacific island, Papua New Guinea, the boy aiming his slingshot at imaginary giant pigeons.

Ukoa and Kemo were almost there, Ukoa making a mental note of all his cargo and reminding Kemo that he was invited to dinner with his wife that Sunday after church to celebrate the new store. Rain had started as the PMV pottered along towards its destination.

In the PMV tired mothers returning from the markets in town were holding dozing babies still breastfeeding and the village and plantation men earnest and deep in their conversations about recent development in politics and business as they rattled along the dirt road. A pair of teenagers examined their newly purchased Walkman radios and latest music cassettes and whispered exciting developments in their lives, sports, music and girls, big city opportunities.

Somewhere along the way to the main road, the young girl and her brother met evil.

Further down several kilometres, unaware of any evil but legends told in the darkest of rainy nights by their grandmothers’ fireside, the gang of five plus one and dog had finished their feast. Not a single item of food was visible and all scraps were carefully removed, as is the tradition in Hunjara to not allow for possibility of sorcery and evil shamans that may come across remnants and do their evil trade.
Even dog had something for himself.

Bursting into song, the gang started reluctantly away from Iora, skipping across water cress and water lilies and climbing the cliff edge of Robroys Block, eyes red with satisfaction of swimming Iora, stomachs full and hearts happy. There was a bass, there was the falsetto and surely a lead guitarist was among the gang too making tunes like their favourite band, hand actions and feet tapping, veins of their necks almost bursting as they sung a great song.

A bright Saturday was closing its day, a light drizzle and thunder grumbled. “Grandma says that days like this are when death approaches a house” whispered one in hushed urgency as the others looked at the darkening sky, dark clouds gathering fast. The gang, hurried along, urgency in their bare foot steps, even the dog lowered its ears and looked especially alert and kept closer to the gang.

Near the road that was the entrance to Ukoas block, perhaps a distance of 20 metres, the track looked bare, neat, grass cut and swept away. The PMV stopped and Ukoa and Kemo alighted, the other passengers marvelling at the store goods for Ukoas new store and Ukoa announcing that it would open on Monday. They carefully placed the cartons on the road and remarked that it was fortunate the rain had not yet burst forth in torrents as is usual in Kokoda.

The PMV moved off to its final destination and the remaining passengers bid their farewells, the women reminding Kemo to greet his wife for them and telling Ukoa he was lucky to have such a smart, intelligent daughter who would surely graduate at the top of her class and go onto high school.

As the PMV drove off, Ukoa gathered his goods with Kemo and they both looked at the track. It was quiet. Too quiet. “Where are the children?” Ukoa muttered. It was highly unusual. Suddenly, he felt a foreboding. A chill passed through him and he was gripped with anxiety.

They walked briskly and then ran towards Ukoas home, without words. At the exact entrance to his home, his new store in proud sight, Ukoa stumbled. Disbelief, his mouth open, not a sound came forth. Kemo dropped his entire load and caught Ukoa who fell. Their eyes gripped by an awful sight. A glint of silver, a watch, from the edge of the track, the grass flattened by some intense activity stretched a circle, and there almost hidden in the brush, the young
girl and her brother, coated in blood, fear and shock captured in their dead eyes, lay in each other’s arms.

The boy, obviously shielded by his sister but nonetheless he too dead. His hands bloodied clutching her upper arms, his eyes shut tight, as if in anticipation of blows, coming or about to come. Her cotton dress ripped and soaked with blood, the red flower patterns etched with the deep red of her final expression of life. Her hand stretched out as if to reach for her beloved Father, their young lives, extracted by the blade of a machete, her mouth quietly ajar, his teeth clenched. What terrible evil!

Ukoa lay next to his two children gathering them in his arms, his voice finally arriving in deep sobbing moaning sounds. Disbelief. Despair. Oh agony and pain. He desperately moved, shook them, checked them, and kissed their bloodied cheeks, weeping bitterly.

Kemo held his best friend and wept along with him and the rain fell hard and dark, washing the blood into a pool beside the dead children and Ukoa, holding them firmly in his anguished arms. Torrents. As neighbours and others hearing and seeing, wailing and crying approached. Shock and horror saturated the community. Ukoa, his life now as good as ended, wept bitterly.

The gang of five plus one and dog came quietly to this ominous scene and stopped to observe. Fearfully and quietly they hurried on their journey home, soaked in rain, tears welling in their eyes as they heard what had happened to their schoolmate and classmate. The rain fell hard and long. Darkness crept out of the day. Dog ran ahead, ears flattened, tail lowered.

It happened long ago, it seems, 30 years.

But I remember that day as if it happened yesterday.

The murderers were never caught, never known. What had happened that day, remains a terrible, tragedy, a father’s dreams for his children crushed…a horrible mystery….

A bright Saturday, that ended so dark, shrouded by ominous, heavy rain, an innocent loving family, torn asunder by evil.
DARKNESS. DEEP PIERCING DARKNESS.

Like a blanket rolled out before her. Thick and foggy.
The coverlet of blackness moved toward her. Gripping her.
Strangling her.
Dancing amorphous shadows invaded her body, smouldering,
taking the breath out of her.
Unseen energy vitalized her whole being, absorbed all her senses
and transfixed her by what lay ahead.
Silence. She lifted her head and looked around.
She was in a misty room waiting.
The air was heavy and gloomy.
Sorrow. Something gnawed deep in her heart. She felt the cold
ceriness in the roots of her pores. The numbness that invaded her
body crept up her toes and incubated inside her. Her legs were
frozen, her arms were stiff and her breathing was intense. Her heart
ached from deep within her.
The sadness that bit deep in her heart rocked her body. It swayed
her and made her one with the dark shadows that seized her
movements and transformed her weakening energy into its
enthralling icy clutch.
Mourning. She looked across the room and saw her cousin Pinsui
smiling and laughing with other women. Why can’t she feel the
sadness that I feel, Marita thought? Her head reeled and she lost
control and wailed frenetically. She couldn’t tell why she was weeping
bitterly, but her broken heart made her tremble and moan. Pinsui
and the other women cried quietly, but Marita’s wailing could be
clearly heard over those who were mourning with her.
Questions. She looked across the room again and saw many other
mourners. Why hadn’t she noticed them before? The men were
covered in mud and the women had ashes on their faces. They were
all wailing metrically and the strange sound added more gloom to the
hazy room. She did not recognize the mourners, but she felt comforted among them. Marita in some way knew that they were there to share her sorrow.

Answer. Boom, boom, rat tat tat tat! There was a new sound. Guns!

The mourning stopped.

Everyone sat still.

Hush.

Then she saw a long, wide wooden casket in the middle of the room. She looked towards the other side of the casket and saw Nambu. He stood there while Marita and all the other mourners sat around it. Nambu put his hand on the casket and lifted the lid.

Marita stood up and looked inside the casket.

It was empty.

Then Nambu put his right hand into the casket and picked up three eggs. He put the three eggs in the palm of his hand. One egg looked old and had a rough surface, while the other two eggs looked young and had smooth surfaces. He held the three eggs in the palm of his hand and then he got the two smooth ones and gave them to Marita. He whispered sadly.

“Look after these eggs.”

Nambu put the old-looking egg back into the casket and slammed the lid, convincing Marita that the casket was now locked and there was no way the egg could be retrieved.

Marita woke up in perspiration, gasping for air.

Her children sat around her as she recounted the dream she had last night. She had tears in her eyes as she imagined the long wooden casket. The man who appeared in her dream was her dead cousin, who had been killed by the rebels a year ago. A first one to be assassinated mercilessly.

Why did he give her two eggs? Why did he put the big egg into the casket? She was going to ask Nambu to reclaim it, but at that moment Nambu locked the casket and she woke up. She realised now that she really wanted to dream the same dream and this time, she wanted to tell Nambu to open the casket again and get that egg out.

She had this conviction that all the eggs belonged to her. Nambu had no right to lock that one egg in that big wooden coffin. She was
angry, sad and most of all confused.

“Ma, stop crying now. It’s only a dream,” Sahela consoled her.

Sahela knew that the dream had had some kind of powerful effect on her mother.

“Sahela, when that coffin appeared in front of me, my heart ached. Even in my sleep it felt so real. I felt the pain.” Marita recalled the numbness and fear. There was some kind of gripping trepidation in the dream.

“Ma, where did Nambu get the three eggs from?” Sahela asked quietly.

“He opened the lid of the coffin and put his hand in and got them from somewhere inside. The funny thing was that when he opened it he gave me time to look inside. And when I did I saw nothing.’

“But when he did, he got the three eggs out, right?” Sahela looked puzzled.

“In fact, he didn’t look inside. He put his hand in and it came out with three eggs that he placed on his palm. It was all so sudden.” Marita evoked her strange dream again.

“When I saw the eggs in his palm I wanted all of them because I knew they were mine. But he put the big egg back into the coffin and slammed the lid. Just to show me that he knew what I wanted but was not going to give it to me. Nambu made it clear with his actions that he was the one in control and at that moment was in charge of allocating the eggs.” Marita’s eyes glistened again.

“Nambu knew I wanted the big egg, that’s why he quickly put it back in the coffin and slammed the lid.”

“Ma, as I said, it is only a dream. Don’t let it worry you, please,” Sahela pleaded with her mother again.

There was commotion outside. Marita and Sahela looked at each other with wide eyes. Then there was loud banging on their door.

Sahela’s aunty was standing outside. She was a known soothsayer in the village. She had a very forlorn look on her face. Sahela couldn’t tell whether she was confused, sad or angry. Aunty Taiiso stared at Marita and Sahela. That was her way of probing, to correct a thought or a problem.

“I had a dream,” she announced in a deep haunting voice.

Sahela caught her mother’s eyes. Teary brown eyes, over-tired and full of fear.
“Marita!” Taiiso said in a raspy whisper. “In my dream, you were dead!”

Marita collapsed into her daughter’s arms.
The village chief called the whole village to come to an urgent meeting. The villagers must know about Taiiso and Marita’s strange dreams.

They all assembled under the old oak tree with its wide branches.
“Right…hhmmmm,” the soothsayer cleared her throat.
“In my dream, I saw a lot of merchandise. It belonged to my brother Pauhu. He came from Rabulan and was having a big sale. He was also handing out goods, free of charge to all of us. We were wailing and mourning over his wife, Marita’s passing away.

“While we were grieving his wife, he was laughing and handing gifts to everyone. He did not shed a tear.” The soothsayer spoke in her usual ‘old speech tone’ which always made Sahela shudder.

“Oh dear!” everyone murmured.

Sahela looked around and saw the looks on the faces of her relatives.
“It’s only a dumb dream. My father would never do anything like that!” Sahela shouted confidently.

“I think it is the opposite. In dreams you always see the opposite of what is going to happen,” old Kaida looked puzzled.

“Maybe my brother has got himself another wife and Marita is going to die of grief,” the soothsayer said without affection for her sister in law.

“Marita had a very strange dream too. Is it a coincidence that Marita and Taiiso would have a dream of the same nature? About death? Or is it a revelation of the destiny of someone among us?” as the chief spoke the crowd nodded in fearful agreement.

Marita stood up, cleared her throat and retold her dream to her people.

When she had finished no one spoke, not even the soothsayer.

Then old wise Tunusu said,

“It is not a good dream. Nambu is a dead man who materializes into your dream and gives you two eggs. Something bad is going to happen, not to you Marita, but to your family.”

“But I saw Marita dead in my dream,” Taiiso clearly did not want any other person dead in her family, except Marita.
“Mama, the three eggs definitely mean something. Eggs carry life. We are formed out of eggs. It is a dream with hidden meaning.” Young Popui said in his usual soft tone of voice.

“Popui is right. Eggs are life. We all come from eggs. For an egg to go into a coffin means the end of a life,” Old Tunusu quoted to the crowd.

“But why would Nambu appear with the three eggs?” old Kovou questioned. “The casket is the thing that scares me. A casket means someone is going to die. Marita, your dream foretells the future,” she concluded fearfully.

“Maybe, Marita’s chickens will stop laying eggs,” old grandmother Rukamou suggested, puffing away on her rolled tobacco.

When Sahela heard her relatives trying to come up with some sort of explanation for her mother’s dream, she thought of Nebuchadnezzar in the Bible. Her mother’s dream had some sort of deeper meaning.

“We are living in difficult times. I sense a warning of some sort,” Aunty Aretha predicted.

“Sagusi is pregnant. Eggs means life,” Kunu revealed his wife’s secret to his cousin, who was sitting next to him.

Each person who gathered under the old oak tree had some sort of explanation for Marita’s dream.

A few weeks later, the militants came and burn down the nearby villages.

Marita rolled in the mud and wailed.

The militants had arrested her two sons and husband, who had returned from Rabulan a few days before. They had beaten them and taken them ‘for questioning’. Pauhu was suspected of being a government spy. Her two sons were taken too, to be questioned about their father’s business travels.

Marita wept and beat her chest.

When her cousin Nambu was arrested, that was also what the militants told his wife, ‘for questioning only’. But Nambu never returned.

Marita knew, she would never see her beloveds again. She wept and tore at her heart. The ache she felt was unexplainable. The pain was so deep, it poured right out of her heart, through her veins and the wails that came out of her mouth somehow released the pressure
she felt deep down inside her.

Marita could not be comforted. The spasm-like aches tore her body apart.

After many weeks the parable in the dream unveiled itself. One gloomy morning her two boys returned home safely.

Pauhu had been assassinated mercilessly by the militants, right in front of his two sons. They took his life the same way they took Nambu’s life.

“Look after these eggs.”

Nambu then put the old looking egg back into the casket and slammed the lid, convincing Marita that the casket was now locked and there was no way the egg could be retrieved.

Marita recalled her dream. Now the meaning of the dream was revealed.

Her husband was the old-looking egg and her sons were the two eggs saved from the coffin.
Beloved fatherland - a true story of trust and betrayal
MARLENE DEE GRAY POTOURA

WE WERE ALL FUGITIVES, HIDING in the bush and jungle, fleeing from both the rebels and the government soldiers.

We crawled through the jungle like bush beings, not domesticated creatures. I was totally fed up with this kind of ‘forced and at your own will’ banishment. I was restless and dreamt of fish and chips, hamburgers and ice-cream.

I dreamt of civilization, where there were shopping malls and theatres. I wanted to watch television and see who was who on the red carpet.

I wished I was with my dad in Rabaul where he had gone to sort out logging royalties for the landowners. But, because of the blockade, we were separated from him. I was at my wits end and couldn’t stand being exiled in the jungle any more. That night, I had a big argument with my mother.

Very early in the morning I left our hiding place and went back to the village. I slept in my room the whole day right into the night. I did not make any noise. I was more like an animal, prey hiding camouflaged in a dangerous zone.

I woke at 4 am and just lay in bed listening to the sounds that were familiar to my village ears. At 5 am I dozed off and then, a few minutes later, suddenly woke to the sound of my father’s voice.

Now, I knew I was truly missing my father, or were there enemies who saw me enter the village? Again I heard noises downstairs. Yes, someone was walking and moving about. I pricked up my ears like a wild dog, petrified but ready to pounce.

“Hey, are you people still sleeping?” It was clearly my father’s voice. But I felt hesitant to move. He was in Rabaul and there was this blockade. All this hiding in the jungle must be making me lose my sanity.

“Marlene, Linda, anybody home?” It was clearly my father’s voice.
Without a second thought, I jumped out of bed and ran down the stairs into my father’s arms. He was drenched by the heavy rain. I held him and cried for a while. I heard him sniffing too.

“Marlene, where is everybody?” he asked after a while, as he realised our house and the village were strangely quiet.

“Papa, all our people are in hiding,” I said quietly.

“Papa how did you come?” I asked. He was tired and wanted to rest but told me to go to our hiding place and tell our family to come home

“I came through the Solomon Islands. A boat left me on the beach and I walked.”

He sat on my bed and started opening his backpack. I realised he had put on a lot of weight. No wonder his knees were all swollen from the long walk.

“Papa, you must hide. There are rumours that you are a suspect and that the rebels are waiting for you,” I said. “A month ago they came before dawn and searched our house, looking for a wireless or something. Then the next day they got my brothers to show them where you buried the guns that were shipped by the soldiers some years back.”

Father bellowed with laughter. “Wireless and guns! Don’t they have a war to fight with the soldiers instead of suspecting their own? Don’t worry Lene, everything is going to be all right!”

“No, Papa, you are on the hit list. You must leave and go back to Rabaul until everything cools down. People have changed, they are not like when you left. Every day our own kind are suspected and taken away, never to return and see their families again.”

What father said to me then has always rung in my ears. Even today I still cannot understand that atrocious war.

“Lene, no one will do anything to me. I am the chief here. This is my fatherland, these are my people, my own colour. The war is not with me, it is with the soldiers. I have returned at last to my home.” His confidence was beyond explanation. I believed him.

But my belief was shattered. Three days later my father was arrested by his own kind, falsely accused and was made to stand in the middle of a bridge just a few metres away from his two sons.

He was then shot through his ever-caring heart.

Then he was pushed over the bridge and into the crocodile-
infested river.

As if to prove his innocence, the crocodiles and other water creatures did not touch his body. He was found downstream by kind people who sent word to my uncles to bring his body to our village for a decent burial.

Today there is a tombstone that marks where my father is resting in our village cemetery.

Fatherland! He believed in his own people. What tragedy!
There’s much more to diarrhoea than meets the eye
EMMA TUNNE WAKPI

SHE STOOD BY THE BLACKBOARD beside a crude picture of a tree that she had quickly sketched. In the middle of the trunk was the word ‘diarrhoea’ and underneath it was written the word ‘problem’.

Seated around her were health professionals; nurses and community health workers experienced in remote and urban clinical work.

The question seemed very basic, almost an insult, but they were there to learn how to facilitate community training so took it in good faith - after all they were pretending to be community members for this lesson.

“Why is diarrhoea a problem in our community?” she repeated. The answers came thick and fast and she had to hold up her hand to stop the myriad of responses. “Okay let’s get them one by one and work through them” she said.

A good five minutes of discussion followed this statement and afterwards it was agreed that it was due to the lack of proper sanitation, the biggest cause of which was the lack of proper toilets.

“But why?” the facilitator inquired, “Why do communities not have proper toilets in the first place?” This led to another 10 minutes or so of discussions with the conclusion being that there was a lack of education about sanitation in communities.

The group was unanimous in its view that even in communities where sanitation was taught building proper toilets and using them was still an issue.

This led to many stories and experiences from the participants about communities who were shown how to build toilets (in some instances a good deal of money was spent in building really nice ones) that ended up not being used at all.

“But why?” came the probing question again, why wasn’t education sufficient in addressing the issue of building and using
toilets?

Various answers were given and parleyed, ranging from laziness and the stubbornness of communities to indifference and a no-care attitude.

Finally a quiet young man who worked in a health centre in a remote location spoke up; “We haven’t gone down to their level. We are telling them what we know and understand and trying to make them understand. We are telling them why they must use toilets but we need to understand what they know and why they won’t build or use toilets.”

The room became quiet and the facilitator allowed time for this statement to be absorbed by the other participants.

Finally another spoke up, “It’s our culture; sorcery and the fear of sanguma means many won’t venture too far away from their homes at night.” There are beliefs that a store house for waste would enable enemies to collect faeces to put a curse on you or attract sanguma who loved feasting on faeces.

As silly as it seemed, the health professionals each understood the reality of this issue. Education on sanitation was not going to work in an illiterate community where the belief system and world view ingrained since time immemorial held a firm grip. It was a sobering moment; the answers would not be precise, it would take hard work to change attitudes.

But the beauty of the tree diagram wasn’t finished. The reason the tree was there and being used was to show communities the impact of their belief. So working onward the facilitator started asking another set of questions.

“So what happens when people get diarrhoea?” Again the answers were fast in coming and by working slowly through them the following was derived; when a child or person dies as a result of diarrhoea people start talking about sorcery.

So what happens when they talk about sorcery? They accuse a person. So what happens when persons are accused? If they are defenceless they are most likely murdered. If they have family and connections they rise up to defend themselves and this often leads to tribal warfare. Also the death leads to a lot of expenses in the form of payment to relatives and funeral costs.

The group grew thoughtful as they pondered the reality of this
situation. Hopefully they speculated that this might lead communities to the realisation that lack of a healthy lifestyle could result in warfare. This seemed quite a stretch but as the participants began discussing it they could see how it made sense.

The realisation that sanitation was rooted in spiritualism and animism gave new direction to how health workers approached health awareness and education.

The Christian health workers talked about replacing the fear of death and darkness with the truth of love and life. How they had to find those within the communities who professed Christianity and hold them accountable to lead in a practical way.

To show that they had no fear of poison and *sanguma* they must use toilets as a testament of their faith. They could engage churches and community leaders and give them sanitation lessons and help them understand that maybe more were dying from germs than from *sanguma* and to prove this they must build and use toilets.

Others discussed the issue of ingrained fear and how children were raised with fear as the primary method for achieving obedience. Even if as adults they *knew* that maybe *sangumas* didn’t hang around near toilets the fear was programmed into them and would be very hard to erase. This led to discussions on intervention lessons with new parents etc.

A lot more interesting discussions were held and it was realised that maybe answers that seemed very clear in theory needed tweaking and a thorough local understanding of how issues were viewed and a very local approach to how issues could be addressed.

It seems unreal doesn’t it? Fear of sorcery leads to poor sanitation resulting in death which causes murder and tribal warfare.

Go figure, but this is the reality and for sustainable development to happen we must address these kinds of grass roots issues in grass roots terms while waiting for quality education programs and other infrastructure to reach the majority of our people which then might hasten the change in attitudes.

Meanwhile text book answers just won’t cut it. More than 30 years on we’re still addressing the same issues that the *kiaps* were addressing; something has to change.

We have to change. We have to care enough to peel away the layers of easy answers and get to the root of the problems that we
Papua New Guineans fully comprehend but for various reasons are hesitant to address because we will be viewed as different.

Believe the different, live the different, facilitate the different to make the difference for our communities and country.
Exploring the unexplored
AXEL RICE

DRING! THE SCHOOL BELL MADE its 2013 debut, signalling the start of the year’s first period. Its reverberating knell caused the sea of grey pupils to scurry off into the surrounding brick structures like a swarm of startled ants.

I stood in the midst of the scramble, with no clearly defined path ahead of me, with no preinstalled knowledge as to what I was supposed to be doing. Unable to attach myself to any individual familiar person who passed me, I found my boat anchored on this strange island. Where was I?

It was hard to believe that just a week ago I was basking in all the tropical sunlight Lae had to offer, scaling the backyard trees and braving the notorious ‘green’ lizards that guarded them.

Up until this point my existence could only be defined by the sporadic history I had written in Papua New Guinea, though it was not to my surprise that Mum and Dad eventually decided to make me the subject of their latest Apollo program; sending me out into the great unknown.

Temporarily shrugging off the anxiety that was mooring me, I turned and trailed this group of students, who I inaccurately judged to be in my cohort. I paced behind them as we entered another bricked court. Approaching some buildings an ominous echo had come bouncing off the brick walls that lined the area ahead. It instantly had the effect of reinvigorating unwanted memories I had learnt to cloak. Memories that reflected my unconventional middle-school experience back home. While most had braved the halls with unparalleled confidence and overshadowing personalities I was confined to the shadows of the school, my presence only acknowledged by close friends.

Coming around the perimeter of a squat, neat building the faint echoes that were at first only a whisper in the distance had suddenly erupted into a roaring pride. I had paused at the turn. What had held
me back? Perhaps I was afraid of the unknown, but what was I afraid of, it was only school? My last high school, in Lae, was a very tightly knit community. It was a place where everyone literally knew everyone else. I had spent my whole life there, the years allowing the harsh, humid environment to shape my identity. I was straying from what I knew. I was pushed to the brink of my comfort zone. To be immersed in your own kind and to not mesh immediately I resigned to the fact that I was an alien.

I inched myself around the corner with an undeterred unwillingness, being met by a large group of students, chattering away at each other. I couldn’t make out any of the sentences that were being unceasingly blabbered out into the air, somehow my ears filtering out the noises and alerting me to my increasingly deepened breathing. Like when James Cook first docked on the shores of Australia, I stood about the area, conjuring conclusions about these people and irrationally questioning their ways.

I gazed around the area, scoping out the situation. As I started to slowly dart through the crowd, a teacher’s voice came bawling through the wall of noise, overpowering the collective force of the talking students. It was the Year Headmaster. At his verbal command, all students within the area descended onto the brick floor, all eyes converging on his tall, well-suited figure. Once everyone had settled it had become overwhelmingly obvious this was the sheer year 11 population. Would I make it out of this high school alive?

I needed to initiate some sort of a conversation with someone, anyone, at least just to let me break the barrier of ice with my new peers, but I found that simple task uncomfortably daunting. Finding my way to my allocated form room, I was met with looks of unfamiliarity. It felt as though everyone I had passed was visually dissecting me, staring me down like the foreigner I was. I was resistant to these strangers, each and every one I passed.

After the very tedious form tutorials and the handing out of our timetables we were released out of the room, some more ready than others to tackle the intimidating school year. I left the classroom last, trying to decipher the map I was given but I found no luck so I resorted to a nearby teacher who gladly grabbed my piece of paper and guided me through. By now, the rest of the students had
disappeared leaving my lone self-presumed insignificant body desperately trying to adapt to the new environment like a pet goldfish that’d been released out into the vast seas.

The teacher brought a kind of warmth that relieved me of my state of anxiety but that was quickly sucked from me as we arrived at my first class. Her clenched fist pounded on the door, and at its answer, there stood a precariously tall figure, I dared not look into his eyes. The unsealed opening of the door provided me with a glimpse of the crowd I was about to encounter. The tall figure led me through the door. At this point I had no choice but to confront the unfamiliarity.

What unfamiliarity?

I’d been battling with myself all morning. I hadn’t said a word all morning. Would they have understood me even if I had? I entered a trance at this point, the debilitating glare of the students putting me on edge. I pushed through and settled on a vacant seat. “Hey’. A voice came from beside me. I turned my head, ‘Hey’ I mirrored. I couldn’t keep myself isolated from these people. I doubtfully added more words, then he added more words, then I added more words, until a conversation was concocted.

I was communicating with this stranger and I was understanding him, and even better he was understanding me. Perhaps my shallow assumptions had kept me from letting loose, but on that day at least I could go to bed knowing that I wasn’t ‘that’ different. A connection had been made!
The man who came between
DOMINICA ARE

IT WAS DIANNE’S FIRST DAY at university. After getting settled in her room, which she would be sharing with two other girls, she started rifling through her things and unpacking.

Her two roommates were not there yet so she got to choose the bottom bunk and her locker first. It felt good to go to university at last and experience and learn new things, meet new friends and just have a lot of fun.

“Hi!” Dianne was startled and spun around to the door she had left ajar.

“I’m Tracy,” her intruder poked her head in and extended her hand. After a brief introduction, Tracy said she was just bored so had walked around to meet all the new faces. At that moment they hit it off. They became the best of friends and as the years ensued their bond became stronger.

They lived in the same dorm, took the same course, went to meals together, shared everything even their deepest darkest secrets and did almost everything together. They knew everything there was to know about each other. They were the inseparables.

“Guess what?” Dianne said while blushing and pausing for some time. They were walking back to their dorms after studying in the library when Dianne decided to break the news to her best friend.

“Oh come on. Tell me,” chided Tracy. “I’m dying to hear it.”

“I think I am in love with a stranger,” Dianne blurted out. There she’d said it,

“Huh? Seriously? Is there something you’re not telling me?” Tracy questioned her.

It was something she hadn’t been telling her best friend for some time. Dianne was not really planning on boyfriends and falling in love until her final year. But she had got hooked up with a guy who was also attending university in another city.

Their only contact was through phone and email. Their
conversations got more interesting each day and Dianne began to fall in love with Patrick even though they hadn’t actually met in person.

“Am so happy for you,” Tracy said lovingly and hugged her best friend.

One Thursday evening, Tracy said excitedly that she was going for a Church camp over the weekend in the city where Patrick studied.

She kindly asked her best friend if she could meet up with Patrick and let him be her tour guide since she’d be new to the city.

Who wouldn’t say no? Dianne gladly agreed and quickly texted Patrick. She exchanged their numbers so they could easily meet. The next day Tracy left.

Dianne constantly texted her best friend to check on her. A part of her feared for her while she was with Patrick because she’d never really met and known him.

Tracy: Hi girlfriend. I just arrived safely and met Patrick at the bus stop.
Dianne: Oh great! What’s he like?
Tracy: He’s hot and cute. A gentleman indeed.
Dianne: Please take good care of him for me too. Hehehe.
Tracy: I sure will. Talk to you later. Bye! Xoxoxox.
Patrick: Hi Di. Just met your girlfriend at the bus stop. Walking her to the church camp since it’s near to the school.
Dianne: Thank You! Make sure she is safe.
Patrick: sure I will. Gotta go!
Dianne: Bye!

So Dianne was at total ease after hearing that they had met and Tracy was safe. On Saturday, she called to check up on them and Tracy said she would be busy at the church camp all day and Patrick was catching up on his assignments and school work. They both promised to call her in the afternoon.

“Patrick said he would walk me around town after I’m done with my afternoon activities,” Tracy said excitedly when she called Dianne.

“That’s great. Please take some pictures and bring them back. I’m dying to see how he looks,” cooed Dianne.

In the afternoon, Dianne thought she’d just call to see how they were doing with their afternoon walk but after trying to call and text them they both failed to reply or answer her calls. She started to get anxious and feared something bad might have happened. That night
she got a text from Patrick that said they had been hanging out with friends and he hadn’t heard or seen her calls and texts.

“Lame excuse,” Dianne murmured to herself and didn’t say much. She called her best friend’s phone but it went to voicemail. Well, Patrick said she’s fine and had left her at the camp so all is good then.

All of Sunday there was no word from Tracy. Her phone was still off. Dianne decided to use Patrick to check on her best friend but he said he would be busy playing rugby all day but if he had time he would check on her. Dianne was a really concerned friend and it was just normal for her to do this.

Now it was Monday and she still hasn’t heard from Tracy. Dianne was losing it already.

At about 9pm, she got a call from a new number. It was Tracy! She said she was coming back and would be in school soon. Dianne’s anxiety disappeared. She was dying to hear about her friend’s weekend and especially about Patrick.

Tracy didn’t say much except that he was a sweet guy and Dianne was lucky to have him. She hadn’t taken the photos of Patrick which Dianne had asked her to do. A week after Tracy’s weekend trip, Dianne realized that she was not the same person as before.

She rarely spoke, was constantly on the phone talking or texting, and when Dianne mentioned Patrick’s name, she’d quickly change the subject. She didn’t know what had happened, but realised something was wrong.

“What!” she screamed into the phone,” She’s my best friend I have always been nice to her. What are you talking about?” Dianne was confused and filled with rage. Patrick had just said that she was being mean to Tracy and jealous because she hadn’t got a chance to meet and hang around with him like her.

“Jealous of what?” she snapped. Get a grip, she told her herself. Something was terribly wrong and she had to find out. Someone had been telling terrible lies about her.

She went off to interrogate Tracy but her best friend retorted sharply that Patrick was just lying. It felt like a punch in the gut to hear her friend talk like that. Oh! Wasn’t that just great? Now she was more confused over who to believe.

Things started to get tenser and they gave each other the silent treatment. Dianne tried her best to make them forget about Patrick
and everything but Tracy became meaner each day. They had had their fights like all friends do but this one was different.

Dianne finally got to meet Patrick and sure enough he was hot and cute. A gentleman indeed. Things began to be clear now. Tracy desired him and was trying to destroy her best friend’s relationship. All this time they had been secretly going out and Dianne never knew. She had been taken for a fool.

No matter how much she really liked Patrick, and he begged for forgiveness and a second chance at their relationship, she still couldn’t do it because she trusted neither of them. Dianne decided that the next best thing to do was to forget about Patrick and move on.

She couldn’t have cared less if she was with him or not. What they both did was unimaginable and it was very unbecoming of her best friend to do it to her.

It was getting towards the end of their final year at university and school work was a load with final exams coming up. Dianne has no time to think about the issue. After several failed attempts to patch things up, she gave up. She managed to stay out of Tracey’s way until the school year ended. Their friendship was on the rocks and all because of a man.
The morning cold was chilly and it dug deep into the bones. Jasiname pulled the old government blanket that she has been using for the last umpteen years over herself one more time. She kicked her legs and pulled the last of the blanket to cosset her in. She waited for the cold to disappear before she thought about the day.

I don’t need to get out of bed now, Jasiname asserted.

Yesterday was a surprise for her. She knew that she did well in school but to be called to receive the top prize for social science was something she wasn’t expecting. She remembered how she walked the aisle to the podium to receive her prize.

She had seen from the corner of her eyes the dashing young fellow who had her heart in tatters, beaming a smile for her and making her watery then. She would have fainted there and then for him but she held her head up and had robotically continued to the podium. She could not remember the walk back as she strutted for him and for him only. She was totally in love.

She felt hot flushes recalling the night of passion they had shared just a few weeks back.

Outside Hanamo was already splitting logs for fire for the mumu.

“Jasiname, wake up, your aunty is bringing the pig and you need to see the pig”.

Jasiname slowly pushed the blanket away. She was just about enjoying the morning re-living her hot flushes inside the warm blanket and hated this early cold workout. It was a pity that she could not escape to her Adonis’ arms and house and she wished her father would not be so abrupt with her. However she knew that she was obliged to see the size of the pig as she was expected to repay the owner of the pig later in her life.

She walked out of the door into the mist covered morning to see her father put the last of the stones onto the heating mound. The
smoke from the \textit{mumu} pit were already chasing away the mist. Her mother Sukale too was up and sitting squat, peeling \textit{kaukau} for the \textit{mumu}.

Today was going to be her day in the village. There would be more good things said about her. Her name would draw sweet praises from the villagers and her peers. She was the only one from the village to have been given a prize at yesterday’s graduation. Inside the envelope that she got was also her letter of acceptance to the new national high school that she was going to attend in the New Year. This piece of news would be broadcasted at the \textit{mumu} and she was already feeling special.

Jasiname looked at Sukale. Her mother was a beautiful woman and she had been told that she took after her.

Jasiname knew she was also beautiful and had a long list of boys that wooed her. She was only a bit more than the size 28 but the boys never minded that she was shorter than most of the other girls.

Her mother’s perseverance in roasting \textit{kaukau} each morning had paid off when Jasiname, a first for the village, got the offer for a place in national high school. Her proud mother was wearing her happiness on her sleeve. She peeled the \textit{kaukau} with austerity oozing from her body.

Noise erupted when aunty came pulling a rope with a pig tethered on the end of it. The reluctant pig was putting up some resistance. Hanamo took the bundle of banana leaves that straddled the head of Aunty Rosa and accepted the roped pig.

He cleared his throat and called out to Jasiname.

“Eh my girl Jasiname, you see this pig. I think it is a good pig to begin celebrating your success. It will be the start of bringing good things to our house”.

Jasiname looked at the pig. It was a chubby black and white male pig and its tusks were just beginning to form. It was a pig that was to be repaid. This was the start of her own debt that she was going to repay in one form or another.

The gathering for the \textit{mumu} grew as her extended family came in with their contributions. Several small pigs and many chickens were also being slaughtered and cleaned. One family came with enough sugar cane to feed the whole village. There were plenty of congratulations showered on her. Hanamo kept on asking Jasiname
to record all that was brought to the feast.

The crowd and the intense activity did not hide her desire for her Adonis. She still wished he was around and made arrangements for him. She had spent a good part of her growing up in Paliyo and Mamito’s house.

She talked her father into inviting them to the mumu even though they were from the other clan in the village. Jasiname had grown up in the couple’s home. It was also in this house where she had started her liaison with the young Adonis. She knew that the Paliyo entourage would include her beau.

Contented, she busied herself with assisting everyone at the mumu so that her mind should not wander away to her Adonis. She assisted fetching the water from the creek to pour into the mumu. She then swept away the rubbish and cleaned around the house.

The village square beyond was very clean and the grass lawn cut low. This was a highlands village, full of round houses, topped up by several coconut trees, making the place look like a coastal village.

Jasiname would remember her many liaisons under the coconut trees with the many boys of the village but this one was special and she was going to make the best of the holidays before she left for the national high school.

The aroma of the cooked pork spread throughout the village and soon mothers mingled with crying children around the mumu pit. A table with a clean sheet was put in front and her certificate and letter was displayed there. There was also a dish with a huge haunch of pork and a couple of chickens. A similar dish stood beside it.

Uncle Jowari started with words of thanks to her for bringing pride to the family. She was the first female from the village to go to this new national high school in the New Year. Several of the girls before her had either gone to technical, teachers or nursing colleges. She was entering into something new for the village.

Jasiname half listened to all the cautions that were given to her about looking after herself. A smile escaped from her when uncle started on something about boyfriends. If only her uncle knew of boys that she had bedded since grade five.

Her first kiss was in a grade four classroom in broad daylight on a dare by her friends. She had lost her virginity three years later in grade seven and had been active courting at night since then, in
between having her first period at the beginning of the year in grade ten.

Talk about boyfriends. She rolled her eyes behind Uncle’s back. If only he knew.

Her uncle hoisted up the second dish for Paliyo and Mamito to thank them for letting Jasiname live with them resulting in Jasiname excelling in her school. There was a round of applause and happy shouting “whee ha ha” in gratitude to the other clan.

Mamito took the dish gratefully whilst Paliyo gave his reply in thanks.

Jasiname was distracted by her beau behind Paliyo. He was from Paliyo’s clan and had therefore accompanied Paliyo to accept the food on their clan’s behalf.

The Adonis looked her way as she sat in honour next to the table. Jasiname saw his crooked smile and smiled back weakly, already planning the night.

It had started a bit after her final exams. He had returned from his college down on the coast all filled out from good food. He had made a beeline for her despite all the other girls eyeing him.

He had so much energy for the night and she was truly spent for the next couple of days but she craved for him and made tracks for his house each night. In his house far from the village they had made love.

She had craved for more and could still feel her body itching for more.

The thought suddenly came upon her that she was a bit running late on her time for her period and she was fretful for the praise and debts heaped on her. She sat and squirmed throughout the talk as the reality of being pregnant seeped into every pore of her body replacing the euphoria of the loving Adonis.

He had said it, after the night of spent passion.

“From me to you with love, a graduation present”.

93
The green dress
JEANINE TUGURU

SHE STIRRED IN THE DARKNESS, pain filling her body; her head felt like it would burst. She lay quietly, gently moving each limb to see if anything was broken.

Thankfully, nothing was damaged, but every breath she took felt like she had a tonne of lead on her chest. It was impossible to even think with her head throbbing so. As she lay there in the dark she could hear voices and laughter.

She was bare-chested, of that she knew. Her left arm groped around in the darkness painfully and she managed to locate the remains of her favourite green dress and placed it over her battered body. Slowly, the events of the night came rolling back and she could not help but hope that the next painful breath would be her last.

The office was always stuffy in the afternoons, but today it had been unbearable with the air conditioning out of order. The technical crew were working on it, but Lila felt as though she was in a desert. She glanced at her watch “Three-thirty,” thought Lila. “Only half an hour and my weekend will begin!”

Minutes later, she felt her pocket tingle as the vibration of her cell phone announced a new text message. “Dance tonight??!” Lila couldn’t help but giggle. Her friend Millie certainly was one to party. She was only three cubicles away, and as the clock neared 4.06, Lila packed her things and slipped over to see her friend. “So, are we on?” Millie was definitely not one to waste time. “Sure,” replied Lila. “Besides, my brother’s in town for his break so I can force him to pay.”

Both girls giggled at the mention of Lila’s twin brother Philip, who Millie had had a crush on since forever. As they left their office, they ran into their friend Sue, who announced that she was going with them. The three girls made their way to the hostel where they lived and proceeded to get ready for their night of fun.
It was impossible to have a conversation with the music of the club blaring so loudly. Many people were on the dance floor with others mingling around the bar getting wasted. The girls had gathered around a table, where Lila’s brother Philip was buying them another round of drinks.

Philip, older than Lila by seven minutes, worked for a mining companies and had a fly-in-fly-out schedule. Being twins, he was not only very close to his sister but also very protective of her. He wasn’t too fond of her friend Millie, although he knew she was in love with him. He thought she had a bad influence on Lila. But tonight, he was just glad to see his sister again. During the course of the night, they ran into some of Philip’s friends from work who were more than happy to join them.

He was sitting at a quiet table towards the corner of the room. The minute the little group entered, he only had eyes for her. He took a swig of beer as he focused on the girl in the green dress. Her creamy brown skin and thick curly hair, pretty pink lips and those beautiful, dark eyes. Feeling that familiar urge, a sudden jolt of pure lust coursing through his body, he quickly tore his gaze away from her. He had done this before, and he knew he could do it again if he played his cards right. Patience was indeed a virtue.

As the night wore on the young people danced and had several more rounds of drinks. Millie couldn’t help but notice a particular older man in a corner table who had been staring at her for quite some time. She was flattered by the attention and thought he might be some sort of high-ranking public servant because he looked so distinguished. His scrutiny and obvious interest in her scared her a little, and yet her curiosity was aroused.

She took to the dance floor with one of Philip’s friends, but her eyes locked with the stranger’s as she slowly enticed him with her provocative moves. The man gave a sly smile and stood, making his way over to the bar. Millie, feeling immensely pleased with herself, left her dance partner and made her way over to the man at the bar. She was used to picking up men at dances. One-night stands were a norm for her.

And although she was hopelessly in love with Philip, he’d made it very clear that he despised her. If she couldn’t get with Philip, she got with any other man she could. She knew she was beautiful, and men
found it hard to resist her. She could be extremely charming when she chose. She gave her sweetest smile as she sat down opposite this intriguing man and accepted the drink he offered.

“Who is that man with Millie?” Philip asked his sister. “He looks like a pervert!” Lila took a quick glance at her friend’s companion. The man had a rugged handsomeness to him and she could see his appeal. She smiled as she shook her head. She was used to Millie’s ways. “No idea bro, but I wouldn’t worry. This is just a typical night in Millie’s world!” The twins shared a laugh and had another round of drinks.

It was nearing 2am when Philip suggested they make tracks as they had to visit their mother in the morning. Lila wandered over to see if Millie would leave with them, though she knew her friend well enough to know the answer to her query. “Lila darling, this is Joe!” Millie was as lively as ever. Lila smiled as she shook the man’s hand, but as she left them she couldn’t help but feel the slightest bit of apprehension as she thought of how he’d looked at her.

“I must be drunker than usual,” she thought to herself. “Millie will be fine. This is just another of her one night stands.” Besides, Lila was more than a little interested in Philip’s friend Samson and her thoughts filled with plans of how she’d interrogate her twin for more information on Sam. Within minutes, she’d put Millie and the strange Joe out of her mind as she hooked her arm into her brother’s and they left to find a taxi.

“I wonder what hotel I’ll be waking up in tomorrow morning,” Millie thought to herself as she accepted another drink from the handsome stranger before her. He was so intriguing; it was as if she were under a spell. Even the very sound of his voice kept her spellbound. “Shall we make our way out of here?” asked Joe with a smile.

Millie felt a strange tingle through her body when he smiled at her. Her adrenaline raced and she could feel her blood pounding. She gathered her bag and stood up, certain that this was her greatest catch yet. She wondered how the night would end as she stood on the curb and waited for Joe to bring his car over.

As he walked over to fetch his car, he felt almost impatient with desire. But he knew he had to keep his cool. He knew she was interested, had hinted several times what she wanted. “Too bad for
her,” he thought. She had no idea what she had gotten herself into. He glanced over at her. She was drunk, and that green dress clung to her body seductively. The game was almost over.

Millie had to hold on to the seat. Joe was driving too fast and she was scared. He’d taken so many turns and, as his car’s windows were tinted, she’d just about lost all sense of direction and had no idea where she was or where he was taking her. As he came to a screeching halt, Millie steeled her stomach against the oncoming waves of nausea. It wouldn’t do to throw up in front of this man.

As she opened the door, there was no hotel in sight; she was in the middle of nowhere! Surrounded by trees and bushes in the dark night, Millie found herself suddenly sober. Fear started to creep into her, and as she lunged toward the relative safety of the car, two other figures stepped out from the shadows.

They were too quick for her. She opened her mouth to scream but a large hand covered her mouth. She fought like a mad cat, but the men had been through this before. Eventually they overcame her and all she knew was pain before the blissful darkness came.

Monday’s newspaper had a small article on page four entitled, “Body of unidentified young woman found in drain.” Nobody knew who she was or how she had ended up there, but the article stated that she had been raped and stabbed several times before being thrown in the drain and left for dead. When they found her, she was still clutching her torn green dress.
While war raged in Bougainville, there was a miracle at Haisi

AGNES MAINEKE

I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD give birth on my own, but I did. Confirming for me the words of the Angel Gabriel, “With God there is nothing impossible.”


Since May we had been hiding from the Papua New Guinea Defence Force in the deep jungle of south-west Bougainville. I was pregnant with my fourth child.

These were difficult times. Food could be carried from abandoned gardens and villages only on certain days. Movement was restricted for fear of both the PNGDF soldiers with their Bougainvillean helpers, the Resistance, and also our own Bougainville Revolutionary Army.

By October I was heavy with my child but still had to carry food, coconuts and other requirements from our village to the bush camps because I had to provide for my three little girls - aged at that time eight, six and two.

My husband was a chronic asthmatic who often suffered attacks due to the state of the slap-dash houses we lived in.

Sundays were special days when everyone left their hiding places and gathered at the Mission Station for service. It was our faith that helped us face the hardships of the ten long years of the Bougainville Crisis.

Even those who didn’t attend Sunday service or Mass prior to 1989 started attending during the war. In those years, until 1999, we sometimes had the opportunity to hear Mass on a special feast day, like the Assumption, celebrated by the Italian SVD Priest, Fr Dario.

He was our light during those dark days. He fearlessly travelled between BRA strongholds and PNGDF posts. He was the one who made it possible for me to travel to the health centre to bear my fifth child. But that is another story.

It was on Sunday 18 October 1992. My husband and I left our
three daughters with their maternal grandmother and journeyed to the mission for Sunday service.

My due date was 27 October, so this was our last day to prepare the five litres of coconut oil which the BRA required each family to make and give to them for fuel.

After the service, my husband and I stopped at a coconut plantation belonging to our relatives. We husked about 40 dry coconuts and scraped them in the garden shack. We scraped twenty each and I carried the grated coconut in an old bag and returned to the camp at dusk.

I cooked our evening meal and got the girls ready for the night. When we had eaten our meal, we prayed and put the girls on the mats where they slept.

I had one other task, which was to squeeze the grated coconut ready for heating to make oil.

As I started squeezing, I felt the first twinge of pain in my back. I ignored it, thinking it was due to the exertion of scraping 20 coconuts earlier that afternoon.

But the pain came back after half an hour, so I went to lie down. My scheduled delivery date was still nine days off.

As I lay on my mat beside my now sleeping girls, the pain returned. I knew this was the onset of labour. I got up and told my mother who said I’d have to go to another camp where there was a nurse.

It was dark in the jungle. People in our camp sat beside their fires and told stories.

We had no torches or lamps and I was surprised and touched when my grandmother gave me a little hurricane lantern which she had already lit.

It was her precious treasure which she extended to me saying, “Here granddaughter, you have more need of it than I. Take it with you.” She had kept that little lamp well hidden.

My husband put the nappies and baby things that he’d bought when he had been permitted by the PNGDF to accompany his late brother-in-law to Rabaul when he got sick.

With these things in hand we set off towards the camp where the nurse lived. My great uncle’s wife was willing to accompany us. I had the little lamp in my left hand and a stick in my right hand to help me
walk firmly along the muddy jungle tracks towards our abandoned villages and then further east to the nurse.

Offering a silent prayer to Our Blessed Mother, I walked between the old lady and my husband. I knew this is going to be quite a night for me. As we travelled, the pains of the child-birth were increasing and coming more frequently.

It took us about an hour to reach the first deserted village. By then it was about eight o’clock at night. I asked my two companions if we could stop there, but both of them were quite adamant.

“No! No! This village is near the road. The BRA’s might see us and kill us.”

So I steeled myself and again whispered a prayer to Mother Mary. “Please be with me, dear Mother. I need your help.” By then I knew that I would not be able to make it to the camp where the nurse lived.

By this time we had left the muddy jungle tracks and were travelling towards another deserted village along the Haisi – Boku road.

I was stopping nearly every five minutes because of the pain.

We had just reached the houses of the abandoned village when I just had to stop walking. The pain was excruciating.

I told my two companions, “I cannot walk another step. I know the baby is on its way down.” They both acquiesced.

My husband decided that he would quickly continue on to the nurse and bring her to me. So he took off without any light, not even a piece of firewood. It was just lucky that this was our village and he was familiar with the bush tracks.

Now I had to try to prepare for the arrival of my baby. My three girls had been born in hospital with nurses in attendance, but now I had to be a nurse as well as a birthing mother.

The baby was insistent. What could I do? The house was a ground house with only a broken down limbun bed near the fireplace. No time to cut a big leaf or find something to lie on and let the baby come.

The old woman wouldn’t do anything because she was frozen with fear. Each time I asked her to do something, she responded, “I’m afraid; I don’t know what to do.”

Even when I put the broken pieces of limbun together and laid
myself down and asked her, “Can you see if the baby’s head is visible?” She answered. “I don’t know,” without even coming anywhere near me.

I had to resort to touching myself and feeling the baby’s head. So I waited for the next sharp pain and pushed and pushed, eventually expelling the child.

By nine o’clock the baby had been born, falling on to the dusty, dirty ground.

I half-sat and picked up the child, determining that it was a male. I asked the old woman to get a nappy from the bag and give it to me.

The poor baby was already sucking on his bloody fingers because he was hungry. I tied his two hands along his body with the nappy but I had to lay him back at my feet in the dust.

I seethed with anger at this useless old woman. I had thought she would help me because she used to give birth to her children by herself in the old days.

I reminded myself I was still not free. I had to remove the placenta and then I would be able to stand up and attend to the poor baby. I had been told in pre-natal clinics that the placenta would be expelled with the same pain as the baby.

Therefore, when the next pains came, I pushed, and thankfully without further effort the afterbirth came tumbling out. I was free.

I asked the old lady to get me another nappy and I folded it as a pad then stood up and picked up the baby from the ground, wrapped it in another nappy and laid it on a high shelf that was used to put things on. I just said, “Thank you Mama Maria.”

In the meantime, where was the baby’s father? He had gone on a mission to bring the nurse but had got lost in the dark. It was eleven o’clock by the time he and the nurse and my aunt and cousin-sister arrived at the ‘birthing room.’

By then the baby and I were asleep and the old woman sat nodding in a corner.

As he led the rescue party, my husband heard no noise and anxiously called out, “Aggie are you there?” I replied, “Come and see your son.” The baby was still attached to its placenta by the umbilical cord because I didn’t know how to cut the umbilical cord.

Maineke shouted and rushed inside. The nurse and my aunt took over. They made a fire, heated water and made me wash and also
washed the baby. It was a relief to place myself into capable hands.

We stayed in that old kitchen until the next morning when we had to return to our bush camp. My aunt and her daughter brought us to our camp before returning to theirs.

My son Barnabas is grown up now, he’s 22 years old.

When he was an infant he was diagnosed with heart murmur, perhaps as a result of his birth. He used to get sick and run a heavy fever whenever he was afraid or stressed. Last year he completed a Certificate in Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning at Badili Vocational School in Port Moresby.

That night, 22 years ago is long gone. But I just thank the Lord for being with me through that night.
Defeated mind
DIDDIE KINAMUN JACKSON

“GET OUT OF MY HOUSE! Get out! Before I call the police to come and remove you from this place. Take that bastard with you and don’t ever come back you lying whore!”

“You’re such an ungrateful brat. Is that how you repay me when I brought you from the village and you come into my house and then find your way into my husband’s bed? Shameful!”

“Probably the whole time while you were here you let stray men into the house and now you’re trying to blame my husband.”

That was the last thing running through Hitolo’s mind as she wept helplessly. Her aunt’s words stung her. What she said was the truth and while the truth set her free it hurt so badly and, speechless as she was, she wept silent tears of shame and embarrassment.

Hitolo was a carefree girl who had everything she needed in the village, food from the sea and from the gardens. There was nothing to worry about except her usual household and garden chores before she was off to the sea with the village girls to dive for shells to make themselves new beads.

That was how they passed their time. It was fun to be living near the sea and she really loved her home.

One evening over the family meal her father had received a letter from his niece, Mary, who lived in town and was asking if Hitolo could stay with them and babysit her child as she was going to go back to work after maternity leave.

Mary needed someone to take care of the house and the baby. If Hitolo was to come, she wrote, they could telephone from the padre’s house and a car would be sent to pick her up in five days’ time.

This news was discussed over the fire by Hitolo’s father and mother and finally her father asked her if she wanted to go and Hitolo said yes. She had never been to town due to the distance and the fare, although her parents would go occasionally to sell or to buy goods.
The thought of going blew her mind away. Now she had something to tell her friends; for sure everyone was going to envy her because she was going to town. That was where all the good things were.

After four nights of restless sleep, the day finally arrived for her to go. Hitolo hurriedly packed her few belongings. There wasn’t much. There were two blouses that her mother had bought a year ago, she only wore them on Sundays to church. The hems were loose but they were the only things of value she had apart from a few traditional necklaces and beads she had made herself.

Hitolo was going to town but she felt a bit uneasy. Was she doing the right thing, she pondered as they waited for a vehicle to appear. Finally a big black car arrived and Hitolo got into it, all her friends and family waving goodbye.

When they arrived in town Hitolo saw that everything was fast and scary, unlike the quiet and peaceful way back home. She already felt a little bit sad and homesick.

They left the town centre and drove into a residential area where the houses were beautiful. Never in all of Hitolo’s life had she seen anything like this.

Finally the driver turned into a pristine neighbourhood and Hitolo thought these were the houses of very big chiefs who must have lots of wives and wealth to be living in such splendour.

Finally they drove up a steep hill and the driver said they were near the house now.

The car came to a stop in front of a big white house located on a steep cliff. Hitolo saw her aunt and uncle standing waiting for her. They must have seen them coming up from the valley.

Her Aunt Mary hugged her as Tom picked up her sack and gave her a firm handshake. His gaze made her feel a bit awkward. Maybe this was the way men in town acted Hitolo thought.

Mary told Hitolo of the duties and responsibilities that were expected and she listened with grace.

One day, when she had been in town for about two weeks, Hitolo saw Tom around the house and asked if he had left something behind but he just grinned and said he was sick and had to take a day off work.

Then in the weeks that followed, he came home frequently, this
time bringing small gifts which Hitolo reluctantly took.

Tom would say how beautiful she was and complimented her on every little thing she did in the house.

Then one day he came back as usual, stating he had a hangover from the previous night. So Hitolo prepared him hot soup and let him be.

She had fed the baby and put him to sleep and started cleaning the rooms. She bent down to sweep the floor and suddenly felt a tight grip on her back.

She was taken aback and struggled but was no match for Tom, who pinned her down and threatened her with a knife before raping her and threatening to kill her if she told her aunt.

Four months later Hitolo realised that she was expecting a child. She tried concealing her stomach by wearing baggy clothes but her aunt noticed and asked sternly if Hitolo was pregnant.

Shamefully and tearfully Hitolo related the story to her aunt, who screamed at the top of her voice and dragged Hitolo out of the house and threw her down the steps telling her never to set foot in the house again.

If she did, her aunt threatened, she would call the police.

Hitolo had never felt so scared and alone. She couldn’t go back to her aunt or to the village, where to have a child out of wedlock was a sin preached by the padre at Sunday mass. She was a disgrace to her family and she hugged herself under an old mango tree crying softly.

She hurriedly climbed the tree before anything changed her mind.

Hitolo and the birds sang their last song for the day. A life taken too early and a journey cut short.
When rifles ruled: The solace of the innocent
MARLENE DEE GRAY POTOURA

Thus embedded in her heart.
Dawn came as a curse.
Grandpa mist dragged crawlers in;
Not his fault though.
Her awakening that stood still
For rifles’ rule she saw!
Came hurtling to her door.
Sleepy eyed, she witnessed;
Nest she called home destroyed.
Ransacked to ashes and ruins.
Scattered, as she fled and escaped.
Rifles fired over her head.
Mother held her daughters’ hands
And wept, as the distance closed.
Fathers and their sons bounded,
As they bled and cried.
‘Leave our daughters be’
‘Leave our mothers be’
Rifles whacked them.
Brotherhood and colour
Came all to nothingness.
Bloodlines and dynasties
Disrespected and destroyed.
Love, respect and honour
Erased by the power of rifles.

NIERR ESCAPED AND RAN.
She hid in the overgrown trunk of an old moileu mother tree. She lay down and curled her skinny body into its enormous embrace. The tears streaked down her grubby brown cheeks.
Nierr looked up and saw sunbeams kissing the wet dew on the
heart-shaped leaves swaying in the morning breeze. She focused her tear-stained eyes and squinted in the morning sun. The leaves were happy because of another beautiful day. But a sad day for Nierr.

They had come just when dawn was approaching.

As Nierr turned on her woven mat her nose twitched and she smelt their presence lurking behind the cocoa trees. Their stench rose like the rotting carcass of a wild boar.

As she woke her mother they heard an owl-like whistle. She quickly grabbed her singlet as the door burst open and the night crawlers invaded her home.

Gunshots rang out. Without second thought Nierr climbed through the window and ran. As she fled she realised that the mist was moving towards the cliff. She stopped, turned and looked back.

She could clearly see her kinfolk in the light of the bamboo torches. She saw her father, uncles, brothers and cousins whacked, butted and tied hand to foot. She heard her mother, aunties, cousins and sisters screaming and weeping.

A crawler jumped in front of Neirr, raised his rifle and took aim. Nierr turned and plunged into the mist. Somehow she landed at the bottom of a gully on the soft ferns growing near the creek.

She had no idea how she got there. But she was comfortably placed, as if by unseen hands. She stayed still and listened. Everything was quiet except for the crickets and the calls of dawn birds

Neirr quietly made her way up the cliff through the overgrown shrubs. She crept stealthily back towards her house.

There was no house.

Only embers and ruins.

Nierr fled. She ran through the forest sobbing and a voice rang in her head: *Don't be a coward, go find your family and be with them. You are nothing on your own.*

She turned and ran back to the ruins of her beloved village. Her head reeled when she saw the blood stains on the grass where the signs of struggle were still evident.

She called out, “Papa! Mama!”, but her parents were gone. She called her siblings one by one, but the place was empty.

She fell forward, gripping the grass with her skinny hands and wept. As the sun rose she saw that her village was in ashes, her home was no more, her family had gone and she was alone.
Suddenly Nierr heard laughter. She jumped into the bush and once more dived down the cliff as the bullets rained above her. She fled through the forest, not knowing where she was going. She just wanted to get away from the rifles. Death came with them.

Here in the embrace of mother tree, she felt the sympathy of nature that listened to her sniffing without complaint. Moileu let her sit at her glorious feet. Moileu let her listen to the birds that sang in her branches. Moileu let her lively green leaves dance to cheer her after her terrible ordeal. Moileu listened silently and hid her. Nierr closed her eyes and rested; made fugitive by her own kind and seeking a solace in another she never knew existed.

As the sun rose above Moileu Nierr’s stomach rumbled with hunger and her throat was dry from thirst. She crawled out of the tree’s safe embrace and crept down to some nearby water. She found a quiet pool and lay in it for a long time.

As she relaxed, her gaze caught a pawpaw tree with three yellow fruit.

She climbed the papaya tree and pulled each fruit carefully. She carried them to the pond and washed them. She found a strong twig and pricked the one with the softest membrane. Then she opened it and ate the juicy yellow contents.

She hid the other two so that she could eat later.

After her stomach was filled and her thirst was quenched, Nierr slowly started walking back to the mother tree. Her eyes filled with tears as she thought of her family.

As she rounded a rosewood tree, a gun barrel was placed on her chest. She screamed and tried to run, but a crawler held her skinny hands behind her back while another one slapped her face and yanked the mimis necklace from her neck.

Two other crawlers with rifles stood in front of her. She screamed again and struggled to free herself. Another crawler knocked her on the forehead. Her head reeled and she swallowed hard. The smell that hovered around the crawlers was unhygienic and Neirr felt suffocated.

Suddenly, the breeze - which had been calm - turned into the brutal rhythm of a wailing gale.

She could hear the tree’s branches whooshing and creaking angrily. The leaves were now doing a frenzied chant. The whole
forest was angry.

Mother tree bellowed an angry moan and her old bark creaked, sending messages to her kin through boundless unseen roots. The tree clan agreed that grandfather tree, standing in front of the crawlers, should join the great earth of secrets.

In seconds known only to the secrets of the forest, grandfather tree was uprooted from the soil and its hard old trunk fell on the crawlers who were consumed by the hungry dirt. As grandfather tree fell, the twigs lifted Nierr and moved her to safety.

The wind subsided and turned into a cool sweet zephyr with a serene innocence.

The tree clan observed the rules of the four elements of earth when a five-year daughter of Eve wept under mother tree and found solace in the comforts of her great roots.

Because innocence forgets.
Sleeping beside the village chief’s daughter
JOSEPH AMBANE JOHN

IT ALL HAPPENED ON THE evening of 9 November 2007 at the remote village of Bombir in the Kerowagi District of Simbu Province.

Around four on a fine Friday afternoon I packed some food for my mother, who was teaching at Nokar Primary School, an out-of-the-way school located right at the foot of the cloud covered mountain range that separates Kerowagi from Gembogl.

I left the family house 500 meters from the Okuk Highland near the main Mingende Market and started walking up the mountain - a journey that would take six hours.

I kept walking without rest towards the first range as the sun rolled down behind the mountains. I felt sweat rolling down my back and the hot air from my lungs forced its way through my mouth and nose but the cold evening breeze kept pushing me forward.

I hardly realised that the sun had disappeared behind the mountains and that evening had fallen.

The narrow bush track became invisible so I switched on my torch to keep me going. After four hours I left the first range and came close to Bombir Primary School. There I helped myself to some fresh water from a bush stream that poured from a bamboo pipe beside the track.

It was already eight in the night as I sat beside the stream for a rest. I felt my toes and fingers getting very tight and pain crept up my feet.

After a rest and having satisfied my thirst with the cold mountain water, I continued on to a small village. I arrived at a house and saw many people, especially young men, sitting around three fireplaces under the shelter of a large blue canvas tarpaulin.

A kerosene lamp hanging from the roof of the shelter was their only source of light. Their voices lowered to silence as they turned around to stare at me as I approached from the darkness. An elderly man slowly stood up and greeted me.

I quickly begged him for accommodation for the night as I was
very tired after walking the long distance from my village.

After a brief discussion among themselves, the elderly man led me to a large kunai hut which I figured was their village chief’s house. He handed me an old blanket and advised me to sleep in the small space next to someone who was already fast asleep, covered in a blanket from head to toe on a double mattress.

Desperate to rest I placed my bag on the floor and laid down on the bed and closed my eyes.

A question nagged at my mind as to why only one person was left alone to sleep in the large house but I quickly dozed off and into a deep sleep.

The high pitched shrill of cicadas and a cacophony of birds and other insects welcomed the dawn of a new day and woke me early. I grabbed my bag and left the house with the other person next to me still under the blanket.

After two hours of continuous walking, I reached my mother’s school at Nokar. Mum was busy weeding her vegetable garden when I arrived and she paused while I told her the story of my journey.

As I spoke and mentioned my night at the chief’s house at Bombir, she became very quiet, her eyes opened wide and her palm pressed to her mouth.

I asked what it was. To my horror I was told that the daughter of the village chief of Bombir had died during the early hours of Friday morning and her body had been placed inside the chief’s meeting house.

The tribesmen were guarding her dead body from sorcery. I realised the silent figure I had slept alongside was the corpse of the chief’s daughter.
Patience has its limits  
GERTRUDE BAKAIE

UP IN THE HIGH RANGES of Mt Wilhelm lived beautiful Weywey, full of elegance and taste. Wherever she walked the people had a positive comment on their lips.

When Weywey was only an infant, her mother had died of heart failure. Her loving and protective father raised her under strict rules which Weywey observed.

Her obedience earned her the admiration of the whole village as Weywey kept to her daily chores. After school she brought the pigs back to their pen, fed them and prepared the family meal. This was her life.

One day as Weywey was preparing for school, her father called her over. He hugged her and said, “Weywey, you are a big girl now. A lot of boys in the village will be keeping an eye out for you. Be careful and choose wisely. Don’t be lured by them.”

At school Weywey could still hear her father’s firm advice echoing in her mind. She felt she had been given the freedom to exercise her womanhood but with caution.

This was a new beginning, a new chapter, in her life. She felt satisfied and loved her father for trusting her and making allowances for her after all the strictness she was accustomed too.

One afternoon walking back home from school, she bumped into a young handsome man, Bakaie, who came from a mixed parentage of Simbu and Southern Highlands.

Bakaie’s parents had migrated to Simbu after a terrible tribal fight 10 years previously. Bakaie was their eldest son and had just completed his law studies at the University of Papua New Guinea.

He was on his vacation and would return to work as a lawyer in one of the city’s law firms. Even though he lived nearby, Weywey had taken him for a stranger.

When Weywey’s eyes met Bakaie, everything changed. She felt that he was the man for her. She tried to brush the thought aside but her inner voice told her, “Weywey, that’s your man. Go get him.”

After many sleepless nights and an endless burning desire for
Bakaie, Weywey collected her courage and did something that was against her culture. She went to Bakaie’s house, stood at his door for some time, collected herself, and then knocked.

She was thrilled when Bakaie opened the door himself. Lost for words Weywey just pushed a note into his hand and hurried away.

In her note she wrote, “Bakaie, please say that you will wait for me. I will grow up to be a mature woman soon. I will save all my kisses for you. I will shine with a love that will be forever true.”

In no time Bakaie was at the door of Weywey’s house. She was happy to see him responding to her note. They both stood looking at each other.

Finally, Bakaie found his tongue. He spoke softly and slowly. “Weywey, beautiful mountain butterfly, love is one thing and age is another. I am 22 years and you are only 15. I cannot wait for you. I have to live my life.”

With these few words, Bakaie left.

An emptiness filled Weywey’s heart.

Bakaie left for Port Moresby a few days later.

Weywey was down-hearted. She was not a cheerful girl anymore. All her hopes and desires for Bakaie had gone like the wind. One minute she was in love and the next minute she was in pain.

Is that what her father meant when he told me to choose wisely with caution, she asked herself. The question kept coming back to her again and again.

As weeks went by Weywey finally learn to let go of her feelings and move on in life. She went about her daily chores again, secretly hoping that Baikaie would one day return and ask for her hand in marriage.

One fateful day Weywey’s father felt ill and quickly died.

Weywey felt the whole world was against her. Life had no meaning. She just wanted to accompany her father on his eternal journey to meet her mother.

The village could see that Weywey had given up on life and they kept a close watch on her.

But one thing kept Weywey going: the commitment she had whispered to her father during the funeral. She promised to be the successful woman he wanted her to be. She promised her father that she would make him happy.
Weywey learnt to accept her father’s absence and went about her life. Time went by.

Five years later, Baikaie came back to ask for Weywey’s hand in marriage.

In the cold of the morning, he strolled to Weywey’s house and knocked softly on the door.

The door flew open and there standing facing him was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Weywey was shocked to see Bakaie. He had come back for her. She was stunned.

They both stood looking into each other eyes for some time then Bakaie said, “Well, aren’t you gonna let me in. It’s freezing cold here.”

Weywey was furious because this was the moment she had been dreaming of and now it had arrived she could not enjoy it.

She stood speechless for some time. Finally, she spoke softly trying not to show her emotion.

”Bakaie, it’s been five years since we last met and I’m now married to your best friend, Joseph.”
FROM DEEP WITHIN THE SOGERI forests I come forth signalling the end of another day, carrying the rays of my grandfather – the Sun, thanking him as he sets across his sleeping wife.

In his fading light I curl up among the boulders at the base of Paga Hill whispering messages to the plants and animals from those along the inland rivers, falling asleep as their chatter slowly turned into a hush.

Deep in the night I awake startled at the sound of a young prostitute weeping and tearing red rivulets into her wrists.

I hummed into her ashen face a song I heard a mother singing often to comfort her child a thousand years ago as she tended to her gardens and baked her clay pots.

I lay across the young woman’s body offering her the warmth of the earth as her own began to fade. She does not want to stay. Her tears taste of a hundred dreams unable to germinate in a life drained of love.

I search her memory and find a thousand pair of eyes looking at her with hate. I recognise each one of them. I cannot hold her spirit to mine.

She follows the light of my parents – the Moon and Stars, on a path bringing her toward the spirits of the people I loved, who once stood proud on this land welcoming her as one of their own.

I bid her farewell singing the song of a great chief whom I encountered as an orphaned boy who courageously saved his mother from the savagery of an entire village.

When grandfather spreads his bright cloak across the sky, I kneel beside the young woman’s cold body to tattoo the memory of her life into my arms, and as memories of her pain become mine my anger swells and boils into the surf.

The trees and grass beg me to be calm. From my flaring nostrils gust forth my eldest sons – the great Winds. My daughters – the Clouds, swirl above my mighty head impregnated with rain. Hungry
for destruction my children dance storm and chaos.

With them I rage howling and wailing through the Harbour streets and topple a handful of people into the sidewalk-drain congested with husks of areca nut and spittle. We graze car windows with stones and rocks at Konedobu, Ela Beach, Hohola and Badili and flood the main streets of each suburb.

How dare they? Even animals do not destroy each other so. They spit, they defecate, and they throw their filth onto me and onto each other. Greedy, selfish and conceited people – they cut, scratch & claw into the sleeping curves of my wives who form the mountains and hills. Capturing, caging, killing what should be free. Taking and never giving back! They do not care for each other, or this place, or for me! With one word I can summon my grandmother – the Sea, to rise and flood the filth-makers into her watery womb.

Only when I hear the frightened shouts of a family on a boat out at sea and observe the destruction of houses at Two Mile Hill I stop and roar for an end to the storm. I calm my children and return them to their slumber.

At the top of Burns Peak I weep in anguish, my tears soaking into an earth worn-out by over-gardening. I stare at Port Moresby through liquid and haze.

One day, I rattle the radio towers as a warning to the people. I shall raze this city and all within it to dust and rubble.

A quiet sad-soaked stillness is felt by all as I pass the roads leading through Waigani, Gerehu, Tatana, Badihagwa and Hanuabada. I sit weary on my favourite boulder along the Poreporena Freeway among the comfort of my wives.

It is there, one of my younger sons bears to me the voices of children laughing delightfully, as they carry their home-made kites into the grey sky broken momentarily by the last trail of grandfather’s bright coat.

One of my wives gently recalls to me the first people that arrived here, before my grandmother shifted in her sleep and covered the land bridge. They were different then – large, agile and wandering people, following the great herds of wild beasts that are no longer alive today. They wore animal pelts and bore strange markings on their faces, and they hunted always.

I remember the first of their kind who died on the land – I have carved her memory near my heart.
Care for my children, this wanderer woman asked me as she kissed my feet. Throughout millennia I have done so – but none of her descendants have I cared and loved more than the ones who first called upon my sons the Great Winds. For such an honour I beckoned my wives to show them the secrets of the earth – gardening, clay-pot making and tattooing. I promised all chiefs descended from this line that I would make their people great.

But I am all but a memory now in this land – only few remember my sons and they are old and dying.

In their dreams these old men and women call out to me, despairing for their children. They will be reminded I tell them gently and they sleep assured that the day of reckoning will come and their children will be made to remember.
A remarkable woman who shared a young man’s dream
PAUL WAUGLA WII

THE GLIMMER FROM A LANTERN was the only source of light inside the room. She sat quietly on a bamboo platform inside the dimly lit room and began to take out an assortment of items from her bilum lying on her lap.

She carefully checked each item under the light from the lamp, which was suspended on a wire just above her head. She picked up something, amongst the odds and ends, which looked like a folded plastic bag.

It was indeed a plastic bag, an empty one kilogram Trukai rice packet. It was not unusual for mothers in the village to keep an empty plastic bag in their bilum that they might use in a myriad of ways.

Lucy was a typical village woman at heart. What she was holding under the flickering lantern was somewhat unusual and odd in that it was neatly folded in to a tight rectangular shape the size of a man’s thumb.

A string was fastened around the folded plastic bag like a coil around a magnet in order to ensure that whatever treasure she was keeping in there would not drop out. Meticulously, she undid the rope and as the plastic began to unfurl to its original shape, Lucy slid her fingers into it and pulled out some money.

She counted the banknotes under the flickering lamp. The money she was holding in her hand was the reward of her labour. The bank notes added up to fifty kina in total. It was not much but it was something.

A little smile formed a curve in the corner of her lips. Next week when the beans and some more kaukau from my new garden are harvested, I will make another fifty kina, she thought as she tried to make a mental calculation of the remaining amount of school fees that she must pay up before Toby would be allowed to stay in school for the last two terms.
She placed the money carefully back into the *bilum* and, just as she was about to put it away, Toby walked into the house. He was dripping wet from the heavy rain outside.

“Ah, you are back and you are very wet indeed,” Lucy said as she surveyed his wet clothes and hair.

“Yes, I am soaked to the skin,” Toby responded and, throwing his mud-covered boots under the bed adjacent to the doorway, he walked to one corner of the house where a towel was hanging from a wire suspended across the ceiling.

He dried his hair and face and after removing his shirt and hanging it on the wire line, he came back and sat down beside the fire in the middle of the living room.

“Did you sell all the *kaukau* at the market today?” he asked his mum who was sitting quietly atop the raised platform which was her sleeping place. Toby looked intently at the burning flames now as he waited for his mum to say something.

“There were plenty of sellers at the market today,” Lucy began to explain. “The Good Lord was merciful to us as He always has been. I earned fifty kina. Most of the sellers could not even earn twenty kina today. The rain came down and they brought their bags of *kaukau* back to their homes.”

Toby looked at the dancing flames as he tried to digest his mother’s explanation. He was going back to school next week and he had to go with a hundred kina in order to be allowed to continue in school. His mind was racing. Where else can I get the other fifty kina he was thinking?

It was already getting dark outside, although the downpour has now receded to a mere trickle. A thick black darkness began to descend on the village as Toby sat there inside the smoke-filled house with his mother. He was feeling angry and distraught.

“But I told you, it’s a hundred kina…,” his voice choked in his throat. He knew that he was not going back to school and the realisation pained him. Lucy sat there quietly. Any careless word might provoke him to wrath. Toby sat there in silence too, trying in his young mind to come to terms with the reality confronting him and his family.

Toby knew that he could not argue with his mother for she had done everything that she could do. He also knew that there was no
one in this world against whom he would direct his anger at his predicament. He felt much pain within as he sat beside the burning fire.

Lucy sat in silence on her bed. She felt for her son and she understood what was actually going on in his mind. How could she not understand her son? After all they were in this predicament together.

“I left your food in the pot and it is on the stool near the cupboard,” she said after a while. Toby took the pot and ate his dinner in silence.

She had taken particular care when she was boiling the green leafy vegetables over the fire and the food tasted delicious. Furthermore, this meticulous care with which his mother would prepare meals for the family was one of her many qualities that, he realised, he took for granted.

While Toby was eating, Lucy stood up and adjusted the lamp. When the lantern was glowing she made a comment about how long-lasting the lamp had been since she had bought it almost ten years ago when Toby was in elementary school and his sister Suaire was a toddler.

At the mention of his sister’s name, Toby looked up to his mother and asked about Suaire’s whereabouts. His mother smiled a little when their eyes met and told him that she had sent Suaire to Goroka to spend the weekend with Uncle Mundua and his family.

After the meal, Toby stayed awake long into the night. From time to time he would look at his mother who appeared fast asleep on her bed. Tears welled up in his eyes when he tried to imagine what would become of his life without his mother.

She was aging and losing her strength and this was not so much a result of the passage of time but was more to do with the inevitable outcome of the strenuous and back breaking work that she has been doing every day to raise her children after her husband had died in a motor accident fifteen years ago.

She had always been a hard working woman, not only in regard to raising her own offspring, but also in terms of her contribution in maintaining cohesion in their relationship with the members of her community and its close-knit society.

However, that feeling of communal responsibility had tended to
diminish in recent years. As a result, Lucy has been dealing with her children’s school fees mostly on her own. She had sold three pigs in the last three years to raise the money to keep Toby in Primary school and now secondary school.

The manner in which she had earned that money was not the easy prospect as one might think it was. On each occasion she has had to walk over a slippery mountain track pulling the pig by a rope tethered to its leg in order to sell it at the station for the much-needed cash.

Toby had actually walked with his mother on a couple of these marketing trips over the mountain to the nearest station and he has come to understand the pain his mother was going through to keep him in school.

He knew his mother was suffering much for him and he thought it was really unfair. He wanted to tell her to forget about it so that he could stay back in the village to help out with the work. They would be happier together in that way.

However, that was not what his mother had in her mind. She was prepared to go that extra mile in order to make sure that Toby would have a better education.

“I will take another pig over the mountain to the market tomorrow,” she had said as she was lying down on her bed.

She knew that it was worth it because she has heard what the teachers have said about Toby. He was a bright student. In fact, Toby was more than a bright student. They were talking about a child who was her very own. She did not want to allow their unfortunate circumstances to deprive her son of a good education.

Lucy was a fighter at heart and she was more than ready to battle the odds to get him through. She knew that Toby, like herself, would one day grow up to be a fighter in a world that would be very challenging and competitive, world that would offer so much promise to a young man like him who could emulate the character of his strong-willed mother.

Feeling utterly exhausted, he crept quietly to his own bed. The dim glow of the lantern cast a shadow over the room, while outside in the compound happy children were singing in the night and a dog was barking near the river bank below the ridge where their village sat.
Too young, too late
DAVID KASEI WAPAR

I CAN’T FIND THE RIGHT words to describe the feeling; it was both embarrassment and sorrow.

I was too young to understand what was going on but, from the noise and the expression on Dad’s face, I guessed something important was to taking place.

Kapus, my elder brother, had not told me about it and only found out for myself when the din had subsided in front of our house.

Peeping through the window, I could see Stella, a classmate from Grade Six. Why would she come here accompanied by her wavois (nephews) and with a bowed head? I thought.

Part of the crowd had their faces painted and held the fali falfal leaf, the Wolomu clan emblem.

Then it struck me, this was the ceremony where the bride is formally handed over to the groom.

“There must be a mistake. Stella is in Grade Six and Kapus is in Grade Nine,” I said to myself.

Molom, one of Stella’s nephews, stepped forward and greeted Dad with a handshake.

I left the window and turned to hear what Kapus had to say. But he was already on the veranda sitting behind Mum and Dad, wiping away tears with the back of his hand. From the look on his face I could tell he was regretful.

“What? No, no this can’t be true,” I whispered quietly with tears in my eyes. “We still sleep on the same mattress and he’s travelling back to Kairiru for the final term of study.” My mind swirled like a raunwin.

My silent pleas were to no avail. Finally Molom declared: “As one of Stella’s nephews, I am happy to bring her to Kapus as his wife.”

“She has been pregnant with Kapus’ child for over a month now, so to avoid conflict between you and us, we hand her to you,” he said.

I slowly stepped out and sat in the doorway taking in both the tsk
tsks and murmurs of approval from the small crowd.

Dad stood up and welcomed Stella and her nephews. “Thank you for sorting this out smoothly. As the father of the groom I welcome you, Stella, to the family and assure your nephews we will take good care of you.”

Now that seals the deal, I thought. My mind raced, making plans to assist Kapus escape this unplanned marriage, this ‘adult thing’. But then again, Mum was a devout Catholic and wouldn’t let us get away with it.

“You can avoid my cane but you just can’t escape God’s punishment,” I recalled the stern warning whenever we got ourselves into trouble.

After the formalities, the crowd dispersed, leaving only Stella and her close relatives. Eventually her belongings were brought into the house by Mum.

Where shall she sleep? Is she sharing the same mattress that Kapus and I had been sharing since we were kids? Is she going to care for our sister Baramai? Will she cook well? Silent questions that time alone would answer.

When they finally looked at each other, for the first time I saw Kapus smile like he had never done before. I must have blushed. Deep down I knew he wasn’t ready for a lifetime commitment.

Mum pulled me aside and said emotionally, “This is what you get when you go after ladies. Kapus and Stella now have this marriage and a child rather than their education. I hope you will learn from this.”

A nod was my only response.

I swallowed and held back tears when I finally got the chance to shake Stella’s hand. I had known her for six years as my classmate but today she has become my tambu meri, even in class.

The following week at school was the worst. I had to put up with all the ‘Stella and Kapus’ gossip. I hated it when the teacher spoke of it. To make matters worse, I sat just adjacent to the empty desk once used by Stella.

Eventually I got used to being called liklik tambu man, and appreciated Stella’s presence at home very much because it gave Kapus and me a break from the kitchen.

At least she cooks for us when Mum’s not around, I thought.
I left home the following year for my primary education while Kapus struggled to juggle school work and marriage. It did not work out. They parted a few years later.

Kapus was bright and so was Stella. If only they had known the consequences of that ‘puppy love’ they might well have waited for the right time.

They were both too young.
Not leaving it up to chance
TANYA ZERIGA-ALONE

IN A FLASH, THE BACK of his hand connected with my cheek. The force caused my 10-year frame to turn 360 degrees on the spot. Stars erupted in my eyes, and my brain sloshed inside the cavern of my head.

It was hot, fiery hot, and the tears evaporated from my eyes as I struggled to choke back my heart which had leapt out of my chest from the shock.

As the room recoiled with the slamming of the door behind his retreating back, the heart wrenching sobs from the direction of the bedroom made me realize that what I had just experienced was just the aftermath of the storm which had raged in the bedroom for the past half hour.

“Mum,” I screamed as I threw myself against the bedroom door, forgetting my searing hot face. I screamed louder as I fumbled with the knob. The door was locked from the inside.

“Mum, please open the door,” I begged.

I heard a shuffle in the room and heard my mother leaning against the door on the other side of the locked door.

“Please baby, don’t cry, I am alright,” she slurred, “go and get Uncle Greg, I need to go to the hospital.”

“Mum, no,” I screamed in alarm slamming myself on the locked door.

“Please baby, just go and bring aunty and uncle,” she begged in a fading voice as I heard her slide to the floor.

“No,” I screeched and sprang out the door and straight into uncle Greg and Auntie Pat who had seen the retreating back of the man we called dad and were coming to check on mum and me.

“Mum, mum,” was all I could manage as I passed out.

When I came round, I was lying in auntie’s house, being fanned by their grandmother. The cold cloth on my face was not cold enough to quell the sweltering pain on my tender cheeks. My brother was sucking his thumb, all hunched up and pressed into the old woman.
Old bubu mama informed me that my mum had been taken to the hospital and she left instructions for me to not go home but to look after my baby brother and stay with bubu mama until she returned from the hospital.

That night, even the prayers offered by bubu mama or her comforting presence could not stop the events from replaying in a continuous loop in my head. Initially, my concern was for mum but as the night hours ticked on, my mind shifted to what had happened to me. I could see the huge hairy hand coming down in slow motion and connecting with my face, as spittle flew out the other side and I spun like a highly strung spinning top.

Mum had told me that the word hate was a bad word – in God’s eyes hate was on the same level as murder. Hate is reserved for sinners bound for hell. Then it hit me there in bed beside my baby brother and nestled against the bulk of the old woman - I had become a victim of hate. He hated me, the man I looked up to and called father. I broke down and my heart followed suit.

Eventually the tears of self-pity ran out and the tear ducts hardened into tight coils of hatred. How I wished he could fall down dead where ever he was. It did not matter to me there and then that I was now the transgressor.

The next day, mum returned from the hospital looking bedraggled and shaky. She had a black eye and a butterfly Band-Aid plastered on a gash on her upper lip which was swollen and purple. Her left hand was bandaged and in a sling. We reunited tearfully.

That night we went home with great apprehension, but we had the company of all the female members of our neighborhood who came to give us support and protection in case the beast of a man came around again.

As predicted, he did return.

“Sisi, honey, Sisi, I am so sorry’, he pleaded tearfully with mum using her pet name, “please forgive me, I did not know what I was doing. I will never do that again.”

“Go away lowlife,” aunty Pat threw open the door and spat in his face.

He only needed the door to be partly open to jam the door with his huge hairy leg to stop it from shutting.

“Aaron my boy, I love you so much, I am so sorry, please come to
Daddy,” he beseeched while ignoring Aunty Pat as his eyes searched the faces in the room for my baby brother.

Again, it was happening as was predicted. He would try to get back into your life by using the children, mum was told, be strong and do not give in into his tears. Mum was beyond persuasion by his crocodile tears, so she just ignored him.

He kept on for a while and upon getting no response, he slunk away in shame under the cover of darkness.

The next day, mum went to the Community Peace Officer and set a date to meet with the man we call dad and sort the issue. The next available day for the meeting was two days away. Word was sent to my real grandparents to come to the meeting. It would be a shameful business - airing the private story of our life, but mum decided that reliving those painful memories were the only way to break the cycle of violence.

The day arrived and we were all summoned to meet with the Peace Officers under the mango tree at the church grounds. Our agenda was first and the only item in the list and it lasted the whole day. At the end of that day, our story was the tasty morsel that made the standard fare of sweet potato palatable around the evening fires.

One year ago, at just 23 years of age and armed with a Nursing Certificate, the woman I call mum was posted to this rural hospital. Being a young woman, she needed company, so that was how, Aaron and I ended up with her. Aaron and I are cousins – the woman we call mum is the younger sibling of my mother and older sibling to Aaron’s father. Aaron’s parents and my parents gave us up for our aunty to adopt us. I was 6 years older than Aaron.

Mum was young and attractive and had a lot of admirers, but she chose the broad shoulders and rippling muscles of Sam – muscles that turned deadly as we gradually found out. He worked at the local didiman store - which had its benefits. He took care of all our hardware needs - bags of fertilizer for mum’s flower gardens, and my little plot of peas and corn at the back of the house, a proper tank and proper gutters that fed our tank with clean fresh rainwater. He also installed all the locks in the house and made them fool proof.

The only drawback, he was a very insecure man – very suspicious of my mother, questionning her every movement; scrutinizing all her friends and even severing her friendships. He wanted mum to
himself. He would even get jealous if mum showed us children more affection than him.

All of the jealousy had built for the past eight months and spewed into that violent explosion 5 days ago.

On that fateful day, at around 4:30 pm, he came home straight from work and demanded sex. Mum was busy preparing to go for night shift that she put him off. His advances being thwarted, he snapped. Then accusations started flying – he accused mum of not loving him the way he loved her and he accused her of infidelity.

Not long after, his huge gorilla hands took over the talking. Behind the locked door, she was like an amateur boxer in the ring with a heavy weight. And when he was done and leaving, he gave me a serving of his frustration for being my mother’s daughter.

That day under the mango tree, other stories came out – evidence which mum carefully hid from me and Aaron and even the neighbours and no one suspected that such a man like him – stable and family oriented would be capable of such violence.

With a stoic expression on her face, mum recounted how he had destroyed some of her best clothes and at one time he even took a scissors to all her underwear. He would pull her hair and pinch her to draw blood on her thighs and stomach areas. Places where the bruises would not be visible.

Once he came home late stinking of alcohol. When he was served dinner, he took one look at the food and threw the plate out the door. He demanded to eat chicken and not the tin fish that we served him. We did not sleep well that night.

That afternoon after he stormed out of the house, mum slit her wrist in frustration, she could not bear the torment anymore. But hearing me on the other side of the door; she realized that she couldn’t just take her life because she had responsibility in me and Aaron. That night, she lost enough blood to need a transfusion overnight.

That day under the mango tree, the shame on grandfather’s face was overwhelming because mum was blamed for bringing the problem on herself. She was presented as an immoral woman to have let Sam move in to her house to share her bed and her life even before any bride price was paid. Grandfather could not ask for compensation on that ground.
At the end of all the day, Granddad asked mum to apply for a position in the hospital in our own home district. We left 4 weeks later. We were not sorry to see the last of the place that held dreadful memories for the three of us.

As I am writing this piece for a domestic violence report, I see mum bouncing my first son on her lap.

Through arranged marriage - since grandpa did not believe in leaving things up to chance - he married mum to a distant relative, slightly older but stable in temperament. Mum bore three younger siblings for Aaron and me.

When I came of marriageable age, mum ensured she approved my husband before I got married. As for Aaron, we are saving up money to buy him his bride. We have learnt our lesson well and not leaving our future to chance.
Brown Collar Crime
TIMOTHY PIRINDUO

WANI IS A HOUSEHOLD NAME within the Suwayawi village community. He is the last remains from the twelfth generation of the Suwayawi clan. Four generations older than the present village population, Wani shows no evidence of aging.

He is a village court magistrate spanning unrecorded years of service to the government. His influence reverberates over the neighbouring villages and as wide as the district boundaries.

He is empowered and immortalised by reputation from intense local knowledge and is claimed by many as a soul from centuries gone who has returned as a prophet to take care of his people.

Wani is feared and claimed to possess supernatural powers that can turn one into a stone. His presence alone is enough to make one shiver to the bones. Nobody dares go near his house or land.

The sun was high and beneath the coconut palms life was motionless except for a few birds whistling in the nearby bushes. A lone cock at one end of the village, witnessed by another at the other end, can be heard indicating the approach of noon. Nature’s way of reading time.

At the far corner of the village whispers are heard from youthful voices escaping from the boy-house. “Where is that cock cry coming from?”

“Look, they are under the house. Quickly, lure them with some pieces of coconut and get the fishing hook down,” replied the other.

They were prepared for this. Within minutes the job was done and meat was available. The next thing was to ransack the food gardens for vegetables to go with the fowl.

A squeaky sound came and the wooden door flew open. Billy stepped out. He has lost a bit of weight from the continuous smoking of marijuana and lack of nutrition. His eyes are lazy and he is squinting to avoid the piercing sun.

It is the dry season period and most of the villagers are preparing new gardens or making sago near the riverbanks. A few have gone
into town and the village truck is not within sight. Walking backwards scanning the entire village and enjoying his high mood, he jumped in fright at the sudden appearance of Wani.

“Where are you coming from, Billy?” Wani asked.

“I was just checking Mande out for some cigarette, but, ah, not around. Must have gone into town,” Billy managed to get the words across after struggling to compose himself.

“Oh, good boy, Billy. You have any marijuana butt with you?”

“Just a little. I guess it should be enough to take away the steaming heat and bring a fresh jungle breeze. Listen paps, Rebo and I have slaughtered a rooster and we’re looking for vegetables to go with it.”

“Good boys. I’ll run out of gas by the time this butt is done. If you two know where to get vegetables please by all means go ahead and do so. Leave the consequences to me. Listen, be swift and don’t forget me.”

Night passed and the new day neared evening. Biku hurried up to Wani, “Magistrate, my rooster is missing and my six-month old garden has been ransacked. The prime suspects are Billy and Rebo. The suspects were tracked from the temporary trail that they created until I came upon their names clearly inscribed on a betel-nut palm. I can show you if you want proof.”

“No, no. That’s alright grandchild, I will gather the village tomorrow evening and we’ll sort it out. Okay?”

“Thank you magistrate,” Biku walked away still trying to control his pounding heart.

The July night began to become chilly as the Colman lamp hanging a few inches above the head of the magistrate struggled to spill out its light. Five gossips had gathered nearby.

“Good evening my grandchildren. You all will by now have some idea as to why we are here. For those of you who don’t know, Biku’s rooster is missing and his garden has been ransacked. Billy and Rebo, you are the prime suspects.

“Can you both step into light? I want you both to tell me and every one of us here if this is false and how do you can prove that,” the Magistrate said.

“Magistrate,” Billy spoke first, “This is not true as we were at the river swimming and sunbathing all day. Mary, Nangu’s daughter, saw us on her way to the garden just after noon that day. Mary confirm
that. Our story speaks for itself.”

“That cannot be. Mary was in town, I saw her. Besides she is not around now to testify,” Biku cut in. “You two skinny drug-addicts, who sleep all day, and whose names were inscribed on the betel-nut palm, who are you trying to fool here?”

“Okay, okay, calm down. Let us not point fingers at each other,” the Magistrate quickly intervened. “I am terribly sorry Biku, my grandchild. Seeing with your eyes is one thing, hearing or suspecting is another thing. Mary is not here to confirm what Billy has said.

“Yesterday, I was in the village all day. There was not a single person in sight. The village was dead silent,” the Magistrate went on. “I will tell you a story. During my heyday, I went and stayed at Tanguyawi village with some distant relatives. I was like many of you young ones, inscribing my name everywhere I went. On riverbank stones, tree bark, palm trees, nearly everywhere where letters could be carved. And it made me feel big. However, sometimes I went to places I never visited and, surprisingly my name was there too. It made me question one of their village boys who told me that those where carved by my secret admirers. Girls of course.

“So, what am I saying here then?” There isn’t enough hard evidence to lay charges against the two suspects. If no one has anything else to say then I’ll declare this gathering closed,” Wani concluded.

“You know, we talk about corruption and white collar crimes in high places,” Biku half-heartedly whispered to his wife as they lay awake in bed going over the events of the past hours. “What we have just witnessed is unmistakably a brown collar crime. I could tell that those three had collaborated in some way.”
Kina Securities Award for Poetry

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That’s my Niugini  
ROBIN SUANG

I see the world blooming, my nation stands amidst the big guns  
I feel the echoes of my Melanesian genes and might  
The painted tapa wear, the Malomalos and the tanget we share  
The flying chauka and garamut, we ask the world “meri Manus yu stap we?”

Hoping for the world to tell us “meri Manus i stap hia”  
We look west of Manus we hear the bamboo beats of my  
Bougainvillean brothers

The Saposa girls sing island saposa meri saposa, with the panpipes and  
  bamboo beats  
The land of the rising sun, island sankamap

Looking from close, a Manusian chauka flies to greet the drongo  
The karanas bilas peles, with mystic view, iconic surfing waves and  
  smiling faces

Nilpis is where the drongo lives, with cultures of diversified variety  
Tenderness of the Malangan in New Ireland, when the drongo flies  
Across the sheer plains, across the volcanic guria land of Radazz  
To the ways and smiles of the Matupit  
Dances from far and wide, from Rapopo to Blue Lagoon to the far east NCR

Smoking rages and spewing ashes from earth with in  
Kokopo stands to greet in style with the pasin west  
Dancing in style, buai daka na kambang  
It’s my NGI, it’s my NGI, Niugini Islands

Through the Bismarck sea, we come over to feel the Morobe feeling,  
I’d fly like a kumul, I’d cry like the mothers of Siasi  
Through the fields and over the hills of Bulolo taking the highway to  
the Highlands  
The kumul swells across the Highlands, from the Wilhelm of the
Simbus
To the mudman of Asaro, my unique Papua New Guinea
The Huli wigman looks up as the last Papua seeks up
Sits up and echoes his voice across the Mendi Valley
With the *kundu* beats of the new Hela Province, its oil fields the hope
of the developing nation
Echoing the signals that PNG has arrived is Mount Hagen were the
Kanges live
With the Jiwakans ready for a new start, the Miok of Enga flies up
the mountain ridges towards the Sepiks
There the sun sets in Sandaun, looking like a bird we stand
Near the border, West Papua
Our closest relatives, from the Mighty Sepik River
The Sepik place of the founding father of this beautiful country
Define East Sepik with Grand Chief Somare, whom our Tolais
named him *To’Palangat*
We swim through the black waters of the Sepik and end up in Ramu,
Beautiful Madang stands bright,
The Kalibobo lighthouse the symbol of a diversified town

We take a PX flight ending up in Kiwai, the land of the Fly
Western Province we catch some barramundis before we take the
road
A bird of paradise awaits at the Gulf of Papua
As we pour more oil and gas from the resource rich province
The sleeping *isapea* sleeps in its untouched banks
As the *boli maea* song plays “Yu yet kam na lukim”
So captivated I was, I leave Kerema town
I was on my way to POM POM city city,
A butterfly led me from a distance to a land
a birdwing, the biggest in the world
smiles at me and says, “Oro Kaiva”
what a beautiful place indeed, through the Tufi fiords across Purari, I
end up at Kokoda
walking the trail where our forefathers fought and died for the
a few days later, am in Sogeri, wanting to get back to Port Moresby, the Kiriwina and the Fergusson chants are heard over the Owen Stanley Ranges, across to Cape Rodney, making my journey there, I gaze from a distance, from a distance I saw this It made me astonished, it took my breath away As the Trobiand Islanders danced with their “hu ma bese ia tapioca” I could feel the vibes, I could take the dance field, when the Motuan lady shouts Ediyaro Bogebada… I knew I was already in Port Moresby My capital, where my friends from Motu would say Bamabuta, oi I no night yet That’s my Niugini… Expect the Unexpected, Expect the Unknown.

How you can contribute

DOREEN BAULONI

Pass a peppermint Colgate smile
Stretch a copper stained grin
Give it to a stranger without one
Wave your hands to a traveller
Say hello to a passer-by
Shake the hand of someone you meet
Call one another wantoks
Regardless of the language you speak

Sound the conch of gathering
The feast of friendship herald
Slaughter the disputes past
Melt the arrows of revenge
In a bonfire of forgiveness
Prepare a banquet of caring
Lay it on a table of sharing
Uniting all races in one accord

Let education not raise the foolish
Who trampled selflessness underfoot
Knowledge be embraced by the wise
Directing each man his path
Let status not shorten the sight
Letting glutton fill able bellies
Overlooks a neighbour’s dire need
The worth of their toil and money

Chop down the trees of injustice
Clear the scrub of partiality
Reduce to ashes selfishness
And ignorance be carried no more
Plant the seeds of equality
Let fairness sprout galore
In the fields of every path
That takes one to the humble roots

Park that fifth element
Gather the sixth sense
Walk down the seventh street
The people at the far corner
Be aliens to one no more
We are neighbours astride
Regardless of ethnic origins
In peace and harmony we strive.
Wingless angels
MARLENE DEE GRAY POTOURA

My days I spend, with the cute little ones I teach.
I only have simple words, to describe their daily plights.
    A silent epidemic, that has taken the lives.
Of so many white, brown, black and yellow
    Wingless angels.

In a world ruled by the undefined authority
    Like you and me.
    Aye, the little ones!
It is not their choice that each day
    They are born into this cruel world.
    Our wingless angels.

    Bruises and broken bones; I see
    Black eyes and swollen noses; greet me
    Ripped lips and cane welts; each day
    Limps and bumps; so pitiless
A cruel world they had never chosen to be in
    Our wingless angels.

    Dirty uniforms and shoes; needs are ignored
    Worthlessness and humiliation; so quiet in class
    Belittled and shamed; unexplained tears
Name calling and oppression; tease and bully
    A spiteful world they did not ask to be in
    Our wingless angels.

    Rejection and ignorance; sad and long faces
    Threatened and yelled; hearts of stone
Exposed to violence; strong headedness
Poetry

No hugs and kisses; cold and distant
A world of unfairness, choices are limited
Our wingless angels.

One thing least we forget!
You and I were once
Wingless angels.

Alike, we will show these little ones
To follow in our steps
When they become men and women
To exercise undefined power
Over their wingless angels.

This has become a trend
From father to son
From mother to daughter.
Indeed, simple words only
To break the cycle
To sum up the predicament
Of our wingless angels.

Dengan biaya untuk – I am lost
LAPIEH LANDU

For the boat people….

I wake to the smell of stench
The sound of an angry tide
As ocean spray surrounds
Blinded by cold-thick mist
My hands are all I feel.

Dengan biaya untuk
The swaying to and fro
Shaken by this fragile craft
Fear, anxiety, ambiguity
Of everything about the unknown
My feet, as if planted in ice

_Dengan biaya untuk_

The vivid flashes of my belonging
Brutal hardships all too many
For I float in the midst of nowhere
God knows where I am going
My mind, slowly wanders

_Dengan biaya untuk_

My pockets emptied in despair
Disrobed from all riches I own
Emptiness an ancient matter
Nothing but Polaroids of memories
My heart, pounding in anguish

_Dengan biaya untuk_

Scanning through the drove of heads
Young and old, sick and dying
Intentions all too familiar
Freedom of anguish and despair
My body, trembling in fear

_Dengan biaya untuk_

The aura of desperation overwhelming
Somewhat filled the heavy air
Frantically in search for hope
Among each and every glare
My eyes, glistening with fright

_Dengan biaya untuk_

How I long for the warmth of fire
As its thought gives me comfort
A feel of ease I recall
When nights turned cold and brutal
My skin, peeling in distress

To a land foreign but promising
They pledge, they reassure
They make it sound all but gold
We are near! Alas we are near! They roar
My conscience, engulfed in doubt still

Will this be my home for now?
A place I bury my past
My source of forage and strength
I long for this to last
My soul still whispers at dawn to me

Ode to Anthony Ampe

CHRIS BARIA

Aye, forgot to tell ya
Old Anthony he died
Great man, great clan
Reduced to rubble
For the want of metal

Oh how he mourned
The death of his valley
The possum and the parrot
No more but dust and oil
No land, no soil to till or toil
King Narungsi he became
To escape the stark reality
His mind did flip to learn
Six feet beneath his feet
He never could own

Thousand profanities he hurled
The government and company
have stolen my land, he sang
as he roamed the land he loved
Never could he ever find solace

Like headless chooks we run around
After money and greatness
Buried in vanity, blind to reality
Yes our kings didn’t wear crowns
To be seen or heard from afar

Fare thee well Anthony
In the land of eternal rest
Your ancestors dance for joy
To greet you on the shores of Tutueu
Where all spirits are free and equal.

Impaired
LAPIEH LANDU

Indeed your words aren’t a throng of letters anymore
Amplified by the propitious waves from within your soul
Not the tune of tenderness we once danced to
But tools of trauma, I live impaired

Indeed the pushing and shoving aren’t gestures of passion anymore
Depicted by the gentle grasping of your hands
Not the tender clenching of certainty you assigned me
But contraptions of stigma, I live impaired

Indeed your glares aren’t sincere as rendered anymore
Illustrated by fathomless brooding from within your port
Not the graceful glance of acclaim you once gave me
But the peering of contempt, I live impaired

Indeed your thoughts aren’t composed of blissful sonnets anymore
Forged by joyous cascades that swirl your cerebral matter
Not the fanciful notion we shared in time
But perceptible spite of envy, I live impaired

Indeed your presumptions aren’t your efforts of preference anymore
Robed instead, by genuine intentions that you contrive earnestly
Not the ambitious seeds we once planted together
But wilful control to deprive my integrity, I live impaired

What has come of our once sincere alliance?
Comprised of artless toil and sentiment
No more the covenant of truth and sincerity
But a vicious cycle of madness!

Enough! No more! No more, I live impaired!

I know, I walked
SIONI RUMA

I walk, down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in
I am lost.... I am helpless
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.
The Crocodile Prize Anthology 2014

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again
I can't believe I am in the same place but, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

I walk down the same street
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it there.'
I still fall in.... it's a habit, my eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

I walk down another street.

Long tulait bai yumi kalapim dispel banis
kalabus
MICHAEL DOM

Kumul; yu tingim tu taim tulait i buruk?
Antap long Waigani maunten, kapsait olsem ret na gol
Ikam long bilak na bilak skai – stalait i pundaun –

Yu tingim tu ol driman stori mipela ibin toktok?
Taim mipela stap wantaim long bik moning – kol –
Mipela poroman strong tru taim tutak i holim graun;

Dispela taim mipela raunraun nating long laik
Poetry

Nogat promis, tasol mipela bilip strong tru
Stil paia i stap long pasin; yumi tok aut na tok stre.

Na taim Sana i kirapim dispela paia – traipela lait –
Dispela paia i kamap strong insait long bel trutru
Na mipela save olsem i gat longpela rot i stap yet;

Bai yumi abrusim mak bilong dispela haus kalabus
Taim bel na tingting bilong yumi i kalapim banis.

Kumul; do you recall how daylight broke?
Over Waigani Hill, spilling red-gold
From those black, black skies – cascading starlight –

Do you recall those dreams of which we spoke?
As we kept company that morning – cold –
Kept faith in friendships strength, born of dark nights;

When we wandered, helpless, each on our own,
Without promise, till our shared certainty
Sparked by each other’s trust; our word, our bond.

So when Sana made that fire light – full grown –
Those flames raged within our sanctuary.
We knew then that we must now go beyond;

Beyond the measure of these shackled halls
Our hearts and minds must leap from prison walls.
What lies have I heard ....?

MARTYN NAMORONG

Lies lies lies
All around me buzzing like flies
I hear the whispers from the corridors of power
Bursting my eardrum every hour
And the sound of truth seeps through my veins
Awakening my consciousness to a nation’s pains
We don’t get free healthcare folks
We pay for fake drug stocks
We don’t get free education
In many a rundown institution

What we get is a façade
And you wonder why life is hard
Why they ban the buai seller
While they tolerate the plastic seller
You wonder why it’s so expensive to be alive
Why your people struggle to survive
It’s because of the lies
And the truth being hidden from their eyes

The Kina is in distress and its drowning
While the government continues borrowing
They stole a troubled mine
And they’ll make us pay a fine
Two billion dollars to pay for oil
While in misery citizens toil
Watch the share price rise
It should be no surprise
The markets have heard of the Swiss
Carrying Debt's kiss.
If only I was a man
ISHMAEL PALIPAL

Why did they do that?
It shouldn’t be like that
my namesake is a hero
If only I was a hero
Things could be a little different

For what did they do that?
They should have told us that
my namesake was murdered.
He shouldn’t have been murdered
because he wasn’t a bad guy

What was he to them?
His skin colour is like them
my namesake is a brown skin
just as the murderers are brown skin.
What had he done to them?

Those guys with camouflage uniforms
patrolling the borders silent uniforms
have somehow had him killed.
I would have all armies killed
If only I was a man

My namesake was my uncle
and he was not a BRA uncle
Living in the Solomon Islands was his life
so why did you take his life?
For his side is not yours or theirs

But if only I was a man
I would fight you like a man
If only I was who I am today
That day would be your last day
Therefore I’m searching for you around
Like I’ll been searching for him around
Now that I’m a man.

Sweetember 16
NORM KAVA DAVID

No matter how we struggle to make ends meet
No matter how the world may see us

No matter how … or whatever
Every Papua New Guinean has a reason for today

Just another day for the world, but not PNG
September 16 is a vocabulary for inhabitants of this land

At times we are tongue-tied to say new words
Our vernaculars can influence our pronunciation
But we love and defend how we say it

So people all over will come for PNG
Because PNG will be forever Sweetember 16.
Political Fusion
LAPIEH LANDU

Is it the desire for power?
Or is it the yearning for common good?
Our leaders at war against each other
Amidst it all I stood

Is it the desire for power?
Or is it the yearning for common good?
Political animosity, diverting pure goodness
Amidst it all I stood

Is it the yearning for power?
Or is it the desire for common good?
The mutilation to communal trust alive!
Amidst it all I stood

Is it the desire for power?
Or is it the yearning for common good?
Bleeding in bitter hatred and void
Amidst it all I stood

Is it the desire for power?
Or is it the yearning for common good?
Biasness a tool all too familiar
Amidst it all I stood

Is it the desire for power?
Or is it the yearning for common good?
Our lands far and wide ravaged entirely
Amidst it all I stood
Is it the desire for power?
Or is it the yearning for common good?
As our young implore grave help
  Amidst it all I stood

It is the desire for power
And the yearning for common good
The marriage of good and evil implanted
  Amidst it all, I stand.

Sweet poems of mine
DOMINICA ARE

I don’t know why
But you’re always on my mind
  It’s an addiction

I’d do my daily tasks
Being busy with numbers and figures
  But this nagging feeling
To spend time with you
  I can’t resist

You keep me company
You relieve me from my worries
  My stress reliever

In my busy schedule I’d scribble a word or two
  Taking a breather I’d write
On the bus to and from work I’d write
Waiting at the bank queues I’d write
  Whilst cooking I’d write
In my dreams I’d write
  When happy I’d write

150
Poetry

When sad and alone I’d write
When angry I’d write
I’d write on a paper
On a stick-on pad
In my journal
In my poem book
In my mind |
It’s all engraved in my heart

Yes
I’d write and write and write
My treasures
My sweet poems.

From the grave
LAPIEH LANDU

The urgency of returning home is but a calling from the grave
An old man’s voice resounding against every wave

As he tosses and turns within his pit
Of his brothers foolishness I must admit

The exchange of sacred soil meant to be shared among us all
Now exploited without regard- indeed he will fall!

His greed has consumed all goodness left
Which now without fail, will lead him to his death

How foolish must one be?
To plant such evil seeds, seeds of impurity

Out from the earth an old man’s wrath will grow
And leave him baffled as to how this is so

Bit by bit our land tendered freely
Without consent of a man who thought he was but merely

He calls me now to return to my home
He sees all lost to a malicious gnome

His fears I see more plainly now
Not knowing who, where and how

I hear his voice as I lay in bed
“Come back to me” pleadingly said

I lay alone, surrounded by absurdity
Of men whose hearts lack a sheer sense of morality

The warmth and care you take with you
And a love I miss so dearly too

I now watch each precious step
Even at night as you take your nap

I look forward to meeting you again
In a journey I know will soon come to an end

The urgency to returning home is but a calling from the grave
But an old man’s profession for a generation he hopes to save!

I hear him calling, he’s calling my name
And when I return, I will be doing the same!
**Sembelie**
**ILANGIN SANGKOL**

Fierce and strong
Brave at heart
Like a young lion
With the world at its feet
Your words become clearer
As you learn to speak

You come from a place
Where kings are born
And leaders are made
Where mountains separate
Hamlets and plains
Stone *brukim* stone

From birth you lay in a cot
Made from bamboo and wood
As history tells you are the promise
Of love and perseverance
A dream made real
The impossible became life

And every day you grow
Bigger and stronger
Your name means “Kanda”
*Strongpela diwai* or bamboo wood
Your name means strength
You are my son

My first born son
Sembelie
Sad, sad world
J P RICHARD

I see people suffering they die and I start muttering hey why
I see people paining and my heartache is gaining
Humans engulfed in misery, I couldn’t gulp that mystery
Did the cripple-one asked to live? O that rip off I’m tasked to believe

I can happily walk and laugh but they can’t possibly talk and stuff
I got plenty next to eat, they got empty next to it
So I fiddled my food saddened while they riddled their hood
maddened

Who do they blame for this flame? Who do I blame for this game?

The hunger games they play makes my anger games replay
I scream at the wall, I dream for them all

I pray for the less fortunate but this is their messed fore-tuned fate
They cry silently to be enthralled, they why endlessly out of control

Do good people deserve to die further? Or do mood people decide
to try murder?
Hence the question of morality, fence and fasten my mentality
I keep having this dream; my spirit keeps hearing this scream
It’s the one that I wake up with, the one that they bake up in

So I close my eyes and pray, hoping my dreams will sway
Gone o you winds of misery, embrace your sorrow you adversary
Let my heart be free, to start my new degree
That one day I’ll wake up and happiness will make up
I am me
DOMINICA ARE

I am me
Call me stubborn and ignorant
Call me shy and silent
I may be quiet but bright
I am me

I am not perfect
I’ve made mistakes
I’ve committed the worst crimes
But I love my imperfections
There’s nothing I regret

I’ve learnt from my mistakes
I have been hurt
But I’ve learnt to forgive and forget
To be strong and silent
And to face my fears

I have been judged
They noticed my flaws
I have my haters
I encounter criticism
But I am not worried

I don’t care if you don’t like me
It’s not my problem
I am who I am
It’s your problem
I love me

I will keep my head high
I will be focused
I will succeed
I will be strong minded
I will be tough

I treasure those who still love me
They know my mistakes
My weaknesses
My crimes and flaws
But choose to be by my side

I am human
I appreciate myself
I am proud of myself
I love my self
I am a woman

I am me

Sijo on the loss of culture
MICHAEL DOM

Strangers teach you to sing songs and march to a drum that they own;

To reject your garamut, your kundu and the stilled speech of wood;

Their soporific chorus dulls your mind and cheats your Black soul.
When rifles reigned
MARLENE DEE GRAY POTOURA

Thus embedded in my heart
Dawn came as a curse
Grandpa mist dragged them in
Not his fault though
My awakening that stood still
For Rifles’ rule I saw!

Came hurtling at my door
Sleepy eyed, I witnessed
Nest I called home destroyed
Ransacked to ashes and ruins
Scattered, as I fled and escaped
Rifles fired over my head!

Mothers held their daughters hands
And wept, as the distance closed
Fathers and sons bounded
As they bled and cried
‘Leave our daughters be’
‘Leave our mothers be’
Rifles whacked them!

Brotherhood and colour
Came all to nothingness
Bloodlines and dynasties
Disrespected and destroyed
Love, respect and honour
Erased by the power of rifles!

A long march you took
Beaten and disgraced
No court, no magistrate, no judge
Heard your case
A man without summons
Sentenced by the mandate of rifles!

Two sons turned away
Their backs they gave you
Not hate, not cowardice, not fear
It was love, it was respect, it was admiration
For blood was about to be shed
As rifles were raised and aimed!

For on the bridge you stood
Bravely, powerfully, peacefully
A man sentenced without a hearing
A failed constitution, a failed court house
A failed race, a failed lineage
Rifles fired!

Gift of life ended!
Rolled over that bridge!
Like a criminal!
Like a murderer!
Like a convict!
Like a nothing!

Innocence; twice proven by Divine powers
By One who Created! Magistrate!
By Only Life Giver! Judge!
Crocodiles’ mouths He shut!
Like lions of Daniel!
Rifles ruled; Creator is Ruler!

Now, you rest dear papa
Laid in your own soil
Ground you walked on
Coloured like your skin
Land you loved and treasured
Home of your ancestors
Rest In Peace.

I am innocent but responsible
GABRIEL KUMAN

I was born fully naked
Without a cloth on my wrinkled body
Seeing scrotum hanging down in between my legs
My delighted mother proclaimed in ecstasy to the whole world
She had caught a bird in the twilight of the night
I was innocent but responsible

As a child growing up in the highlands culture
My dad had other thoughts; he wanted to have many wives
Big name, prestige, power and village leadership
Dominated his inner being
He neglected me and mum completely
Subsequently, Mum and I took refuge in mum’s homeland
I was innocent but responsible

I grew up through the tender love, care and hard-work of my mother
Without Dad’s presence
I missed out on important village customs, values, skills and knowledge
I grew up without the essential upbringing that an average child received
I was innocent but responsible

Through the vision and hard work of my mother
I was enrolled at school to receive my first baptism of Western
education

On the first day of school I went in rags
Half naked with only old sports shorts to cover my torso
A local hand woven string bag filled with *kaukau*
Was hanging from one side of my shoulder to the upper part of my diaphragm
That was enough to cover my upper part as a shirt
I was innocent but responsible

For six consecutive years I was walking to and from the school
Under the scorching heat of the sun;
Sometimes I even go without breakfast or lunch
Climbing steep mountains, high hills, deep gorges and crossing torrential rough rivers
Was part and parcel of my boyhood school life
I was innocent but responsible

I have a role to play
Whatever I do now will determine my accountability now and forever
My mum has done all that she can
I have to do my part
Anything I attempt now goes with me all the way into the future
My dad didn’t care about my upbringing and my future
Yet I took the responsibility
I was innocent but responsible

***Three tanka***

**MICHAEL DOM**

**Mountains daydream**

A sleepy blue sky
Spins cotton to pass time
Poetry

While mountains daydream
In a majestic tableaux
There is Zen where few men tread.

**Ocean**

Your face unwrinkles
You are imponderable
In your vast silence
In your deep, dark blue embrace
Who dares breach your salty keep?

**Night sky**

Oh, glamorous thief!
You have stolen all my dreams
And hidden them each
In your obsidian keep
Where I search for them in vain.

**I am your angel**

JIMMY DREKORE

If I can fly
If I can touch the sky
I’ll tell the clouds
To wash away your pain

If I can fly
If I can touch the sky
I’ll tell the wind
To blow away your sorrow

If I can fly
If I can touch the sky
I’ll tell the rainbow
To wipe away your tears

If I can fly
If I can touch the sky
I’ll tell the stars
To light up your world

If I can fly
If I can touch the sky
I’ll give you my wings
So you know I’m your angel.

Sweet tooth
GEORGE KUIAS

Sweet serenade from the sound of your voice,
the sweet-to-the-taste words that you say so well.
A sugary snack pours from your lips as you make your choice,
of what delicate story you will tell.

A frothing delight as you mix your emotions,
from the start of the tale to the end of it,
my mouth waters for more of your bodies emotion.
The beauty within you sends me into a fit.

I could sing a lover's song,
as we sit upon the bay.
My heart is now where it belongs,
and this is where it will stay.

A sugary sweet sight appears to my eyes,
as I see my favourite sight.
Poetry

And just as I begin to realize,
together we'll be alright.

Your hand brushes mine to spark
the warmth between us and our entwined hands.
The brush of skin, in the dark,
It's beautiful, lovely, spectacularly grand!

You're my treat
and I swear that's the truth.
But oh, you're so sweet!
And I have a sweet tooth.....

Meanwhile, the trees keep falling
GARY JUFFA

The verbiage of supposed concern in parliament is tremendous
The rhetoric promoted by the elected officials certainly impressive
These seemingly agitated leaders that express much outrage and
nothing else

And the trees keep falling

Empty promises, yet to be kept, empty lands, bare feet, empty
pockets
The birds have flown, the land is quiet, streams muddied, all creatures
no more
Weeds quietly grow where majestic giants and their kin once stood,

And the trees keep falling

The keepers at the gate, have failed their promises and their duties
and sold out
Their pockets filled, their mouths gagged, their bellies swollen
Chinese meals, offshore trips, fat accounts and inconsiderate hearts

And the trees keep falling

Elaborate formulae and intricate financial arrangements, clever accounting
Tax evasion, capital reinvestments, money transfers and royalty scams
Forestry Plans, poor surveillance, ignorant rubber stamping bureaucrats

And the trees keep falling

Will we ever hear the cry of the Bird of Paradise? Fill our lungs with fresh air?
Will children hear the rustling of green leaves caressed by a cool forest breeze?
Will the muddied brook be crystal clear again and the exotic fish be found there?

And the trees keep falling

Our Ancestors

JOHN KAUPA KAMASUA

Have you ever looked at the night sky
And watched the stars?
And wondered why we know more about them
Than we do about ourselves?

There is a faint and distant connection
Between us and these heavenly bodies,
Somewhere in the eons past
Where even memories cannot be resurrected
Poetry

We were one, intricately linked,
Made of the same material as the stars
All together, in body and spirit!

Our ancestors saw the same heavenly bodies
And had felt the same peculiar sense of wonder,
Their blood is deep in our veins
As much they are connected to the stars.

Our ancestors’ memories are imprinted on the stars,
O’ If only they could speak of days long gone
When brave men walked the earth,
But much less is left of them, I often lament.

So my friends, our ancestors are in the stars
As much as they are in the earth,
All connected by the same thread of matter
That is you, me, earth, water and fire!

So my friends, if you look up in the night sky
And see the twinkling stars far and near
Know that you are not alone.

Domestic violence within
CECILIA BULA

I am a young woman
I have heard, seen and read about women,
Old women and young women, women from all walks of life;
Abused, beaten, killed, cursed, murdered.

What do you call this?
My country is a country of freedom!
But I have fears for living my freedom
As a young woman in this free country
How can I walk freely around my neighbourhood, my community, my town, my city?
Because if I am not being beaten, killed or murdered, I get harassed, raped or verbally abused.
Should I get blamed?
For my lack of judgment?
For being at the wrong place at the wrong time?
For the clothes I wear that are not appropriate?
For being a beautiful woman
With my slender build or my curvy build?
A pleasant sight and a tempting sight with every stride I take?
When every man thinks they are free to say anything they feel about me!
Isn’t this domestic violence?
For being just me?

Protecting my essence
JEFFREY MANE FEBI

So you modelled your jewel
Carefully, like I did mine
Perhaps heartily like me?
Thinking I’d let you be
Oh you paved a walk to a duel
In my palm it ain't a glass of wine
You heard of a pint of blood?
I bled many a great flood
So my jewel can grace this page
With its meagre presence
So please be a gem and tell me now
Need I ask you to tell me how?
Know you this isn't me in a rage
Rather it is me protecting my essence
Please tell me
That I may be.

How to become a poet
MICHAEL DOM

If your heart is glass,
You must shatter it,
Then run the slivers into your hands and
Feet; a leisurely feat –
Piece by piece.

If your eyes are dim
You must gouge them out,
With a sharpened pencil, in your best hand,
Neat; deliberately neat –
Each and each.

If your ears are blunt,
You must burst their drums,
Then walk a tightrope, reach the centre and
Stand; confidently stand –
Foot to foot.

If your nose ignores
You must chop it off
With a knife, then place it on your bookstand
Sealed; hermetically sealed –
Smell no smell.
If your tongue is slack,
   You must cut it out,
With the same knife, or scissors, if on hand,
   Cut; incisively cut –
       Root from root.

Give up your unwilling hands, to write.

This is how to become a poet.

My silence
CECILIA BULA

My silence is the cry that you never hear,
   It is the pain that you can never feel
Hidden by these smiles and laughter
   Why are we like this?
      You might ask
I smile to think of a reason
Maybe like a love that you know will never belong to you?
   But none I can find to perfectly describe us
It’s just the way it is
It is my perfect mask and I like to be that perfect actress
      My silence.
The positive woman
DOMINICA ARE

You can call me worthless,
But I’ll show you how priceless I am
You can call me weak,
But I’ll show you how strong I am

You can say my life is miserable,
But I’ll show you how happy I am
You can call me a loser,
But I’ll show you how victorious I am

You can take my forgiveness as my weakness,
But I tell you, it’s my greatest strength
You can judge me,
But I’ll prove you wrong.

You can say I am a failure,
But I’ll show you how successful I am
You can say, I am nothing without you,
But I’ll show you, how independent I am

You can call me scared,
But I’ll show you how brave I am
You can compare me with others,
But I tell you, I’m unique

You can spell out my mistakes,
But they have made me grow wiser
You can laugh at my pain,
But it has made me stronger
You don’t like me, for who I am,
But I am me, I’m not pretending
  You can call me a bad girl
But I’m a damn good woman

Trumpeter
JIMMY DREKKORE

You make commitment
  No fulfilment
They’ll call you commitment
  You’re not cool
  You’re a fool

  You only talk
  Look at the clock
You can’t lead the flock
  You’re not cool
  You’re a fool

  You allow leeches
Sucking as they pleases
All gone to the ditches
  You’re not cool
  You’re a fool

  Your six sons
  No buns
Starving your sons
  You’re not cool
  You’re a fool

  You dream
  you dream
and you dream
You’re not cool
You’re a fool

They sat there once
You’ll face the crunch
And follow the bunch
You’re not cool
You’re a fool

You losing pounds
You losing rounds
You losing grounds
You’re not cool
You’re a fool

Don’t make commitment
Don’t talk
Don’t allow leeches
Don’t starve your sons
Don’t dream

Don’t forget
You don’t play the clarinet

The flame of the Forest
MICHAEL DOM

No more you flame, where forefathers
Spied your furtive flare from afar,
Amidst green canopies, piled higher,
The Flame of the Forest’s bright fire!
Brief beauty hid from bitter stars.
We now lay claim, who come to mar
Your guardian trees, no more to bar,
   Your forests fall, as we aspire
      No more you Flame.

   Where beauty hid lay ugly scars
   Dear price we pay to be on par
Dread words, dread deeds our future dire
We, who sought to raise our city spires
Spy broken earth beneath stony stars,
      No more you Flame.

Road to Completion
TRACEY TERRY

Completion is not an easy road
   Darkness of Failure
   Glory of Light
   Sense of Regret
Questions. What if, maybe, why……
   Thankfulness of arriving

You are never alone on this Road to Completion
Hearts alike search for completion
   That one person
   That one touch
   The perfect fit

Nakedness of being imperfect exposed
   Uncooked jealousy unveiled
   Guilt of the suitor revealed

One cannot discover completion
   Completion finds you
The Road to Completion is not Easy.

A day in Port Moresby
DAVID WAPAR

Sweaty necks and straining eyes
Exhaust fumes and dusty streets
Mountains and savannah, but the buildings rise
Welcome to my city Port Moresby

Unsightly betel nut spittle everywhere
Greet a wantok with a mouthful of our favourite fruit
Cigarettes and gossip at 12, as those are what we share
Change for my K10 note and I’m back under the roof

The clock strikes 4 to greet the rush-hour
Pick up bags and bilums, let’s head for the gates
Shoving and pushing for a seat as we curse the bus driver
For those without one, standing is better than getting home late

Items tossed, clothes changed and I switch on the TV
6pm news not so interesting tonight;
A few cheque presentations and a hold-up at Badili.
Finally, a plate of rice and chicken, a cold shower and then it’s ‘goodnight!
Encouragement
JIMMY DREKORE

Mountains are too high
But you can fly
With the wings of your heart
To that beautiful part
That only appears in dreams

Valleys are too deep
But you can skip
With the springs of your soul
To that noble goal
That only appears in dreams

Use your mind to see
The door that no eyes can see
All will turn back
It’s the mind’s eye they lack
Coz they see walls

Use your hands to speak
Words your mouth cannot speak
What comes from the mouth will be blown away
But what is built by the hands will not sway
Leave behind what generations will value

Use your heart to teach
Lessons no words can teach
Actions bigger than Everest
Capable to pass ant test
Coz the heart is a dictionary
We came with nothing
We will go with nothing
Leave your footprint
During your short stint
Or you were never here

As a writer
DIDDIE KINAMUN JACKSON

i sat and wrote and wrote
into the moonlight
upon the cold hard rock
writing stories of the dream time
stories passed down
and so old like time itself
pondering hard into the dim firelight
straining my mind
just to write down everything
to preserve the story
as best i could

chipping the cold hard rocks
sweating into the cold chilly night
i gaze upon my scripts
hands bleeding
from chipping to hard
marvelling at the masterpiece created
i may be gone
but my story lives
upon this beautiful rock
that bore my hand

now i sit and write
translating the beautiful scripts
on the ever now famous cave
pen onto paper
i promise to write it down
as it is written
on the cold hard rock

i write into the night
under the low
electric light bulb
the passion builds stronger
as each drop of ink
touches paper
and the same old story
becomes anew
in each breaking dawn

i write and write
like my forefathers before me
my blood is the ink on my paper
it relates to my soul
and there is no end
to the words within
wanting to be heard

i write and write
hands getting tired
mind growing weary

not from exhaustion
but from every door
that closes in my face
i will not back down
it will not break my spirit
nor weary my soul
i will write and write
like those before me
write as much as i can
preserve as much as possible
someday when I’m gone
the world will come to realise
we deserve to be heard
for there is no country
without an identity
written in a very beautiful story
of how it is and
how it came to be
we deserve your attention.

Port Moresby in summary
MICHAEL GEKETA

A gaze there,
a girl being pestered

A stroll there,
an innocent robbed

An ear there,
a gun discharged

A nose protruded,
cannabis sniffed liberally

A caring hand there,
no ownership but ruin

A sermon preached,
astutely unheeded

A feeling there,
fear besieges

Vagrancy Act dust-covered,
population boom

Culturally diverse,
ethnically austere

A Cleanathon there,
counter-polluted

A thought for good will,
woes exceed

Fully-financed,
systematically abused

Investor confidence,
business boom

Fashion capital,
tapa-cloth eclipsed

A change for better,
decree good will

A tranquil Moresby,
the onus is yours!
Sijo for Papua New Guineans  
MICHAEL DOM  
Coastlander

You say I am of the highlands; stone headed and hard hearted.  
But my children dance amidst heavens fresh tears, shed on mighty peaks;  
Whose sweet strength you cannot taste, in salty seas where you fish.

Highlander

You say I am of the coastlands; sleek skin salted and sun-lazed.  
But my children dance beside the pregnant swell of the deep blue sea;  
Whose warm love you cannot touch, on lonely peaks where you hunt.

Little figures  
EMMA TUNNE WAKPI

As morning wakes and stretches  
As its presence reaches out and  
Touches men and beasts and birds  
Little figures stir and rise to see  
Mothers by the fire boiling tea

One kaukau, two kaukau, three  
From ashen ovens freed, then  
Dusted off and wrapped in leaves  
Little figures down their teas and
Eat one kaukau (two they keep)

As morning fully rises
Lifting mists from all directions
Warming men and beasts and birds
Little figures prep for school, their
Bilums full of kaukau and books

Rambling, racing in small groups

Seeking to secure, obscure nooks
To hide one kaukau, for after school
Little figures play and make their
Way, along age-old paths to new

As morning bustles into noon
And rustles up a hunger
Among man and beasts and birds
Little figures pause their learning
To eat one kaukau from Mum’s oven

Science, English and Math they learn
Formulas and words and signs
Confusion, sighs, comprehension!
Little figures forge new trails but keep
The old inside to find themselves

As noon fades and wanders through
The ether of approaching dusk
Draining man and beasts and birds
Little figures stir and clear their desks
Preparing for the long trek back

Hearts indigenous, minds curious
Allow philosophies to rain upon
Trodden plains of ancient ways
Little figures traipse paths new and aged
Poetry

Taking the last kaukau from its place

As dusk snuggles into twilight
As its sleepy shadow urges
Man and beasts and birds to shelter
Little figures warmed by fire and
Dinner, slip into the realm of slumber

What will they awake to see?
When dawn streams into the darkness
Commanding light and demanding
Decisions of who the self should be
What choices will their learning yield?

As life treads its way through time
And asks of each an intention
May little figures through their
Learning pursue a reason; a
Purpose that affords life’s meaning

Chant for the spirit world
REILLY KANAMON

Betel nut stuff in his mouth, jaw grinding it skilfully
Bush knife in his right hand, clearing the bush track
His grandchildren following
To his right side and to his left
Spewing the mashed betel nut stuff from his mouth
Into the air like thin smoke from his smoking pipe

Spirits of the jungle, spirits of our ancestors
I bring before you my grandchildren
Your great grandchildren
Bestow upon them your blessings  
Strength, courage and wisdom  
Protect them against the wiles of the evil forces  

Never ask a question about the jungle  
Admire nothing that you see, touch or taste  
Evil spirits are watching everywhere  
And everything you do, do it as you own it  
His mouth now empty from the spillage  

As the sun sets, he gets a fire alight  
He burns rubbish made by his grandchildren  
Wiping the ground with green twigs  
Calling the spirit of all his grandchildren by name  
Least they be left behind and bond with evil forces  
Time to go home! Time to go home!  

Spirit of the jungle, Spirits of our ancestors  
Release the soul of your great grandchildren  
Their chores for the day are over  
We are going home to rest.  

Am I a Melanesian?  
ALBERT KAUPA TOBE  

Who am I?  
A result of my past  
My future a result of my present  
How do I respond to my present?  
I serve because I seek acceptance,  
I serve because I am accepted  
I serve because I seek to be loved,  
I serve because I am loved,
What if I choose not to serve?
  Rejection and isolation
Or acceptance and recognition
I am troubled and disoriented
being a Melanesian in this century

**Disabled**

MICHAEL GEKETA

In the legs
Immobile I may be
But in my mind
An initiator I am

In the eyes
Vision impaired I may be
But in my mind
A visionary I am

In the hands
An amputee I may be
But in my mind
A designer I am

In the ears
Deaf I may be
But in my mind
An analyst I am

In the nose
Disfigured I may be
But in my mind
A counsellor I am
In the tongue
Stutterer I may be
But in my mind
An advisor I am

In physique
A cripple I may be
But in my mind
An able body I am

In this world
A liability I may be
But in my mind
An agent for change I am

Ever ready
Against exploitation

Bilum hanmark bilong ol meri
MARY FAIRIO

A bilum is a popular traditional string bag made out of plant fibre, wool or string
A lot of effort is put into making bilum –drying, cutting, twisting and weaving
A bilum comes in all styles, forms, shapes and sizes,
They are unique, authentic, colourful and beautiful overall,
A bilum is identified by the province, even district it is made from,
Bilums are made by women,
And carried everywhere by children, men and women alike

A Papua New Guinea woman’s character it resembles,
The details of the bilum shows her knowledge and creativity,
Her patience and determination,
Poetry

Bilum is women’s achievement, women’s pride
That has a significant place in the society,
Bilum is like women’s agency, they impact everywhere.

Bilum creates unity among the 800 plus different languages, many cultures and traditions
Bilum is a binding mechanism among gender, ethnicity, economic status and age
Doesn’t matter where you come from, bilum is a shared symbol among the people
Serving multipurposes from carrying food, books, babies, as decoration, and as gifts
Their value is wide ranging.

Bilums create unity, happiness and beauty generations before, now and in the future
Bilums are powerful representation of women
Because bilums are the handiworks of women

Write more
MICHAEL GEKETA

Once a PNG poet
Sought poetic insight;
He fronted at UPNG,
The academic sighed.
“Write more!
Be inspired.
See the rainbow?
Go paint your prose
In seven hues
Feel the pain?
Express your stain
In bad or good vein
Taste your brain!
Lest it’s sweet or bitter rhyme
   Hear the pitch
Of sharp or low stanza?
   Smell the shame
Of repulsive scene?
Go explore your ingenuity
   So mine your mind”
   He conspired.

I was born a person
BAKA BARAKOVE BINA

He was the pearl of my eyes, she said of her love
I saw fluttering butterflies on the corners where we met.
His lies were my music that throbbed at the ropes of my heart.
I couldn’t wait for him to get his arms around me.
I had wanted to melt into him and to hold him for myself
And I did - and you were the result.

I was the result...
I must have come pre-packaged like those carrots that you see on the seed packages
   I must have cried and laughed.
   I must have brought joy and happiness to her and him.
   I must have true blue blood, his.
Oh yeah, I have a nose that’s too thin for my liking, his.
   And short legs, like hers – whad-ever.
And they must have liked each other so much for me to be born.

It is no mistake that I was born then.
I have blood like them, like all my other relos.
   I have some brains like everybody else.
I have feelings like everyone and that too is – whad-ever.

I have a craving – whad-ever
To dress in whad-ever I like.
One pinga shoes
Tight jeans too
That hold up my - you know what
I want to have a one liner – andap long eye
Tyre earrings whad –ever
Oiyo – let me be.

You know ... I was the result of your secret liaisons
I am not asking for your backside
Talk to me front on like you do to others
I am true blue blood
Yours.

Simbu cries but we buy Landcruisers
JIMMY DREKORE

Simbu
My beloved home
I hear you cry
And pain ripples my heart

Your roads are in a mess
Some have no access
Yet we buy Landcruisers

Tertiary students cry for fees
Funds are hard to squeeze
Yet we buy Landcruisers

People are dying of tuberculosis
It’s a silent crisis
Yet we buy Landcruisers

Simbu
My beloved home
I hear you cry
And pain ripples my heart

Mothers are dying
Children are dying
Yet we buy Landcruisers

Marijuana rules
Steam rules
Yet we buy Landcruisers

No water
No power
Yet we buy Landcruisers

Simbu
My beloved home
I hear you cry
And pain ripples my heart

Where is development?
Are Landcruisers development?
We still buy Landcruisers

Wheels grow wings
Fuel funds make kings
So we buy Landcruisers

They are presidents
Setting precedents
So we buy Landcruisers

Simbu
Poetry

My beloved home
I hear you cry
And pain ripples my heart

Sweet revenge
STACEY NAHI TARURA

Severe; savouring; succulent
Witty; wicked; wild
Enthusiastic; envious; electrical
Enlightened; endearing; enchanting;

Turncoat; torment; taunt
Rivalry; rage; rave
Elusive; extreme; emphatic
Vengeful; Vicious; vain

Enemy; ethereal; eerie
Nauseating; nasty; niggardly
Ghastly; gruesome; grisly
Excessive; extremist; ego-filled

Tragedy of the Papuan Wonderland
HELA ABU AWIRA KAIABE

If we can give a smile to an old lady
From the far ends of the tribes of Hela
We have done something -

From the misty gateways of Margarima
to the ever green gorges of Mula Ranges
Gazing over the mighty meander of River Awaya
Where the sun emits its last rays before it sets beyond the horizons.
Looked back and thought the solar system fails by another sun rising from the east, but it was the reflection of the sparkling peak of the great prophetic Mt Tundaka
Was shocked as if a dog was staring at me,

But it was the pointed ears of Mt Haliako and Mt Junari
Closing had been watching over the glistening edges of Gigira Range for centuries
Silently loses their farewell tears as River Tubi and Tuliya,

Ass laitebo is slowly migrating away,
Looking north and made sparkling by the sparkling gold nuggets of Mt Bee,

Mt Pakapua and Mt Kare, was hungry but got my tummy fills when I witness the evergreen fertile Valley of Hulia Basin,
Which has a higher possibility to replenish the entire population with prolific harvest regardless of time and space.

Lazily roll over the range of Yalihoko,
Slides through the home of Noko Iba, and enter the volcanic peak of Mt Bosavi floating on the sea of oil.
My heart engulfed with joy,

My mind evolved with curiosity
But my strength needs some energy....... 

“She was there
Before I was there
She fed me but I didn’t feed her
She becomes thinner
I remain the same
They become huge
She knows what can be done
But she cannot say how to do it  
I know how to do it  
But I cannot do it  
Because “they” are huge  
I was wrong  
Should have only given a portion  
But gave it all…..”

Shine Papua New Guinea  
MICHAEL GEKETA

Now near a mature 39  
Your youthful years revered  
When mama Aussie said “Walk!”  
On a golden salver you did  

Papa Somare led you serenely  
Over razor-edged peaks ascending  
Seas so turbulent you crossed  
So special those years were  

The people so loved you  
And you were adopted by leaders  
By Chans and by Wingtis  
By Namalius and by Sir Meks  

Not forgetting the Skates  
And twice fathered  
By The Chief lately  
Then O’Neill overriding  

All these years  
Co-adopted by Oppositions  
Like Belden Namah
Nurturing you in their own ways

Life however was
Naturally inconsistent
The unpredictable El Nino
Irregular floods

The ever-prevalent AIDS
And a murderous tsunami
All that you endured
And more on top of all that

A drama made by man: a motion
Of no-confidence
Leading to politicking and coalitions
And the never-ending reshuffles

To the bloody-crisis
So fuelling the autonomous fever
Your political erraticism
At times vulnerable you were

And sporadically invaded your domain
Such evils of drug and arms trafficking
And surfing the lows and highs
Of economic waves

But you endured
In time you made alliances
From within and abroad
Maintaining your worldly dealings

This fuelling asylum hullabaloo
It was a life in transition
That came with crime and violence
Loved by no man, real nonetheless
Poetry

Tribal warfare
State of Emergency
Mutiny
And student sagas

It all shaped your destiny
All for progress
So shine Papua New Guinea
Forever

Bride price creed
REILLY KANAMON

Today we bring to you the bride
She is our daughter, born of our womb and blood
Her loyalty is the smile of our home
Her mother is the her best friend in the kitchen
We are saddened by her departure
But proven fit to look after her, time has come
We grant her the desire of her heart

Today she becomes your daughter in law
In the presence of her aunties and uncles we release her
The wife of your son, mother of your grandchildren shall she be
Your wife shall now be served
And your son shall be the man of the house
From far off we have seen a fortunate family
A house that our daughter shall call home

Today we witnessed a new family
The bride and bride groom uniting us
As blood is thicker than water
So by the blood comes the fruit of our womb
A daughter to adorn your household
In good or bad times we shall guard your back
So too you must be the protector of our princess.

The Crocodile Prize
DIDDIE KINAMUN JACKSON

This is home
Regardless of age
Regardless of time
Regardless of colour
Grudges or conflict
Doesn’t matter where you’re from
What language you speak
This is home
Where speech is expressed at its best
When ink touches paper

This is home
Where age is of no value
To the skilful hands
Time is of no essence
To the creative mind
Quantity is of no import
To the powerful thought
Quality raw talent
Expressed at its best
When we speak our minds
And express ourselves
Through pen and paper

This is home
Where everything is news
And anything is important
Criticism given with honesty
Respect earned through merit
And plagiarism has no place
Only our minds
Are the greatest asset
As our hands do the talking
Without fear or favour

This is home
From highly prolific writers
To home grown talent
We give our best
To the rest of the world
We fight for a voice
That is to be heard
Tho’ we may not be many
We are here
We are writers

Punch us with your
Ignorant looks
Shoot us with your
Piercing eyes
Lock us up with deafened ears
And slam your door in our face
A war not started by the tip of a sword
But by a small drop of ink
And we humbly come to you
Unarmed
To give you your history
Yet we are unheard of

This is home
And here we will stand strong
As ever
If home is where the heart is
This home is where our passion lies
This home is where our minds find peace
And our hands move freely
Struggling our way into the history of
Papua New Guinea.

friday six pm
PAULINE RIMAN

violet crimson magenta wilting hibiscus
baby warm six pm jasmine scent noni oil
cococonut kernel clouds ripe underside mangoes
chopping sticky aibika frying fatty corned beef
brownning heliconia sugar loving ants
opaque louvers wag tail eating dust moth
rice hot boil burst thick percussion symphony
glass cups slipping sliding dishwater
mobile phones cold dark silent sentry
geckoes locking tales son reciting timetables
private beauty miniscule drama
You’re not here to share it with me.
You have gone to be with another.

Why must my people suffer?
GREGORY JAZE AVIRA

Surrounded by oil and floating on gas, lies my country so rich and
diverse.
Aliens they come to dig up my earth, for whose benefit my mind
ponders.
Poetry

Millions of kina rush in, yet so little seen in our everyday life.
My people cry in silence, yet my leaders turn a blind eye.
And I wonder, why must my people suffer...?

A mother dies giving birth to life, not much done to safeguard her.
A child left to wander the street, while peers learn skills to better their lives.
Thugs rob a man of an honest wage, where are the cops to come to his aid.
My people long for change, but the big men busy fighting for power.
And I wonder, why must my people suffer...?

Will change ever come, my people ask every day.
A fair slice of the income cake, for a better tomorrow all that it takes.
Yet my people's tears roll, as millions disappear in thin air.
Happiness is what they long for, tears and anguish is what they obtain.
And I wonder, why must my people suffer...?

Been there, done that: a high school elegy
OBED IKUPU

The first spliff, the first kush
The first drag, the first illumination,
At the back of the ablution block, at recess and lunch break
The first liberation, the first misconception
Been there, done that

The first bucket, the first brew
The first initiation, with seniors in the fields
The first drink party, the first wasted time
Been there, done that

The first soul, the first relentless emotion, the first courtship,
The first desire, the first stolen kiss, back of the classroom
   The first break-up, the first heartache
      Been there, done that

   The first bully, the first confrontation
The first brawl, the first desolation, at the main gate
      Been there, done that.

   The first provocation, the first summary offence
The first police interrogation, at the principal’s office
      Been there, done that

   The first agonised insight, the first tragic experience
The first sleepless night, the first depression
      Been there, done that

   The first monkey, the first systematic fool
The first loser, the first failure, at their benchmarks
      Been there, done that

   The first ending, the first final
The first emergence, the first chance, the first triumph
      Been there, done that

   The first beginning, the first wild experience
High school, the last true challenge

      I wish…
Bubu Haine  
BETTY ISIKIEL

PART 1 - KUDOUGU

Glistening in the beauty of age  
A love to set sinners free of bondage  
A simple traditional exchange  
With no murmurs of vows, a marriage

In obedience and loyalty  
To tribe, to clan and family  
She was his sincerely  
To love and care for dearly

Kokoda, battles and guns  
Young ladies hide from man-made sun  
He walks among white for the black son  
Her dear love; among the trees, run

War is over, camaraderie and peace  
Back together, a heart at ease  
A new dawn, arises in east  
Love not war, like birds and the bees

PART 2 - FOURTEEN

Curly hair glistens of coconut oil  
The new land that she must toil  
The river flows through golden soil  
Their young hearts now rejoice

A traditional bee in city hives  
Childbearing now to number five
The Crocodile Prize Anthology 2014

Veggies and bush meat, how to survive
Years pass and some more teens

Childbearing has totalled fourteen
Seven roosters, seven hens, populating
Days and nights in bush, a need for protein
Raise the children barehanded

The mother now a grand
White hair like crystal in the sand
Fourteen times, I understand.

PART 3 - IN LOVE AND WAR

Her fourth generation due in three weeks
Been a widow since 1996
Her heart broken, we cannot fix
Her love strong like building bricks

Her soldier became her angel
The army gives her his medal
She makes each bubu a bilum for a cradle
Great grandchildren all in a bundle

Traditions passed down
We all sit and clown
For good food and medicine she is renowned
Until the day our hearts will frown

In our tears we all will drown
Mina ya Mama ya Oh Mama
JIMMY DREKORE

Dinga language with Tok Pisin and English translations

Kua gal mei re
Bona kane au re
Mone mone di re
Unao

Kua gal ipin dom ba
Mun bake gil sim ba
Kalin ama gil sim ba
Ama umonao

Gage moara wo
Kiran ta gonawara wo
Apalge ya yalge dua ra wo
Nomane sipin nao

Mina ya
Wakai gol ya
Gil pin ba
Dikrin nao

Yal molo dinga ple
Yal molao

Karim billum kaukau
Olim rop blong pik
Isi isi
Yu kam
Bilum kaukau hevi ya
Bun baksait blo yu pen ya
Lek blo yu tu pen ya
Tasol yu isi isi kam yet

    Ol manji stap ya
    Ol bai angre ya
Hausmeri na hauman stap ya
    Yu tingim ya

    Mama ya
    Naispla tru ya
    Yu pilim pen tasol
    Yu no complain ya

    Yu tok kamap man na
    Nau mi kamap man ya

Carrying that load
Holding that rope
    Slowly
Walking home

    The load is heavy
    Hurting your back
    Hurting your legs
    But you kept walking

    Kids are at home
    They will be starving
    Rest of the family
    Are always in your mind

    Oh mama
Most beautiful mama
Poetry

It hurts
But you don’t complain

You wanted to see me a man
Now I am a man.

Imbia
CAROLINE EVARI

Imbia!
My Imbia!

Your beauty stands constant
Even when you wither through season
And your strength compared to none
When the sun rises in the east
And sets to bring nightfall
You work the field
And nurse our wounds
The heroes of tomorrow you carry in your womb
And the pride you give supersedes all fear
My Imbia, my Nai’ye
My Queen

*Imbia* means mother and *nai’ye* means best friend
Soul Speak
IVY KARUE

My soul was awakened by the sound of your voice,
I responded to your call like I had no choice

and there as I gazed in your deep dark eyes,
I saw the answer to my own heart's lonesome cries...

My love I have waited my whole life for you,
in your arms time and space cease to be true

with you everything feels so right,
as natural as day comes after night.

You're like chocolate to the soul,
of a heart in captivity,

like the sweet taste of freedom,
to one broken; you are liberty....

I love you with a love I do not fully comprehend,
it's a language so pure, only my heart can understand

all you are, everything about you consumes me,
the day I met you, was the day I met my destiny.
We sit and stare at each other
Seconds and minutes go by
My heart burdened, I watch her nervously
Her brown eyes stare directly at me
With grief deep inside
She awaits my word
And I await hers before I begin
But those sad eyes stare back at me

I try to stretch a nice big smile
I try to blink a flame of hope
Look away for distraction and courage
But these efforts so wasted
Her innocent eyes like arrows
Pointing directly at me
For answers I cannot give

I gather my thoughts and form some words
I try to speak and let them escape
I want to sound calm
But the thought of her response stills my voice
Her eyes begin to fill with tears
And I realise I am going to lose

With a rush of pain I mumble “I love you”
A familiar phrase meaning nothing to her
A phrase no longer provoking affection
She wipes the tears from her eyes
As her sad face transforms with hurt
I swallow hard and pause for thought

But before I can reach out to her
Before I can get hold of her
Before I can figure what to do
She stands and begins to run
Heading towards the bridge
Heading toward her fate
The place we first met
The place she goes depressed

I run knowing what will happen
I run fast as fear grips my strength
If I can reach her in time
I will promise it won’t happen again
And this promise I will never break
That I will be fair
That I will be true
That I will stand by
For now I fully know
I am not prepared to let her go

My panting is louder
My vision of her fades
Panic pumps my throat
I feel a lump grow big
I have to reach her
I have to be quick

And as I reach the bridge
I drop down, arms round my head
And scream with agony
As before me she hangs
Without a smile
Without a word
Poetry

Gone like the wind
Never to be heard
Never to be held
And never to be by my side again

Laif I sot tumas
DAVID WAPAR

Mi save ting laif i olsem flawa
We i save soim kala lo moning aua
Tumoro, taim win na san i kam nau
Bai yu lukim lip blong flawa pundaun

Laif blong yu na mi mas stap amamas
Laif, laif, laif I sot tumas
Em bai orait sapos oltaim yumi amamas

Mi save ting laif I olsem mun
We I save kamap long abinun
Tumoro taim kilaut I passim
Bai yu tanim het long painim

Laif blong yu na mi mas stap amamas
Laif, laif, laif I sot tumas
Em bai orait sapos oltaim yumi amamas

Mi save ting laif I olsem win
Kirap long wes na I go long is
I sekim solwara na senisim ples
Tumoro ol I lukim na bai sekim het

Laif blong yu na mi mas stap amamas
Laif, laif, laif I sot tumas
Em bai orait sapos oltaim yumi amamas
I think of life as a flower
Showing its colours in the morning hour
   Tomorrow, after the wind and sun,
You see the flower’s leaves droop down

Your life and mine they must be content
   Life, life, life is much too short
   And it’s good for us to be happy

I think of life as the moon
That rises in the afternoon
   Tomorrow clouds are overhead
You look around and find it gone

Your life and mine they must be content
   Life, life, life is much too short
   And it’s good for us to be happy

I think of life as like the wind
Which comes from west and blows to east
   Which whips up the sea and changes the earth
Tomorrow we look around and shake our heads

Your life and mine they must be content
   Life, life, life is much too short
   And it’s good for us to be happy

---

**Herstory**

**PAULINE RIMAN**

Upright sapiens tracing constellations
Painting frescoes of migrating ancient quadrupeds
Mouling primate kin un-severs umbilical cord
Prostrates before celestial and terrestrial
   Chanting mantra: *magna deum mater*
Primal instincts know: she *was*, is and always *will be*
Superior Ovum from which humanity evolves
From a powerful womb we come forth –
Not an inferior bone broken in a dream
The perfect XX, not its deformed latter.
Triple cyclical projection of Universal Mother
Life, Death and Rebirth
Past, Present and Future
Heaven, Earth and Underworld
*Julunggul, Sinebomatu, Hine-nui-te-Po,*
*Amaterasu-no-mi-kami, Kuan-Yin, Devi*
*Ishtar, Cybele, Gaea*
*Danu, Freya, Medeine*
*Oshun, Inkosazana, Mawu*
*Ix Chel, Ataentsic, Sedna.*

War, conquest, power and female servitude
No longer born of Sacred Mother but Supreme Father
Titaness births in secret to rapacious god-king
*Coyolxauhqui's* severed head shining in the night sky
Gods and heroes force cyclic to linear
Positive masculine *ying*, negative feminine *yang*

A poem by Pauline Riman
Triple projection of man’s woman
Virgin, mother and wife
Prostitute, mistress and concubine
Inferior, weak and servile.

But resilient is Sovereign Female Wisdom
Druid priestesses celebrating the moon at Stonehenge
*Neferneferuaten-Nefertiti* and *Akhenaton's* monotheistic love
Queen *Scheherazade’s* one-thousand-and-one stories
Fleeing *Helen's* wooden horse and
Feigning *Rahab’s* trumpets razes kingdom walls
*Sappho’s* verses encased in the coral reefs of Lesbos
Revised through the songs of *Ruth’s* royal grandsons
*Fa Mu Lan’s* warrior training with the great *Eight Sages*
*Mem nanaranga* Daria Bringer of Culture.
Yet in her castle ruins remain the historic vandals
Mistranslation of young woman sterilizes femininity
The Church’s gynocidal Malleus Maleficarum
We remain Aristotle’s mutilated males
Confucius’s causes of disorder
Thomas Aquinas’s misbegotten men
Freud’s deficient humans with penis envy
Defined, authorized, sexualized and judged by men.
Like Furies Pankhurst’s Suffragettes disrupt England
And like Valkyries strengthen it during a World War
Ensues a second-wave with Beauvoir’s Second Sex
Unleashing all the fury of an Erinye within a mighty pen:
Friedan’s Feminine Mystique
Greer’s Female Eunuch
A poem by Pauline Riman
Firestone’s Dialectic of Sex
Gould’s First Sex
Unsettling, altering and inspiring a new world
Where feminine, female, masculine and male exist
In freedom, fairness and justice
And the continual fight for All to know
Not just their history but also their Herstory.

You Speak Me!
IMELDA YABARA

You know what I want to say
but can’t
You get why sometimes
a little is too much
or that sometimes a lot is not enough
You speak silence
You get why it’s never too late
never too far to go
You know when it’s okay to be here
and when it’s not
You get that sometimes it’s a ME thing,
and you know when it’s an US thing
You know its work
and you still show up
you still stick around
You speak me.
Thank God for you!

Shadow Millionaire
HINAFUMI ONAFIMO

Money, as you can see
is not an issue for me,
Take one cigar here, and everywhere
Take a bite of betel nut
And paint the air red.

We are good: For today
Keep the change,

The coins are a burden.
In my pockets,
There is no more space
for rusty coins

I only deal with notes.
For today
Do you not know?
MICHAEL DOM

Do you not know, I love you so
Each day dear heart, this feeling grows
Each time we part, you take my heart
Tell me, my sweet, what skill, what art,
With grace, I pray, suffice to show
These thoughts emanate from your glow,
These words resonate, your echo,
These lines encapsulate my heart,
Do you not know?

When all my words, as rivers flow,
Have failed my thoughts, and fell below
That hallowed height, to win your heart,
And I, bereft of love, depart,
Tis for thou doves will cry sorrow,
Do you not know?

Going nuts, the PNG Way
HINAFUMI ONAFIMO

The climb,
Oh Tura
Was chest arching
But when you arrived
The happiness on their faces
Is relevant to the relationship between
The fruit and man.
The lonely tree
In the eyes of the eerie afternoon
Now provides a great friend
Whom you can chew,
Laughs to take you high &
Take you low.

Never mind the
technical knockout and
the red stains.
In PNG, people go nuts
for Betel nut.

An Old Man’s Death
PAUL WAUGLA WII

He stares at the beckoning wall of nothingness.
It is here and here alone
On his death bed
That the entire scheme of life
What has been, is now, and would ever be!
Is put in absolute perspective.
The nothingness before him
Is an intertwining maze of blackness
That emerges and merges into a million interlocking threads.

On the threshold of departure into the unknown
His life ebbs and flows
Waiting for the final moment to arrive.

Stealthily…gradually … but inevitably
That final moment comes to him.
Looking into my eyes, he was seeing
   And yet unseeing.
Looking beyond the temporal into something profound,
He surely would make a profound confession
   If he could.
   Not a chance!
He passed on, peacefully, into oblivion.
A treasure trough of life’s experiences
   Gone with him, gone with the man.
PNG Chamber of Mines and Petroleum
Helping Papua New Guinea to Develop its Full Potential

Award for Essays and Journalism

The Chamber is a non-profit, peak industry association that represents the interests of the mining and petroleum industry and associated industries in PNG. Current membership is over 200 companies.

The Chamber’s mission is to promote the mineral and petroleum exploration potential of PNG and the development of a world-class sustainable resources industry that provides benefit streams to improve the welfare of all Papua New Guineans.

The Chamber:

- Promotes world-class sustainable mineral and hydrocarbon exploration, production, processing and support industries.
- Is the representative voice for the mining and petroleum industry in PNG.
- Informs and educates the wider community of the activities and benefits of the mining and petroleum industry.
- Conducts conferences, seminars and workshops to promote and support the industry.
- Keeps members informed with a regular Bulletin.
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Tel: (675) 321 2988   Fax: (675) 321 7107
Email: conf@pngchamberminpet.com.pg
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Papua New Guinea a victim of flawed nurturing – an historical commentary
MATHIAS KIN

PAPUA NEW GUINEANS TODAY WATCH in awe as men fly through the heavens towards the stars. We envy nations of the world as they develop mighty economies and obtain great scientific, military, infrastructure, arts and sports achievements.

On a development spectrum, Japan is positioned at one end and PNG at the other. On the eve of our 39th celebration of independence, it seems that reaching Japan is impossible.

After nearly four decades of sovereignty, our skilled workforce is as good as that of any country and Papua New Guinea has earned billions of kina from minerals, hydrocarbons, fishing, agriculture and forestry.

And the country still has an abundance in untapped natural resources. Also, we are well supported with aid from our friends offshore.

Despite these ample inputs, Papua New Guinea’s development indicators are amongst the poorest in the world – poor even against third world countries that do not have the resources and development support that we enjoy.

The majority of our people live below the accepted United Nations poverty line. In the early 2000s this country was even on the brink of being declared a failed state. It seems with age Papua New Guinea becomes messier.

Discussions by academics, church leaders, politicians and ordinary citizens as to why the country is doing badly point to the following factors: corrupt politicians; an equally corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy; the clash of culture with norms of modern development; chronic law and order problems; and an ever-increasing population growth.
As I work on this article, the television is discussing how Prime Minister Peter O’Neill is refusing to be interviewed by police over K72 million kina dishonestly paid to a law firm. Only last week, there was a scandal about a K3 billion kina loan from an international bank.

Since 2000 such ills in government have become too frequent and ordinary Papua New Guineans are giving up hope of redemption. However they still attend the polls every five years to cast their votes.

By the 1960s, when the major colonial powers of Europe were giving sovereignty to their colonies, Australia was not eager to give early independence to Papua New Guinea. However international bodies such as the United Nations pressured Australia to do so.

At the time Australia correctly reasoned that Papua New Guinea was not ready for self-rule. Their recent experience in World War II had also shown Australians that Papua New Guinea should remain under Australian control as an effective buffer between Asia and the Australian continent.

By the 1960s, the Aussies were especially mindful of the powerful presence of the populous Indonesia, particularly due to Indonesia’s claim to Dutch New Guinea. Today this conviction hasn’t changed - The National newspaper (5 June 2014) headlined ‘Aussies wary of Indonesia’. The warm and cold nature of Australia’s relationship with Indonesia makes Papua New Guinea a most important ally for Australia.

But back then, despite Australia’s reluctance, pressure continued to mount for early independence for Papua New Guinea and from the 1960s Australia gradually improved its development of the country in preparation for self-rule.

Many in Australia reasoned that Australia had left it too late and that Papua New Guinea was not politically and economically ready to rule itself but, in 1972, the Australian government gave self-government to Papua New Guinea in preparation for an independence that was not too far away.

Between 1972 and 1975 not only was there a rush for
independence but many Aussies left our shores for their motherland. Many stories are told of tearful separations of Australian and Papua New Guinean families who had lived and worked side by side for years.

On 15 September 1975, my mother and I freely shed tears of sadness - as did hundreds of other South Simbu people gathered that day at Gumine Station - as we watched the Australian national flag lowered for the last time.

This same scene was witnessed in government outposts, towns and cities across Papua New Guinea. The next day, in Port Moresby, our first Prime Minister Michael Somare declared the independent state of Papua New Guinea.

This announcement was relayed by an important official through a loud speaker from the central grandstand at Sir Hubert Murray Stadium as hundreds of warriors dressed in traditional regalia beat *kundu* drums and clapped, whistled and shouted.

The feelings of grief the day before had changed to excitement as we watched our new bird of paradise flag hoisted high. My mother held my hand softly and said: “My heart is painful, I am not happy”.

On our way back to Salt Nomane later in the afternoon, many people talked of uncertainty and emptiness.

This hasty departure from our shores left behind an innocent, unskilled people and a vastly underdeveloped new nation which had been born to fend for itself in the twentieth century.

The take-over by unqualified Papua New Guineans contributed greatly to our subsequent fate.

First, there was insufficient progress in the development of the country’s infrastructure and its economy. Its institutions of learning and health, and its huge agro-forestry and marine resource potential, were not sufficiently developed. An exception was the construction of the Highlands Highway in the 1950s and the development of Panguna mine in the late 1960s.

Apart from these two worthy national developments, there was no downstream processing or manufacturing of any sort but the land
continued to supply raw materials to our colonial masters and their trading partners for their own development.

There was not much economic opportunity at the grassroots level. Growing of coffee, copra, rubber and cacao were encouraged but the big holdings and much of the processing were owned by Australians.

Rice was discouraged because Australia grows the crop. This was despite the fact that Papua New Guinea’s climate and soil could grow rice as a staple and major export cash crop. Much timber was taken. In the 1920s and 1930s, billions of dollars’ worth of gold had been taken. This still happens to this day, legally exploited under commercial and government agreements.

The Papua New Guinean people were barely developed and trained at a high level. By the 1960s, there were few university graduates amongst the three million people.

Papua New Guineans who worked as labourers on plantations had learned few sophisticated skills. Many expatriates doubted the capacity of the people. The reality that Papua New Guineans would one day fly jumbo jets, become lawyers, engineers, scientists and hold PhD’s in every discipline was unimagined.

Papua New Guineans running their own country was unthinkable. Many of the foreigners who came here had poor educational qualifications themselves. But they became instant bosses when they set foot in Papua New Guinea. Their certification was their Caucasian casing.

Secondly, until the 1970s, racism was unmistakably evident among many expatriates. The outsiders who came here thought of themselves as superior and mostly kept to themselves. They made little or no attempt to understand the hundreds of cultures that existed then as they do now.

Until the early 1960s, there were sporting clubs, bars and other utilities only for the whites. Black people were not allowed to drink alcohol. There were few whites and they felt intimidated by the surrounding masses of black people.

There were exceptions. The Leahy brothers, Jim Taylor and others
unashamedly mingled with the people and even married into the tribes. Today we see many legacies of these associations.

There were some expatriates whose job it was to understand the people’s culture. American anthropologist Paula Brown studied the Simbu culture in the 1950s and 1960s. The missionaries were the only other people who put in any real effort to know the people’s culture and their language. They also built tangible social infrastructure such as schools, health centres and roads in the many rural areas where they settled.

Thirdly, about a million highlanders, one-third of Papua New Guinea’s total population at the time, did not understand independence. Although the colonists had been in Papua New Guinea for more than 100 years, the central highlands had only been explored in the 1930s.

After being ‘discovered’ in 1933, the highlands area remained pretty much closed to outsiders. It stayed that way until World War II. There were tribes in the Southern Highlands that made first contact only in the 1950s.

When the idea of independence for PNG was introduced into the highlands in the late 1960s there was genuine fear among the people that the few who understood what independence meant were coastal people and that they would dominate after the white men left.

The highlanders wanted independence delayed to give themselves a better chance. Highland leader Kondom Agaundo told a United Nations visiting mission in 1962: “I have heard you want to give us self-government. I ask you not to give it. When I feel strong I will ask for it, but I do not want you to force it on me….”

Many Australians like Michael Leahy were of the view that Papua New Guinea was not yet ready for self-rule. Some predicted Papua New Guinea’s imminent plunge into chaos.

Finally, there was another momentous development taking place which hurried the prospects of self-rule. Young New Guineans who had some education formed the first indigenous political party, Pangu Pati - Papua and New Guinea Union Party! Many Australians called
them dangerous radicals, these early politicians like Pita Lus, Albert Maori Kiki, John Guise, Kondom Agaundo, Joe Nombri, John Momis, Michael Somare and John Kaputi among others.

However, this development was taking place among a small minority of the three million people. The majority, who had never been inside a classroom, were in the dark. The highlanders’ main exposure was as cheap labour on plantations in the 1950s and 1960s.

Between 1972 and 1975, there were great expectations among the small early elite as they took up positions previously held by expatriates. They thought that, now the white men had left, they would take power and acquire the wealth. This was in essence cargo cult thinking and the beginning of our demise.

The untrained Papua New Guinean mind did not know how to govern and work the administration efficiently or effectively. Most members of parliament at independence had not completed tertiary education and did not understand parliamentary procedure.

Thirty nine years have passed and the greed for money and cargo lingers. Our politicians today are well educated with much experience in government, public administration and business but they continue to engage in bad governance and corrupt dealings.

Since about the year 2000, our politicians and their unelected collaborators have been vigorously engaged in corruption.

In ending this tragic story, we ask where Papua New Guinea is placed today as a truly independent state among the nations of the world. Was it ready when given independence?

Papua New Guinea today remains among the least developed nations. Corruption as a chief contributor to slack development is intrinsic everywhere, every day.

The gap between an underdeveloped Papua New Guinea and an advanced Japan continues to widen. If we do not change, chaos leading to failure is imminent. PNG’s early nurturing flaws indeed contributed to its fate today.
Can the Melanesian Way guarantee a good life?
TANYA ZERIGA-ALONE

WHEN THE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED to reroute asylum seekers bound for Australia to Papua New Guinea, there was a public outcry against the move by a majority of Papua New Guineans.

In the midst of the animosity levelled against the decision the more peace-loving Papua New Guineans were using social media to remind the rest of the people about the Melanesian Way.

Papua New Guineans were urged to embrace the asylum seekers in ‘the Melanesian Way’.

What then is the Melanesian Way that is supposed to make asylum seekers welcome?

Proponents talked about love, acceptance and peace such that, if this concept was a picture, it would show a line of people standing along a beach with the Bible in one hand, a lei in the other and a smile on their face.

Is the Melanesian Way a way of love? Did our ancestors stand on the shores and sing songs of welcome when the Whiteman sailed into the harbours and coves of the island of New Guinea?

John Waiko in his narration of the first contact between the Binandere and Europeans showed that the manner in which the different tribes approached the intruders was a direct reflection of their capacity to fight their tribal battles.

Some tribes were self-sufficient in their capacity to fight and maintain tribal lands and acquire new land from the losing tribes, while other tribes were being run to extinction.

Those that could not defend their lands embraced the Europeans as allies in the hope that they and the power of their guns could be used to fight their battles.

On the other hand, those that were self-sufficient saw the Europeans as a threat and rejected them and fought them at every
chance they had and even ate the bodies of white men to assimilate their power.

The Binandere people were portrayed as a scheming lot who forged alliances based on the benefits the alliance would bring to them to assist them fight their enemies. Unfortunately the Europeans were not aware of this agenda.

Other commentators define the Melanesian Way as a value of equality. Indeed, most Papua New Guinea societies are egalitarian. Apart from a few societies that had chieftain systems, most tribes in Papua New Guinea lived in a society where everybody was equal. (Although the introduction of sweet potato disrupted this system in some societies by breeding pigs, polygamy and the big man.)

The notable writer and blogger Martyn Namorong calls this the ‘Melanesian equilibrium’ wherein the fruits of the land were regarded as communally owned and, as such, everyone in society expected a fair share - not necessarily an equal portion - a balancing act between the interests of the individual and those of the tribe.

But that was where it ended, within the tribe. No Melanesian equilibrium was ever extended to those outside the tribe. Tribes were fiercely protective of their land and women.

John Fowke, in his essay on the Melanesian Way, says that it is the way of a fragmented multi-tribal society. It’s a way which facilitated the existence of such societies whilst they remained divided, multi-lingual, local, warlike and competitive. In PNG’s case, this was a society that existed successfully and independently for tens of thousands of years.

The ‘Way’ that kept a fragmented multi-tribal society intact, as referred to by Fowke, can be put down to one word – suspicion. Suspicion of everything beyond the tribal boundaries, suspicion of the unknown kept tribes independent for thousands of years.

The trade links and allies that existed were acquired, maintained and managed through marriage over time. The elaborate planning and ritual that went into arranging marriages and paying bride prices demonstrates how important marriages were for strategic purposes.

Although confusing to outsiders, the sometimes messy mortuary
ritual that takes place to honour the “mama lain” and the “papa lain” when someone dies serves to reaffirm those links and allies.

Other commentators say that the Melanesian Way is an attempt to bring the thousand tribes with diverse tribal rules together as one nation. The Melanesian Way served to bring the thousand tribes ....under a new version of tradition as a bundle of values specific to no particular place but putatively shared by all.

Is that what Bernard Narokobi meant when he coined the term back in the 1984?

The rule of law which judges right from wrong is a concept absent in the Melanesian context. Narokobi recognised this and pointed out there was no right way of making peace and that conflicts can be successfully settled by recognising differences in the approaches and then coming up with the best mode to resolve the issue.

Through this method of considering all options, all parties win to some extent and none lose. This ensures that relationships are maintained and none is estranged, because one may need to call a favour in the near future.

This method of reaching a consensus had practical implications when the thousand tribes came together to become one nation. This method validated all the different customs that existed and showed respect and consideration for the differences. This method of dispute resolution was the Melanesian Way Mr Narokobi referred to.

Does a Melanesian Way exist and does it work? The answers are ‘yes’ and ‘sometimes’. For instance, the Melanesian Way is the winner in land disputes cases. Through dialogue, the genealogy is constructed and the land divided accordingly. All parties are satisfied.

This however, is not so for those who go to a court of law. The law rules that one is the winner and owner of the land and the other is the loser. This breeds animosity between blood relatives.

Despite its usefulness, the Melanesian Way is open to manipulation and misuse because of the oral nature of customary law.

This misuse has been pervasive in the political arena. A commentator states this about the Melanesian Way in politics: [It] is
whatever those in powers choose it to mean. Lacking any kind of scrutiny their personal lives are enriched by theft, bribery and corruption. The Rule of Law means nothing to them and corruption is so entrenched that it is the norm rather than the exception.

After observing politics in Papua New Guinea, hard-talking commentator, Dr Susan Merrell says the Melanesian Way is redolent with self-serving pragmatism and a fickle approach to commitment that can be called upon, or not, according to whim.

This self-serving pattern exists because Papua New Guinea’s parliament has two guiding principles. First is the one borrowed from the west and based on Christian tenets and the other is custom.

Custom, however, is not one custom but a thousand customs, unwritten and open to interpretation and which cannot be challenged in a court of law.

In such a dual system, with no rule to guide decisions, the trend has been to choose culture over the constitution when it seems beneficial to do so. The Melanesian Way has become the excuse to break laws and circumvent obligations and hard decisions and even escape the grasp of the law.

Justice is not served when a compromise is reached outside the modern court of law to pay “bel kol moni” to the families of victims of rape and abuse. It is against human rights values when a young girl is forcefully married off by her family to an older man to settle old scores.

So the Melanesian Way has become self-serving, as pointed out by political commentators. It suppresses innovation because it rewards supporters and kin and not hard work.

Can the ‘Melanesian Way’ guarantee a good life for the people of Papua New Guinea?

The definition of a good life is subjective, but all people, regardless of whether they live in glass houses or grass huts, desire a society where there is respect for lives and property, where there is an opportunity to better their lot in life through education, where they can access good health care, where they are safe and protected and
where justice prevails.

We can make a good life for our people when we stop pretending that the Melanesian Way is relevant in the 21st century because it is not. Every human being must abide by the rule of law and conduct their lives according to the moral code all humans live by.

Justice has to prevail. The troublemakers must be punished and the people must rise and fall not because of influence but because they have worked hard and earned a good life.

In conclusion, we revisit the initial question: what version of the Melanesian Way would Papua New Guinea offer to make the Asylum Seekers feel welcome? In keeping with the spirit of the “Melanesian Way”, the details of the welcome party will be decided upon when it has to be decided. As for the future prospects, the Government as the head of the united nations of Papua New Guinea may decide through legislation, to accommodate one more new tribe, to be housed on government land, to serve the government. This action will violate the thousands of year old instruction, encoded in the DNA of every Papua New Guinean, that compels warriors into warfare over land and that invokes deep distrust for outsiders. The attraction of acquiring powerful allies may just win over the default for keeping it between wantoks.
ONE MIGHT QUESTION HOW, IN a diverse country in transformation with over 800 ethnic groups and dialects, an individual can feel a sense of belonging to one nation.

Is there a national culture? In other words, is there a common identity whereby the ethnic groups can distinguish themselves as Papua New Guineans or Melanesians? Is there a Melanesian Way?

The answer is ‘yes’, there is a Melanesian Way, and, there is a national culture. It is rooted in the desires of individual Melanesians and can be seen through the consumption of commodities.

Commodity consumption has led to the transformation and formation of a national culture: thus the Melanesian Way.

Perhaps one of the most commonly consumed commodities in Papua New Guinea that has contributed to the definition of national culture is betel nut: the commodity that was recently banned for public consumption in Port Moresby.

Betel nut, commonly referred to as *buah* in Tok Pisin, is a significant cultural commodity in Papua New Guinea (and other parts of Melanesia) that has been economised and has contributed to the transformation of Papua New Guinean societies.

Betel nut is often used as a token of appreciation and friendship; different communities throughout Papua New Guinea that ritually consumed betel nut in the past have their own significance traditions related to its exchange and consumption.

Despite the existence of the ritual of betel nut chewing in traditional Papua New Guinean societies, cleanliness was paramount. The neat practice of betel nut consumption has, however, deviated to careless consumption, which poses health risks today.

Despite the improper chewing habits that have contributed to filth
on the streets in Port Moresby, betel nut consumption serves as an important symbol of a national culture, its’ consumption a ritual that forges relationships among individuals within a diverse country thus connecting Papua New Guineans and enforcing the Melanesian Way from the villages to the settlements and streets of towns throughout the country.

The cultural baggage that I bring in writing this article starts with my grandfather placing betel nut into my mouth when I was only a few months old. I grew up as a betel nut chewer and at one period of my childhood I remember it as the source of income that sustained my family.

I got into trouble one too many times for betel nut consumption but have never felt that sense of guilt one feels after doing something wrong, perhaps because, according to my conscience and nurturing, I know the consumption of my beloved betel nut is a culturally accepted norm.

I have however fallen victim to the use of betel nut in sorcery charms: I was the victim of another person using discarded betel nut rind for sorcery at one stage; and on another occasion I consumed betel nut enchanted by love spells.

I left betel nut several times, for months at one stage. It was not hard to have the will to say no to buai, what I found hard was turning away from offers of betel nut as a sign of friendship among family and friends. That I find to be the core of the Melanesian Way: gift exchange.

From my baggage I could pull out various aspects under the topic of betel nut, reflecting how intertwined and deeply rooted this one controversial nut is in my cosmic Melanesian worldview.

One must embrace the concept of individual relationships in the Melanesian context to understand the Melanesian Way of gift exchange. Here I not only refer to the literal exchange of gifts but also the meanings and expectations engendered by gift exchange.

The individual in Melanesia is viewed contrarily to western notions of the individual. The western notion views an individual as a
single human being with distinctive human capacities, in other words it refers to an individual and his (or her) set of characteristics as assessed and judged by others that distinguishes him (or her) from another individual.

In traditional Melanesia, a person is the product of the contributions of other persons, or in other words, a person is seen as being composed of substances from other persons.

These substances include the labour of kin and relatives. For example, in a certain area it may be believed that physiologically a child may comprise the bones of the father and the blood of the mother.

Throughout this child’s life he or she is taken care of not only by his/her biological parents but also by other relatives perhaps his/her aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Thus he/she comprises each person that contributes to his/her being.

When a person contributes to another person he or she is detaching parts of himself or herself and attaching these parts to whoever it is that they are contributing to.

It is typical that all contributions are expected to be reciprocated. Gift exchange can also be seen as the basis of the much debated wantok system; which is often abused these days due to the changing notions of personhood and agency in Papua New Guinea.

Several anthropological studies reflect the importance of commodity consumption in Papua New Guinea and various ways in which commodities are transforming societies which in the process is helping with the enactment of new identities and modes of personhood.

The abuse of the wantok system is an example of commodity consumption being at odds with notions of nationhood; it undermines an individual yet engages the individual with the nation-state.

The definition of an individual in Papua New Guinea today therefore comprises the blending of both traditional and Western commodities and their engendered meanings.
In the past commodities were often defined by location, the formation of a nation state has, however, led to the flow of commodities from defined localities to other areas throughout the country. This has led to the transformation of the definition of an individual in communities throughout the country and the formation of new identities.

The ritual of betel nut consumption among individuals represents a desire to fit in to a larger group: a national culture of Papua New Guinea, the forging of many different tribal groups to one nation. Thus, betel nut consumption is an important practice that has led to nation building.

The economising of betel nut has led to a new flow of other commodities into communities leading to alternating sets of transformation in villages, gender relations and notions of the person.

This means that betel nut consumption, once a cultural practice for only certain areas in Papua New Guinea, has spread throughout the country to areas where it was not a traditional commodity. Through betel nut sales people have secured an income to fulfil their desires for clothing, food, and other material gains as well as the attached meanings.

Given the important role betel nut and other common commodities in Papua New Guinea play in gift exchange; the core of the Melanesian Way, there is a need to regulate the consumption of commodities in order to foster a safe and healthy Melanesian society.

The recent betel nut ban in Port Moresby highlights the need for Papua New Guineans to engage in cultural and economic practices in a healthier way and to rethink their attitude in the consumption of commodities.
Robert fears for Bougainville’s home grown businesses
LEONARD FONG ROKA

HAILING FROM THE MOUNTAINOUS ORAMI cluster of villages in the Panguna District, Robert Keruta rents a room in a flat in the Section 18 residential area of Arawa.

He was a student of the Saint Joseph High School at Rigu before the Bougainville conflict affected his education. With peace gaining ground, he decided to be a businessman helping Bougainvilleans.

In the 1990s, when the PNG government enforced its brutal Australian-backed blockade over Bougainville, Robert joined the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) to defend his island and people.

He served in the BRA and at the same time received training to be a Health Extension Officer in the crisis-time learning institution at Paruparu.

When the Bougainville peace process reached Panguna and the cash economy began to flourish throughout Bougainville, Robert worked as an alluvial gold miner in the Tumpusiong Valley to make money for his sustenance.

After a couple of years of intensive labouring, Robert left mining and became a gold buyer. Then he went on to retail business where he established a trade store. In 2010 he went further, buying a Toyota Land Cruiser that he operated as transport for passengers and their cargo along the Arawa-Panguna route.

In 2011 he ventured further into retailing in Arawa, where he says there is a large population of customers.

“Arawa is growing rapidly,” he says. “There are more people from the north and the south of Bougainville coming to live and set up businesses here. It is now the centre of all activity for Bougainvilleans, thus there is money here.”
Robert says that in Panguna the cash flow is not stable so he has a hard time trying to make money.

“Operating a trade store in Panguna and making a profit depends on the miners along the river banks of Kavarong,” he says. “If a lot of people process their gold in a day then we can generally make profit. Most of the people around Panguna have their gardens to live on and do not need much money.”

Since moving to Arawa, Robert has been making K400-800 a day.

“People in Arawa live mostly on money so they need trade stores. This is why I make about K400 most weekdays and go as high as K800 at weekends.

“This business is really exhausting. I have to restock goods on my shelves nearly every day because my retail outlet is only a single room and there is no space to store spare stock.”

The only worry he has is the possibility of the Bougainville government allowing in non-Bougainvilleans who will have the potential to suppress Bougainvilleans socially, politically and economically.

“I really hate the Asians and so on coming to set up businesses here,” he says. “We died for this island and the leaders must know that and protect us with laws that control non-Bougainvilleans.

“Many of our leaders did not help us fight in the war and they are selling Bougainville to the non-Bougainvilleans.”

To him Bougainvilleans are an innovative people and they proved this during the Australian-backed PNG blockade of their island by surviving and making discoveries like new applications for coconut oil.

“In the economic sector, Bougainvilleans will perform only if the Autonomous Bougainville Government closes the door to outsiders so that innovation grows and Bougainville can be self-reliant.
Tang: our favourite juice, and yes, it’s a way of life
JEFFREY MANE FEBI

PACKED IN SMALL PACKETS AS powder, it comes in different flavours.

Good refreshing drinks these: orange, pineapple and mango flavours being most popular with consumers.

It is served at barbecues, picnics, feasts and mumus, oh yes, and at meal times. Kids love it. It’s also student’s favourite lunchtime drink, and buai sellers and chewers prefer it as a mouth rinse.

Playful children, through gaps in their front teeth, spit projectiles of this juice and are scolded by their mothers, who threaten to pour the remainder on their heads.

And little girls take things a step further, using it as lipstick to paint their lips - and enjoy doing it. Sometimes women, for the fun of it, also paint their lips, perhaps to remove layers of buai or nicotine stain.

When a determined mother or father, bustling their way to a game of cards, screams at the children to stop nagging them and offers to buy them something, usually the juice is implied.

And when a mother is losing at cards, she persists in playing and opts to feed her child this juice as she barks orders to her elder daughter to cook something quickly.

This nectar is a heavenly sip for when she has lost all and ends up with a throat feeling like a desert that has missed the rain for a thousand years.

Meanwhile, in the vicinity of the game of cards, usually several games in one location, Steam Bodies lurk.

The main objective of these people drinking Steam (alcohol produced from illegal backyard brewing) is to milk coinage from irritated winners through flattery, praising a winner’s intuition in
playing the cards right, outright begging or a veiled threat driven from their desperation.

If enough money is collected, then a 500ml bottle of Coke is purchased to dilute the Steam. Otherwise the juice is used.

Then noise-making, albeit without aid of any musical instrument, ensues for the duration of their drunken stupor. These noise-making skills, primitive and intolerably disturbing, are unrivalled.

Often the drunks use the juice as a matter of convenience, to sprinkle over their heads.

This act of drunken baptism, an attempt to ease the tight embrace of Steam and its chill, often works.

However a sweet and sticky residue remains which attracts honey bees to their faces after all else has dried.

Picture a Steam Body in drunken stupor fighting off honey bees.

No matter how beaten and disregarding of pain this body continues to drink the precious fluid, perhaps with a swollen lip.

Meanwhile on the business side of things, owners of roadside markets, with their neatly lined and colourful coolers, make money from thirsty pedestrians.

Many of these have been loitering in and around shopping centres or government offices and are on their way home in the afternoons with their last kina in their pockets.

Away from the streets and into Port Moresby’s squatter settlements, poor families, sometimes each day, have this juice with baked beans before laying their heads to rest.

The unfortunate ones fight hunger throughout the night, and often for days on end. How tomorrow feeds them is just another saga in their wretchedness.

Imported from Asia, a packet goes for fifty toea – it is cheap, and makes a juicy and refreshing drink for the whole family. It is called Tang juice.

This product has become the beverage of choice for the masses living around the fringes of Port Moresby city.

It is and will be a favourite as long as it can be obtained cheaply.
It is part of us now – it is a way of life.

Come to think of it, why is there not a factory in Papua New Guinea producing Tang or its equivalent? Isn’t there a business opportunity when demand is huge?

Well, this is for the *money man* and the government to think about. However, until these people start behaving selflessly, importation of this fine product will continue.

For now I shall pour myself a glass - orange flavour - and slowly sip my thoughts to slumber.
The unique nature and character of customary law

DAVID GONOL

PAPUA NEW GUINEA IS A unique country in terms of traditional customs and cultures. Papua New Guinea alone accounts for a quarter of the world’s languages and/or cultures. To be specific, there are 800 plus languages and a thousand plus tribes in the country. Each tribe has its own customary laws to govern its affairs.

The Constitution and the Underlying Law Act stipulate that customary law should take precedence over common law and equity in the development of the underlying law, or what I call Melanesian Jurisprudence.

But there is a real problem. Our Melanesian customs are not codified and as such are not readily available for reference, as are the common law and equity of England.

Therefore, a careful study of the character and nature of Melanesian customary law could help us understand the unique nature of the law and see how best the courts can adopt and apply it in the development of the underlying law.

It is necessary to examine the unique nature and character of Melanesian customary law to understand the rapid changes it is undergoing due to globalization and western influences.

Certain Melanesian customs have a character that is flexible and adaptable - so flexible they can easily adapt to the changing circumstances in this 21st century.

The custom of bride price, for example, is still being practiced. The mode and materials have changed but the purpose and substance remain the same. Had it not been for its flexibility and adaptability, it would have long been extinct.

However, not all Melanesian customs and cultures are adaptable.
Many are rigid in nature and as such they have become extinct or are gradually becoming extinct.

Like Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection or survival of the fittest, the customs and cultures which are not adaptable will be swallowed up by the onslaught of western influence. About three quarters of our customs fit this model and are simply dying.

The custom of arranged marriage was very rigid. It was not flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. The western style boy-girl relationships seemed so attractive to the younger generation that they abandoned the custom of arranged marriage completely. This trend is experienced all across the country.

Melanesian customary law is community oriented. Everyone lives for the traditional society they belong to. Everything they do, they do for society. Everything they own, they own for society, including land. They live and they die for society.

Since everyone lives and dies for their tribe, the tribe takes charge of everything. This includes success as well as mischief. The individual is mostly safe under the canopy of the tribe.

Unlike English common law, customary law is very community oriented. If one member of the community commits a crime, then Melanesian customary law stipulates that that person’s tribe or clan be punished instead of the perpetrator himself.

If one of my tribesman kills a man from another tribe, though I am in Moresby and do not know anything about it, I will still go into hiding because the men from the deceased’s tribe may come looking for any of us.

If the other tribe chooses not to take revenge, then my tribe is expected to pay compensation. The whole tribe will come together and contribute to compensation. The perpetrator from my tribe will not be punished personally unless we hand him over to police and law courts.

Similarly compensation will not be paid directly to the immediate family members of the deceased but to their tribe. Their tribe will then share it amongst its clans, and give to the immediate family
members their share. This is Melanesian customary law at its best.

Resources ownership in Melanesia is the single most important threat to development. Landowners in major project areas are a real problem for the government to deal with. They come asking for royalties, seed capital and other entitlements for development taking place on their customary land.

If the government and developers do not meet their demands, then they do so at the risk of destruction, disruption and closure of major developments.

Despite landowners thinking they own resources on their land, the law provides otherwise. In particular, section 5 of the Mining Act 1992 and section 6 of the Oil and Gas Act 1998 vest ownership of mineral, petroleum and gas resources in the State.

But landowner claims of ownership comes from customary law, which stipulates that they own the land and everything found on and under it. And so there are two regimes of law and they are in conflict.

The independent State of Papua New Guinea and its provinces and electorates are a pure creation of modern law. Their life comes from statutory law. Papua New Guinea is established by the Constitution whereas provinces and electorates are established by the Organic Laws.

But the vast majority of the people do not understand this. They forget they belong to a country. They treat their provinces as big tribes. They expect their provinces to submit to traditional law. They even try to impose customary law on the province thinking a province should be punished for a crime which has been committed by its members.

The law provides that custom is recognised and, as such, that it should be adopted and applied as part of the underlying law. However, in practice, custom is rarely pleaded or applied in courts.

There may be a number of reasons for this but lack of understanding of the nature and character of customary law could be one that causes lawyers not to plead custom and instead resort to common law.
We think we know custom but we don’t. And we tend to ignore customary law which has governed our societies since time immemorial - and are so quick to adopt modern laws and western influences.

The big failure on our part is that we fail to appreciate that Papua New Guinea is a mixed society where both customary law and western influences are active and applicable.

Our understanding of our customs will put us in a better position to assist the courts so they can adopt and apply customary law as part of the underlying law.

The onus is upon us to assist the courts to develop underlying law. If this generation fails to do something to help develop underlying law, then nobody else will.
Can I thank you for your human compassion?
FRANCIS NII

I CANNOT FIND THE RIGHT words to express my heart’s gratitude for all my friends in Australia and Papua New Guinea who have poured out their hearts so compassionately to support and ease my physical condition … only silent tears say it all.

An unexpected telephone call from Australia set the ball rolling and before I knew it I was the proud owner of a special mattress, a custom built wheel chair and an array of special vitamins and supplements designed to help me get back to good health.

In my life as a paraplegic I have been confronted with all kinds of challenges, both physical and spiritual, and some of them are very painful but I don’t whine and cry.

I have always asked myself: would whining and crying help me? And I find that they don’t. They only weaken my spirit and my strength and make my condition worse. So I have developed an iron-hearted approach to the challenges that come my way.

But I now realise that in every iron heart there is a softer part and, when you touch that, it can melt and the brooks of heaven burst forth.

For the past few days I have been in mourning. The compassion that has been shown by my family of writers and readers in Papua New Guinea and Australia, and even as far as Nairobi in Kenya, to ensure that my life not only continues but is changed for the better has been so overwhelming that I have been moved to tears.

These very humane friends have touched my heart so much that every time I tried to write this thank you note, tears blurred my vision and I had to lay it off several times.

Being a paraplegic and unemployed has made life for me very challenging.

Many times, especially in the first two years of my disability, I
prayed to the Lord God, the author of my life, to simply take my life away.

I refused to face the world in the completely different perspective of a man in a wheelchair. The thoughts about the numerous impediments I would confront daily were a nightmare. I just wanted to go away and be at peace in heaven.

But God did not take away my life. He has His own plan for my life and I have seen His hands many times in many ways.

The accident happened in February 1999 in Goroka. I was hospitalised in Goroka for about two months before obtaining a voluntary discharge because of the very poor service.

I spent the rest of the year in Goroka setting up a home for my children with my final entitlement from the public service, which wasn’t much.

In February 2000, I came to the Sir Joseph Nombri Memorial Hospital in Kundiawa for further treatment.

In early 2001, spinal fixation surgery was attempted but failed because of a secondary complication.

While the operation was in progress, my right lung collapsed. My right diaphragm had been cut open from close to the navel right around to the spine. When my right lung was exposed, it could not cope and collapsed.

Although my whole body was numb as a result of the anaesthetic, my mind was still functioning at a certain degree of consciousness and I felt that my breath was going to stop at any moment.

The doctors confirmed later that I told them my breath was going to stop - and I passed out. The doctors saw the lung had completely stopped working, did what they could to resuscitate it and immediately stitched it up. They did not do the spinal fixation.

When I regained consciousness, I found myself in the surgical ward with infusion tubes, cannulas and drainage pipes all over my body. It was tormenting.

While I was recuperating from the failed surgery, I developed severe pressure sores. These were caused mainly because I had to lie
still in one position for some days. The hardness of the ordinary mattress also contributed. My water mattress was too big for the hospital bed so I had left it back home in Goroka where it was stolen.

Several times I went under the blade of the surgeon’s knife for the removal of the necrotic tissue. There was also skin grafting. There are many scars around my buttocks and hips – the residual marks of pressure sores and surgeons’ blades.

Sometime later my surgeon and priest, Dr Jan Jaworski from Poland, got me a second-hand water bed, which was very helpful. All the sores healed. I was able to move around in my wheelchair, be independent and do the things I wanted to, including writing stories and poems. But to get the writing published was hard.

Then in 2011, Jimmy Drekore introduced me to PNG Attitude and The Crocodile Prize. Since then I have been writing and sharing my thoughts with my family of writers and readers from Papua New Guinea and Australia on PNG Attitude and through the annual Crocodile Prize Anthology.

My current condition developed from a mishap that occurred on my return from attending the 2012 writers’ workshop and Crocodile Prize award ceremony at the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby in September.

When I arrived in Goroka, my daughter Cheryl, who was supposed to be waiting for me at the airport, was stranded in Kundiawa. She was unable to catch a bus. Worse than that, my mobile phone battery had gone dead … total communication blackout. I had not charged it the night before.

I waited at the Goroka airport for two hours and still there was no sign of Cheryl. I couldn’t wait any longer because it was getting late. I offered some tips to a group of boys and they assisted me to the bus stop and into a bus that was crammed full.

There were only three seats remaining and I sat in the one close to the doorway. There was plenty of cargo and it was very awkward for me but I refused to complain. In a way I had no choice.

On the way to Kundiawa, my right tibia fractured below the
kneecap. The road condition was very poor, riddled with crater size potholes. As the bus manoeuvred its way around them, I was tossed about and in one of those movements I must have hit something that broke my leg.

I didn’t know, and I didn’t feel anything, until two days later when my leg became severely swollen. Of course I suspected something was wrong. I went for an x-ray and the picture revealed the fracture.

A back slab was wedged around my ankle for 12 weeks and it severely impeded my mobility in bed.

More woe, my second-hand water bed developed holes and was rendered useless. Pressure sores started to develop. Although my leg was healed, the pressure sore under my left buttock got worse.

I went under the doctor’s blade and the necrotic tissues were removed but the sores had not improved because of the hard mattress I was using, and other reasons as well. I was confined to bed for more than a year.

I go out once in a while to get natural vitamin D from the sun because I was becoming a carrot. Otherwise I stayed in bed all the time and did all my writing lying on my back.

I have never before discussed publicly the previous accident or the latest mishap, nor the consequent experiences and problems that I endured – except with other people like my family members and Jimmy Drekore, who is like a son to me.

When some of my friends asked me to write about it, I bluntly refused. I have been keeping everything to myself and battling on silently.

This is the first time I am sharing it all openly and I really feel obliged to do so in appreciation of the overwhelming support rendered to me by some beautiful and kind-hearted people.

Thank you so much for your compassion and benevolent support. The heart you have shown is awesomely inspirational and elating.

I will certainly get well and continue to share with you pieces of my mind in PNG Attitude.

The loving grace of the Lord shall be with you all.
Is there a Melanesian solution?
MARTYN NAMORONG

LET ME PREFACE THIS DISCOURSE by stating that the Melanesian Solution is not John Howard’s Pacific Solution nor Kevin Rudd and Tony Abbott’s Papua New Guinea Solution.

Also, in contemplating this rather difficult question, I have tried not to get trapped by tradition.

I was, however, reminded of anthropologist Dan Jorgensen’s view that, in thinking about independence in Papua New Guinea, the founding father’s expressed the view that the modernisation of the eastern half of New Guinea was a Melanesian agenda. They were obviously influenced and mentored by their brothers in Fiji and would later support independence in Vanuatu.

The independence narratives throughout a decolonising Melanesian region are important as they shape the way a people view their place in tradition and modernity.

The embracing of the past and the future are embodied in the conduct of the government and in society. Nowhere is this more publicly expressed then in the institutions of the Anglican and Catholic churches.

Perhaps it is in the social teachings of Christianity that the people in Melanesia may find a moral grounding. This is necessary in order to avoid moral relativism, which can be a source of instability.

It would, however, be foolish to be too dogmatic about the stance of the churches on some issues but, generally, there would be a net benefit as has been the case since the introduction of the churches into Melanesia.

Whilst the churches have held moral authority, temporal authority in a secular government is what has held the diverse tribes together. It has been by the force of the state that such diverse and antagonistic parties have been brought to order.
Experience in the Solomon Islands has shown that, once the state collapses, the inherent tribal differences are no longer suppressed and chaos ensues, despite the existence of the moral authority of the churches.

It is therefore imperative that there be a mix of strong traditional and modern institutions to ensure order reigns in society. However there seems to be a tendency throughout Melanesia for one institution to undermine another rather than act synergistically for the greater good of the people.

Nowhere is this best represented than in Fiji with the power play between traditional chiefs, the churches, the military and the parliament.

At village level, respect for traditional laws (*kastom*) and power structures is important for maintaining order. Fiji has perhaps the best examples of this. In urban settings, the maintenance of the rule of law by the government is a necessary prerequisite for a harmonious society. In places where the churches hold much sway, the society has a generally positive sense of order. Again Fiji tops its neighbours.

Sadly, I can’t think of a good example of a stable and accountable secular government in the region. Papua New Guinea would have to be the worst example and so, despite having abundant natural resources, it lags behind its smaller brothers in the region in terms of human development indicators.

The Solomon Islands has an important lesson to teach its Melanesian brothers about how we as a people should relate to the rest of the world.

In terms of Melanesia’s foreign relations, we are perhaps some of the most exploited people on earth, whether by colonial powers as in West Papua and New Caledonia or by foreign donors as in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

The paradox of the Solomon Islands is that whilst it has been a de facto colony of Australia for some time, it has managed a major coup in providing healthcare for its people with the assistance of Cuba.
The Solomon Islands has some of the best child health indicators in the world.

If there is a Melanesian solution to the problems in the region, it is about understanding what works in the Melanesian context and propagating those good ideas throughout the region.

Unfortunately, the reality is that there are economic and political interests, both internal and external, which will do anything to undermine a stable, progressive, and socially inclusive region.

In light of this, it is important that every Melanesian protects her or his traditional land, as this is the ultimate source of social security and necessary for the survival of future generations.
Prisoners seek to assist reform in prison
SONJA BARRY RAMOI

JOE WAS ACCUSED AND CHARGED with raping a young girl. Joe, old enough to be the girl’s father, had promised K1500 as bride price and had talked big about starting a cattle project in a joint venture with the young girl’s father.

Instead of making payment upfront or producing any cattle, Joe foolishly took the young girl to his village - where she moved about freely as his ‘wife’ for two weeks before the police acting on the unpaid father’s complaint turned up to arrest him for rape.

Joe was still imprisoned, on remand (weitkol), at Boram prison in Wewak three years later, awaiting trial on the main charge of rape.

Fortunately for Joe, his long wait for justice came to an end after a good State Defender took on his case. The Police prosecutor dropped the charge of rape and also the charge of ‘carnal knowledge with a minor’ because of the lack of evidence and proceeded to prosecute Joe for ‘obtaining sex by false pretences’.

Finally, the Judge dismissed the case. “Hooray, hooray, I’m free, I’m free,” Joe yelled in joy, punching the air with his fist.

He vowed to sue the State for false imprisonment but never did - just like an unknown number of wrongfully imprisoned people before him.

The whole case was a miscarriage of justice because there was never enough evidence to charge and remand Joe in the first place under the criminal code. It was more or less a civil matter.

It could have been much worse for Joe. Boram prison is located near the beach in Wewak with the sound of the surf and the constant sea breeze. It’s a holiday camp compared to other urban prisons such as Bomana near Port Moresby - where high profile prisoner Dr Theo Yasause was remanded in 2011 without bail for approximately one
year before being sentenced in 2012 to 30 years for murder.

This despite the glaring fact that the murder weapon was never found to link him to the murder he was accused of and found guilty of committing. And despite the fact that he had high standing in society with impeccable educational qualifications and vast experience, such as serving Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare’s Chief of Staff between 2007-2009.

His application for bail was denied even though he was a law abiding citizen with no previous convictions.

So Theo Yasause became another statistic, adding to the high ratio of people on remand awaiting their court appearance and forced to fight for justice from behind bars. Theo Yasause is still fighting for justice to overturn his conviction for a crime he maintains he never committed.

The Governor of Oro Province, Gary Juffa, after a visit to Bomana prison to see a relative he believes was wrongfully convicted of crimes he never committed, said: “If we are to practice humanity in its truest form, we must always give our love to those who need it most. God bless all those who are wrongfully convicted.”

Governor Juffa also described his relative as someone who ‘all he ever did was serve his country without fear or favour’.

For various reasons the prison system in Papua New Guinea has become plagued by mass-breakouts. At least 230 inmates – many of them described as dangerous hard core criminals - have escaped from prisons around Papua New Guinea since 2009.

The number of escapees would have been much higher if almost 500 hungry prisoners, who had not eaten for two days due to a food supply dispute, were not prevented by alert warders from breaking out of Baisu prison near Mount Hagen in Western Highlands Province in 2009.

Not too many prison escapees have reportedly been recaptured - although some were shot dead by police.

“It’s safe to say that many of the jail break-outs are organised by and carried out by prisoners on remand due to their court processes
not being processed and disposed of in a timely manner,” advised Theo Yasause.

The Minister for Correctional Services, Wewak Open MP Jim Simatab, told parliament earlier this year that in 2013 alone ‘more than 96 prisoners had broken out of prisons throughout Papua New Guinea.

The high level of escapes around the country - amidst claims of mismanagement and corruption within the prison system and the increase in horrific crimes in Papua New Guinea - prompted prime minister Peter O’Neill to advise in May that the country’s first isolated maximum security prison’ will be built on Manus and managed through a private arrangement.

The government also used its numerical strength to amend the criminal code to make rape and aggravated robbery punishable by death.

The good news for the government and the private sector in Port Moresby is that Theo Yasause - as chairman of the Peace Committee at Bomana - recently helped organise a Peace Ceremony at the prison in which gifts were exchanged by inmates representing different regional factions.

This followed several fights over a number of years between inmates representing the Highlands and Southern regions. Conflict, with the involvement of William Nanua Kapris, between the factions flared up again after inmates from Momase and New Guinea Islands were brought in to the prison.

Notorious prisoner William Nanua Kapris, who escaped again from Bomana for the second time with two other hard core criminals after an inmate was stabbed to death, was recently shot dead while on the run.

While Kapris’ death struck a strong chord of public sympathy, his ‘organised’ escape made life hard at the prison. Many prisoners were subsequently not considered for parole and planned welfare and rehabilitation programs were put on hold.

Prisoners at Bomana ‘desirous to contribute toward the
The Crocodile Prize Anthology 2014

promotion of enduring peace and reconciliation between parties to bring about stability and peace’ conducted a Peace Ceremony following which a Peace Agreement was signed by Jail Commander Kiddy Keko, Welfare and Rehabilitation Manager Frank Ito and by prison leaders representing the different regions in Papua New Guinea - Southern Region, Highlands, Momase and New Guinea Islands.

The parties to the Peace Agreement recognised ‘the need for a comprehensive settlement of peace to bring an end to the conflict that existed within the prison’ and affirmed their ‘commitment to agreed basic principles which call for individuals to portray a spirit of brotherhood, loving kindness, and overall spirit of love and forgiveness as set out in the Bible – ‘love others as you love yourself’.

Importantly, the inmates also gave ‘assurances to the management that there will be no prison break-outs and escapes from the prison premises’ and the Correctional Services officers agreed ‘to conduct themselves ethically when dealing with prisoners’.

“You all must be thankful to be here and take the opportunity to reflect on your past life. You all must thank God to be in prison, otherwise you would have been killed by the law enforcement agency”, Opposition Leader and self-made millionaire, Belden Namah, who had served time in Bomana for sedition over his role in the Sandline Affair, told inmates after he paid a surprise visit to Bomana on December 2011 to celebrate his 42nd birthday. During his visit he donated K25000 to the prison staff and K20000 to the prisoners.

More recently, in April 2013, Belden Namah advocated the implementation of the death penalty as ‘an effective tool the government of Papua New Guinea must adopt immediately’.

“The introduction of the death penalty will deter payback and tribal fighting in the country,” he said in his official media release.

The Opposition Leader also expressed grave concern when he said: “It is also alarming to note that annual increase of inmates at
Correctional Services facilities is continuing to soar at unprecedented levels placing a huge burden on maintaining facilities throughout the country.”

There are currently at least five serving Members of Parliament who have been convicted prisoners. Only one of the five – Belden Namah - is believed to have contributed financially from his own pocket to the prison system. Perhaps other MP’s will spare a thought for inmates this Christmas and contribute to the Peace Committee chaired by Dr Theo Yasause.

In the meantime, people can ponder the fact that, without positive change and rehabilitation within the prison system, the vicious cycle of corruption becomes virtually unbreakable and will only grow worse.

This despite the death penalty provision in the criminal code for wilful murder, which was reintroduced in 1991 after it was abolished in 1970. The death penalty in Papua New Guinea, which has always been applicable for treason and piracy, and which now includes death for rape and aggravated robbery, has never been implemented for wilful murder since the last execution in the 1950s, although four Papua New Guinean men have been sentenced to death since 1995 by two non-Papua New Guinean judges.

Therefore the recent signing of the Bomana Peace Agreement is a significant event which should be supported by all politicians and members of the public concerned about escalating crime and the endemic corruption which has become entrenched within Papua New Guinean society.

As Opposition Leader, Belden Namah also said: “How can you say that this year is the year of implementation when you cannot seriously address the serious law and order issues and come up with the best security policy model for the country? The citizens, investors and tourists must be protected at all costs.

“It is incumbent on the government of the day to give that insurance. Vision 2050 is only a dream if a paradigm shift on how we think, act and speak is not achieved. Papua New Guinea needs to
seriously rethink its security policy model for the country and opt to fix the underlying cause rather than just reacting to the symptoms.”
Roam alone: A new perspective and a new lease of Life

JEFFREY MANE FEBI

OVER THE TWO MONTHS OF August and September I roamed a barren land of non-writing, and perhaps non-thinking, clambered steep mountains and strolled deep dark valleys, alone through thick pools of quirky ignorance.

In abject cold and darkness, a whistle from the softest of beaks harassed the ears, while the scent of a rose set off fire alarms in the olfactory mill. Even the dance of the evening sun ended with me being bereft. And when a dawn appeared promising, throughout the day I only seemed to be trying to catch up with something I had missed in the morn.

Not a day ended in which I gave the briefest of consideration to poetry and writing, let alone reading – not even my favourite blog, PNG Attitude, mattered. Such were my days between August and September. However, I did find something - a new perspective and a realisation of sorts.

This new perspective, the result of a culmination of years of blind ignorance urged on by an unsound and unstable ideology, set me on a new path. It felt like I would be living my whole life over again, this time from a position of vantage. I am really grateful life has given me another chance, so to speak. Perhaps I have found hope, but I am yet uncertain of its true nature.

During this time I roamed the filthy streets of Port Moresby - dark alleyways where corruption in many forms plays out under floodlights; backyard waterholes where bartenders sell their own booze; a pimps' oasis where pensioners flourish without care; and a card gambling haven where entire families live on scones and Tang juice.

I've learned one or two new tricks though, and I witnessed
something common in all the people I met: they have a spirit of joy. They all enjoyed what they do and I saw it in their eyes. This spirit of joy was dancing many dances and it didn’t care if it missed the world.

There was peace and contentment of a kind I can’t comprehend. Only they knew. And that spirit of joy manifested in the ways they carried themselves: confident, content and certain of their respective tomorrows.

I also discovered another face of corruption. It is a simple face with no designer glasses, nor scents of aftershave or scented oils. It is unshaven, adorned with rows of *buai* stained teeth and heavy black lips, and wears an odour that reminds me of my grandfather’s smoke-filled round house.

Whatever conclusion one arrives at, corruption has reached the simple man and they too have become partakers in ways that blow the mind. Whether we let corruption flourish while we find our way to progress through its thick undergrowth, or kill corruption first then find our way to progress, I guess is up to individuals and families, as the government cannot be trusted.

For me, I’ve realised that life is short. And I am not keen on wasting any more time suffering from complaining and talking about things I can’t do much to change.

I will continue to do the things I love most though - write and read - but with more passion about life and its mysteries. May this be my new perspective, new inspiration, and hope it brings me joy and happiness.
A generation of black beauties: *kawas* girls we call them

NIGEL MATTE

In company advertisements or promotions, we mostly see pretty white ladies or good looking boys featured. Yep, there seems to be a mentality that light skinned people are the cutest.

But wait, let’s take a look at the beauty of black skinned people - especially in our Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

Apart from some Africans and other Solomon Islanders, Bougainville is said to have the blackest people around.

Black is a unique skin colour and often when photographs are taken the camera lens makes it appear that these people are *too* black.

But when you see them face to face and take a look with your natural camera, your eyes, you’ll agree they are ‘black beauties’. A beauty of nature’s own design.

In Papua New Guinea, Bougainvillians are nicknamed *kawas,* so when love songs about Bougainvillian girls are sung by Papua New Guinean musicians, instead of them saying, ‘Bougainville Babe’ they say, “Kawas Babe”, an expression that is popular throughout Papua New Guinea.

Actually many Bougainvillians don’t know what the word *kawas* really means. Some say it means friendly, beautiful, cute and wonderful.

Because of these different meanings, when Bougainvillians leave their homeland and go to other parts of Papua New Guinea, like universities, teacher’s colleges or technical colleges, light skinned Papua New Guineans joke and say that if they marry a *kawas* they will produce chocolate coloured kids and, yeah, of course such a mixture is cute.

Being seen as black is unique and beautiful, just like white, yellow,
brown and light skinned people. If you don’t believe me, don’t hesitate to go to Bougainville and see for yourself.

Bougainville’s three regions host cultural shows that attract people from all over. Recently, the Bougainville Mona Festival was held in Buka town and there’s also the Hantoa cultural show, the Tinputz coca festival, the Siwai cultural show and many more.

All a celebration, at least in part, of kawas.
My value, my worth
PAMELA JOSEPHINE TOLIMAN

DID YOU NOT SEE HOW I hung my head in embarrassment when you happily announced to the village that I had begun menstruating? You dressed me in magnificent plumes and soft fur. You oiled my skin and sang over me but I felt like a pig being groomed for exhibition.

“She is worth …,” you announced what would be expected for my bride price as I was led forth and presented no longer as a child but as a woman. From that moment I learnt a painful truth: I would never be my own and my value, my worth, would be dictated by others.

You considered my education an expensive luxury. Cleaning the house, fetching water and firewood, cooking and watching over siblings were things you pushed on me in an effort to increase my value. “No husband wants a woman who cannot cook or keep a home.”

The increase in my domestic value came at the price of missing out on a placement after grade ten. You were relieved that you would not have to waste any more money on school fees. Perhaps now you would see a return on your investment.

You would shamelessly appraise possible suitors in my presence. The fact that some candidates were already married or had fathered children was not considered an impediment. Finally, one persistent suitor caught your attention and appetite.

He began calling regularly at our home and you showered him with respect because of the money and gifts that accompanied his visits. Did you not see how he repulsed me? Did you not sense how sick I felt when his eyes roamed over my body?

You pushed me that day to accompany him into town. He had generously offered to advance you store goods for a small canteen I
was to keep. You pushed me to accept his invitation. But he did not take me directly into town. He stopped at a quietly concealed garden house within his coffee plot.

That day he took the last thing that was mine. Without my permission, he took and took again. I was battered, bruised and bleeding but nonchalantly he continued into town and bought me a Coke and a lunch pack to soften the blow.

I sat numb and silent as we waited for workers to load the store goods onto his vehicle. Finally we headed back and as our family home came into view hot tears burst forth from my eyes. Surely I was safe now? Surely you would not permit this man to ever come near me again?

When his vehicle pulled up, you happily greeted us and then called for tea to be brought for him. In the excitement of unloading the store goods you did not see me wince as I got out of the vehicle. You took no notice of how I walked stiffly into the house.

Later, when he had finally gone and after I had attempted to ease the discomfort of my torn flesh with water heated over the fire, I spoke to you of my ordeal. But the impression on your face churned what little there was in my stomach.

You did not appeal to God or to justice, you appealed to the value of the store goods this man had delivered to your doorstep. “Look at how much he has given us!” You pleaded with me to take him as a husband; my ruin dismissed by store goods that were only valuable within their expiry dates. Again, you dictated to me my value, my worth.

Then you went about your polite demand for compensation and bride price. Did you not think to ask whether I wanted to be married to that man? As you anticipated, he paid for what he had already taken and would continue to take by force every time he wanted to be with me.

All that you had ever hoped to receive for my ‘skin’ was laid at your feet on the day of my bride price payment; live pigs, live goats, cartons of lamb and mutton, store goods, garden food and cash to
sweeten it all. The ‘eating from my skin’ reached its climax that day.

You told me how proud you were of me for bringing in such a valuable haul. You told me that no other girl in our family had achieved such a feat.

The prized pig had now earned her keep. She had been sold, not to the highest bidder, but to a monster that first stole then later paid.

Now my dear family and those who have gladly ‘eaten from my skin’, I would like to set the record straight regarding my value, my worth: 800 kina and not a toea more.

This should cover the cost of an inexpensive plywood coffin, a white *meriblaus, a laplap* and a set of bed sheets. I have not included the value of tea, sugar and other items for the *hauskrai* because strictly speaking those things have nothing to do with my value, my worth but rather the size of your appetites.
Reflections: Our September day shows there’s hope

EMMA TUNNE WAKPI

EVERY YEAR WHEN APPROACHING THE month of September I get a little excited. I take my flag out of storage and hang it up with deep affection a full two weeks or so before Independence Day.

I watch as a slow, subtle change occurs amongst my people and, for a moment during this period of time, there is oneness, an understanding that we are Papua New Guinean; this is our country, our heritage, our life.

Unlike most nations, we did not have to struggle for independence but were ushered into it by a world beyond the comprehension of the majority of our people. There was never really time to develop a sense of nationalism.

But this is slowly changing as we interact globally and are forced to forge our identity. This year I saw solidarity in my people when Papua New Guinea was dragged through the quagmire of bad press from around the world.

The talk on the streets and in the PMVs was that this is a great country, we love our land and boohoo to you who think otherwise.

Despite this growing sense of nationalism I could not approach Independence Day with my usual sense of optimism this year.

Several political and social issues, as well as personal ones, had me despairing for my country, wondering if we could ever make progress and if real transformation of heart and mind could be achieved for a better more stable Papua New Guinea.

This is a great country and the average person is trying to make a fair go of things, but deeply rooted cultural practices and a very lax work ethic is aborting progress before it has a chance to advance.

On the eve of Independence Day a childhood friend of mine was
accused of sorcery and murdered in Tabubil.

He was one of the few locals with a good education and doing something for himself rather than depending on royalty payments. He had no enemies, he was quiet, and minded his own business – an easy target for those looking for an excuse to further their own means.

Prior to that, the organisation that I work for was approached by a distraught older brother of a teenage boy who had died after being admitted to the Goroka Base Hospital. The deceased was referred by one of our health workers based in Tainoraba and came into town with his older brother and two cousins.

While he was hospitalised his guardians had to look for somewhere cheap to stay and eat on their limited budget. They ended up for some nights at our compound; at other times in the settlements.

When the young man died they were at their wits end trying to find a way to take the body back to the village, as it would be unthinkable to bury him in Goroka.

They could not go by PMV and didn’t have the money to hire a car. Even if they did it would take them to the nearest drop off point in Okapa and they would then have to walk a further two days along steep mountainous paths to get home.

In the end we chartered an MAF plane, which would take them to an airstrip two hours walk from their village. Two weeks later they sent 21 coffee bags, a slaughtered pig, various garden produce and bush flowers for us to plant in our garden as thanks and payment.

There are no schools in this area. Boys and young men travel out to Goroka and elsewhere and live wherever they can to try to get an education. Females are not so fortunate and so the majority of the girls in the village will never get any form of basic formal education.

These and other situations which are all too familiar to the average Papua New Guinean had me pondering about the lack of care and concern that the average person has for their fellow countrymen.

Because these situations are so common, the average person has
grown used to them and sometimes quite callous in their response because they themselves are embroiled in their own struggle to survive and prosper.

The Goroka Show was in full swing during the weekend leading up to Independence Day but I became bitter and thought that it was all well and good for us to get dressed in our traditional regalia and sing and dance our hearts out only to put it all away and head back into a reality so disturbing.

I decided that I would observe Independence Day at home and would not join in the general celebration.

On the Sunday, however, a friend approached me and asked that I go with her to the show. I didn’t want to at first but, as I came out of my house and saw the Papua New Guinea flag hoisted on top of a mango tree, and as I watched people walking up and down my street painted in Papua New Guinean and provincial colours, I couldn’t help but feel the familiar stirring within me. I decided to go.

Once inside, the sight, sound and smell hit me; proud people in dazzling colours and plumes singing, chanting, stomping and dancing. Each group was so regal, so mystical and all were performing under one flag.

There was a sense of love and embrace. We decided to see every group perform and it took a good three hours.

As I wandered from group to group I observed the people around me. Young and old from nearly every province was represented; ordinary people like me who just want a fair go and want to live in peace in this land that we love oh so wholeheartedly and call home. We smiled at each other, took pictures of each other and loved that we were Papua New Guinean.

As I was leaving, a family decked out in Papua New Guinea colours was slowly doing the rounds of the cultural groups. The children were filled with wide-eyed wonder at all that was going on, so secure in their parents love and protection.

When I asked to take their picture they were very obliging, posing with laughter and excitement.
Towards the further end of the field, Texas Allan came out to perform, drawing a huge crowd comprised mostly of young people hooting and singing wildly along with him enjoying the moment and having good fun.

My heart lifted, there is hope in this land; we are finding our feet.

Our cultural heritage has the good, the bad and the ugly. We are working at sorting this out; the bad and ugly seems so glaringly obvious and its stench so overpowering that the good seems to be non-existent, but it is there.

I have sensed it and although it may seem that I have lost it, I know I have only to look around and I will see it clearly, therefore I have hope and will continue to help in building this nation in whatever capacity I can.

I woke up early on Monday 16 September greeting my country’s 38th Independence Day with hope and love. God bless PNG.
My life with my family during the Bougainville crisis
ISHMAEL PALIPAL

IT WAS A TERRIBLE TIME and it cost many lives and left haunting memories in the hearts of Bougainvilleans. It came like a thief and took away precious people and belongings.

It was 26 October 1992 when we thought thunder roared and stones fell from the sky. Then we realised what was going on.

There were soldiers everywhere. And they crawled like ants through the bush. Gunshots came from the sea, the sky, through the bushes. Our area was invaded.

My mum cuddled me with a blanket and hugged me close to her chest and kneeled down facing the floor for safety from gunfire coming towards our house.

My people were running here and there, trying to pack their belongings to flee from the invading soldiers and up into the blue mountains.

After some dramatic action between the BRA and the PNGDF, we found ourselves among the fleeing villagers with loads of necessary things to use in the forests.

Small children, still in confusion, were told not to cry. Adults and young people capable of carrying things carried food, clothes, animals and other things.

The fear inside decreased as the ruggedness of the mountains got closer. I was peacefully sleeping in the warmth of my mother’s arms. She carried me carefully through the forest into the safety of the mountains with my father as her support.

In the safety of the mountains, we made our shelters. On the first day of hiding, we saw our houses and other villages going up in flames. We awaited news of victims of war.
Under the big rocks we sheltered, in caves; wherever the darkness was we settled there. We moved from place to place, up into the dark thick forest and mountains to avoid the rifles.

Those first days of absconding were hard, carrying food, belongings and children, but the food was always in abundance for the forest was made to provide what is needed to sustain a person.

Pigs, birds and cuscus provided us with meat; wild yams, taro and nuts provided us with energy. Leaves and fruit from plants and trees offered a balanced meal.

The dried bamboo provided a smokeless fire to cook out of the helicopters’ sight. When there was no bamboo close by fireplaces were made between the big tree roots.

And to be on the safe side, the camps were built near rivers or creeks to wash the fire away quickly.

Along the east coast, the fighting was severe and many soldiers were losing lives. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army was pushed back deep into the forest. From there, with the camouflage of the forest, the PNGDF was, in turn, driven back.

We were in the mountains of Koianu. On the coast the PNGDF captured Toimonapu and set up camp there.

Among all the families and relatives, my family decided to move to the other side of the mountains because of the better services.

My uncle who was one of the BRA soldiers guided us through the mountains and down to Koromira. We followed the mountain tracks to my grandparents’ hideout camp and settled in there for the duration, little realising how long it would be.
The street people for whom there is no tomorrow

FRANCIS NII

THE PROBLEM OF ORPHANS IN Papua New Guinea is becoming so serious that the government cannot ignore it any more. The number of waifs and strays on the streets is constantly rising.

As you travel around the cities and towns of Papua New Guinea, you will notice the faces of young children, mainly between the ages of 6 and 12, going from street to street collecting empty cans and bottles, and doing small errands for a few toea to buy flour balls for the evening.

If they are lucky a cup of coffee complements the flour balls. Otherwise cold water suffices.

Among the young people you will see some elderly males and females also collecting empty cans and bottles in a determined effort to survive. Many of them grew up as waifs and strays in the slums.

For these people there is no tomorrow. All they care about is today.

Talk to them about the 2015 Pacific Games or the multi-billion kina LNG project is meaningless. All they see is bleak despondency. What they care about is their immediate needs for the day.

They have no place to call home. The way they dress and the filth and the stench of unwashed bodies clearly tells you that they do not belong to a proper home.

They lodge with wantoks in overcrowded squalid cardboard shelters or they hang around night clubs or gambling dens in the slums until dawn. In the morning they are back on the street and the routine continues.

When the going gets tough, what is good and what is bad becomes obscure. Pick-pocketing, shoplifting, bag snatching and mob attacks become necessary. Crime and violence are on the rise.
Girls turn to prostitution in their teens and even younger. HIV and AIDS is the biggest contributor to the orphan problem. As parents die of AIDS and other calamities, the number of orphans increase.

The chairman of the National AIDS Council, Dr Banare Bun, revealed in Kokopo this year that the total number of people infected with HIV stands at 35,000. This official figure excludes those who have not been tested and recorded.

Most are young people between the ages of 15 and 25 and most are married.

When parents die of AIDS they leave their very young children to grandparents and wantoks, who generally do not take good care of them. The children are abused and maltreated.

As a result, they are forced onto the streets to fend for themselves.

The government is ‘compassionate’ about the welfare of so-called asylum seekers - foreigners of unknown background most of who are wilfully leaving their country for greener pastures in Australia. The government is ignoring its own people who are in dire need of attention.

The problem is getting worse by the year and the government cannot continue to ignore it.

These people are Papua New Guineans and their welfare should take precedence over that of foreigners.

If ordinary people can see the problem and go out of their way to address it, then the problem is serious. The Mother of Life Centre in Simbu Province founded by Martin Van der Palen of the Netherlands, the Faith Based Orphanage (Outreach) in Western Highlands Province run by Aunty Ruth, and the Nangbe Nazarene Care Centre in Jiwaka Province operated by husband and wife, Steven and Ruth, are good examples.

There are also several other care centres established and operated by ordinary people to care for orphans and their needs.

The three centres mentioned each look after an average of 50 to 100 children a year. The figure may be insignificant compared with
the total problem, but the important thing is they have seen the issue and gone out of their way to address it.

The availability of resources - land, shelter, food and of course money - is the biggest challenge.

Out of compassion and benevolence, they have voluntarily taken the burden upon themselves to provide shelter, food, clothing and education for the children.

These organisations provide a noble service which is rightfully the responsibility of the government. It is a mammoth task that these charities are tackling and the government cannot continue to turn a blind eye.

The government must provide support through the District Services Improvement Program with yearly grant assistance for sustenance and expansion until such time as the government have an orphanage policy in place.

The sooner the better.
I know when I’ll celebrate, but now isn’t the time
STEVEN GIMBO

I DID NOT CELEBRATE Independence Day here in Tabubil. I started work at 7 am and finished at 11 pm after nightshift.

The reason being that I felt there was nothing much I could celebrate. I’m still paying very high taxes, between K700 and K1000 every payday, depending on overtime. My employer’s contribution to superannuation will also be heavily taxed, leaving me with almost nothing.

The real estate industry in Papua New Guinea goes unregulated, and I’m paying K500 every fortnight for low cost accommodation. It is the same in a settlement in Port Moresby or a house in a village on the outskirts of Madang.

The public education system in Papua New Guinea is not what it used to be when I attended school in my rural Bundi; it has gone into a state of decay in rural areas. That has prompted me to put my kids into private schools, which is costing me K22000 a year.

While on break, I get sick and go to the nearest health centre only to be told the medicine I need for my ailment is unavailable.

I missed the plane back from my last break because the condition of the road was so bad the 10-seater Land Cruiser I hired broke down.

Just four weeks ago, criminals held up a colleague in Lae and stole everything from him and a couple of others in a shop in broad daylight.

Just three weeks ago, a colleague's father was knifed in cold blood in Gerehu in Port Moresby. He was a former top cop and a very likeable fellow, a stranger to no one.

There is nothing to celebrate. I will start to celebrate when the level of corruption drops. I will start to celebrate when an implicated
politician or bureaucrat resigns or steps aside.

When the MPs take a pay cut. When the government lowers taxes, plane fares, accommodation, and improves rural health and education.

I will start to celebrate when those implicated in numerous commissions of inquiry are prosecuted for their corrupt dealings. I will start to celebrate when urban hospitals are brought up to date with the latest equipment and stocked with genuine medicines. I will celebrate when corrupt public officials are made to account for their actions.

Yes, I will start to celebrate when these things happen. I am not a pessimist. But these are the realities I face every day. I have lost total confidence in the country's leadership and bureaucracy.
Civil servants: making financial pressure a way of life

KELA KAPKORA SIL BOLKIN

PAPUA NEW GUINEA HAS A plethora of “money-rain” institutions and human cash mules (maket meri) that will give loans to any working class man or woman in need of immediate cash.

The “money-rain” institutions are good at exaggerating the benefits of getting loans through advertisements and luring gullible workers into financial bondage. The interest rates range between 150 - 200 % in most cases, even though they are repaid over an extended period of time.

The maket meri set their interest rate at K1 for every K2 borrowed and are easily accessible on the streets. Not much paper work is involved. With this challenge from the maket meri, the “money-rain” institutions have adjusted their operations to give loans within a few minutes.

Some of the things that drive public servants and others to seek loans are pressures from their tribesmen and families back in the villages and settlements. A typical PNG community will have first menstrual feasts, compensations, clan warfare expenses, funerals, school fees and bride prices and so forth that each member is expected to contribute to in cash or kind. Nowadays, with the aid of mobile phones, workers are constantly bombarded with demands, even for the funerals of stillborn babies.

But not only that, over half the public servants and workers are polygamists and the women’s families also have highs and lows that demand contributions too. In Melanesian culture, polygamists have to show their manhood by dishing out huge amounts of cash to the wives’ clans. The accolade the polygamist receives is like a short ego-orgasm.
However, when the polygamist returns to earth, it dawns on him that his debt from all these commitments and cash handouts are soaring. At that point the wives normally get a good battering and a volcano erupts at home to the amusement of the neighbours.

Wait on, half of these public servants and workers also love drinking beer with their peers and playing poker machines with their concubines. They have to find money for that too. Add rentals and daily food rations for their wives and children and one can see the drain of energy in their eyes from pursuing their male egos.

Many female public servants and workers also take out high interest loans. A woman working in Vulupinidi Haus was grabbed and dumped on her head by a Tari *maket meri* in front of the building one day.

While the woman was gasping for air on the pavement, the *market meri* announced to the spectators that the woman had borrowed K800 seven months ago and had avoided her since.

The sturdy Tari lady had her right foot on the throat of the public servant and was pressing hard. The prey was gasping for air and was agonisingly humiliated. Everybody knows that market mules are dangerous to deal with but some people wish to dice with death.

Loan obsessed public servants and workers are adults with a supposedly sharp rational capacity, so they should be able to plan, budget and manage within their means. How can someone who earns K27000 per annum spend K40000 per annum? That is irrational. The difference between K27000 and K40000 is K13000 and is called financial pressure and the difference is found through “money-rain” institutions and *maket meris* on the streets.

But it comes with a huge price because the interest is triple the normal rate if they borrow from the “money-rain” institutions and the principal is multiplied twice if they borrow from the *maket meris*. In reality, they are looking at forking out K19500 to K26000 as loan repayments. This is a huge burden that the public servant or worker is bringing upon himself or herself.

There are often scenes in Port Moresby government and private
enterprise offices where people witness a worker being bundled out by his or her collar to a police car. Their loan debts force these people to go to work with only K5 in their pocket to cover their bus fares and betel nut or smokes. They don’t have a decent lunch. Half of them have noodles for lunch. The wrinkled and worn clothes they wear are signs of a heavily drained public servant or worker.

Some of them literally work for no pay because they take loans from four or five different financial institutions and human cash mules. These people literally receive nothing or very little because their fortnightly pay continuously goes to repaying debts. They have no joy and enthusiasm for work so they come in for three days and take two days off due to the pressure of their debts.

Their wives and children take refuge in shelters provided by relatives or tribesmen in settlements. As pressures on the family and from the financial institutions mount, public servants use government hours to do private “consultancies” for landowners and any Tom, Dick and Harry that want a drummed up proposal or court affidavit and are willing to pay a pint for it.

The end result is obvious. There is less productivity from the depressed and debt burdened public servants and other workers. The ripple of it also affects the family unit and the worker tries to halt his self-inflicted agony with state or company resources and the civil society is held ransom.

The government must ban public servants from getting loans from the “money-rain” institutions and the human cash mules. Sensible free enterprise companies should do the same.

With the current trend, the debt burdened workers will continue to only deliver only one year’s work every three years.
How Chinese entrepreneurs out-muscle local Papuan New Guinean businesses

BERNARD YEGIORA

THE MAJORITY OF HUMAN BEINGS are economic creatures. We engage in various economic activities to help us survive. Regardless of where we are, whether on the island of Malta or off the coast of East Africa, we engage in buying and selling to generate some form of income to sustain our livelihood.

Over the last two years, the town of Madang, like all other towns and cities around Papua New Guinea, has witnessed an increase in the number of Asian entrepreneurs engaged in various economic activities. From *kaibars* (food bars) to merchandise stores to auto parts outlets, Asian businesses are mushrooming all over town.

In their bid to make ends meet, Asians have outmuscled the citizens of this country. They have acquired land and buildings with ease, causing concerned citizens to wonder how on earth they did it.

In an interview with a paralegal specialising in landowner cases and who facilitates backdoor acquisition of land, I was able to get inside information about acquiring land. He said K50 is like a poison. One can use this poison to get anything.

Most of the Asian entrepreneurs are of Chinese origin and the paralegal talked about the presence of the old and the new Chinese: the old being those who came before independence; the new being those who migrated after.

In the new wave of immigration there are two different groups: one made up of ethnic Chinese from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia; the other comprised of Chinese from the People’s Republic of China, also known as Mainland Chinese.

Both the new and the old Chinese have played a fundamental role in the development of Papua New Guinea. Their investments and
taxes continue to contribute to government revenue. This fact cannot be disputed.

However, many misinformed Papua New Guineans say the money Chinese entrepreneurs make is smuggled back to China in brief cases and under their clothes. Others say they dig up the soil and bury all the money; that is why they do not go to the bank. There are numerous other urban myths about Chinese entrepreneurs.

So what makes Chinese entrepreneurs so successful? It’s a common question that bugs all Papua New Guineans who are concerned about the rapid rate at which Chinese businesses are spreading in towns and cities around Papua New Guinea.

To answer this key question, I went out and made my own observations of Chinese entrepreneurs and how they operate in Madang. I was able to learn some very interesting details about Chinese entrepreneurs which I think contribute to their success in Papua New Guinea.

I began by observing an auto parts shop owned by a group of Singaporean Chinese. The gentlemen who served clients were very fluent in *Tok Pisin*, they even used *Tok Pisin* swear words to connect with their customers.

Customers are drawn to the fact that these guys can swear in *Tok Pisin*. Thus, they like to go to the shop to buy spare parts and in the process *tokpilai* with the Singaporean Chinese gentlemen.

The first time when I went with a mechanic friend, I felt a bit awkward because they called him *kuap hariap*, which literally means fast sex or, in bedroom lingo, a quickie. On our way home the mechanic told me he is a regular and they know each other very well. He said this is how they connect and it makes it easier to ask them for a discount.

The second time I asked the mechanic to get a quotation for a clutch plate, cover and bearing. He came back with a funny looking quotation, funny in the sense that the quotation was addressed to ‘*Mr Kuap Hariap*’.

The Singaporean Chinese gentlemen learned the *Tok Pisin* swear
words from their co-workers. They have a different *Tok Pisin* swear word for each of their regular customers. I was amazed at this relationship and how the regular male customers were attracted to the shop.

Moreover, Chinese from the mainland have initiated an intricate mobile vending network. Youths of different age groups are paid to sell or buy goods from the Mainland Chinese to people on the streets.

This is a smart strategy to quickly reduce the stocks in the shops. Sunglasses, mobile phones, pirated DVDs, ear rings, necklaces and other items are sold using the mobile vending network. Hence customers do not need to go into the shops to see the goods.

Most of the goods are either B or C-grade from Guangdong, Honk Kong or Fujian. According to my own categorisation, A-grade goods are designer goods or high quality goods which are exported to the European market and markets in other developed countries like Australia.

Papua New Guineans nit-pick about the quality of goods sold in Chinese shops but do not understand that Chinese entrepreneurs are not stupid. They know not all consumers can afford A-grade goods or some B-grade goods. They have to sell goods that match the customer’s ability to pay.

In Papua New Guinea’s case, if 90% of the population is living in rural areas, it means they cannot afford quality goods. Based on this logic, one cannot flood the market with high end designer goods because there are simply not enough customers for them.

Other shops, like Brian Bell, sell quality goods. Most of these goods are also made in China. So not all goods made in China are of poor quality.

With the opening of Vision City Mall, which is an indication of economic growth, there has been an increase in the number of high quality goods. The new *Jeans West* shop in the mall is an example. Most of the jeans in the shop are made in China for markets in the developed world.
A villager from the north coast of Madang or from the jungles of Karamui will have problems buying jeans costing K160 in comparison to someone from a posh background.

A low income consumer will not be too keen on buying Gucci sunglasses or a LA Lakers cap from a shop in the Vision City Mall for K200 if they can buy a K5 pair of sunglasses or cap from a street vendor.

I met a young kid of about 13 or 14 selling low quality sunglasses outside Madang market. I asked where he was from and he told me that he was from Simbu. He was one of the squatters from the notorious Sisiak settlement who has never actually been to Simbu. He told me he got the sunglasses from a Chinese shop.

The young kid is part of a group who get paid by the Chinese entrepreneurs to push their goods on the streets. Most of these vendors are underage kids who get paid a meagre commission to act as another outlet for Chinese made goods.

Another vendor I interviewed was more mature; in his late 20s or early 30s. He was selling pirated DVDs outside the large Papindo shopping complex in town. He told me he bought the DVDs from the Chinese traders at a wholesale price and resold on the streets for a profit.

Another interesting observation is the way Chinese entrepreneurs watch the cash register. Most Papua New Guineans say, Ol kongkong ol moni pes (Chinese people idolise money) because they watch every cash transaction with x-ray vision.

Chinese entrepreneurs and the Chinese people in general have a very different culture in the way they use and save money. This has evolved over time and they have developed different practices which make them who they are.

Chinese entrepreneurs are also risk takers. I was fascinated to see a Chinese mini-mart in Madang’s Four Mile Market, which is a notorious place for betel nut traders and sellers. The Chinese have ventured into this area with the aim of sucking up money from cashed up betel nut entrepreneurs who are the kings of the informal economy.
Quite recently Chinese entrepreneurs succeeded in building another mini-mart next to Balasiko Market, another hub for betel nut entrepreneurs. The Balasiko Market services mainly the betel nut trade in town, while the Four Mile Market services other provinces connected by the Highlands Highway.

The mobile vending network is a very risky business. The street vendors are equipped with bags or have different ways of hiding their goods from the police. One particular seller demonstrated to me, shoving the pirated DVDs down the front of his pants.

He told me that if the police catch him red handed they will let him go but confiscate the pirated DVDs for their own viewing pleasure. To date, the number of people arrested for breach of copyright laws and for facilitating the sale of pirated goods is a joke.

The peculiar way in which some Chinese entrepreneurs communicate with their customers, their fluency in *Tok Pisin*, the mobile vending networks for low income earning Papua New Guineans, their distinct culture of using and saving money and their ability to take risks makes them very successful.

In the years to come, as the Chinese entrepreneurs continue to operate in Papua New Guinea they will develop new and fascinating practices to enable them to thrive. Papua New Guineans wishing to operate small to medium size enterprises should study the Chinese entrepreneurs by learning what they are doing. Only then will they be able to mirror their success.

A possible practice, as China does away with its one-child policy, will be strategically arranged marriages between Chinese and Papua New Guineans with the aim of acquiring land or property. This practice will no doubt contribute to the success of Chinese entrepreneurs.

Another possible practice will be the use of mafia style protection. Chinese entrepreneurs will identify a certain powerful family, individual or group of individuals who have strong connections with the underworld and possess firearms. To avoid armed robbery the Chinese entrepreneurs will offer women and money on a regular
basis as protection payments.

According to word on the street, this practice is already in place in Madang but I am yet to verify the credibility of the source. Also I need to do more research to confirm what I am hearing. But, if that is the case, all Chinese entrepreneurs who enter into this arrangement will be untouchable.

Not only Papua New Guineans but Australians and other foreign nationals who wish to invest in Papua New Guinea’s retail sector should make an attempt to fully understand this ever changing business environment.
Tribe versus nation: observations on Papua New Guinea’s core challenge

GARY JUFFA

IF PAPUA NEW GUINEA IS to progress and its significant potential for development is to be harnessed, it needs to shift its leadership philosophy from tribalism to nationalism.

This was one of the most significant observations I made in my first term as an elected official, a political leader in the ninth parliament of Papua New Guinea.

It is one of many observations and in due time I intend to speak of them all. I like to think that concerned Papua New Guineans care what a leader thinks. Maybe I am kidding myself; maybe people do not care.

Last year was an interesting year in Papua New Guinea’s ninth parliament. There were good and bad outcomes but one particular lesson was most sobering for me.

I have noticed, with dismay, how, except for a very small minority, many of my fellow elected leaders remain quiet about national issues; they are reluctant to voice concern and opinion about the many issues that affect the nation, its people and its interests.

Seasoned politicians go about with confidence and, in some instances, boredom; the newly elected struggle to find their feet, some replicating the template of politicking associated with accessing funds, others learning through trial and error.

As a leader, I was disappointed that many politicians who claimed to have entered parliament to address corruption and fight for the good of Papua New Guinea – some exceptionally passionately during the election period - shied away when presented with the opportunity to do so.

Last year there was certainly no shortage of opportunities to
engage in either the fight for Papua New Guinea or the fight against corruption. Instead, I witnessed many instances of apathy by my colleagues towards the national interest and even disdain for any effort to address corruption. I noted, however, that many members were passionate about voicing concerns about issues affecting their electorates and this is of course commendable as well as necessary to prove to their electorate that they are active.

But I am of the opinion that Papua New Guinea’s elected leaders have a responsibility not only to their electorates but to their nation as well.

The handing down of the 2014 budget made me realise why leaders remain quiet and behave according to the unwritten laws of politics in Papua New Guinea. Speak up and you will pay the price; be a good boy (or girl) and gain an affectionate pat and a beef cracker.

For my efforts, I have been penalised by a very unfriendly budget for my province, receiving less than last year’s allocation and losing funding for major infrastructure projects.

In fact, I had been warned by a particular minister. I never dreamt that I and the people I represent would be punished for my efforts to raise concerns about national issues.

That fact was realized after scouring the books of the 2014 budget; not a single major project submitted by my Provincial Government had been funded, although all the meetings had been attended and all the appropriate processes and procedures of costing and justification diligently followed.

What a bitter pill and a lesson in the murky politics played with such inconsideration in Papua New Guinea. It was so similar to other world economies where political survival takes precedence over the well-being of the people.

I understand the stance taken by my colleagues. I would like to say that I cannot blame them. But a part of me still believes that their behaviour ignores the collective expectations of the citizens of this
great nation, with its vast potential and substantial resources.

But is it true that most Papua New Guineans are concerned? Or is it only a minority who are concerned about national issues and who are aware of what is going on.

Certainly many people in Oro Province have been vocal about my efforts, urging me to be silent and focus on the province and its needs and advising me to ignore the interests of the nation as a whole.

I understand their concern but I am a Papua New Guinean first and foremost and I would like to think that I speak for the many Papua New Guineans, whether or not they are aware and concerned about national issues, who would like some effort made by their leaders to address these issues.

It is a given that tribalism is necessary for the preservation of cultures, languages, unique identities and customs but it need not be embraced as the only method of leadership.

To allow this would be to suppress nationalism, which in turn will ensure a *status quo* where political bullying of leaders allows inconsiderate decision making and corruption to prevail.

Papua New Guineans and their leaders need to take that step towards developing a big picture: the country first and the tribe second, rather than the other way round.

So yes, I have noted that many leaders would rather quietly go about their business than be starved of much needed funds for their electorates.

That much is now crystal clear and no doubt many would perhaps promote this strategy of political survival: surviving to see another term by dishing out gifts and projects even if they are suspicious and not in adherence to the Finance Management Act and other laws of transparent procurement and expenditure of public funds.

Politicians choose to work with a perverted system rather than trying to correct it.

I guess that, in this regard, they are correct to remain silent and behave accordingly. They have been granted their rewards, even if
they are short-sighted.

Well, I will speak out and speak up, even if it is at the cost of my next election. If I lose, I will at least be able to say that I did exactly what I intended to do: represent my people, not just those who voted for me and my electorate but those from all over this great nation that I cannot but help feel for.

These are the people in remote locations who cannot access basic services, who endure a harsh and oppressive taxation regime that promotes corporate interests and forces the ordinary citizen to pay, forgoing much needed income.

I will be indignant about sinister or dubious businesses that seek to exploit our resources and pay as little as possible, sometimes even forcing the people to pay.

I will voice outrage about inconsiderate profit-driven exploitation that threatens our environment and our future interests.

I will be vocal about land grabbing and the dishing out of illegal citizenship and refusal to prosecute those who pilfer and steal public funds through fraudulent tactics.

I may go down but I am satisfied that a group of Papua New Guineans who are increasingly aware and agitated will rise up and identify brave leaders who are not just brave at the ballot box but also in parliament and place them in parliament to make decisions that are not only in the interests of a tribe, a community or an electorate but for a nation.

It is a great nation that is so beautiful and so full of life, history, culture and great possibilities.

If social media is anything to go by, the stirrings are there. The concern is now a small seed but it is growing and growing fast.

In due time, leaders who can speak and act will come forward and take their rightful place and forge a path towards greater prosperity for all, improve health and education and pursue transparent justice that is available to all and not just those who can afford it or have the right connections.

A pat on the head and a beef cracker will no longer be able to
contain these future leaders; they will be brave and vocal and compassionate and not easily convinced to sanction the sale of their nation piece by piece.

The style of leadership, where national interest is foregone for the interests of a tribe and an electorate, will no longer be relevant. I believe that day is coming soon and I predict that these are just the teething pains that we see and feel now.

Apathy and short-sightedness in decision making, whether by direct effort or silent consent, and giving in to political bullying will be seen as unacceptable.

I am certain that greater good can come about when the people are no longer willing to be kept in the dark and begin to demand something better, not just as a tribe or an electorate, but as a people.
Thugs, bent coppers and other ordeals along the Okuk Highway
KELA KAPKORA SIL BOLKIN

THE DECEMBER SIMBU KUAKUMBA CULTURAL show was one of the things I wanted to see and take part in since my tribe was likely to be participating.

I flew to Goroka on 12 December and was to jump on a PMV bus later in the afternoon when I heard talk on the street that there was a landslip below the Kingstar limestone knoll and the travelling public were stranded.

I didn’t want to be caught up on the road in the evening, so I decided to overnight at Fishwara settlement in East Goroka.

At dawn I rose with the cicadas and arrived at the Simbu bus stop. Some 14 passengers and I jumped on the first 15-seater bus that was heading Simbu way. We left Goroka town at 7 am and the passengers chewed betel nut and smoked cigars for breakfast and happily chatted as we sped west into the morning clouds.

The clouds were still embracing us as we crept through Daulo Pass and entered Simbu country. We drove past Chuave market and ascended, only to come upon a long line of trucks at the landslip below Kingstar.

The bus crew returned one-third of our bus fares at the site of the landslip and we were asked to walk through and jump on another PMV bound for Kundiawa. As we walked, we went through seven road blocks that were just five metres apart.

The perplexed passengers and PMV owners were given orders by four or five different thugs. There was no one with the authority to keep the situation under control because the police were chewing betel nut and had no desire to control the situation.

That gave the thugs a good opportunity to enrich themselves.
The men had five road blocks and two were mounted by a few women. The ‘owners’ of these road blocks were shouting, scolding and demanding that the travelling public pay a K2 fee for trespassing on their land.

I had to fork out K14 to thread my way through them. The travelling public, who had bags of betel nuts, were made to pay K10 for each bag. The boys who helped carry cargo to the other side also demanded K10 for each bag of betel nuts or peanuts carried.

The traditional Simbu way of inviting a visitor for a meal and cutting sugar cane to show courtesy has been lost to the vicissitudes of time.

What surprised me most was that the women tending the road blocks were as aggressive as the men and swore at will. That was something of a new experience for me. I had never seen my mothers and sisters swearing in any gathering in Simbu.

There are many good mothers and sisters in Chuave and I cannot smear mud on them because of those few sluts, but I now know there are a few thugs among the noble Chuave mothers and sisters.

There was a policeman with a loaded AR15 rifle in one of the groups blocking the road making sure each passenger paid the thugs as they walked through. The policeman had turned himself into a thug and was no longer the noble policeman he swore to be when passing out at Bomana Police College.

He probably joined the thugs in the pub in the evening to muse over the day’s takings. Well, that is the norm nowadays with most cops, so it wasn’t a surprise.

There was a concurrent landslip in the Mindima section of highway to the west that also stopped tourists coming down to see the Simbu Kuakumba cultural show. The duty bearers were not prompt in responding to this disaster and were still procrastinating when the show started.

The Simbu cultural show was on and now the only way for tourists to enter Simbu was on one maiden flight to Kundiawa after years of hibernation. The next flight was scheduled for after the
show. Another planning blunder on the part of duty bearers.

When I finally made it to show I was overwhelmed by what my senses detected. The sounds of drum beats, euphoria, vernacular, serenades and traditional costumes gave me a feeling of security and acceptance.

A few of the dances, *singing* and traditional regalia displayed were foreign and not traditional Simbu, but most were true to the core and they gave me a feeling that all is not yet lost to the cultural imperialism perpetuated by cultural terrorist sects, biblical fundamentalists and spongy politicians as the *Post-Courier* calls them all. My camera had the best moment of its life too; it was busy over the three days of the show.

All good things come to an end and I was on my way back to Goroka to catch the Air Niugini flight to Port Moresby when the 25-seater PMV bus I was travelling on got a punctured tyre at Magiro, where some people were recently buried by the landslip. While the crew and driver were changing the tyre the passengers crept into the nearby shrubbery to answer the call of nature.

Thugs then converged on the PMV bus and started yelling abuse. They demanded compensation for using their bushes as rest rooms. We had no choice but to contribute and pay them. While we were contributing more thugs, including women, converged and started calling the women passengers sluts and virus carriers.

The government does not provide rest rooms for the travelling public anywhere along the entire Okuk Highway. Thirst, hunger and nature calls are programmed by anatomy and people have a right to basic dignity that the road parasites and the government have to respect. Get the pedestal politicians to provide rest rooms along Okuk Highway because the most affected are our mothers and sisters.

In particular we ask Hon Julie Soso to build rest rooms at the summits of Daulo and Kassam passes. She will then surely become a Dame and make herself immortal. The highway thugs are a problem that needs immediate remedy.
The government, through the National Cultural Commission, should document and fund cultural groups in the provinces to keep up knowledge, totems and artefacts. PNG has a huge potential to make tourism dollars with its 850 different cultures, lands and seascapes.

Rest rooms will make life better for tourists as well as other people travelling the highways. Thugs and lazy buggers along the Okuk highway have to be collected and sent to a faraway place where there is no sound of air, rain or other humans.

These brainless mongrels are a disease in society and serve as obstacles to a huge tourism potential, not to mention the safety of the general public.
Permanent betel nut ban is political suicide for Governor Parkop
FRANCIS NII

ALTHOUGH BUAI (BETEL NUT) IS a health hazard and a source of filth, it can be a potent force of political influence.

Economically, buai has become a commercial crop, like coffee, cocoa or copra, and is of significant market benefit.

In the domestic economy, buai creates a chain of employment for many people. Buai farmers employ people who harvest and bag the nut. Wholesalers employ truck and boat owners to transport the product to market.

Retailers employ other truck and taxi owners to transport the nut from wholesalers to sellers, who are many and scattered in various locations. The nuts are then sold to consumers.

In buai trade, one can hardly go wrong. Everybody knows the mark-up. At the end of the day, everyone profits.

This cash flow along the trading chain benefits many people: whether business houses or street vendors.

In the highlands, people buy buses and build houses with buai money. A number of highlanders have lost their lives in the search for buai wealth.

This small nut is economically powerful.

That’s why, politically, Governor Parkop has dug his own grave with his total ban on buai.

The governor seemed to forget that bulk of the population that gave him the mandate to govern them are ordinary grassroots people: farmers, taxi or PMV owners, low income earners and street vendors, who in one way or the other rely on buai money to take care of their daily needs.
The good governor and his advisors have come to their senses lately and are already talking about relaxing the ban sometime in the future, but I suspect that it is too late. The damage has been done. Many people have already been driven into hardship and suffering.

Even if he relaxes the ban in the future, perhaps a few months before the 2017 national election, how can people trust him not to revisit the policy?

I won’t be surprise if the buai issue becomes a political platform for candidates challenging Parkop in the 2017 national elections.

And I will bet my last toea in favour of the candidate who promise to liberate buai – one of them will succeed Parkop.

Mark my words, buai has the potential to swing political power come 2017.
O’Neill’s Panguna visit: how the opportunists were thwarted
LEONARD FONG ROKA

IN 2012, CENTRAL BOUGAINVILLE POLITICIAN Jimmy Miringtoro and Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter O’Neill were chatting in O’Neill’s office in Parliament House, Port Moresby, when the PM unexpectedly suggested that he was interested in visiting Bougainville.

It wasn’t until late January 2014 that the proposal took form and the pair landed at Buka airport in a chartered jet, touring Bougainville for three days in a convoy of cars with three helicopters buzzing around in the skies above.

Late last year, as he was preparing the way for O’Neill’s visit, Miringtoro told the Panguna people that the trip would be a ‘family visit’. It was the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) administration that came up with the more far reaching idea of a ‘goodwill visit’.

Across central Bougainville, many people think some of Miringtoro’s actions in recent times have gone well outside what should have been the responsibility of the ABG. One of these was a Panguna landowners’ deal for an agricultural investment by Chinese firm, Beijing Aerospace Great Wall.

The ABG was shocked by the deal, signed at the Lynchar Hotel in Buka town late in 2013, and wondered what other surprises Jimmy Miringtoro might have in store.

But Waigani’s respect for the authority of Bougainville president Dr John Momis made it clear that even Miringtoro had to play along with the protocol of the ABG taking responsibility for the visit.

Before the ABG took over the PM’s tour, however, arrangements Miringtoro had made with the divided Meekamui factions had created a tussle in Panguna - money and recognition being the
catalysts.

Today, the self-style Meekamui ‘government’ in central Bougainville is a divided band of individuals striving for status. In Panguna there is a Meekamui group led by Philip Miriori who, together with Moses Pipiro from Pangka village, claim a line of leadership from the late Francis Ona.

But Guava villagers condemn them and say Ona died without any official announcement that Miriori or Pipiro should be leader.

Meanwhile, down on the east coast is Chris Uma from Kerei outside Arawa, the man who runs the Morgan Junction checkpoint on the Loloho port – Panguna mine-access road. Uma’s right to rule, he claims, was also bestowed upon him by Ona.

Uma is not a Panguna man but has followers in the mine-affected areas. Uma, whose group bear arms, is a power in the area. But, whereas Miriori and Pipiro have a hatred of the ABG, Uma follows and respects the Panguna Peace Building Strategy, which he says upholds the principles Bougainville went to war for.

Uma’s growing harmony with the ABG through the PPBS means Miriori and Pipiro are sidelined by the Panguna people. They saw Peter O’Neill’s visit to Bougainville as an event that somehow could be manipulated to restore their influence in the eyes of the people.

So, without the knowledge of the Meekamui and in a surprise move, they took steps to support the ABG’s Panguna District Administration invitation to O’Neill to visit Panguna with the financial support of Jimmy Miringtoro and the ABG.

Thus Panguna was designated for a visit by Peter O’Neill by a few people without the rest knowing. When they found out, this shocked Chris Uma and the people of Panguna.

Seeing the threat, Pipiro and Miriori began a media campaign saying that the PM was welcome at Panguna, but their about-face led them to being shamed by Uma and his followers.

And Uma took action. In the fortnight leading to O’Neill’s arrival, he was on the road seeking support from other men to stop the PM visiting Panguna, by words or guns, whichever they chose.
People were divided. So the Panguna organising committee came to Uma’s followers with K15000 if he and his allies allowed the visit. Uma refused the cash leading to more ABG ministers joining behind the scenes to negotiate a solution. Eventually nearly K40000 was spent to allow the Peter O’Neill to visit Panguna.

The final meeting ended at 3am on 29 January only when O’Neill’s team personally got involved and promised to uphold the belkal or, in Nasioi language, domantamiri - a process towards peace and compensation after conflict resulting in destruction and death.

So it was that Peter O’Neill visited Panguna and met with Chris Uma as he drove from Panguna to Arawa by vehicle.

So the rewards of the visit were not with Philip Miriori and Moses Pipiro.

Earlier the Panguna people had heard, wrongly, from Meekamui followers, that the PM was visiting Panguna to recognise Meekamui as a legitimate tribal government. The Meekamui leaders also wanted O’Neill to have a private moment with them.

But O’Neill made Miriori and Pipiro laughing stocks in the midst of the Panguna people and Bougainville.

In his Panguna speech, O’Neill announced, as Miriori looked on shocked, “The ABG is the only legitimate government in Bougainville. Meekamui you have come under ABG and work as one Bougainville people to bring about development and progress in Bougainville.”

After the official program, Miriori approached O’Neill but was told the PM had no time for discussion.

O’Neill’s visit to Bougainville was important and influential. It empowered the ABG as the legitimate government standing for the rights of the people of Bougainville. It further exposed the little warlords in central Bougainville who trying to hold the Bougainville people to ransom.
Pork-barrelling: Jeffrey ‘Santu’ Nape, saviour, giver and Nimai ninja

BERNARD YEGIORA

I WAS GLAD WHEN KERENGA Kua defeated the notorious Jeffery ‘Santu’ Nape in Papua New Guinea’s 2013 general election.

I thought to myself the Sinasina Yongomugl electorate of Simbu Province now has a very highly educated person as their representative, so he will bring development to the electorate.

The whole of PNG developed different kinds of feelings for Nape during his second term leading up to the 2012 general election. Many labelled him as a conniving Speaker of the House who played a fundamental role in overthrowing the Somare-led regime. They focussed on the bad aspects of his leadership and drew their own conclusions.

A good number of his own Nimai tribesmen in the Sinasina Yongomugl district saw him as their saviour and a giver. Some called him the Nimai ninja and many other names that made sense to them.

The image they had of Nape cannot be easily deleted from their minds. They will never forget Jeffery ‘Santu’ Nape, former Speaker of the National Parliament and Acting Governor General.

Funny how things change in politics. In 2002 and 2007 all of us who were connected in one way or another to the Nimai tribe of Sinasina worked together to elect our very own tribesman. The joy of seeing Nape entering parliament for the first time in 2002 is hard to describe. For months the Nimai people chanted and sang quoting the winning number of votes - 6654.

Jeffery Nape polled those votes to unseat incumbent Ludger Mond. So from Yongomugl the seat was passed over to Sinasina.

As a young and energetic Year 12 student from Rosary Secondary School, I cannot remember the number of times I voted in the 2002
general elections. The boys from my clan including myself used lemon juice to wipe the purple ink from our fingers.

After wiping, we joined the line and used our strength to push our way towards the front of the polling booth. Once there, regardless of the name, whether it was male or female, we just walked up and got a ballot paper and proceeded to the polling booth and voted for our candidate.

The lone Port Moresby mobile unit policeman with his M16 was powerless. He knew he was in a precarious situation. If he stopped us from multiple voting he would spark a violent outburst which could endanger his life.

Even though the polling booth was next to the Yoba Catholic Church in Koge village, we had no sense of fear that what we were doing was wrong, unethical and illegal. By all means we wanted our man Santu to win.

The name Santu is a common name which people in the electorate and those of us from Koge village use when referring to or addressing Nape. It is a Tok Pisin version of the word Saint. How he got that nickname is a mystery.

So for Jeffery ‘Santu’ Nape I voted numerous times in the 2002 general election. Whenever I read Electoral Commission advertisements about ‘one person, one vote’ my mind immediately goes back to that Yoba experience.

Like his successor, Kerenga Kua, Jeffery Nape was a business man based in Mt Hagen before he contested the 2002 general election for the first time. He had money and stacks of it. To me, Nape is the epitome of ‘neck politics’ or ‘nere tere’.

He well understood the psychology of a simple villager. Maybe his upbringing as the son of Nape Kupe, a former Sinasina local government President and Simbu Provincial Government Minister, influenced his election strategy. Regardless, from my point of view he was the hottest candidate.

Upon returning home from Mt Hagen in his red, four-wheel drive Nissan Patrol station wagon, he gave K5 or K10 to people to
purchase cigarettes, beer, biscuits, kerosene or whatever their needs of the day. People said the K5 and K10 notes were new and crisp and looked like they had just came from the bank.

But they said Nape did not hold any K50 or K100 notes, making it easy for him to give money to any Tom, Dick or Harry he met on the road to Koge village.

During the 2002 and 2007 campaigns, the various gambling houses in Koge village were packed to capacity, the bets ranging from K20-K50.

Tales of his money-giving feats had an accelerating effect in the way the story passed from one person to another. Soon there were crowds of people lining the side of the road calling ‘Santu winman’, ‘Santu winman’, ‘Santu winman’…..

A lot of people said; “Em win, em bai givim yumi moa yet, ynpela kaikai na givim vote lo em” (If he wins he will give us more, so take the money and vote for him). They visualised Nape in Parliament before they went to the polls.

The money was not only given to Nape’s own Nimai tribesmen but to the Dingas, Tabares, Keres and other tribes making up the electorate. They all received something from Santu’s cookie jar.

This ‘neck politics’ or ‘nere tere’ logic is similar to the idiom ‘There is no such thing as a free lunch’. Those who got something from Santu felt obligated to vote for him. They traded their democratic right for money.

Some of the people who got the money voted for him while others did not, but he was successful in establishing himself as a cult figure. He was no doubt adored by many.

This was demonstrated by the fact that, wherever people were, when they heard that Nape’s vehicle was approaching, they dropped whatever they were doing and ran to the side of the road with anticipation that Santu would stop and give them something. The Sinasina people continued doing that until Nape was voted out in 2012.

When he was in office a lot of our tribesmen walked the Kokoda
track to Port Moresby to see him in Morauta, the suburb where he lived. My cousin came and slept with me in my room at the University of Papua New Guinea for months before he was given an airline ticket back to Simbu and some money for his efforts in the election victory. He told me in detail how they had walked the Kokoda track and the beauty of the flora and fauna.

Those who had money boarded the Lae to Port Moresby flight in search of Santu. They came; they saw and returned with their heads held high. The new jeans and Dunlop sandshoes they wore on the flight back played its part in strengthening the cult of ‘Santu the Giver’.

Santu gave money to each of the clans and sub-clans that make up the big Nimai tribe. The money was distributed equally among the different families. After the 2007 election victory, I got K200 from the chief of our clan.

Even though I did not vote because I was in Port Moresby studying, the effort of my family members in the village made it possible for me to benefit from the ‘thank you money’.

As I sit back and look at what I did in the past, there are many things I regret but how can I turn back the hands of time. I know all of us have skeletons in our closet because we are human.

I have learnt a lot from these experiences and the type of leadership displayed by Nape. I respect Nape for his smartly designed election strategies. His smartness and tactics were again displayed on the floor of Parliament during the political impasse.

Is the strategy of showering money on eligible voters unlawful? Does it constitute bribery, which is a key element of corruption? Should Papua New Guinean politicians and wannabe politicians refrain from such practices? These are questions I leave with you, the reader.

From what I hear the people are crying for Santu’s return because the incumbent has a different leadership style.

I have a strong feeling that come 2017, if no other prominent Nimai decides to compete against Santu then he will be in the running to reclaim his old seat. This prospect will be stronger if the
people of Sinasina decide to cast what is called in Tok Pisin a ‘wari vote’ because they miss the free hand-outs he gave when he was at the helm.

The ‘wari vote’ was successful for former parliamentarians like Mathew Siune and the late Joe Mek Teine. These two gentlemen contested successive elections to no avail, finally their supporters and those who did not have a candidate in mind decided to vote them for their never say die approach.

We can idealise the perfect type of elections we want to have based on Western experience but it will never work out. The ‘one person, one vote’ slogan is all hot air; Papua New Guineans will continue to vote multiple times.

People of all ages will look past leadership credentials, party policies and religious backgrounds to vote for those candidates who can satisfy their need for money. No wonder money is the root of all evil.

The challenge now is to study the pork barrel nature of Papua New Guinean politics and design a home grown voting system that will complement a Papua New Guinean style of democracy.
**Taim blo kilim pik: the education of a butcher boy**  

**JP PRITCHARD**

QQWWWWWEEEEKKKK! THE AIR WAS shattered by the squeal of the pig as I drove an arm’s-length thick iron bar onto the pig’s snout right between the eyes. Just one thrust and the 250-pound beast slumped dead at my feet.

In case you’re wondering, what the hell, that’s animal cruelty; well welcome to Papua New Guinea, we look after pigs for eating, not for pets.

I let the shuddering pig squirm for a moment allowing the flowing blood to drain out, then my brothers grabbed his legs and heaved him onto the wire frame set over the blazing fire. We threw some *tsi-tsu* (dried coconut leaves) over the pig to burn off the bristles to ensure a smooth carcass.

The boys flipped the blackened beast over to burn the underside. After ten minutes or so, the pig was removed and the boys used bush-knives to scrape the burned bristles clear leaving it bald and smooth. That was be my fourth experience of slaughtering and butchering a pig for a feast. That was on Christmas Day in Markham in 2013; we had a family feast then.

I remember my first butchering experience in Goroka during my graduation *kaikai* back in 2006, I was nervous, I was excited.

Today, you could say seven years on and four experiences would make my butchering history colourful, but I’m telling you, it gets trickier every time you pick up the blade to butcher a pig because, when you’re at it, you’re doing a number of things at the same time: you’re mentally calculating the number of people out there ready to stuff their hungry bellies with the meat, you’re butchering the carcass according to the particular ethnic standards of
your location, your hands tell a story to the curious youngsters as well as the vigilant elders and of course you put on your best show with a stupid smile on your face, in case that beautiful young lady from the other tribe is still watching.

By the way, that method I use to slaughter the pig with was adapted from my Goroka side, where pigs are leashed and tame and easy to slaughter. A little pat on the back and an iron bar to put the beast to sleep.

In Markham people usually slaughter the piggies during a chase with hunting spears. A lightning thrust by an expert hunter backed-up by his hunting dogs is required because pigs in Markham are left to wander around in the wild and only when dusk approaches are herded into their fenced yards.

Being of mixed parentage, I was exposed to two different cultures, Atzera ethnicity in the Markham District of Morobe Province where my mama hailed from and Gahuku ethnicity in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province where my old man originated. The way the Gahuku slaughter and butcher pigs is different from the way the Atzera do it so it was important that I learned to slaughter and butcher using both techniques.

Slaughtering and butchering a pig is not something that you read in a text book in a classroom; it’s a traditional skill embedded in the Gahuku and Atzera heritages, as well as every other indigenous group in Papua New Guinea.

You watch, you get curious, you pay attention, you fiddle around with the carcass when your fathers and uncles are butchering the pig and then one day you pick up the blade that your old man used to handle, you put that blade to the beast and you let your memories guide your shaky hands while your old man stands by your side and mumbles his agreement when the blade runs smooth or grumbles his disagreement when the blade so much as misses a centimetre off its supposed route.

You have to be mentally strong too because, if you’re someone who passes out at the sight of blood or are someone who has a soft-
spot for animals, you should be with the ladies peeling bananas or grating coconuts, seriously.

Anyway so where was I? Yes, I laid the bald carcass on its back with its four legs pointing up to heaven, or wherever pigs go to when they die, then I started by slashing the fore-hooves and the hind-hooves vertically down the length of the legs, splitting the limbs into halves.

With the slashed limbs giving me a clear-cut section of how the carcass would be divided, I then put the blade on the bump just below the neck, applied a fair amount of pressure to open up the belly layer without rupturing the internal organs and slowly dragged the sharp blade down.

The smooth thick skin opened up nicely, revealing white fatty layers. The straight cutting line occasionally crossed to the side to avoid the male-part then regained its course all the way down to the rear opening. I returned to my starting point and sliced around the neck.

Then I dug my hands into the pig’s internal organs, grabbed the wind-pipe, slipped my blade under and slashed off the trachea. With both hands I tugged and rolled the whole internal organs down and out, they should easily come loose from the spine and the tugging bit gets much easier with experience.

All cleaned out, I picked up the blade and sliced the carcass into rectangular pieces the size of an A4 paper then into smaller pieces half that size, pausing at the hard parts, the bones.

I grabbed the axe and chopped at the bones of the spine, the ribs, the pelvis, the limbs and the skull, which was pried open along the jaws splitting the head into two (don’t worry the brain should still be intact, protected by the upper jaws). The meats were then sliced into further suitably sized pieces.

As I’ve mentioned above you always think of the number of people to share the meat with as you cut. Phew, finally my job was done.

The internal organs would go into a big dish or two and some
ladies would scuttle to the river with them to clean out and cook them.

“O pikinini yu top man tru, em ya kam sindaun pastem na kaikai buai.” The elderly men would readily offer betel nut and be very eager to chew and chat with the young butcher so you have to comply out of respect.

It’s not that I’m a fan of old boys going on about life and all that; it’s just that I was trying to be nice and get the chit-chat over with. Come on, give me a break, that beautiful lady is waiting remember?

So there, this method I’ve just described is done in Markham. The meat had to be butchered into sizable pieces to be cooked because here they do not make mumu in the earth like the people do up in the highlands; rather the meat is cooked in gigantic gurr (clay pots) flavoured with spices and traditional salt.

The women would prepare long beds of fire, almost three metres long, and then you would see the clay pots lined up from end to end like black soldiers engulfed in raging flame - there’s even a traditional song about it: ‘Ten hungry gurr all lined up in a row, all lined up in a row, upon the blazing fire of our mothers...’

Another such fire would cater for zampu and marafri (varieties of bananas - long orange and short yellow respectively) and delicious yams and sweet cassava drowned in thick coconut cream.

On the other hand, up in Goroka, the pig’s hooves and legs are not slashed and the head is not butchered. Rather, the spine and the skull remain as is instead of being chopped into pieces-only the ribs are pried off one by one with the butcher’s blade sliding along and skinning the flesh clean off the bones. The head and the four legs are never split because these important parts of the meat go to very important guests amongst the festival delegates.

The prepared pig carcass would be laid flat open on the kumu and ferns, kaukau, taro, bananas and tapioca in the mumu pit. After the mumu is ready, the pig meat is sliced into pieces and shared with, of course, the head and the four legs going to the VIPs.

However, in Markham, with the skull divided, it is the teeth that
are collected for necklaces and the skull fragments are used on the handles of our elders’ rods, axes, or spears as well as the face of their shields and battle masks.

So it’s really two sets of different traditional techniques that I had to master, being of two different heritages.

I’ve decided to drop a lot of the traditional norms like sanguma and masalai beliefs, polygamy, a woman’s rightful place in the society (eye’s rolling), marriage rituals, puripuri and so on.

I only listen to these fascinating stories from my grandparents in Markham. They’re still around, hitting their 80’s, planting water melon and chewing buai with not even the slightest worry about the internet and crazy media, politics and corruption, tax deduction and economic crisis, nuclear weapons and capitalism; sigh, God bless their hearts.
Papua New Guinea as a banana republic: Chinese Li Wu suborns officials
KELA KAPKORA SIL BOLKIN

A RECENT INCIDENT I WITNESSED at the Taurama Shopping Centre in Port Moresby ended up posing some important questions for all Papua New Guineans.

An argument started between a Tari man in a Chinese _kaibar_ and the Chinese man on the other side of the counter. Moments later, a towering Chinese man came out and punched the 1.5 metre Tari man into submission.

He was beaten and bruised to the point of exhaustion and, as you might expect, two of his Tari _wantoks_ came to the rescue and nearly punched and kicked the tall Chinese man to death.

The public who witnessed the incident were divided in their support. The pro-Chinese mob said the Chinese had created employment and paid taxes through their businesses. They said Papua New Guineans do not create employment but sit and gamble (_bom_ or 7-leaf) or talk politics and wait for free handouts.

They added that Papua New Guineans finding themselves with some money become one-day-millionaires and go on a drinking spree and sing until dawn. They concluded that PNG men and women have no business acumen and should not talk about Chinese business aggression.

On the dissenting side, the pro-Taris said most of the Chinese come into the country through back door deals with politicians and immigration officials and corrupt every system in place. They said being citizens of a superpower doesn’t give Chinese the right to break the laws of a small country and trample on its citizens.

As the arguments went on, they almost erupted into another melee but police officers speedily arrived on the scene, and this was
most interesting.

Two police cars arrived containing high ranking officers. The Chinese called these senior police officers by name and chatted with them. It was evident they were friends. The policemen ignored the bruised Tari man.

I started taking photographs but an obese policeman demanded that I delete them on the spot. I deleted the shots while he watched. One of the policemen said, ‘You journalists write bullshit.’ I told him I was not a journalist and didn’t even know how to write.

No one could find out the reason for the argument because the Tari man could not speak good Pisin and the Chinese culprit could only speak Mandarin. People tried to ask the young women in the *kaibar* to explain what went wrong but the Chinese told them not to talk.

Anyhow, no arrests were made. The Taris were told to go home and refrain from being such nuisances and one of the Chinese came out of the *kaibar* and gave the police servings of rice and stew in takeaway cartons and some Coca Cola.

One of the policemen took the plastic bag without saying thank you and looked in the direction of the crowd, swore and told us to disperse. Maybe swearing at the public was an indirect way of saying ‘thank you’ to his Chinese friend for the free lunch.

When the police left, a veteran public servant said the Chinese keep a black book that contains the names of the 80% of PNG politicians and bureaucrats who are given *Li Wu*.

*Li Wu* in Chinese Mandarin is gift or present and *Her Li* is a congratulatory gift. Most politicians when they are elected and ministers when they are appointed receive *Her Li*, the public servant said.

He added that around 80% of top police officers are on the payroll of Chinese businesses. Occasionally you hear people on the streets of Port Moresby say, ‘Em ol polis bilong LGNA’ or ‘Em ol polis bilong RH’. LGNA and RH are, of course, Asian companies. Papua New Guinea should have the one and only Royal Papua New Guinea
The incident at Taurama Shopping Centre seemed to confirm what the veteran civil servant had said about the black book and the various police officers in PNG in the pay of both government and Chinese and other Asians.

The Chinese are able to call top ranking police officers who within minutes will arrive to provide protection. The top officers release the Chinese and get junior police to assault Papua New Guineans.

Does the Li Wu to politicians and top bureaucrats make Chinese businessmen and women in Papua New Guinea immune to the laws of the independent state of Papua New Guinea? What is Papua New Guinea, anyway!
Eventually the price for parental neglect will be paid  
FRANCIS NII

THE LEVEL OF LOVE AND care we give to our children is the same we will receive from them when we are sick or get old. If we give them the best according to what we have, we will get the same measure and even more from them.

Yesterday the news of the demise of Tabie reached me, and memories of human tragedy rekindled. He had been referred to Sir Joseph Nombri Memorial Hospital in Kundiawa from Goroka Base Hospital.

Tabie was in his early sixties and some months ago was admitted to my ward for treatment of acute arthritis in both his legs.

Although he was able to walk with the support of crutches, he didn’t have the strength to help himself with other chores.

My daughter Charlene helped him to fetch drinking water and to get his morning tea and dinner from the mess. She even did the laundry for him.

As days passed into weeks we realised that none of his relatives was coming to look after him. He needed help with toileting and bathing, so we helped him. We provided him with fruit and extra meals. Whatever we had we shared with him.

At times Charlene would ask about his relatives and if they might come and look after him. Tabie said he didn’t know.

“What do you have children?” she asked.

“Yes Bubu, I have many children. They are all grown-up and married. Two of them are in Port Moresby. One is teaching at Kilakila Secondary School and the other is operating a taxi service,” Tabie replied proudly.

“Then why will none of them come to visit you? You need a
guardian to look after you, bathe you, wash your clothes and get your meals from the mess. You are not strong enough to help yourself”.

“Bubu, you are right. I don’t know why they are not coming,” he said with a tone of regret.

“Do they know you are here? Do you have their phone numbers?”

“They know I am here, Bubu. But I don’t know why they are not coming. I don’t have their phone numbers.”

“It’s alright,” Charlene assured him. “I will look after you and my dad.”

Tabie stayed for almost three months until he was transferred back to Goroka. He was living with his latest wife, a widow, when he passed away a week ago.

Throughout his three months at Sir Joseph Nombri Hospital, only three visitors came and visited him and they were not family members. They were wantoks from the village (hauslain) who brought with them some food.

The first who came were a couple. Charlene asked them why Tabie’s children were not coming to look after him.

The man hesitantly and said he didn’t know. The wife facing Charlene, with her back to Tabie, twisted her nose.

I couldn’t work out what the facial gesture meant.

Charlene, being an intuitive girl, grabbed the woman’s hand and said, “Let’s go and chew betel nut,” and they went out.

About half an hour later they came back, their lips red with buai.

When the couple left, Charlene bombarded Tabie with questions about the number of wives and children he had with each wife and how he parented the children. She had already learnt a lot about Tabie’s life from the woman.

The truth finally surfaced.

Tabie had been a handsome man in his young days and married one woman after the other. After the birth of his second child, he deserted the mother and the children and married a new wife.

As soon as the new wife had a child, he left them and married
another one and went on like that … a hit-and-run type.

He had nine children from his many wives.

He didn’t look after any of his children. He didn’t promote and support their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development including formal education … the usual parenting process from infancy to adulthood.

All the children were raised by their maternal grandparents or other people, who put them through school and paid their school fees.

Biological fatherly love was something that all Tabie’s children missed in their lives.

Tabie didn’t realise he wouldn’t be forever young, handsome and energetic. There would come a time when he would get old and sick and depend on his children for care and support.

When he got old and became ill, the children totally despised and neglected him.

When Charlene learned of his promiscuous past and the neglect of his children, she stopped helping him. Tabie found life so hard, he was transferred back to Goroka.

Currently at Sir Joseph Nombri Memorial Hospital we have a patient paralysed by TB of the spine. He is in his fifties and was living a promiscuous life with no or little concern for his children.

His children would come and go. They didn’t give a damn about his excrement and urine.

Many times he would yell and cry for help and the children would tell him to die. They told him straight that he never cared for them. They grew up in their mother’s hands. Other guardians had pity on him and were helping him.

There are instances where children have inflicted severe bodily harm on their biological mother or father because of parenting negligence.

There are many Papua New Guineans like Tabie who follow the flesh without worrying about the consequences of their actions and end up paying the ultimate price.
Our children are precious gifts from God and our assets and heirs. They are the ones we would fall on in old age and in the time of sickness and other calamities.

It is inhumane and insane for people to not take care of their own children unless they have a good reason, like medical, economic or other legitimate conditions.
ALCOHOL PROVIDES AN ESCAPE FROM reality for many young Papua New Guinean males. I would be toxically depressed had it not been for alcohol. The insanity of many young guys who become schizophrenic after consuming too much marijuana makes sense to me.

Several weeks ago I bought pizza for my dear brother Nou Vada and we talked rubbish about the rubbish that’s happening in this country. Nou told me how his Facebook inbox got clogged after news spread I was working for Opposition Leader Namah. We both laughed about it.

The truth is Papua New Guinea doesn’t need Martyn Namorong and Nou Vada. We are obstacles to progress. We are stopping development from happening.

Well, that’s according to how everyone defines progress and development. Nou and I talk about bagarapment. We do odd things because for us there is no box. We’re crazy guys who accidently happened to have brains.

Nou understands why I worked for Namah. I don’t expect anyone else to understand me as well as Nou does. After all, it was Nou who introduced me to the concept of ‘corrupting corruption’.

Nou understands why, during the political impasse of 2012, we were on opposite sides. I supported Tiffany Twivey and Prime Minister O’Neill at that time because I felt the constitution of Papua New Guinea could not adequately address the excesses of the Somare regime. Indeed, I was hoping Twivey could lead a revolution but that did not eventuate.

This might give some context to folks who might be surprised by
the assistance I provided to Namah.

Just as I wanted to counter the excesses of the Somare regime, I wished to counter the excesses of the O’Neill regime. That is the realpolitik of Papua New Guinea that an uninitiated observer may not be able to contextualise when passing judgement on current issues.

The principle of ‘corrupting corruption’ is something not widely understood but applicable to the Papua New Guinea context.

After all, there are very few clean hands in this country so one has to be a little bit more pragmatic as opposed to being ideologically entrenched.

That is what Nou and I understand and so, despite being at opposite sides of a debate at some times, we have a mutual understanding of where we’re coming from.

Papua New Guinea is a land of abundant opportunity. There are good prospects for this great nation of ours. The challenge for us is to convert these opportunities into the realisation of the dreams and aspirations of our people.

This is a difficult task because those who have been entrusted by destiny to lead the people continue to selfishly accumulate wealth.

Nou and I are lucky people who have had the opportunities that someone in a remote hamlet in the Owen Stanley Range hasn’t. One day I hope Nou becomes prime minister. He is a man of intellect and integrity who I have enormous respect for.

The day a boy from Hanuabada becomes prime minister will be the end of colonisation. The Papua New Guinea flag will be raised at Hanuabada to replace the Union Jack that once flew there 200 years ago.
The man who conceived the destruction of Panguna’s power pylons
LEONARD FONG ROKA

BETWEEN 1963 AND 1970 THE Australian colonial administration under the directives of the United Nations was recklessly rushing to build a new country in the Pacific, Papua New Guinea.

To the Australian authorities the Solomon Island of Bougainville was the logical source of financing this new country through a new copper and gold mine at Panguna.

The colonial administration, from its offices in Port Moresby, bulldozed the wishes of the people of Bougainville. Their unacknowledged motto was ‘Masta i tok; tok i dai ‘(when the white man speaks; the talking finishes’).

Through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Bougainvilleans in Panguna, the site of the mine, protested as their land was destroyed and infiltrated by foreigners at a speed and intensity they had never seen previously in history.

A young man from Simpore village in the Tumpusiong Valley, Bonabenza Bikiri, saw all this after escaping from school to work with small companies supplying the Panguna mine in the 1970s.

Bikiri, alongside elders and youths of the Tumpusiong Valley, also participated in the protests against the Conzinc Riotinto operations at Panguna that were defacing their valley with massive river siltation and deforestation.

“In those days,” Bikiri told me, “it was us, the Tumpusiong people - made up of Onove, Enamira, Darenai and a few Damara people - who came to help us protest and face BCL. We removed surveyors’ pegs, fought the police and held protest marches in Panguna.
“The villages in the mine area like Guava, Moroni and the Dapera did not help us because they had received payments designed to win their hearts. They often laughed at us.

“But we did not give in for we were suffering most from the siltation of the river and were the ones resettled to high ground.”

The Dapera and Moroni villagers only realised later that their land was subject to destruction when bulldozers uprooted them and the company officers ordered them to be resettled.

“I grew up with the pain,” Bikiri recalled. “I watched my old mother crying over our gardens being lost to deep siltation in the Tumpusong Valley. And that is why, when the late Francis Ona started inviting us to his cause, I volunteered, for he was talking about our rights.”

Bonabenza Bikiri together with many other elders and youths attended meetings chaired by Ona, whose militant leadership attracted him.

Ona did not want the compliant Panguna Landowners Association that was run mostly by his blood relatives and wanted the mine to shut down immediately and re-open on Bougainvillean terms. Bikiri saw there was now a possibility of change for the better.

The Guava people also joined the anti-BCL movement.

I can now reveal Bonabenza Bikiri’s part in the events of November and December 1988 when explosives were stolen from the Panguna mine magazine and a power pylon blown up at Policeman Corner on the Panguna Road.

Shortly before then, Francis Ona had called a meeting at the Panguna Catholic Church.

Ona, seeing his protests being swept under the mat by BCL and the then Panguna Landowners Association, called on his supporters and followers to act.

Bikiri told me, “He was infuriated about a series of meetings between BCL and the Panguna Landowners Association executives. All he wanted now was action to show them that his words were not just words but he was willing to follow them with action.”
Bikiri sat on a back pew lost in the tide of ideas to shut the mine with actions that would have minimum risk for the participants.

“The meeting,” Bikiri recalled, “was discussing a resolution and that would have the whole of the Panguna mine landowner villages leave their homes - mothers, youths, children and domesticated animals - and camp in and outside the Panguna mine pit’s access tunnels.

“With all our families and things we could camp there blocking all access to the pit, the primary crusher and workshops,” the speakers proposed.

Bikiri was dissatisfied with that resolution since all such similar protests that he had participated in never brought about change, so he interrupted the meeting.

“You Guava people are new to this anti-mining protest issue,” Bikiri told the meeting. “You laugh at us, the Oune people.

“I have only one comment: who will feed our wives, children and supporters down there as they go hungry under the heat of the sun? We do not have the money to support them and BCL once again will do nothing to save us and our land.

“Leave our family’s safe at home and cut the power supply of this destructive mine and let’s see if it stops work. What do you think?”

Looking up, Bikiri saw Francis Ona’s firmly place his index finger on his lips indicating all to calm down and that the meeting was over. The new strategy was accepted.

Francis Ona shook hands with Bikiri and the meeting broke up, leaving the arranging of the exercise to Ona and his team.

Bikiri sat back in Tumpusiong waiting for the results and on the night of 22 November 1988 news spread that explosives had been looted from BCL.

“I was so happy with the news,” Bikiri said. “Ona was really up to his word. He had men steal the explosives. I waited for the first power pylon to come down and, when it did, I was so excited that BCL was now tasting its own medicine.”

Bonabenza Bikiri today works as an alluvial gold miner in the
Tumpusiong Valley and helps with local level government activities.
Disabled people in Papua New Guinea are being shamelessly exploited by opportunists
FRANCIS NII

THE CALLOUS EXPLOITATION OF DISABLED persons by able people as objects for economic gain through sham, coercion and duress is thriving in Papua New Guinea.

Since the Papua New Guinea government’s announcement of social security benefits for disabled people last year, disabled advocacy groups are springing up, most initiated by opportunists.

These chancers mobilise and coerce disabled people into offering them money and pigs with promises of financial returns.

They force them to parade and even sleep on the streets to gain attention from the public and the government.

There are designated days in the year that people with disabilities can advocate their rights in public, not just any old time time causing public nuisance and disturbance.

Most disabled people are illiterate and vulnerable and able people are taking advantage of their ignorance and vulnerability to pursue their own selfish interests.

Disabled people are human beings and have the same rights that are enjoyed by able people. Their dignity, freedom and independence should be respected.

Article 3(a) of the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons ratified by the Papua New Guinea government in New York last year states: “The principles of the present Convention shall include respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons”.

Contrary to this, in Papua New Guinea able people are taking photos of disabled people and using them to gain financial benefits
from government agencies and donors under the pretext of helping them.

They even claim to ‘own’ disabled people.

At a recent AusAID funded disabled people’s workshop conducted by the Papua New Guinea National Assembly of Disabled People at the Catholic Resource Centre in Kundiawa two able-bodied people, a male and a female, who were supposed to be observers forced themselves into discussions and, in a heated argument, each claimed to ‘own’ 5,000 disabled persons.

The scurrilous pair had been collecting money and pigs from disabled people then promising them financial returns.

The disabled people have become the meat in the sandwich in this tug of war.

How on earth in this 21st century can people claim to own other human beings? This is total insanity and amounts to slavery and disrespect for the rights of people with a disability.

Disabled people are sick and tired of able people using them and gaining finances to build palaces and empires for themselves.

They may be disabled but they are capable of contributing meaningfully to the development of their community and country.

All they need are opportunities and empowerment so that they can become agents of change and make a difference in their community.

It is hoped that as people in authority and areas of influence become informed of the needs and aspirations of people with a disability appropriate steps will be taken to create conducive environments and programs to assist them to live productive and meaningful lives.
MY PEOPLE HAVE LIVED ON this land for thousands of years. I grew up loving this land; learning from my father and forefathers to respect it, to appreciate it and at all times to protect it from harm.

Our principles were based on respect, honour and honest work. There was no demarcation of sexes; elders were revered and loved and taken care of; widows and the weak were always considered; women were to be respected not beaten.

There was no class system and every one had an opportunity to rise and be someone.

Our political systems were superior to those that were introduced by those who entered our land, declaring superiority and ownership and demonstrating it with violence and disrespect.

My people are warriors, all of them. We defended what we believed in: our land and our way of life.

My people are a compassionate people who love their kin and their land and weep with heart wrenching grief at any loss.

But we see a new enemy, a different kind, more powerful and aggressive and superior in numbers and weapons. It is Greed.

Today's world is a world driven by this new enemy, which is armed with disrespect. The agenda of its proponents is to gain through the application of various facets of Greed; a Greed that demonstrates no consideration for the values we once held to be true.

It is a Greed that dismisses the rights and interests of people; crushing those who resist and enslaving those who submit: greed that pits brother against father, mother against daughter, clan against family. Everything carries the mark of Greed. Everything has a price tag.
There are no true values: love, honour, respect and consideration are ridiculed and demeaned as being weak and unnecessary impediments to progress.

Self-interest, lying, stealing, apathy, offence and evil are the new ‘values’.

They have all been spewed forth from the bowels of Greed, and pollute anything that is good. They are polished and shine with appeal to those who manipulate this modern world for their own purposes.

Greed threatens everything we have come to know and value. Our forests, and the creatures that live in them, are earmarked for destruction. Our rivers and streams are no longer pristine and clean. Our hills and valleys are dug up and ripped apart.

We are caught in a state of confusion. Whereas we once knew who we were, and where we were and where we were going, now, we are uncertain.

Our homes are threatened and our way of life, considerate of our environment and ourselves, may no longer be relevant.

We are a forest people but our forests disappear and it seems so will we.

Greed is a collective cancer on humanity, eating away at the fabric of society and demeaning us all until there will be no more.
I recently chanced on a Facebook group named Simbu Intending Candidates and am trying to comprehend the logic for such a creation.

Firstly, there is already the Simbu discussion group which discusses socio-economic, political and sectoral issues. Three-fifths of their discussions are on obsolete politics but it gives wannabe politicians an opportunity to demonstrate their political acumen.

The discussion group also exposes members to the dekrome arkanga, which is Simbu slang for the Lumbricus terrestris earthworm. These earthworms are lazy confidence men who feed on wannabe pollies. They are people who do not plough their own land for sustenance but feed on others toil.

An example of their activities can be explored by looking at the recent fate of a security guard who was a wannabe politician.

He worked in one of the Asian stores in Kundiawa, earned K120 per fortnight and unfortunately made known his intention of contesting the presidential seat of the local council prior to the issuing of writs for the last election.

He lived in a 5 by 4 metres cardboard shed in a settlement in Kundiawa where his people, upon hearing of his intention to contest the seat, visited every pay day.

On average, his small shed accommodated and catered for 10 people each fortnight Friday. He suffered hunger and survived on flour balls for the next 14 days. This cycle went on until the issue of writs for nominations.

He then resigned from his job, went home and contested the election. As the count proceeded to the second preference vote he was the first to be eliminated. The people who had dined from his
meagre pay and slept in his shed hadn’t voted for him.

He contemplated suicide after the declaration of results but instead chopped one of the people he had fed during his campaign.

Nowadays, there are still earthworms slithering around Kundiawa town and elsewhere with long black oiled beards, cowboy hats and infinite gimmicks. Their numbers are increasing exponentially as many young men and women realise it is a lucrative business.

Some of the women, with flattery skills learned from their husbands, are particularly good earthworms.

If an intending candidate goes up to Kundiawa, there is a high chance that an elderly woman will come by and call him a yal kuru, which in Simbu for ‘whiteman’. Such flattery serves to inflate the wannabe’s ego so he can open his wallet.

Another scam, when there is a death in the clan, is for an earthworm to take his dirty folder (what he calls a ‘submission’) and go looking for intending candidates and current MPs asking for money to buy a coffin and lamb flaps for the haus krai.

He leaves the sad women and old to mourn over the corpse and fend off the kumo (witches) while he runs around seeking donations.

This might take the earthworm and his protégés a week while the corpse literally decomposes. As a sign of respect, the women and elders cope with the whiff and wait.

Days later, the earthworm returns with his spoils and slaughters the pigs and makes a grand bragging speech on his ability to bring in wealth. After more verbal diarrhoea the earthworm finally concludes that he will contest the next LLG presidential seat and implores mothers to remember him in their daily prayers.

The lamb-thirsty clansmen then yell hooo, meaning ‘yes’, at the aroma of lamb flaps.

Without fear or favour, the first dish of lamb flaps and other food will be served to the drug addicts, and that is another funny part of contemporary Simbu culture.

The addicts, having smoked tonnes of Mary-Jane (marijuana), take
the dishes and congregate in a corner and devour the meat in a matter of seconds.

Whilst the drug addicts and people feed on the lamb flaps the earthworm and his protégés sip their SP brownies, bought with the intending candidates’ and current MPs’ donations.

After six stubbies the earthworm calls for attention from the community, says nothing but cries his eyes out. He has no policy platform but will strategically cry saying, “I feel sorry for all of you”. That is enough for the emotionally charged community to elect him and he will win.

Seeking donations to stage a funeral is immoral since filial love demands that a departing member in essence is still alive in the family in spirit and therefore a decent burial with resources coming from the family backyard is humane. The coffin, blankets, kerosene, tea, sugar and all other expenses must come from the immediate family’s own toil.

Other ethnic groups in PNG never go near the houses of their politicians to ask for a coffin and lamb flaps when a relative is dead.

In Kokopo a Tolai politician and his family can freely go to the market buying garden produce and shopping without anybody stepping up for a handshake. It is considered morally degrading to chase pollies asking for help with funeral expenses in their culture.

A Simbu politician, on the other hand, cannot walk down to Wara Maket with his wife and children without risking losing them in a melee of converging earthworms.

The current generation of Simbus are fast losing their heads and I suspect this new candidates group on Facebook will simply become a catalyst for more flattery and swindling of unsuspecting candidates for resources in our *nere tere* (eat and vote) culture.

This new group, by dint of its name alone, also runs the risk of coming into conflict with the laws governing elections, nominations and campaigns.
Working like you don’t need money: the Chinese in Papua New Guinea

BOMAI WITNE

PRE-HISTORIANS CLAIM THAT THE people occupying the island of New Guinea first migrated here over 40 thousand years ago.

Contemporary Papua New Guinean historians like Professor John Dademo Waiko agree. In the 1500s, when the first Europeans of Spanish and Portuguese origin sighted the island of New Guinea, this was just the beginning of regular European visits and the naming of islands, mountains, rivers, bays and sometimes people after European places and features.

By the late 1920s, the islands and most coastal areas of New Guinea had come into contact with Europeans of different nationalities and professions.

A few Asians of Chinese origin had also arrived in New Guinea during those early times and more arrived in shiploads to work on European owned plantations in the late 1800s.

The Chinese are a cultured race whose origins and civilisation dates to more than 250,000 years ago. On arrival in New Guinea, they worked hard and did not succumb to the dominant European ways.

Later they began to organise themselves through economic activities and the other dreams they pursued. The communities where they settled, built and called home, later became known as Chinatowns.

Some Chinese fell in love with the people and environment of Papua New Guinea and stayed on to toil alongside the local people and the Europeans in the nation building process. They may have been Chinese at that time, but their children are now Papua New Guinea citizens.

The Chinese helped develop many commercial centres in Papua
New Guinea and there are also Chinatowns in Solomon Islands and other parts of the Pacific.

The two peoples coexisted in Papua New Guinea without much official interaction until 1976, when the relationship was cemented through China’s diplomatic recognition of Papua New Guinea as an independent country.

Papua New Guineans knew the Chinese before they knew other Asians and continue to generalise Asians of other nationalities as Chinese.

I recall accompanying an Indonesian friend from Java to Goroka Market three years ago when someone selling broccoli shouted at us, ‘Saina man, kam baim brokoli blong mi’ (China man, come and buy my broccoli).

The Indonesian who was conversant in Tok Pisin replied, ‘Mi no Saina man, mi Indonesia man’ (Am not Chinese, am an Indonesian).

In the same way, many Papua New Guineans called Europeans ‘waitman’, thinking all of them came from the same country.

Only after World War II did Papua New Guineans come to realise that Europeans are of many different nationalities and black people live and work in Europe too.

The relationship between China and Papua New Guinea has continued to expand over the years. There has recently been an influx of Chinese in Papua New Guinea for different reasons.

Chinese discipline and the culture of trust, hard work and refusing to take a free meal from another’s toil sees them work like they don’t need money.

Chinese are commonly seen as owners of trade stores, restaurants and small supermarkets and are now venturing into other services.

A friend of mine told me two years ago that a Chinese tyre service owner in Lae landed a wheel spanner on a Simbu man’s head, killing him instantly, for demanding three times that the Chinese inflate his car’s tyres free of charge.

Another Chinese ventured into roadside betel nut and cigarette selling in front of the Asaro District station last year. His “buai and
"smuk" table was reported to be cheaper and more reliable than those of other vendors. Chinese have a business knack that is missing in Melanesian culture.

Papua New Guineans are good at taking free meals and have modified this culture to lie and scavenge other people’s hard work.

The strategy that works well for lazy scavengers has been adapted to prey on people who work hard for a living. The term ‘claim’ is popular among landowners occupying a section of the Okuk Highway in Simbu.

They demand some form of compensation to fix almost any landslip or pothole on the highway. We also hear that some public servants support and facilitate the claim culture and take their cut as a quick way to thicken their purse.

It appears that the Chinese are aware of Papua New Guineans’ aptitude for free meals, deceit and theft.

The Chinese have been conservative and not open to Papua New Guineans. Over these long years of contact, Chinese culture and language has not been exposed or taught to Papua New Guineans, nor have the Chinese exposed their children to Papua New Guinean culture.

Many Chinese prevent their children from learning Tok Pisin and Motu in the early years and teach them Chinese and later English and other complex languages.

At government level, China offers scholarships to Papua New Guineans to study in China. A requirement is for interested Papua New Guineans to study basic Chinese. This is a breakthrough for Papua New Guinea.

In the last decade, China has also expanded its investment throughout the Western Pacific and Papua New Guinea has been a major recipient of this.

The University of Goroka has been fortunate to receive a portion of a Chinese investment loan. The Guandong Foreign Construction Company (GFCC) of China has been engaged to build a number of 6-7 story students’ dormitories, staff houses, midwife program lecture
rooms and renovations to the students’ dining room.

GFCC has brought almost all of its equipment and manpower from China. The wheelbarrows that GFCC are using are different from what we would find in Chemica or Didiman Hardware in Goroka town, so they must have come from China.

GFCC also recruited a number of nationals to work in various capacities in the construction area. It is not clear how they recruited these people, but what is clear is that almost all of them were recruited from the streets of Goroka.

These people are mostly involved in the laborious part of the construction. At times they are seen tightening bolts and nuts around important parts of the building.

One afternoon, I was observing two young Papua New Guineans struggling to tighten the bolts and nuts of the glass wall on the balcony of the floor facing my house.

Papua New Guinean workers and the Chinese do not understand each other well. They shout at each other as if they understand.

At lunch time, the Chinese drive off in truckloads for lunch and the Papua New Guineans smoke rolled tobacco, chew betel nut and hang around the construction area.

Globalisation dictates the integration of nations and cultures. It calls for Papua New Guinea and China to step up relationships.

However, the conservative traditions of the Chinese people and their culture poses a challenge for Papua New Guineans. This is compounded by the Papua New Guinea government’s lack of institutional and policy initiative in promoting and creating a middle ground for a fair people-to-people relationship with the people of China.

In the next 10 or 20 years, China may use its economic power to promote its citizens interest in Papua New Guinea and threaten the well-being of Papua New Guinea’s people and cultural heritage.
DRIVING in Port Moresby is stressful at any time for motorists with common sense. (I can hear you scream that this is an understatement.)

Anyway, the number of idiots who sit behind the wheel is unusually higher in Port Moresby than in any other town in Papua New Guinea, possibly the world.

Turning with no indication and stopping anywhere to chat are apparently not traffic offences because so many motorists do it.

Then there are the falling-apart trucks carting rubbish commanded by a character who looks like he could barely could walk upright let alone speak.

This Captain of Chaos wears a filthy singlet and spits betel nut juice at will as he drives at snail’s pace strewing rubbish from his death-mobile, oblivious to the carnage he leaves in his wake as he turns anywhere and anytime with no warning.

Oftentimes this Major of Mayhem is accompanied by Neanderthals who are crammed into the cabin, hanging off the side of the truck or sleeping atop the pile of rubbish.

They are equally effective in painting the road and curb side with copious volumes of blood red betel nut juice. Spitting is an art form – betel nut juice decorates road signs, unsuspecting young girls and stray dogs with amazing accuracy.

I saw one such Colonel of Carnage driving haltingly to Motokea, sliding all over the road as if on ice. As I overtook, readying myself to spew forth a string of expletives, I was dumbstruck. This shirtless guy was eating a bowl of soup! With a spoon! He grinned as I passed and waved his elbow at me.

Then there are the taxis. Don’t mention the taxis! These guys
drive in the middle of the road so slowly you could crawl faster. When they realise you’re trying to get past, they offer a lazy wave of a grubby paw as you seethe in their dust.

You glare as you finally overtake and they smile sweetly and call out “Kanda catch”, “Rightman!” or “Yu tu yah!” all the while thinking they are God’s gift to Papua New Guinea traffic.

They drive with an entire arm hanging through the window as they saunter along unconscious of time. Sometimes their knuckles drag on the bitumen below. You can’t report them. They don’t have number plates.

The most notorious, of course, are PMV drivers. These oddities are graduates of the Rambo School of Dangerous and Suicidal Driving. They passed with flying colours and are contemplating a PhD.

To pass the entrance test to this prestigious driving school you need to get through a final exam which poses questions like: Do you have a sense of road responsibility (No); Do you know the road rules of Papua New Guinea? (No); Do you know how to drive? (No); Are you able to infuriate motorists, passengers and pedestrians simultaneously? (Yes).

Correctly answering these complex questions ensures graduation and simultaneously measures your IQ which is given to you in the form of a single-digit bus route number which you immediately ignore and drive wherever you want.

Funnily enough, PMV drivers in every province share the same behavioural traits. During my semester breaks as a university student I was once boss crew on such a vehicle, collecting fares from passengers.

I slowly realised why these pirates of the road behave the way they do. It is the boredom. Driving the same old rattling mangle every day, dealing with passengers who always try to short-change you, children who graffiti your seats and drunks down the back who vomit and urinate.

Then there are the Traffic Officers who try to extort money from
you or fine you for some minor infringement like a bald tyre or dead
headlight. And don’t mention the state of the roads.

So the PMV driver and his crew create ingenious ways to entertain
themselves and create excitement to stave off the monotony. They
take different routes. They stop wherever and whenever. They charge
school kids adult fares.

I was on a bus going to work and a group of high school kids boarded. All boys, they stood at the entrance, one with a cigarette
dangling from his lip.

He pushed K5 into the hands of the boss crew who gave him
change after extracting the adult fare. “Osem wanem yah! Em wrong
change yah!” (“Hey what’s this? This is the wrong change!”) he stated
in irritating teen-speak.

“Na yu mangi?” (Are you a child?) retorted the boss crew, “Yu smuk
olsem man tru yah!” (You smoke like a man!). The youth looked away
sullenly, having learned more in that brief moment than he ever
would in his entire time at high school.

Like many Papua New Guineans, I travelled the PMV bus often in
my early years through to when I got my first job. There are always
moments of drama and humour. Arguments and fights and general
banter are guaranteed.

A giant woman once climbed on my bus carting a cooler and
sweating profusely. She sat beside an old, skinny man occupying
three-quarters of the seat, nearly squashing the lapun to death.

He didn’t seem to mind though and smiled seedily all through the
ride. Just before she got off the woman turned on the guy and
punched him on the side of the head almost knocking out his three
teeth and rattling his eyeballs so they spun in opposite directions.

“Yu holim susu blo mi yu blary longlong bet sting lapu yah!” (You touched
my breasts you senile old man with dirty thoughts!). The old guy
regained his poise, his eyeballs settling down, and focussed on his
gargantuan seat mate.

In a throaty near whisper, he responded: “Pikinini, ino mi, susu blo
yu em yet bamin ban blo mi?” “Child, it was not me; your breasts touched
my hand!”

Everyone roared and the behemoth scowled and got off at the next stop raising her hand at the old man threatening to hit him again as he cringed, closing his eyes and holding his skinny hand over his head.

Everyone roared with laughter again. You had to be there.

In all seriousness though, the lot of the PMV owner and operator in PNG is not easy. They struggle to repay loans, repair their vehicles and deal with errant passengers and poor roads. They are not guided by a policy on how to operate or protocols on what to do.

I once dreamt of being a PMV owner. That was my plan. I never wanted to be an accountant or lawyer or pilot. I dreamt of being a PMV owner.

I dreamt of owning a PMV that played the best music and where people could get a comfortable ride from Kokoda to Popondetta and back.

Sometimes I think my life would have been far simpler, perhaps more rewarding, if I’d done this. Who knows where I would be now?

In due time, Papua New Guinea will no doubt regulate and improve the transport sector. Taxis and PMVs will have strict criteria to adhere to with stringent licensing laws to abide by. Certainly they will be required to wear uniforms and have reasonable vehicles that meet the expectations of the Transport Department and the travelling public.

In the meantime, we have their drivers to thank for exciting times on the road as they cart around people going about their daily business in the young economy of Papua New Guinea…just 40 years old.
The trials and perils of the regional city: a case study from Goroka

BOMAI WITNE

THE BUILDINGS SWALLOWED BY THE flames were 40 to 50 years old.

A friend working with the Goroka Fire Brigade, responding to my question of what they did to save the buildings, replied, “It happened at the weekend when most of us were not at work.”

He added that, even if the incident occurred on a weekday, the brigade might have saved only a small part of the buildings.

It seems that the authorities’ responsible for building safety and fire prevention are not working properly. Investigations take too long and results are not made available to the public, a syndrome of Papua New Guinea’s inadequate public investigations and inquiries.

The lack of planning by authorities is shown in the developing symptoms of decay in our urban areas; environments which also serve the interest of thugs and illegal practices.

Not to mention street preaching. Street preachers invade public places reserved for other purposes and, over time, claim the area as their own.

Then there are the betel nut vendors who clutter the entrances of shopping centres and take over bus stops.

The sight of rubbish from betel nut skins and red sputum is an affront. Some police who confiscate betel nut keep it for themselves. An irony this: executing duty to prevent betel nut sales and chewing the proceeds in public.

At the highlands PMV stops, a growing number of young men force their way on to buses, adopt the role of crew and make a quick 4 or 5 kina for themselves from passengers while the permanent crew stands by helpless.

Permanent crew: “Husait tokim yu long kam boskru? Kisim money mi givim yu na go!” (Who asked you to come and assist me? Take the
money I am giving you and go away)

Invading crew: “Mi bat wok ya, noken tok olsem, maus blo yu bai bruk.” (I have worked hard, don’t say that to me. I’ll break your mouth)

Permanent crew: “Yu laik hat wok go holim spade na wok gaden?” (If you want to work hard, go take a spade and make a garden)

The argument goes on as long as the bus doesn’t move. The passengers sometime take sides and join the argument. This practice has now become a norm at the Kundiawa and Goroka Okuk highway PMV stops.

Another group of young men carry betel nut, cigarettes and other store goods around the PMV stops and force people to buy from them. Some young men hang around to look for opportunities to steal mobile phones, money, or anything of value from the passengers and they have their own way of getting away with it.

The Simbu and Goroka PMV stops deserve immediate attention. There is no place for passengers to sit comfortably and wait for the bus, especially those travelling with families. It is absurd that urban authorities seem to think that nothing is wrong.

There are many informal markets emerging in urban centres where thugs rule. As well as the main Goroka Market, there are two informal markets a kilometre away to the east and west at Seigui and near Genoka.

The dismal state of these market places indicates that the money collected from vendors has not been used to improve the wellbeing of the market. Urban authorities need to step up.

A group of wheelbarrow boys emerged recently at Goroka main market. They fill a transport gap between the car park and the market by carrying kaukau bags and other heavy produce for a price.

These wheelbarrow boys have grown in numbers over the last five years, sometimes blocking the paths of vendors and buyers. They rush to the next vehicle to claim clients, unworried about shoving children and old folks.

This all happens in front of the gatekeepers whose only interest is
collecting money from arriving vendors.

Waste management, drainage systems and other problems at the markets and elsewhere in town also deserve the immediate attention of urban authorities.

Part of the problem is that land owners at the peripheries of urban centres refuse to allow additional land for expansion.

We are hearing that while Port Moresby is developing at a fast rate, other urban centres stagnate.

It’s time urban authorities stepped up and learned from the National Capital District.
Griwo’s story: where there’s a will, there’s a way
ALBERT KAUPA TOBE

GRIWO KRAEMBI HAILS FROM THE Awin and Hore clans of Senamrai village in the Bige area of Kiunga in Western Province.

He is 38 years old and married to Betty from Telefomin in Sandaun Province. Griwo and Betty have three kids, Ismael, Regina and Izrael.

Recently Griwo graduated with a Bachelor of Management from Divine Word University in Madang through its Flexible Learning Centre. Monday 3 March was a big day for him and Betty. Unfortunately, his beloved and hardworking parents were not able to witness his graduation as they had passed away some years ago.

Griwo was diagnosed with polio when he was one year old. The disease permanently immobilised both legs. Despite his disability, Griwo beat all the odds - being formally employed for more than 20 years and successfully graduating from one of the top universities in Papua New Guinea.

Growing up with his loving parents and four sisters, Griwo completed Grade 6 at Montfort Primary School in 1989; however he failed the national examinations.

In 1990, he re-enrolled at what is now Montfort Technical Secondary High School in Kiunga and completed Grade 10 in 1993 through the College of Distance Education administered by the Catholic mission.

St Gabriel’s Catholic brothers employed Griwo as their administration clerk in 1994. He learnt to type using a manual typewriter and undertook general office tasks. After six weeks the brothers bought a computer for him to use.

In October 1998, Tawap Kamen Investment Ltd (TKI), a local contractor based in Tabubil, offered Griwo a job as general accounts officer and he worked there for 12 years.
Seeing the opportunity to advance himself as a professional manager he enrolled in the Bachelor of Management Program in the Faculty of Flexible Learning at Divine Word University in 2010.

TKI assisted him with tuition fees and related expenses. His current employer, West Maintenance Services, another locally owned company, also assisted him by paying his tuition fees at Divine Word University.

Griwo expressed deep gratitude to his sponsors, who had seen his potential and invested in him.

So in March, Griwo was the proud recipient of a Bachelor’s Degree in Management. He had beaten all the odds to make his dream a reality.

“Yes, it is possible for anyone like me to come this far and overcome the many challenges encountered by people with disabilities,” he said quietly.

“It is a dream but it needs hard work and perseverance.”

I thought of the old adage, “Where there is a will, there is a way”.

Griwo had tears in his eyes when he saw his name on the graduation list. He recalled those early days when he was carried to school at Montfort on his parents’ backs, every day from Monday to Friday.

Griwo admitted he could hear the voices of his parents in his heart saying, “You can do it”.

Oh, how he wished they could be present on his graduation day to share this moment together.

Griwo’s story is a testament that anyone can achieve anything if you set your mind and heart to it.

Papua New Guinea is a land of opportunity. Despite who you are and where you are, you can make something out of nothing.

Consider Griwo, who is not only disabled but had failed once at his formal education.

But he persevered until he finally graduated with a Bachelor of Management from a prestigious university. Where there is a will, there is certainly a way!
Exorcising his demons, Captain Bougainville writes for the future
REILLY KANAMON

“THESE traumatic experiences provide motivation and passion for me to write,” the intense young man told me. “I put my sense of anger and revenge into writing.

“It is a war I am battling, not with guns and bullets any more but with words. I believe words can reach to the ends of the world with insights about our people of Bougainville.

“The generations to come can always learn from the lessons of the past.”

Sitting in his dormitory cubicle, his eyes drifting towards the ceiling, Leonard Fong Roka recalled the day he started writing.

His story begins in Tumpusiong Valley, home to the Jaba tailings area of the now former Panguna copper mine in Bougainville.

Roka’s home area was the epicentre of the 10-year civil war and his people were the landowners. It was within the conflict, confusion and tragedy of resistance, rebellion and warfare that Leonard Fong Roka was raised.

Leonard, described by his classmates as an introvert, is very much a silent achiever. He lost his father, a catechist from West New Britain who married and integrated within the Bougainville community: murdered by the Bougainville Revolutionary Army simply because he was an outsider in the midst of the crisis. Bougainvilleans refer dismissively to other Papua New Guineans as ‘redskins’.

Now, as a final year Papua New Guinea Studies and International Relations degree student, Leonard recalls his early experiences during the Bougainville crisis.

“In 1986 I began my schooling at Piruana village tokples (local language) school but in 1990 my education was disturbed by the
Bougainville crisis. I was in Grade 4. My dreams of an education were shattered but books were my companion during the war years. I read books I had with me even in the middle of the jungle.”

During my interview with Roka, he appeared sensitive and there were long silences. “Wet mi tingim gut na start gen” (Give me time to recall and start over”), he would joke.

Every question of mine seemed to strike a fresh memory of Bougainville in the days of the crisis. It wasn’t until the peace process was established in 1995, that Roka resumed schooling and entered Arawa High school where his passion for writing was born.

“A highlander, William Mania, was my English teacher in 1997 and he got my class writing poetry.

“He told us that it was our time to write for the world to know about Bougainville, to promote and preserve our unique culture and traditions through literature.

“My first poem was My Panguna submitted for a silver jubilee magazine poetry competition in 1997. It was not successful but I kept the poem and maintained a passion to have my work published.

“I never got there until I enrolled at the University of Papua New Guinea in 2003. Here, after reading poems and stories by students in the university news bulletin, I got a rough poem published. This was actually the catalyst giving me the courage to compose poetry.”

When Roka withdrew from the university in 2004, he wrote in the comfort of his Tumpusiong Valley in Central Bougainville. His style of writing developed in the bush where there were no professional writers around him.

“After I left university, I was regarded as a failure by my extended family; it was another battle in my life”, Roka recalls.

“I used my school fee money to build a house in the jungle isolated from everyone except my mother, who paid regular visits.”

With two writing pads and pens brought by his mother, a dictionary, a thesaurus and books on literature, Roka continued his pursuit of poetry. Every day he wrote a stanza of a poem and every week he completed a poem.
By 2007, a final manuscript was ready and he contacted his old university lecturer, Steven Winduo, to help him publish the poetry. This turned out to be unsuccessful so Roka sought assistance from the late Joseph Kabui, a relative who was then President of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

Kabui’s death soon after ended the pursuit for a second time. “This time I almost gave up looking for publishers,” Roka said.

Roka then he came across a book published by Divine Word University Press.

“My first impression upon seeing the book was to have my manuscript published by this press” Roka said. He applied to study at Divine Word University and was accepted in 2011.

“All I carried with me to the university was my school certificates and the manuscript for my poetry collection entitled The Pomong U’tau of Dreams,” he said, giving a cranky laugh.

“My first intention was to make contact with the DWU press, have my book published and go back home and write more books.”

Unfortunately, this manuscript was also not published.

Discouraged, Roka forgot about being published and got on with his studies. It was then, while attending a communication skills lecture by Ms Aiva Ore, he was introduced to the PNG Attitude blog published by Keith Jackson.

It dawned on Roka that blogging had potential for him.

The provision of Information Communication Technology (ICT) services in Divine Word University became the catalyst for Roka to venture into blogging. He found a sphere for his writings to be read around the world with a mouse click. It was through blogging that Roka eventually met his publisher, Phil Fitzpatrick, an Australian author.

The PNG Attitude blog couldn’t publish all of his poems and stories. For Roka writing was breathing and his output was prolific. He realised his literary output needed books.

“I just don’t want my stories to get lost on the internet, I wanted them to be in books for my people in Bougainville and Papua New
Guinea to read,” Leonard said.

It was through the Crocodile Prize awards writing that Leonard’s work caught the attention of Fitzpatrick. Roka felt it was a dream come true in many colours to see his first articles published in the third annual Crocodile Prize Anthology.

“My mate, Papua New Guinea’s award-winning poet, Michael Dom, shot me an email and asked if I’d thought of making a submission for book publication. He believed there would be value in a published book.”

Although Roka describes himself as an introvert by birth, his publisher sees him as a soldier. To Fitzpatrick, Roka is Captain Bougainville – standing up for Bougainville, a lone man with pen and paper.

After his studies, Roka sets aside time every day to write something for his next book.

“My style of writing developed in the bush where there was no professional writer beside me. That’s why my style is 'raw and edgy' as Fitzpatrick once described it. But I have to admit that plotting is not in me; I type as it comes to my mind.”

Roka’s second book was a collection of short stories, Moments in Bougainville.

The traumatic experiences of Roka’s life provided motivation, passion, backdrop and theme for the stories, which are gritty and uncompromising, providing insights for the reader even as Roka works to exorcise his own demons through writing.

Keith Jackson commented that “each of these short stories is a gem. The characterisations are strong, the narrative is fresh, the twists and turns are gripping”.

He continued: “The reader is left with a different view of Bougainville and the Bougainvillean people. It is as near to an insider's view as an outsider is ever likely to secure.”

Roka’s third published book Brokenville is a personal account of growing up on Bougainville during the civil war.

By now the night had grown old and Roka shook his head: “Mi i
nap lo skul, mi laik stap tasol na rait” (“I have had enough of school, I just want to write”).

Looking towards his laptop he said, “My fourth and fifth books are almost ready for publication, I have been working on them at the same time.” He’s also working on his final year research paper.

His fourth book - an ethno-political exploration and mapping of the Bougainville conflict and the province’s future - is due to be published later this year or early in 2015.

For this upcoming Bougainvillean writer, seeking a job is a secondary option. He has found where he belongs, as a Papua New Guinean writer maintaining the legacy of Papua New Guinean literature.

For Leonard Fong Roka, there is still a lot to tell the world about Bougainville.

“Words can reach to the ends of the world with insights about our people of Bougainville.

“Future generations can always learn from the lessons of the past.”
Reflections on Mother’s Day: one Papua New Guinean afternoon
GARY JUFFA

I WAS SITTING AT HOME on my veranda sipping black sweet tea after an exhausting day doing so much of nothing really. It’s that way here in PNG. So much running about and so little to show for it.

It can be very frustrating doing not very much and one can easily get discouraged.

There are a variety of reasons why it is this way and there is no really identifiable culprit but a collection of them: from the bureaucratic system, outdated and completely irrelevant to today’s globalised world, to a lack of assertive leadership.

Or maybe the Westminster system is probably not suitable for a nation of 1,000 tribes and immense cultural complexity.

But this is not why I am writing this reflection, which is veering off on this tangent while I succumb to the temptation to rave and rant about the ‘system’.

Everyone who is frustrated by lack of progress, development and delivery of government programs does it, so I shall stop here.

I started to write because of a song I heard this day on the radio while sipping tea on my veranda and gazing at the setting sun and reflecting on this exhausting process of – in the course of my five-year term of office - trying to correct 40 years of going nowhere.

Quiet moments like this remind me of my departed mother. She bade farewell to this world on 20 February 2009 but it seems like yesterday when I sat and sipped tea with her and we conversed about anything and everything.

She had a passion for doing what was right and she did what she felt she could to help people. You see, my mother was a nurse who worked in many of Papua New Guinea’s hospitals in our struggling health system.
She saw much suffering and pain and saw lives lost unnecessarily in this raw country of many tribes and difficult terrain which is striving to develop and become a united nation.

The song on the radio was sung by Linda Ronstadt, a brilliant singer with the voice of an angel. Her songs wrench at one’s heart, transmitting feelings of painful lost love and of a passionate woman’s struggle to find love and happiness.

Somehow I feel that my mother felt these emotions as she struggled to bring up her children as a single mother while dedicating her life to her country; juggling a yearning for happiness and companionship so elusive and near impossible to attain.

I watched the tired sun set as the song played on. Linda’s melodic expression of her emotions was vivid and explicit. A flock of birds flew off in one of those priceless scenes that bring magic and awe to life.

I fought back tears knowing that my mother would no longer experience this, her life cut short by an untimely exit from the world, her heart giving up finally after years of trying and giving so much of herself with very little rest and peace.

She had experienced a world of constant struggle to raise a family, give them quality of life and making the time necessary to develop her children into good citizens with the values required to do good.

I reflected on her contribution and that of many such mothers in Papua New Guinea who live in a violent and turbulent society in transition; a society having no choice but to accept progress and inevitable change.

Mothers migrating from the comfort zone of a known world to a new one full of unknowns; of immense opportunities but also serious threats with dire consequences.

Our mothers can do little about this wider world; they can only struggle against such challenges to raise good children.

It is up to us, these children, to repay their efforts by doing the best we can and continuing their honourable and selfless sacrifices to build a nation worth living in.
It is strange how music can conjure up the emotions that evoke such thoughts. The sound of a guitar and of melodies and song; the sight of a sun setting and birds flying away; and the simple act of sipping tea while observing a magical moment.

It is a mystery to me, but I am grateful for it. It makes all my efforts worthwhile: every bead of sweat, every tear, every wound physical or emotional, every unachieved objective and every hurdle.

As the song ended, I sipped the remaining tea and darkness arrived and I stood up ready to continue with life. I felt inspired.

I realised how much I love this country, my people and their determined march towards destiny. My dear departed mother may have gone ahead, but she was very much here.
A story of the rural road: deterioration, danger, spades and thieves
BOMAI WITNE

IT HAS BEEN RAINING IN the last few days which has brought both blessings and curses with it.

Commuters along the Okuk Highway are negotiating potholes, overflows and landslips and relying on the skills and expertise of the driver to deliver them safely to their destinations.

Police have hidden from the rain so PMVs are not being randomly stopped and checked. A few drunken passengers thank the rain for keeping police off the road and raise their voices and talk in the PMV buses as if the person they are conversing with is deaf.

The rain has eaten many parts of the Okuk Highway, breaking apart the pavement. Highlands MPs who take the time to travel along the highway may observe this. But probably not.

Preoccupied with thoughts of the luxury at the next hotel, they travel in hire cars and rarely pay attention to the deteriorating road.

PMV commuters don’t care whether the Okuk Highway deteriorates or not because no matter how bad the highway it is nothing compared to their own roads.

People are used to landslips and mudslides that tear away half the road. They travel on open-backed four-wheel drives on the steep, slippery and muddy roads.

They almost peel the paint off the vehicles with their fingers attempting to gain a firm grip to avoid falling off the tray in these savage road conditions.

An elderly driver from the Bari tribe in Kerowagi, who drove me to town, commented that the road had been in good shape but in recent days had deteriorated to the point where passengers had to take a hard grip to beat the uncontrollable twists and turns.

Some decide to jump off the back and walk, jumping on again
when it is safe to travel.

Such is the everyday battle for rural road users. It seems district and provincial road authorities are extinct.

Local Level Government presidents and councillors don’t seem to know their duties. Their long absences from the ward makes people think their only duty is to hang around the provincial capital on borrowed money.

It all boils down to the rural populace not knowing who is responsible for fixing their roads.

Some MPs have bought machines to construct and maintain existing roads in districts. However, we have not heard any success stories.

The electors don’t know where the machines went after the elections, in particular in electorates where MPs lost their seats.

There are also cases where money earmarked for construction and maintenance of roads has been redirected for political convenience and, even if work is done, it is substandard and no-one seems to care.

It is a blessing in disguise that money earmarked for construction of new roads has been redirected elsewhere because people have fewer expectations without a road. With a new road they would only watch it deteriorate.

There are some cases where people are asked to maintain the road themselves, using spades, bush knives and crowbars. Village-based thieves, trusted by politicians of course, pay them some cash from bags.

The last government paid five times for the people in my ward to maintain the road and each time the thief took a hefty cut for himself.

One or two people in the know branded him a thief and liar but were outnumbered by the overwhelmingly illiterate and unknowledgeable population.

The road they built has deteriorated to a point where it is now only useful for wheelbarrows.

The people have alienated themselves from the road passing
through their tribal land to a point where they think maintaining it is the work of the government and they want to be paid to fix the government’s road.

They do not understand that the road links them to the rest of the world.
The story of Sibona Aroma: a difficult life’s journey
DIDDIE KINAMUN JACKSON

I was born on the 16 June 1957 to my parents Aroma Lahema, a United Church pastor, and Uhau Hetahu, a village beauty who fell in love with my father.

From their love, eight children were born Jack, Rarua, Sibona, Betty, Hahane, Henao, Mairi and Hebou - four boys and four girls – of which I was the third child and first female.

Because of my dad’s pastoral work, we travelled much through the Hiri District of Central Province. It was hectic at times, a pastoral role was a promise between man and God and dad kept his promise to God until his death.

I started school at an early age, completing Standards 1-6 at our local village school at Tubusereia, and in 1970 passed into Marianville High School, an all girls’ day and boarding school where I was to complete Standards 7-10.

While I was in Standard 8 my family moved to the Sogeri Plateau and a small village called Ogatana, which had been a rubber plantation in the earlier colonial days.

In 1973 I had just turned 16 and was in Standard 9. I had high hopes for myself. Back then Standard 10 was needed to get a good job or even go to college and I was anxious to reach that level.

But then an event occurred which changed my life forever. The most dreadful news arrived at school. My dad had just been tragically killed.

It was a fateful morning. My dad and mum had gone fishing in the lakes of Sirinumu Dam when my dad was shot in the head by an unknown gunman.

His body fell into the lake and was never found.

As Mum was the only witness to the crime she was held
responsible for my father’s death and was sentenced to 12 years in prison at Bomana.

I can still hear the judge’s verdict when Mum was sentenced. When he uttered the sentence I was shattered. I instantly knew my dreams were over and I cried my heart out.

I cried for my dad, I cried for my mum but mostly I cried for myself.

I knew the journey ahead was going to be long and hard with seven brothers and sisters to care for: Jack (20), Rarua (18), Sibona (16), Betty (13), Hahane (10), Henao (7), Mairi (5) and Hebou just two.

So at 16 I got my first job as a shop assistant with Steamships Trading. They didn’t want to take me on because of my age but I pleaded with the recruiting officer and he relented.

I got paid K80 a fortnight, which helped keep us afloat as we lived with our grandmother. We visited Mum at Bomana from time to time to see how she was doing.

When I was 19, I met the young man, Trudi Dawa, who was to become my husband. We dated for only three months and got married in a small customary ceremony. He was young and restless but was a kind and generous and helped with my siblings.

We had our first child, Rose, on 9 April 1976, followed by Raka (27 April 1978), Steven (16 July 1979) and Jackson (15 April 1988).

When Papua New Guinea became a new nation, I was so busy having children I was lost in time and didn’t realise we had gained independence.

In 2009, we had spent 33 years together when Trudi Dawa, my soul mate, succumbed to cancer and died. It didn’t materially affect me as much as my dad’s death because our children were grown up and there was no need to worry about their wellbeing as I knew they could take care of themselves.

Now I spend most of my time taking care of my grandchildren. I am a proud grandmother of six. Although I miss my husband at times, I see him through my grandchildren, who always bring joy into
my life.

I can say that my life has been hard and cruel but I tried to make the most of everything.

I had to overcome the obstacles I faced. Life is not always given on a golden plate. It’s what you make out of what little you have that makes your life’s journey memorable.
The wiles and guiles of election campaigning in Papua New Guinea
BOMAI WITNE

WHAT REALLY INTRIGUED ME ABOUT the June 2012 national elections, which gave us our current parliament in Papua New Guinea, was the way aspirant politicians emerged as candidates from the clans and tribes of rural electorates.

According to the election report, a record number of 3,435 candidates contested the 111 seats, the majority of which are based on rural areas.

The Electoral Commission and other groups undertook extensive awareness programs before the elections. These programs covered how elections work, the right of electors and candidates and the importance of elections. They also dealt with issues of good governance, corruption and related matters.

But there’s another kind of awareness. Aspirant politicians, to realise those aspirations, need to manoeuvre family, clan, tribe and other formal and informal networks to get to a point where they can nominate and become candidates.

The electors nod in agreement to almost everything the aspirant politician has to say and offer. The assumption is that election awareness programs will fill gaps in the electors’ knowledge.

The most skilful aspirant politicians are former members of parliament. This group of people are experienced in making laws and debating policies at national level and should know election laws and processes better than other aspiring candidates.

The way they mobilise electors before writs are issued should conform to the ideals of elections in democracies and align with the spirit of election laws. They should set benchmarks consistent with modern election practice.

However, this has not been the case in their approach to elections,
nor is it evident in the campaign techniques they employ.

Former MPs are front runners in spending money on anything in the name of luring votes.

Elector go crazy when they see money. The shape, size and number of campaign houses throughout the electorate are manifestations of how much money these candidate have to spend.

The size, colour and frequency of billboards also reflect how much money these candidates are throwing around.

They want to keep themselves at par with the incumbent MPs campaign or even a step ahead. The race to spend, a race inside the race to be elected.

There are aspirant politicians who have worked in public and private sectors whose experience and leadership provide them with an excellent basis to contest elections.

And there are inexperienced junior public servants, recent university graduates, pastors, priests and community leaders who also join the race.

There are seasonal contestants, who believe that after a number of attempts they may be successful. The current member for Kerowagi provides an inspiration for these people; he never stopped nominating from the 1980s until he finally won at the 2012 election.

Then there are the vote splitters who come around to contest elections with massive funding from current MPs to split votes and destabilise support for strong contenders.

The relationship between electors and candidates during election campaigns can be described as one of mutual deception.

The aspirant politicians take advantage of the electors’ lack of political knowledge and gullibility. They spend money to build campaign houses, provide meals for lazy electors and even give them money.

They promote a group of individuals with very little or no standing in the electorates to serve as members of campaign committees. Some of these people have never made a garden for their wife and often don’t even have a house in the electorate.
The candidates spend money in the electorate with high hopes that it will be enough to convince electors to vote for them.

The electors use the three preferences available to them in voting as a tool to feast on the growing number of aspirant politicians.

To electors, aspirant politicians are wealthy individuals who have visited the electorate to share their wealth.

So electors devise strategies that will make candidates spend money on them. They invent bedtime stories for aspirant politicians, compose songs for them and dream of the candidate’s victory.

Everyone will swear by the Bible to give the candidate their first voting preference. Such a promise is enough for the candidate to send for cartons of beer and slaughter the nearest pig, promising payment to the owner of the pig at a later date.

The election laws are silent about such campaign activities.

Where the laws do talk, candidates compete in the accepted Papua New Guinean way and do not raise the alarm about illegal campaign activities.

A few candidates with money for lawyers will, at the post-election court of election disputes, bring up illegal campaign strategies by the winner.

If Papua New Guinea maintains the status quo, the amount of money candidates spend to lure votes will continue to increase, undermining the election process and the ideals of elections in democracies.
Down at the grassroots: a week with the people of Marum village
REILLY KANAMON

IT WAS SO COLD THAT I had pulled my bed sheet up over my whole body. Yet a chill breeze found its way through the betel nut stamp floorings and through the spaces in the bamboo blind walls.

I breathed dust from the bamboo blind the whole night.

My back ached from the rough floor and my body was stiff with tiredness from the five-hour walk to Marum village the previous day.

I stirred as shafts of light penetrated the blind walls. Birds welcomed me with songs of dawn. Children were already playing outside.

I tip-toed towards the entrance, squinting my eyes to avoid stepping on sleeping, snoring bodies in the house.

Outside was a slice of paradise. Marum Primary School sits on a small plateau surrounded by a range of mountain in the Bugati area of the Raikos District, a mountainous region of Madang Province.

At the southern end of the school the great Yowor River meanders its way to the coast and there is another stream on the northern side which provides drinking water. Everything looked pristine.

At 7am the sun still hid behind the highest peak on Mt Ujili. Every taro harvest season, the villages at the foot of Mt Ujili hear the rumbling of a landslide which marks the beginning of harvest.

To the west of Marum towers Mt Opo’ou which casts a shadow over the village in the afternoon.

This early morning the village was misty but the people were already outside to meet us. They would have heard yesterday that a group of Divine Word University students were going to spend a week with them.

The lawns around the teachers’ houses and the playground were
well mowed. Power cables connected to the teachers’ houses. The generator runs from dusk to 10pm for school residents.

We were treated as staff and villagers came with food contributions for our stay. Taro, sugarcane and greens piled up under a tree next to our house. There were 22 of us, including one girl.

We went to Marum as members of the DWU Adventist Students Association for a gospel outreach and to run seminars on various topics to help the people. These included how to start a small business, information on health and sanitation and talks about the importance of education.

On Easter Friday the principal asked us to share our experiences with the students and staff of the school.

Although Marum Primary School is isolated, the school has semi-permanent classrooms. Classes range from grade one to eight. Walking into the grade one classroom, I feel for the students. The desks are made of round sticks and split bamboo seats and top. Most other classrooms had bamboo blind walls and fewer desks.

During the day I tried to memorize as many names as I could. So were my student companions. Students came and offered us fruit, peanuts and sugar cane. They were all competing to give us something.

I couldn’t hide my emotions and let my tears have their way. As I turned to look at my colleagues, they were blinking regularly. The hospitality overwhelmed us. We felt we were special to them.

Although it was Easter weekend, the students, staff and villagers stayed for games with us. We played soccer, rugby-touch and volleyball.

As it was getting dark, the thought of securing a space to sleep in the cramped house came to mind. After a dinner, a couple of us sat around a dimly lit fire telling all the tales we could remember from childhood. Feeling like dropping, I left for the house.

As I opened the door, I almost stepped on three bodies lying like logs. I had to crouch and feel my way to the position where I had slept the previous night.
Lifting the mosquito net, I wearily lowered myself down.

Before my bum could touch the floor, I sat on a raised knee and jumped across another body to gain my balance. Someone had taken my space.

Sitting and sleeping the whole night I dreamt of my bed in school. I should have stayed back in school and enjoyed my sleep.

The cry of dawn came as a refresher. Our second day at Marum. Enthusiasm to engage with the community had grown.

Friday was our community service for Marum and nearby villages. The DWU Adventist students were divided into separate groups to visit old people and orphans in the villages, pray with them and distribute the second hand clothes we had brought with us.

I was proud to be among all the Adventist students on that trip. The people and their lifestyle taught me a lot about the uniqueness of Papua New Guinea, my own country. A country so blessed with natural resources. The lifestyle was simple.

At the end of the week we prepared for the five-hour walk back to Yowor Bridge where the government road ends. We would get on the truck there for the journey back to school. To get there we had to cross the Yowor River four times, each time hoping the river wouldn’t flood.

The day arrived and we were farewelled with a big *mumu* of chicken and vegetables. The entire Marum village and surrounding villages came for our farewell. They lined the road as we shook hands along our way.

The happy days we had shared turned into wailing as they saw us leave. I have never before experienced such heartfelt hospitality.
Corruption and personal responsibility: one hand washes the other
GARY JUFFA

PAPUA NEW GUINEA IS SOMETIMES called the land of the unexpected. What is expected, though, is corruption, spread thickly everywhere.

Corruption, often associated with the public service, is discussed everywhere: from betel nut stalls to the most sophisticated hotel conference rooms.

Consultants have made oodles of money running courses talking about it and Australia has sent armies of advisers claiming to help Papua New Guinea improve measures against it.

Very little has been achieved to prevent or even check corruption. Corruption is a relentless creature, moving constantly and continuously, aggressively taking on anyone who challenges it, and apparently winning and gaining ground.

In Papua New Guinea it seems that those who profess to fight corruption are either paying lip service or simply not doing enough. People love talking about corruption. Doing something about it, however, seems much harder and many people avoid doing anything but talk about it.

All the while, corruption grows like a horrible cancer, spreading through all parts of the country, infecting societies and communities and the individuals within them.

It seems to saturate Papua New Guinea and has become so much the norm that it is not only expected, it is increasingly accepted.

It is present in just about every government department and statutory organisation. In the public sector, good governance seems a Utopian fantasy, out of reach and impossible to attain. More talking goes on. More of nothing gets done about it.

Leaders preach against corruption while it progresses relentlessly -
doing as it pleases: an inflated contract here, a dubious scam there and the improper appointments of cronies everywhere. All the while the rhetoric drones on against corruption.

But corruption is not confined to the public sector. The public sector is just one of two hands that claps.

What is less spoken about is corruption in the private sector. When one speaks of corruption and how the private sector plays a part in it, it seems that one does not feel so much outrage and disgust.

“Poor you! You had to pay what? That’s outrageous!”

What is hardly ever said is: “Maybe you should not have paid!”

Well apparently it’s all the public sector’s fault. They came out of their office and demanded a fee for doing what we’d already paid for. But someone did pay the additional ‘fee’. That’s right. Two hands clapping. Loudly.

But we choose to hear only the claps of the hand that is the public sector. Why? Because it represents “them”, not the private sector, which represents “us” and no one likes to admit they are wrong, much less they did something wrong.

That’s an instinctive human defence mechanism – to plead innocence, to deny guilt and to justify and rationalise so we choose not to hear the sounds of private sector hand clapping to the beat of corruption.

Sorry to have introduced this intrusive thought and to have burst the bubble of those living their carefree, ignorantly blissful lives as if corruption had nothing to do with them.

Whether or not we like it, we may be involved, unwittingly perhaps, or pretending to be ignorant. As the Mafia saying goes ‘one hand washes the other’, meaning one cannot benefit without the other. Both parties are equally responsible.

Hear that? Two hands clapping– public and private sector, listen to them both. Now you can hear it I’m sure.

Let us look at some real examples from Papua New Guinea. For instance expatriates working in Papua New Guinea illegally in breach
of employment laws. This is an easy one.

It goes like this.

A number of expatriates enter Papua New Guinea and work on business visas. The excuse is that it takes too long to process employment visas. But that does not remove the fact that they are in breach of their visa provisions, because the business visa does not allow one to be employed.

They well know when they are filling in various forms to enter Papua New Guinea that they are coming in to work and not to be a tourist or engage only in activities sanctioned by a business visa.

So they enter, under false pretences, are employed and often pay no taxes. Most people in this situation will say, “Well, that’s not my fault. It’s the organisation that employs me, it’s their responsibility and I’m not going to question them. I’m just here to do a job!”

Really? But you knew you were coming to work here. To earn a living. You knew when you filled out the migration forms and lied in that section about what you were coming to do in Papua New Guinea. You knew that when you said you were coming in as a ‘tourist’ or to do ‘business’, you were coming to work and earn a taxable income. So, is this not dishonest?

Another example. There are businesses that avoid taxes because they employ clever accounting firms or tax agents or customs agents to process paperwork and facilitate activities at minimal cost.

Some of these agents ensure that business is expedited through offering bribes or by providing misleading information - for example falsification of customs entry documentation or tax returns. So, is this not fraud?

We should ask ourselves, does putting a layer of ignorance between you and that which is obscure make it right? Does it help if someone else is dishonest for you and ‘removes’ you from direct responsibility for corruption?

Of course not! Ignorance of the law is no defence in any court. Laws have been breached! Just because no one checks does not make it right.
Papua New Guinea’s Migration, Taxation and Customs departments are terribly understaffed and so is the Labour department, so checks are slow or not even done at all. Only when someone with a vendetta or grudge wants action and is willing to press it does enforcement activity occur.

Then suddenly people are fined, prosecuted and even deported.

There are many examples of private sector corruption. We can examine activities such as whether the local supermarket pays all its due taxes or whether people declare the gold they’re taking out or whether they are honest in completing their customs and immigration documentation.

Do you believe it is okay to give the customs official or traffic police officer a small gift because ‘that’s what they do here’? Yes, clapping all round.

And what about when your bank claims to support a green economy but funds a company that will kill off life-forms on the sea bed it will mine?

What about the banks that finance companies involved in illegal land grabbing and illegal business activities? Are they not corrupt in some way?

What about the individuals who sell luxury items like cars and houses to corrupt politicians or businessmen and take money corruptly acquired? Does it not bother them that this money was intended for an aid post in some rural area that is now unable to treat the sick?

How about claiming you provide the cheapest phone call rates but eat up all the credit within seconds of the initiation of a call?

On and on it goes…examples abound everywhere. If you listen carefully, two hands are clapping. And in Papua New Guinea it’s near deafening.

And if you keep listening you will also hear the weeping of the parents of the children who died because they could not access the vital services they needed. Denied by corruption.
Like Our Lady, we suffered the wounds and survived the crisis
ELEANOR MAINEKE

OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE, HAISI Catholic Mission, is located on the south-western tip of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

In 1962, an American Marist priest from Boston USA, Fr Roger Borgea, established the mission - only the second Catholic mission in the Siwai District of South Bougainville.

Along with the establishment of the mission came a community school, now known as Haisi Primary School.

The catchment of the community school in the 1960s was the neighbouring Murua and Sininnai areas. It was a boarding school until Murua and Sininnai detached and established their own schools.

The establishment of Murua and Sininnai schools was due to the increase in population and the need for basic service delivery to keep up with the development trend back then.

However, Murua and Sininnai remained as the sub-parishes of Haisi Catholic Parish.

In 1989, 27 years after the establishment of Haisi Catholic Mission, the Bougainville Crisis dawned to claim an estimated 15,000 lives and leaving traumatised generations on the island.

The Bougainville Crisis can be seen as an historical and mysterious war. It started from opposition to the operation of the giant Panguna copper mine.

The discovery of the copper deposits in the 1960s led to the establishment of the mine by Conzinc Riotinto Australia (CRA). Production started in 1972, 10 years after Haisi Catholic Mission was established.

The mine was under the management of Bougainville Copper
Limited (BCL) with the Papua New Guinea government as a 20% shareholder. The Panguna open cut mine was at that time the largest in the world.

The mine’s operation made it possible for a road link to be established from South Bougainville to Central through the mining township of Panguna. This was one of the many developments of that time.

In 1972, my lovely Mum and her children lost their Dad. Now this is history which is retold to the younger generation of the family.

1989 was a significant year for me as it was the year I was born. Specifically on the day the Papua New Guinea government declared a state of emergency on the island of Bougainville.

So I was born at the dawn of the 10 year civil war on the island. My childhood years were blurry with nightmares of gunfire and fear of dark days. I never really understood the lifestyle we were living. Many unanswered questions flashed through my tiny brain about the way we were living.

Around May 1994, we left the Haisi Care Centre and went into hiding. As a five-year old girl, I walked the long nights from bush camp to bush camp, hiding from the PNGDF and the Resistance, since we were under the control of the BRA (Bougainville Revolutionary Army).

Come 15 August 1994, and we were back at the Haisi Care Centre, this time under the control of the PNGDF.

In the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church 15 August is the Feast of Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven. Despite the situation around them, the Catholics in Haisi gathered to celebrate the occasion with Holy Mass at the Mission.

Before nightfall, there was a shoot-out between the BRA and PNGDF at very close range in the Mission grounds.

Our Lady Queen of Peace, who stands with a welcoming heart, got a bullet through her heart from the gunfire of a PNGDF soldier. She did not fall down and a mysterious thing happened at that moment. A cloudy fog came between the two groups of soldiers that
blocked them from seeing each other.

So Our Lady Queen of Peace stood with her wounded heart to greet everyone who entered the grounds of Haisi Catholic Mission.

Then, on 11 April this year, an earthquake measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale broke off her top. Now only her foot still stands.

There are many untold stories about suffering and survival during the Bougainville Crisis. These untold stories of crisis survivors will be treasured by Bougainville generations yet to come.

For me, as a crisis child, walking the long journeys in the dark nights and waking to the grumbling thunder-like sounds of gigantic man-made grasshoppers was all a nightmare. Why we were always moving tinkled in my little mind.

Seeing my Mum so sick but still having to care for us was painful. It was like a wound.

Just like Our Lady Queen of Peace, there are so many untold stories and unhealed wounds among the survivors of the Bougainville crisis.

To write those stories is a great task for Bougainville.
Write to heal.
In Simbu the Maryjane druggies are given special recognition
KELA KAPKORA SÌL BOLKIN

TONNES OF MARIJUANA (MARYJANE) ARE waiting for a potential buyer in many of the villages in Simbu and other highlands provinces.

The marijuana bags are stored on a wood shelf or ceiling above the fire mound in the family home. Some are stored in 10kg rice bags, sewed up and used as pillows.

Many couples smoke marijuana to inflate their energy so as to make gardens for their sustenance. They smoke it every day like normal cigarettes.

Kids in grade school right through to the esteemed councillors in the villages smoke Maryjane. Yes, girls too.

Drug addicts and cultivators in Simbu are aware of the organised Asian drug syndicates and the bikies surfacing around Torres Strait and are keeping a vigil for when these narco-tycoons set foot in Simbu and shower them with guns and money for their Niugini Gold (marijuana). A bit of a neo-cargo cult, it seems.

If a clever wannabe pollie in 2017 campaigned and promised the people of Simbu that marijuana would be made legal, he/she might win. I think the nere tere plebs would vote them in at the first count.

Nowadays, anybody can say anything and win an election. There is no forum for screening and rating the promises of irrational politicians and their campaigns.

The drug addicts in Simbu have become such an integral part of the community that they freely take up their quota of everything; from feasts to games and leadership positions.

In the last 10 years some tribal groups have recognised the addicts in their community as important members. Whether you loath or admire them, it is now irrefutable that addicts have a special place in
the microcosm of the clan.

For example, during a feast when the preparation of pork for guests and family units is completed, the elders will give the normal lengthy speeches whilst others will wave off the flies and dogs. Whoever controls the feast will eventually invite the senior drug addict to make a few remarks.

At the completion of the speeches, the first dish of pork is given to the catechist. The people fear the Lord, so by giving the catechist the first share of the pork they indirectly appease heaven and hope it will be kind to them.

The second important set of dishes is given to the drug addicts.

This recent recognition of the drug addicts as a legitimate group in society has a number of causes.

In traditional Simbu culture people seek to appease ancestral spirits if there is a sickness in their neighbourhood. The men will slaughter pigs to appease the spirits and amend their relationship with nature.

With the arrival of Christianity, the community now had two chances; first they pray to heaven and, if there is no sign of improvement, they turn to their ancestors to check if there is any animosity there.

And now the community has a third force to appease - and they are the drug addicts.

The drug addicts will have slaughtered the community’s domesticated animals and devoured them in the confines of river banks and caves. Their taste buds itch for chicken and pork once Maryjane gets into them.

Domestic animals, even babies, cannot roam freely any more in the village precinct. The people have to maintain a vigil to keep away the wolves who are the drug addicts.

Already infants have been snatched from their sleep and taken away for meals. Law abiding citizens have been murdered and many girls raped too.

The only way to stop these addicts from stealing or murdering is
to appease them every now and then.

The community has to give the addicts offerings, just like they do to the church; money so they can buy their daily stock of Maryjane, and free food etc. to stop them taking what they want and creating carnage.

Another reason for recognising them is that, during the most turbulent times when the clan goes to war with a neighbouring clan, these drug addicts, after smoking tonnes of Maryjane, will shoulder a gun and take the frontline without any sense of self-preservation or flinching.

The police force will not be there to protect the community because, as usual, they will have run out of fuel. The safety of the community, therefore, is in the hands of these drug addicts who will keep a vigil for the enemy in the night while high on Maryjane and will thrust themselves into the frontline to face the enemy at dawn.

The society after pondering all the pros and cons of the conduct of drug addicts has decided to lean towards propping up the druggies rather than shunning them.

Any informer attempting to report on these things to the authorities takes a big risk because the state’s presence is not seen and felt in the community. In this sense the drug addicts are untouchable.

At this juncture, the drug addicts feel they have a standing in the community and wear their nicknames like *fada crash, with-a-bro, no-use,* or *kerja mal* with inflated egos. They are a law unto themselves.

Some drug addicts have inhaled more than their bodies can tolerate and have lost their minds and are now walking around naked in towns and villages scavenging in the rubbish bins.

Others wander from Simbu following the Okuk Highway all the way to Lae or Madang, or they go further west, feeding on any rubbish that meets their eyes.

In one incident, a father who ran out of patience after pleading with his son to quit smoking Maryjane held a shotgun to his son’s temple and pulled the trigger. The other drug addicts ran for their
lives as the son lay in the dirt shaking copiously before breathing his last. Had the father had a rifle, no doubt the whole team would have been sent to heaven.

The National Narcotics Bureau has been a political football and dispenser of patronage since 2001. The Bureau is still engaged in sporadic and pointless awareness campaigns instead of coordinating, funding and establishing regional and provincial bureaus to help support the other stakeholders trying to reduce the supply and demand of Maryjane.

The United Nations and other development partners have seen the rise of drug abuse in PNG and the presence of organised drug syndicates but reason that if the government does not care they don’t care either.

The government has to take the lead by giving the National Narcotics Bureau the resources to coordinate drug reduction and rehabilitation programs.

Customs and Immigration, Police, Navy and other duty bearers have to work as a team to patrol the many islands, atolls and long shorelines and sieve out the organised drug syndicates.

We also implore the good MPs to pull out the Substance Control Bill that surfaced in Parliament in the 1990s but has been swept under the carpet ever since by pollies who have ulterior motives.

PNG has to have strong laws to contain the drug trade and methamphetamine and ice production within PNG by the Chinese triads and other international drug syndicates. PNG is on its way to becoming a narco-state, it seems.

For the Simbus, we have to adopt the Naur-Gor United or the Domil Community Development concept of the Jiwaka Province to solve these socio-economic ills.

Naur-Gor and Domil are two success stories of community development, civilian arrest and rural rock up. These two communities both allow no room for drug addicts to flex their authority.
Abonas Alotau: a place to refresh the mind and spirit
GARY JUFFA

I HAVE ALMOST GIVEN UP writing about anything. There is nothing left to inspire me. Or even agitate me.

It is that terrible space writers find themselves in when they are completely loath to write about anything. I am sure many have been here. I have. Several times. I want to write. It itches within me like it’s dying to be scratched. But I open a word document and I start. And give up after several lines.

I just gave up writing about corruption several minutes before I started writing this. Before that I had started on a piece about transnational crime. And before that about the state of our environment and the recent findings that prove that global warming is real and will lead to more adverse natural happenings around the world.

But each time I gave up. Before I could even complete a paragraph. I tried to be serious, to include well researched data (Google is amazing!) I tried to be funny and witty but to no avail. So I gave up. And wrote about my ordeal.

Something will come to me I thought. To be honest, I think I am simply exhausted. I am so tired of trying so hard and getting nowhere. Of spending so much of my time and personal resources and observing rampant lying and stealing and constantly trying to stop this scam or prevent that scheme.

It seems like there is no end to the madness that is now our society, Papua New Guinea, instead it seems to be getting worse! There is simply no order, from politics to society.

I think of politics as an outhouse in some remote forgotten district. Before one enters politics one is standing outside this
outhouse, this pit latrine. One can sense that there is much filth and shit, one can smell it. Flies buzz around it. But it is only when one is elected and one is inside that one can really experience the explicit sewerage in its rawest form.

Here are a group of maggots having an orgy of sorts (political parties?), there is semi-digested food (proposals, scams, schemes of all sorts?), giant flies buzz around high on the aroma of shit (middle men and consultants?) and the latrine itself is barely able to contain it all (the public service?).

You cannot help but feel disgusted. The pungent aroma of urine mixed with various stages of decomposing excrement assault your senses. Hello, politics! Well at least in Papua New Guinea!

I am ranting. Raving. Taking out my anger at having this temporary (I hope!) inability to write about my intended topics on the state of politics.

But I am too harsh. There is hope. Alotau. I just returned from that wonderful town. I was attending a gathering organized by Charles Abel, Member for Alotau. I won’t talk about the forum other than to say that it was a great initiative by Charles on sustainable development.

I will just mention Alotau. It is more beautiful then I remember last time I was there in 2011. I remember being impressed then. I was more impressed this time around.

People were neat and clean and walk around in an orderly fashion, buildings were clean and tidy, even the low cost public service houses were neat and clean with manicured lawns.

Children in school uniforms were beautiful, laughing, clean, healthy and walking respectfully to or from school. One could be forgiven for thinking they were in a different country.

Soccer and rugby fields with small stadiums, clean cut roadsides and even some white people walking around. No one seemed to be bothered at all. No one harassed them. No one took notice.

Respect. That’s what I saw in Alotau. Much respect. And it was clean everywhere - the streets, the town, the yards, the shops, the
markets and the people.

Was it because the people simply had the right attitude? Was it their mindset? Was it because the members of this province all work together and respect each other? Why is it that everyone chews betel nut but they do not spit it everywhere, there is no betel nut skin or littering or loitering that is usually associated with betel nut everywhere else in Papua New Guinea? It is simply a marvel.

Whatever it is, they give Papua New Guinea hope. Just writing about Alotau and what I saw and experienced there has made me feel better. I still can’t write whatever it is I thought I wanted to write about when I popped open my computer, but at least I feel better. God bless the beautiful people of Alotau and Milne Bay indeed. God bless their leaders too. They are certainly a good example.

Oh, and I met Abona. A good friend. He sang me several songs with a band at the Alotau International Hotel and dedicated it to me and Roger Hau’ofa who was also there. “Dis is too my two old fadas! Jelly Joofah and Loger Howeva!”

Abona is the local jester. He stands 4 foot tall. Speaks English in Samalai dialect and permanently has betel nut in his mouth - I would say at least 2 litres.

Abona is involved in every major event in some way. He has an uncanny knack for turning up when some event is on. No one turns him away and he fits in and contributes in some way. He has a drink and a feed and mingle and asks friendly questions and contributes with exceptional clapping and howling when it is required. Awesome stuff.

And he can sing and he never seems to have aged, he must be at least 60. I last saw him in Port Moresby in 1994. I was still at university, struggling to complete a degree I eventually abandoned. Abona looks exactly the same then as he did now. I have more white hair than he does.

But that’s from hanging around in outhouses trying to be a politician and doing something about this mess I inherited…that’s my excuse anyway… Aioni!
Cleland Family Award for Heritage Writing

The Heritage Writing Award covers a broad spectrum of literature including the retelling of ancestral tales and stories from pre-independence Papua New Guinea.

The Award, sponsored by Bob Cleland, remembers his parents, former Administrator, Sir Donald Cleland and Dame Rachel Cleland, above, and recognizes Bob’s daughters, Susan, born in Goroka EHP and Kathryn, born in Balimo WP, who have pledged to maintain this sponsorship into the future.

Congratulations to all those who entered the Crocodile Competition and especially to those who submitted entries for the Heritage Award.
IN THE NASIOI SOCIETY OF Bougainville there is a proverb for males that goes, ‘when you have intercourse with a woman, you must know that you are having intercourse with a garden, a house and everything that will sustain you both’.

This is associated with marriage.

This wisdom really is a norm in central and south Bougainville; unlike the north where it is not that evident.

In most Bougainville communities I am familiar with, like Nasioi, Koromira, Eivo, Nagovis, Banoni and Siwai, the village concept is rapidly dying out. In post-crisis Bougainville, there is hardly a village community in existence.

The 10-year Bougainville civil conflict contributed to the rapid demise of the village system. The crisis scattered people into refugee camps away from the coast or into the Papua New Guinea held care centres, thus disturbing the harmonious process of village living.

But in Buin I discovered massive villages still, especially Oria, Laguai and Malabita, and the proverb is still relevant. But generally in today’s Bougainville, homes are now erected within the extended or nuclear family.

In Nasioi society, boys as young as six tend to force parents or brothers to build them one-room houses. This is a culture referred to as avakori in Nasioi which means baby-works. Both tiny boys’ houses and girls’ little gardens are referred to as avakori.

Avakori, especially for younger girls’ gardens, when brothers or parents support it, contribute to the sustenance of the family.

There is this spirit of independence or self-reliance among those youngsters practising the old tradition of avakori. Males are equipped to build their own homes and females are able to make gardens that sustain their families when the time for marriage is reached.

As for me, I began avakori in Kupe Village at the peak of the
Bougainville crisis in 1992. Influenced by my peer group, I began making my own garden helped by my mother and, late in 1993, I began a house of my own supported by a relative.

In my Tumpusiong Valley, with modern materials and money from gold at hand, male kids are well engaged with *avakori* and little houses and females run parallel with their own gardening interests.

This has led to changes in these areas because the young are becoming more financially independent and do not need to be fed by their parents.
I have realised that blood is thick and strong
MARLENE DEE GRAY POTOURA

I WAS HARASSED AND MUGGED when initially trying to find a place to settle and raise a young family in Lae. Today I cannot believe how far I have come.

But still I remember my dear mana Roandi: my grandmother from Watabung. And I ask a question: is intermarriage a solution to acceptance in the diverse cultures of Papua New Guinea?

I live at 4 Mile in Lae. This area is known for hold-ups and robberies. “Four Mile is not safe,” the residents of Lae will tell you.

Ethnic groups that settle on blocks of land like 4 Mile, build strong ties, appoint leaders, who they respect and make powerful communities. These communities protect their own - vagrants, criminals, drug dealers and working class people alike. If you are a newcomer to a block, you are most likely to be assaulted first.

In Lae, this kind of ‘find your place to settle and blend in thing’ is overwhelming.

Ethnic ties are our own traditional constitution.

Before, I moved to 4 Mile, I resided at 1 Mile. One foggy afternoon, I was walking home from work and a man crawled out of the drain and pointed a homemade gun at me. Somehow, I got away and ran.

The funny thing was that a boy started chasing me. I fell into a deep drain full of debris and he daringly came at me with a gleaming dagger. I struggled out of the filthy ditch, dropped all the things I was carrying and ran for dear life. There were curious onlookers, who did nothing to assist me

I realised I was not safe living at 1 Mile.

I moved across town to East Taraka. There, a mugger nearly ended my life.

I was walking to the Unitech gate bus stop, talking to my brother on my mobile, when I felt my whole living being knocked out of me. My head reeled and I fell into a murky puddle. I slowly got up and saw a man walking away with my bag and mobile phone. There were people everywhere, but none of them helped me.

As I cried and walked to the bus stop, I felt an apple size lump
under my left ear. I was doing no one any harm, just walking on the road, talking to my brother and someone nearly killed me.

When I moved to the 4 mile area some years ago, I was terrified. I mean, knowing this place and the stories I’d heard, plus the experiences I had already been through, I was quite alarmed.

“Which part of Bougainville, are you from?” my Simbu neighbours asked me the first time I moved here.

“I am from Buin, as you can see from my skin colour. But in fact, my mother’s mother is from Watabung in Eastern Highlands Province”. I clearly did not want to be a victim again. I decided to try out my origins and see if it would help me blend into the community.

Word spread around the community like this, “Bilak sikin yia, tasol, tumbuna meri blo em blo Warabung yia. Boda blo Simbu na Goroka.”

“Aiiiiiyaa, tru ah! Naispla yia!’Bestie yia, sikin tasol yia. Kam gut yia!”

A first glance at me, one would not be mistaken that I am a true-blue Bougainvillian.

My grandfather, Kauva, was a policeman in Goroka. During World War 2, he joined the allied forces and fought the Japanese through the rough and mountainous terrain of Simbu.

After the war he married my mana Roandi. They settled in Goroka and had six children.

In June 1959, Kauva decided to take his family to his homeland of Buin in Bougainville. They travelled down to Lae and then faced a long, tedious voyage by ship to Rabaul and then to Bougainville.

Mana Roandi was kind, generous and hardworking. Her sharp-tongued and loudness also made people fear her. But she found her place and standing in that strange land Kauva brought her to.

As a child, I remembered mana Roandi looking at the sky and crying. Once I asked her why and this was what she said to me, “See the blue sky up there? My love ones and relatives see the same sky, moon and sun. But, I cannot converse with them, yet we see the same things every day.”

I did not understand what she mean then, but now I do.

When I moved to 4 Mile and settled among the Simbus I did not encounter any of the previous experiences I had. I have blended in well with them.

I go out at night, to the tucker boxes when I run out of sugar or when I want to buy a telephone flex card and get on Face Book. No one bothers me. I am part of the community.
I feel comfortable living here, because I know that I am part of these people. And they, knowing about my grandmother, accepted me as one of them.

I am reminded once again that, blood is thick and strong.
Anganere Pasindia band: discos and prostitution
KELA KAPKORA SIL BOLKIN

THE SIMBU CULTURAL SHOW HAS been back this December after many years of hibernation. Though not many young people adorned themselves in traditional regalia, the old and middle-aged took pride in their culture and braved both the drizzle and heat to showcase it. Much talent, glamour and diversity were displayed.

Unfortunately, only two or three foreigners were seen in Kundiawa town and Simbu lost a large amount of tourism dollars. The landslips in the Mindima section of the Okuk Highway in the north and Kingstar to the east of Kundiawa town helped prevent the influx of tourism. The other reason is that Air Niugini hasn’t had direct flights to Simbu for a long time.

But that’s not all. The bad news was exacerbated because the show committee decided to pay themselves a hefty per diem as well as pilfering some funds. The cultural groups spent between K1000 and K1500 in the three days of the show to earn a meagre K200 profit. That’s an absolute loss to the cultural groups.

The talk on the streets in Kundiawa town simply affirms that the show committee were measly egocentric megalomaniacs. They belong to the big group of wreckers of the public good. Enough is enough; let us pray that the lord will give them one million boils on their dickheads.

Now, let us talk about some goodness. There were many exciting events at the show. In the midst of these was the Anganere Prostitution Band. The members are all in their late 60s. Their story shows them to be in the same category as the likes of the famous Wahgi Hellcats and other highlands bands of the 1970s.

Aure Baka of Ongloku clan in the Kundiawa Gembogl district returned from Port Moresby with a guitar in 1972. While in Port Moresby he saw a live performance of the Paramana Strangers string band of Aroma Coast and was captivated.

Upon his return to the Simbu Mountains, he told his peers back in Anganere about the big city lights, Ela Beach, the kokenis and the Papuan String bands.
His childhood friends, including Paul Kindi, Joe Koima, Eko Paul, Mangre 7 and Mende Soti, congregated around him, listened attentively and tried to fathom the descriptions of the Papuan land and seascapes and the *kekenis* that Aure described.

Tough Paul Kindi, still pondering over Aure’s stories of the Paramana Strangers, summoned his friends a few weeks later and suggested they form a string band since there was no string band in the area. Hence, a few years after Kiki Geno starred with his Paramana Strangers string band, they started their own.

Around that time, *sosol* or discos swept away Simbu’s famous and unique night courtships (*karim lek* and *kukim nus*). The discos quickly took over with their bamboo and string bands. The bands started to play in early evenings and continued until dawn.

Young men and women congregated and enjoyed the nights in *sosol* houses dancing and courting instead of at the traditional serenades in the girls’ homes.

The old people equated the discos with prostitution and were totally against the gathering of young people at the *sosol* houses. Nevertheless, the boys put a few rules together and sarcastically named their new band Pasindia (prostitution). Hence, Anganere Pasindia Band was born in 1973. The old people were kept away by the connotations of the band name.

Paul Kindi was named band leader and they added a couple of guitars to the one brought in by Aure. They started performing in the Kundiawa Gembogl area playing the ‘five’ or ‘rough’ keys.

They soon became famous with songs like *Dina daina do, Kambuno Tine paga ire we, Tine Sunga Ambai wa, Lapun teeth bruk, Piru pa saiya nu’we, Mi stap long Kundiawa, Wanpla liklik meri, Suwai nik koraim bra* and many more.

Soon Anganere Pasindia Band gained prominence and toured the Gembogl area. More crowds and accolades came in so the band decided to travel out of their homeland into neighbouring districts to perform during big occasions like school fetes, electioneering campaigns and other celebrations. They also travelled to Mt. Hagen, Goroka and Madang to perform during political rallies, conventions and other important gatherings.

On 16 September 1975, they made their first big public performance in Kundiawa town during Papua New Guinea Independence Day celebrations and won first prize.
Paul Kindi, now a respected village court magistrate, said they learnt through trial and error and as the years moved on they improved their style of playing and composed songs that reflected the true Simbu lifestyle.

The Anganere Pasindia Band recorded with NBC Simbu in 1979. That was the first time they had set foot in the NBC Simbu-Karai bilong Mambu studio.

In 1982, the Anganere Pasindia band played at a National Party convention in Kundiawa town and that day Paul Kindi’s style of playing his guitar held captive a Grade 9 student, Etwik of Dom. Paul also fell for her too and took her home after the show and married her.

However, as is the tradition with musicians, he divorced her a couple of years later. A few more women met the same fate when they ended up with Kindi too. The band leader is now with his latest wife and their children.

The Anganere Pasindia band also recorded songs with the Papua New Guinea Karai Service in Australia. Their songs are still aired today.

Paul said, in those days women melted like butter in the sun when the Pasindia band took to the stage. Fans too showered them with food stuffs, money and grog.

By 1984, most members were married and their marital duties took them away from rehearsals and playing.

The members called it quits towards the end of 1984 when Paul Kindi was elected as a village court magistrate. The other members of band also realised that their kids were growing up quickly and they needed to spend more time on gardening and raising their family. The hibernation of the Simbu cultural show and the introduction of electronic music boxes was also a catalyst for the death of the band.

The December 2013 cultural show brought the members together for what was supposed to be their swan song performance. However, as the golden oldies took the stage the crowd went wild. The oldies relented and promised to turn up for the yearly Simbu cultural show and perform until they can walk no more. They said they will pass the baton on to their kids to take the name forward once they are on crutches.

The unusual thing about the founding members of the band is that, though they are all past the retirement age of 65, they are still
alive, unlike other band members of the 1970s.

Councillor Pilot has talked Paul Kindi and his mates out of retirement to perform at the Simbu cultural shows. The Councillor has promised to buy costumes for the Anganere Pasindia Band’s golden oldies to return for the 2014 Simbu cultural show should it continue with a more morally upright and transparent show committee.

Their songs will surely live on but their legacy is threatened by electronic boom boxes and musical devices. The Paramana Strangers have moved on with the change in the music industry to perform using electronic musical instruments and studio recordings. Will the children of Anganere band members take the legacy to next level with live bands and recordings? The focus is now on the Anganere band member’s offspring.

The band leader, Paul Kindi, has consented to other string bands using their songs to do live performance but has warned solo artists and other electronic band members that their songs cannot be copied or recorded in recording studios without their consent. If done, the Anganere Pasindia band says it will not hesitate to take legal action.

Simbus hope to see the Anganere Pasindia Band members with costumes come alive again in the next Simbu Cultural Show.
Shy soldiers
J P RICHARDS

Wars come and go but my soldiers remain eternal (Tupac Shakur).

JUST RECENTLY, DURING MY 2013 new year’s holidays in Markham, I stumbled upon a plant that told me a story of war, love, family history and also broadened my understanding of a plant that could transform the face of medicine.

After we bought buai and daka at Ansa market at Mutzing Station in the Markham district, my grandfather and I tramped back on the dirt track along the eroding banks of Mangyang Creek to our peaceful village of Sampubangin.

Along the track the buai I held in my palm slipped and fell into a bed of thorny bushes. Carefully I tried to pick out my buai and pricked my hand in the process.

“Ouch!” I cried out.

Grandfather laughed and said “Rumpung (grandchild), I’ll tell you a story about this thorny plant.”

I’m like, oh boy, here we go, another boring tumbuna story. As a biology student, I already knew what the plant was. It is commonly called touch-me-not, sensitive plant or nilnil grass in Tok Pisin. Its scientific name is *Mimosa pudica*. In Latin *pudica* means shy, bashful or timid.

The plant is a flowering perennial herb from the same family as peas and beans, the *Fabaceae* or *Leguminosa* family. It’s a native to the tropical Americas. How it ended up in Papua New Guinea has a tale that is embedded in the stories of World War 2. My grandfather was around 18 years old when WW2 invaded the peaceful Markham Valley.

The year was 1943 when the Japanese military set up camps in various areas around Morobe Province. The Japanese were outnumbered and losing ground but regardless, they had created a simple war strategy that helped enable them to maintain their territory in the New Guinea region.

The Japanese brought in *Mimosa pudica* and scattered the seeds
along the bush tracks. The seeds grew and spread. Then they would check on the plants occasionally to see if they had been disturbed with the leaves being retracted. Then they would know by the shrunken leaves together with the boot prints that the Allies were close by and they would ambush them. The *Mimosa pudica* was helpful and had seen success throughout the region.

Grandfather remembered his Australian soldier colleagues complaining and cussing the thorny bristle, not knowing that the plants were not native but rather a Japanese tactic to give them signs that the enemy was around.

Those Australian soldiers were reserve battalions, many of them very young and untrained. When they complained grandfather would brush the plant aside, all the while wondering where it came from because in all his life in Markham he had never seen anything like it.

The plant was also brought into New Guinea for another purpose, medicine. The chemicals contained in the herb were extracted and used to fight snake venom and chewed and swallowed to subdue stomach ache, two of the deadly threats for soldiers, apart from being shot.

Later I did a little research and find out that the *Mimosa pudica* contains the biochemical toxic alkaloid *mimosine*, which has been found to also have anti-proliferative and apoptotic effects. The extracts of *Mimosa pudica* immobilize the filariform larvae of *Strongyloides stercoralis* (a human parasitic roundworm that inhibits the small intestine) in less than one hour.

Plant juice extracts from the roots of the plant have shown significant neutralizing effects in the lethality of the venom of the Monocled Cobra. It appears to inhibit the myotoxicity and enzyme activity of cobra venom. Of course the Japanese were not too sure if cobras were found in New Guinea back then but thought to be on safe side.

By 1944, Japanese troops had seized the old Kaiapit station up at Sauruan village and had taken the villages captive. My grandmother hailed from Sauruan and was around 5 years old when the Japanese soldiers invaded their village and captured them. Being very chubby and light-skinned, the Japanese kept her in a cage together with other ‘edible-looking’ children so they could feed them and eat them because the food supplies for the Japanese were being intercepted by the Allies.
Grandfather, as a young man, helped fight with the Allies when they conquered Sauruan in time to rescue the captives. Grandfather’s heart was broken when he saw the little children in the cage, not knowing that one of those edible children would one day be his wife.

Grandmother’s bigger brother, who had been tied down and beaten, was finally rescued and became close friends with my grandfather. So there, the family connection was made. When the Japanese were gone the valley grew peaceful and our grandfathers lived on building houses and gardens. My grandparents were married and moved to Lae, where grandfather got a job working for Niugini Medical Distributors.

Today the plant is widespread in Morobe Province and other parts of the New Guinea region and is considered as a weed in agricultural food crops both in gardens and plantations. But the humble story of these soldiers of World War 2 lives on leaving a legacy that is part of Morobean heritage.
Fading images: the evocative legends of my grandmother
GARY JUFFA

IT’S THAT TIME OF THE year we know as the rainy season. One of Papua New Guinea’s only two seasons. The other is the dry.

Both last about six months in this tropical nation, home of the world’s third largest rainforest area. From about November until April, it shall rain throughout Papua New Guinea. The downpours vary in frequency and intensity; often thick and heavy jungle rain.

I like the rainy season. Even now, it brings with it memories of growing up in Kokoda. Great memories. Nostalgia tends to be the melody of raindrops falling on the roof whenever I take a moment to listen on any afternoon of a day ending with rain.

Like today. As the daily afternoon rain fell, I made a cup of hot sweet tea and sat down to watch the day quietly bid farewell. In Kokoda, you can hear the rain coming long before it falls. The day becomes dark and sombre and the wind brushes across the treetops, whistling as it blows through the forest.

On such days, as a child growing up on my grandfather’s cocoa plantation, I would run out eagerly with my cousins, hopping and skipping about anticipating the slippery, sliding frolicking fun we were about to have.

There would be much falling down and laughter and giggling as everyone got soaking wet and ran here and there. Eventually, as it grew too dark to play and the evening meal was ready, our tired parents would call us and we would run to the creek to swim and wash off the mud and clay with bars of yellow washing soap.

Then we’d run through the rain to our homes and stand by the fireplace to dry off, our teeth chattering and our hands folded across our heaving chests as we waited for plates of steaming food and sweet black tea.

Sometimes we’d be lucky and have Carnation condensed milk in a can, small, white and with a red carnation flower on it. The milk was thick and pale yellow as it was poured into the tea. Everyone sat eating and drinking and there would be story telling of the day’s events or of funny experiences and memorable moments of days
gone by.

It was so dark you could barely see beyond the light of the hurricane lamps and the fireplace but you could hear the rain falling hard on the tin roof or kunai grass arara or hauswin.

The fire would crackle and pop and the dogs lying beside it would lazily scratch themselves, eking out as much warmth as they could without getting burnt. The flooding creeks would threaten to burst their banks and the wind would softly whisper our names.

I remember those nights most vividly, sitting in the hauswin (house wind), a shelter built on raised stilts and with a thatched grass roof and sometimes a bamboo woven semi-wall. It was designed to be cool on hot days and warm on cold rainy nights.

The roof would overhang the shelter and a floor of split young black-palms were springy and pleasing to lie, sleep and sit on – a good place to eat a meal or sip a hot sweet cup of tea while listening to stories.

Stories were the stuff of our entertainment, all manner of stories. If you were lucky as a child, you could sit quietly and hear adults speak in low tones, telling stories you should not be hearing. An alert adult would rebuke you and send you off to bed.

We all enjoyed listening to stories and no one told better stories than my grandmother. Hers were legends, long drawn out sagas of ancient people and creatures, of demons and evil spirits that had strange and awesome powers and did horrible things to their victims.

These stories were legends, folk tales and history, explaining the geographic features of our tribal lands or the history of a particular creature and why they came to be or why they behaved a certain way or made a certain sound.

She would tell the most horrifying legends, unless my mother happened to be visiting from Port Moresby and was within earshot. My mother disapproved of the stories and admonished grandmother for frightening us. But we loved them.

Grandmother’s stories were told after dinner on such rainy nights, often when she was baking her scones for sale at the Kokoda market the next day. The stories filled us with fear and seemed to make the rainy night more meaningful. Everyone huddled close and, if you listened carefully and concentrated, you could see the images of the characters as your imagination painted their features.

It seemed the night birds loved these stories too, for they seemed
to draw closer, their eerie sounds chilling us to the bone as we also grew closer- to the fireplace.

No story frightened us more than that of Aha Siworo, or Mother Earthworm, a feared ancient lady who lived in the deep woods.

She ventured out every rainy night and walked through the forests humming in a low voice, her eyes fiery red orbs, her grass skirt swaying and rustling, carrying a large string bag carefully on her head. Her string bag contained parcels of carefully wrapped banana leaves.

And there is a noise. Hear that? Why it is the tiny death bat who is heralding the march of Aha Siworo, screeching in a piercing whistle as it flits fast and angry above the feared witch.

If you watched carefully, you could see the ghosts of those about to die, clinging to the wings of the death bats. And Aha Siworo, her shrivelled and dried body straining hard under the weight of her bag. She would stoop over a recently prepared grave and take out a parcel, place it carefully, unwrap it and keep walking to the next grave.

My Grandmother told these vivid stories with great detail, her facial features expressing every development, every step and every feature. She would chew betel nut and deftly use her lime pot stick, fishing around in the lime gourd and chewing slowly and meaningfully as she continued her story.

Awa Siworo on her journey of the night, not walking but gliding, her grass skirt swaying and rustling, stopping at recent graves and placing her morbid package.

Grandmother would pause and carefully spit her betel nut onto the fire’s ashes, her hard cracked feet covering it with earth.

“The packages,” Grandmother glared at us as we huddled closer and anticipated the moment of revelation with wide eyes and racing heart, “Were filled with wriggling, turning and slippery, slimy earthworms!”

We all flinched as one.

“For these worms were her children and she would feed them with the flesh of the dead. They would burrow into the earth of a recent grave, through the coffin and right into the bloated flesh, and after gorging themselves they would rise up to the earth and await their mother, fed and full.

“They would leave only a set of recently cleaned bones. Aha, Siworo would return humming her song and pick them up, carefully wrap them and place them in her string bag, and walk off to her far
away home where no one has ever been…”

Everyone would gulp their now lukewarm tea. We had just witnessed a kind of magic, storytelling that captured our imagination and took us to a place of mystical creatures and strange practices.

“Japeb, en ejo hingetora!” a quiet small voice would pipe up from one of us. “Grandmother, another story, we want to listen”…..

The art of storytelling, the passing down of folk tales and history, of explanations and translations were rich aspects of a gradually disappearing culture. And those who weaved their magic on such nights are themselves but fading memories.

I am brought back to today. The rain is still beating down hard and a great night’s slumber beckons me to my bed.

My tea is cold and my mind struggling to grasp those memories before they slip away to somewhere in my mind and heart, where my beloved grandmother and her many, many legends remain.
Nokondi
MICHEL MEL

One of each
Limb and bone
Half a man
Half a ghost

The forest shrieks
In his wake
Tremors warn
Of wanderers’ fate

For his heart is one
With all the land
His spear and bow
Clutched in hand

The ancestors sang
Without resound
Nokondi, nokondi
Em papa graun!
Once upon a leg: a Nokondi story
J P RICHARD

ONCE UPON A TIME IN the cold misty mountains in the Eastern Highlands Province lived a 13 year old albino boy named Megusa. Megusa lived with his dear old lapun mama in their old kunai raunhaus in Masi Village.

Nobody liked to hang-out with Megusa because of his genetic condition. In the village people thought albinism brought bad luck; little did they know that albino people could see things that normal people couldn’t.

Lapun Mama always prepared Megusa’s goire (kaukau) and masi (taro) with sweet carrots, cabbage, cauliflowers and, if available, a smoked piece of iza (pork) every morning and sent him off to labour in their coffee garden close by the hill.

Megusa would leave his kunai raunhaus and scuttle across the village, head bowed in shame, eyes averted from the whispering villagers, and hurry down the winding bush track, across the crystal creek then up the savannah slope to his coffee garden.

Alas, every morning, Megusa would be greeted with broken coffee branches, spilled coffee cherries and strange single footprints. The footprint was neither from the left leg nor right; it looked like...well, it looked like an undecided footprint. The only one-legged person in the village was Geisi and he was a righty.

Why did this rascal pick on my coffee garden thought Megusa? Can’t he see I’m just a poor kid living with my lapun mama with nobody to care for us? Papa is no longer around because he died in a tribal fight over land with nearby neighbours, the Kefamo people. Mama had gone years ago, sick of Papa and his habits.

Megusa had no siblings because his mama was afraid she would again give birth to a genetically faulty child. Lapun Papa had died long before he was born and his uncles and aunts kept their distance. So Lapun Mama took Megusa in when nobody dared to look after a bad-luck child and he received love, care and protection from Lapun Mama and rejection and cold-shoulders from the other villagers.
Lapun Mama practiced a little bit of magic so people knew better than to mess with her. She never harmed anybody, just a little spiritual insurance over her raunhaus, gardens and pigs and harmless herbal medicine for herself and Megusa.

Megusa couldn’t understand how this one-legged rascal was able to avoid lapun mama’s protection and keep stealing their coffee cherries. He never told Lapun Mama because she would think him silly. There’s no such thing as a one-legged rascal who’s neither a lefty nor a righty.

One day his curiosity got the better of him and Megusa decided to catch the rascal in the act. He got up before the sunrise, grabbed his belongings and crept out of the raunhaus. Outside, it was dark and the cold fog hung down.

His bare feet absorbed the cold as he hurried across the village and followed the path to the garden. He approached along a different track, noiselessly and almost without breathing. He camouflaged his body with streaks of clay, coffee twigs and leaves and hid alongside the biggest tree trunk at the very edge of the coffee garden.

Megusa squinted through the coffee branches and the fog and waited for what seemed like forever, his stomach rumbling, heart pounding and his breath condensing in front of his chubby nose. Maybe the one-legged rascal had seen him coming and decided to hide, maybe he ….

Suddenly his back stiffened as he heard a faint noise approaching - chik-chik-crik-crik-pop-pop-hop-hop; chik-chik, rustling the coffee leaves, crik-crik, cracking the broken twigs, pop-pop went the coffee cherries, hop-hop came the one-legged rascal.

Megusa stared in amazement as this one-legged figure materialised out of the fog unsuspectingly picking coffee cherries and busily breaking twigs as he approached. Megusa wasn’t afraid, rather he was awestruck. What on earth was that creature! Was it another genetically-deformed human hiding away from unloving people?

His heart saddened with empathy. A few more chik-chik-crik-crik-pop-pop-hop-hop later and the one-legged rascal appeared. Megusa was further surprised because not only did the rascal have just one leg but also only one hand, one eye and one ear.

It mumbled and grunted as it chewed the coffee cherries, its mouth filled as it happily munched away. Being an albino and alone all the time, Megusa had become fearless as he roamed the forest and
worked in his coffee garden.

His only thought was to catch the rascal. He would pounce on it and wrestle it to the ground. With one leg and one hand the rascal couldn’t possibly win. So Megusa set his stance like a prowling tiger, his back ached, his bare feet dug into the soft earth, a long strong bush-rope gripped in his right hand, eyes squinting, heart pounding, blood rushing.

The one-legged rascal came within striking distance, breaking twigs and munching coffee beans. Suddenly Megusa sprang and dashed toward the one-legged rascal, leaping on it and wrestling it to the ground. The one-legged rascal screamed so shrilly Megusa’s eardrums almost burst.

The rascal was surprisingly strong but Megusa was skilled in tackling pigs and inserting loops on their hooves and that was exactly what he did. Megusa pulled the rope and fastened it to a nearby coffee tree then grabbed a fallen branch and threatened to smash the one-legged rascal’s head. Eventually the one-legged rascal settled.

“What are you?” demanded Megusa. “Why are you stealing, eating and destroying my coffee garden?”

“Because I have to eat just like you, I eat coffee beans and green coffee leaves, it’s my food!” shot back the one-legged rascal, “and I’m not a ‘what’, I’m a ‘who’!” it cried.

“What is your name?” Megusa was slowly relaxing but still suspicious.

“My name is Nokondi and I live in the mountain caves. I can make you very wealthy by nourishing your coffee trees if you let me go.”

“Oh yeah, nourishing like what you are doing now? That’s what you call nourishing?” Megusa turning even redder than his own pink complexion.

“No it’s not like that. I cannot plant the coffee tree, my hand is cursed but I can fertilise the trees with my special potion and make them grow faster and healthier. In fact, I can make as many as 50 coffee trees grow and bear fruit every full moon.”

“Wow! Slow it down Mr Nokondi.” Megusa’s mind was doing a quick calculation; 50 coffee trees every full moon, 600 coffee trees by the next season. “Are you sure about that? If that’s your sleazy trick for me to release you, it’s not working. Why should I believe you?”

“Because I speak only the truth, if I lie, I will die the moment the
lie escapes my lips; that is part of my curse.”

“Mmm, prove it,” Megusa scoffed.

“My blood is green and if smeared on any part of the coffee tree, it cures all coffee diseases and makes the plant healthier right away.”

So Megusa pinched its arm and certainly the blood was green. He squeezed a drop on his finger and smeared it on one of the branches of a nearby and sickly-looking coffee tree. To Megusa’s amazement, the tree promptly healed as promised; the shrivelled bug-eaten leaves transformed into smooth glossy full green leaves, the stems stiffened and the fruits became healthier and juicier.

“Wow! This is amazing!” Megusa was flabbergasted starring with eyes about to pop. After not much more probing and consideration, Megusa finally decided to release his captive.

“If I release you, will you run away?”

“No.”

So Megusa released Nokondi slowly and sure enough Nokondi let out a heavy sigh and relaxed with no intention of fleeing.

The two of them sat down and talked. Megusa told Nokondi about his sad story and Nokondi promised to be his friend and help him through life. When the sun was about to come up, Nokondi stood up and announced that it had to leave because his skin would sizzle in the sunlight. Nokondi promised to bring back the special tree-growing potion when the sun set low and Megusa agreed to wait.

Sure enough, Nokondi returned in the twilight and handed Megusa a bamboo tube full of potion. Megusa let Nokondi eat as many coffee cherries as his stomach could contain then left.

Megusa returned in the morning, planted the first 50 coffee trees and applied the potion. After a month, he had 50 full grown healthy coffee trees that bore thousands of ripened juicy red cherries so heavy that they forced the branches to hang down.

And so Nokondi and Megusa remained good friends. Megusa became very wealthy having a very large coffee plantation. His secret mystical friend remained concealed from the people. Because Megusa was prosperous everybody looked up to him.

Megusa forgave them all and built a local clinic and a school at his village. Afraid that western civilisation would ruin Nokondi’s home, he bought a very large tract of land north of Masi Village and dedicated it to biological conservation. Today, the park is known as the Mount Gahavisuka Provincial Park.
The legacy of Damien Dameng, the father of Meekamui
LEONARD FONG ROKA

THE IDEA OF MEEKAMUI WAS adopted in Bougainville politics by the late Francis Ona. But the concept was older than him, having been created by a student at St Joseph High School many years before: Damien Dameng from the Irang-Pangka valley in the Panguna District.

Damien Dameng was born in 1930 in Dongtare hamlet. He was in primary school at Sovele Catholic Mission in the Bana District of South Bougainville when World War II came to Bougainville.

After the war, Damien re-enrolled at Orami Tokples School, mainly learning the Catholic's catechism. Later he transferred to Buiana, a school led by Father Mueller in the Toio valley of Panguna.

By the 1950s he was at Tunuru Catholic Mission where he was suspected of being with Betoro, a woman from Topinang, and he was punished. In retaliation, Damien attacked a nun, Sister Juliana, who reported him to the American priest Father Hogan.

Father Hogan duly removed Damien from Tunuru and transferred him to Puruata in Torokina, enrolling him at Mamarego Catholic Mission in Bana, where he remained for two years. After spending time here he moved to Rigu, where he did Standards 9 and 10.

It was intended that, after this, he should go to Tsiroge in Buka to learn a trade like carpentry or teaching. But by the early 1960s he had come to believe the mission was destroying Bougainville and decided to turn his back on the Catholic Church.

He called Brother Bozaar, an Australian, and said, “I am not going to Tsiroge, I am going home”.

At this same time, the Hahalis Welfare Society in Buka and other grass roots movements were active with their work. Damien Dameng called a few Kieta leaders to Irang and told them, “The mission is killing us so let's go to our culture”. So was born his group, the Meekamui Pontoku Onoring.

Meekamui is 'holy land' in the Nasioi language. Pontoku are sacred sites which have significant meaning in a clan's mythology or history.
Onoring means ‘we are alive’ and is derived from the idea that, despite being oppressed, Bougainvilleans are still alive and able to defeat enemies.

Damien began protesting against the CRA exploration in the area and his movement soon had many followers across what is now the Panguna District.

Damien’s movement had three pillars; all concerned to drive Bougainville to its purest roots. These said that: Western education belongs to the bad spirits; Western health belongs to the dogs; and Western religion belongs to immature kids.

James Tanis wrote that: “Dameng opposed church teachings as trickery, the colonial administrators as thieves, and CRA and BCL as destroyers of land and culture.”

These ideas, Damien said, were also presented along with six live pigs to United Nations officials when they visited Kieta to meet church and government representatives. For him, it was an outstanding success.

His movement also forcefully closed schools in Panguna for three years in the early 1970s when the late Francis Ona was a young student. Most people supported the cause simply because it was vocal against the CRA operations in Panguna.

Damien Dameng travelled Kieta-wide advocating his movement and the anti-mining protest. This and other movements the influential Catholic Church labelled as cargo cult activities but they could also be seen as independence and, anti-mining and economic progress movements with Christian icing on top since religion was still influential.

On the ground in Irang was Philip Nesii, Dameng’s cousin, who played an administrative role in what was now declared to be the Meekamui Pontoku Onoring government. People began referring to it as the 50 Toea Gavman due to its tax collection of 50 toea per head.

Philip Nesii oversaw the detention of sorcerers in harsh conditions on an unoccupied area of the Tairengku ridge between Mosinau and Pangka and was also in charge of building a self-styled ‘parliament house’ in the heart of Irang village. He said the parliament was to mature at Irang and later relocate to Arawa, the capital of Bougainville and Solomon Islands.

One factor of Dameng’s success was captured by James Tanis writing in Bougainville before the Conflict (2005, p 461). “While Dameng
consequently stopped his campaign against sorcerers; at the same time he realised that the local government councils were worried about his influence, making him feel stronger than the councils.” As support grew, Damien’s agenda broadened to include nationalism and independence for Bougainville.

To Nesii, the parliament consisted of four political parties representing the four major clans known in Kieta: Basikang, Kurabang, Barapang and Bakoringku.

Parliament house was a square building with the Speaker’s seat at the centre and north. To Nesii, the Speaker’s seat was a 'holy of holies', and today what remains of it is still respected.

At the west end, the parliament had a 100 member chamber made up of the Basikang and Bakoringku clans. In its east was the chamber for the 100 members of the Kurabang and Barapang clans. The south end of the house was for the women and Bougainville's minorities, like the people from the atolls.

Beyond the parliamentary grounds was a symbolic monument in a form of a four-tongued star constructed with concrete in 1972. In its centremost part was a square hole representing the government of Bougainville and the four tongues were the major clans that made up the political parties of the Bougainville government.

Nesii and Dameng told me in 2011 that since the 1970s the late Francis Ona had been exposed to Damien Dameng’s government and adopted it but with no positive intentions. Instead, when the opportunity arose, he transformed the concept into ‘Meekamui Pontoku Sipung eto osi’kaai-aang’. The new idea now centred round the sipung eto (from the fireplace) and osikai-ang (owners of the land).

Francis Ona’s government in Guava pushed that it was based on the principles from the fireplace, meaning a person is safe if attached to his rightful home and only powerful in decision making on the land he rightfully owns or has inherited from his ancestors.

The idea was that Bougainvilleans had to go back and re-establish their epistemological beginnings and protect all their land to be powerful enough to have control over their island.

As Damien saw it this was not much different from his and Nesii’s teachings. To the brothers, the late Francis Ona was a militant trying to politicise their works to win the hearts and minds of Bougainvilleans who were losing faith in Ona’s rule.

According to the brothers, Ona and his followers, by removing
Onoring and replacing it with *sipung eta osikai-ang*, meant to make their government more appealing.

Damien Dameng died in mid-2013 when he was about 82 years old, passing away after an accident that led to illness. He was a very famous dog meat eater in the Kieta area. I was with the brothers for a week in late 2011.
Tensions rise in the ethnic melting pot that is Jiwaka
BOMAI WITNE

IT WAS DIFFICULT TO ADJUST many of the Papua New Guinean ways passed on to us from our forefathers to the institutions and business practices, such as plantations, introduced by the Western world.

This struggle persists in many forms. The western way of life and the introduced institutions developed against the wishes of many of our ancestors but have been endorsed through legislation by successive governments.

The introduction of plantations of all kinds throughout Papua New Guinea, to take one example, have had an enormous impact on our people’s lives.

Europeans provided salt and laplaps as a bait to lure people to work for them on plantations and gave them some money and a wooden box as a take-home gift.

Some highland men demanded to be paid in kina shells and their demands were granted. Kina shells cemented the highlands culture of amassing wealth and using it as a basis to marry more than one wife, create and re-create alliances and destroy existing alliances.

Eastern Highlanders, Simbus and Western Highlanders developed a taste for working in coastal plantations. Engans and Southern Highlanders later joined the queue.

When tea and coffee plantations began in parts of the Western Highlands and in what is now Jiwaka Province in the 1960s, Simbus, Engans and Southern Highlanders could not resist the thought of the European wealth offered for work on these plantations.

Simbus and Western Highlanders were the experienced ones. My father revealed that he returned from Rabaul to his birth place at Omdara in the Gumine District of Simbu with a wooden box containing money, clothes and some shells.

Three years later he mobilised his clansmen and walked more than 30 kilometres from Omdara all the way to a coffee plantation in Kudjip. At the request of his parents, he later decided to return to his birthplace. However, some of the clansmen who accompanied him
never returned.

Many highlanders left to work in the plantations with the hope of making fortunes for themselves and the third generation of these migrants still live within the perimeters of these plantations.

Although the movement began in the 1960s, it is surprising to note that the outsiders have not assimilated into the local culture. It is also not known how many made their fortune.

There is a clear line of ‘who is from where’ around the plantations. The Kimil-Kar area of Jiwaka Province is now a multi-ethnic community. Simbus co-exist with Southern Highlanders, Engans and people from other provinces.

The coffee plantation and its promises of employment and fortune attracted the parents of these people. However, like all the cash crops established during the colonial period, profit from many coffee plantations has declined and yields have decreased to a point where it threatens the plantation’s existence.

The plantations have not been receiving the level of care required. Bush invaded them, fences were left to decay and workers were laid off. This has created confusion in the minds of the plantation workers and the community.

They began to invent their own stories to come up with a suitable explanation. The common perception among people is that the decline is due to the fact that the expatriate owners sold the plantations to local businessmen who then neglected them.

The current generation of ethnic groups from other provinces in the Kimi-Kar area sense that the hopes of their parents and grandparents have dwindled. They know they have to make a start for themselves in the competitive world outside the plantations.

Some realised that marriage to the local tribal girls paid dividends. They quickly settled in the villages and resorted to pineapples, corn and other crops for sustenance.

Others began to claim land around the plantations and along the Banz-Kimil Highway and resorted to betel nut and cigarette vending at the hauslain maket (village market).

Such ventures create tensions among the local people who perceive and claim this land as their own inherited business zone. The tension has expanded to the township of Banz where many of the outside ethnic groups that wholesale betel nut and vegetables have displaced local farmers.
The area which was designated for the market some 30 years ago has not expanded to cater for the growing number of vendors. The establishment of the new Jiwaka Province and its prospects for economic development has attracted more outside people who buy land from local people and establish businesses.

Like other highlands provinces, drug and alcohol abuse are on the rise in Jiwaka. The newly established Jiwaka Secondary School, supported by the Evangelical Brotherhood Church, has seen its teachers and students threatened and attacked many times. Similarly, the long established Fatima Secondary School has often come under attack from landowners.

My uncles and cousins who settled at Kandal, near the current Jiwaka District Administration office, have been getting into physical and violent confrontation with people from other ethnic groups and local people as they seek to make a mark and gain recognition for their existence.

The current generations of ethnic groups have been around before Jiwaka Province was born. They went there to stay and will continue to exert their interest formally or informally.
 Maintaining grandpa’s legacy 
DAVID KASEI WAPAR

I CAN CLEARLY RECALL GRANDPA’S words: “Yu mas singsing tumbuna singsing. Nongut bibain tiksa blong yu askim yu long singsing” (You need to know traditional songs. Who knows, you might one day be asked by your teacher to sing one).

It sounded funny to me, and I took it as one of those many boring grandpa lectures. It doesn’t make sense, I thought.

Not until years later when I came to appreciate my origins more and further realised my cultural identity was fast diminishing.

It was on one of those less starry-nights more than a decade ago when old grandpa Wapar told me that while we were enjoying the warmth of the coconut-husk fire beside his bedside.

He was singing to me after our conversation so as to emphasize his point.

At intervals I’d glance at grandma Sawoi who was lying on a fanga (mat woven from coconut leaves) against the wall and cackled at the way grandfather would struggle to sing and get the words out from his almost toothless mouth.

Grandma would join me then in a chorus of laughter that drowned grandfather’s croaky voice.

But then, eventually, my heart would break at the sight of him whistling the melody hoarsely with tears in his eyes.

The sound of the warm ocean breeze against the coconut leaves and the constant crashing of waves against drifting logs washing ashore provided the background to his continuous throaty humming.

A few dry coughs would abruptly interrupt him.

“I wish I’m still young so you can see how I sing and dance,” he told me emotionally that night.

You just can’t sing anymore, I thought to myself sadly.

Four years ago, while doing my second year at the Divine Word University, his words became a reality.

It was in those weeks leading to one of my most exciting extra-curricular activities, the annual DWU Cultural Show, that I put his words into action.

After having danced the previous year without proper traditional
attire, I promised myself to come out shining and in full gear the following year.

However I didn’t expect what was coming. I realised later that it was a memorable event in my life.

I joined a bunch of Sepik students in the short walk from the student mess to the practice area on that humid evening in August 2008, feeling all psyched-up.

But when we settled at the practice venue, it hit us that there was no one to teach us something to perform for the show. All was quiet while we awaited suggestions.

Now, a different kind of fire began to burn in me; to stand up and take the lead.

After a few minutes I couldn’t hold back any longer. My hand shot up before I realised. I knew the time had come for me to take pride in my cultural heritage, particularly my Tarawai origin.

I took to the front amidst a few claps and cheers and in no time began writing the lyrics on the white board with ease and accuracy.

“Asi bika asi narandue…” I wrote the first line of one of Tarawai’s most ancient traditional songs; the wale b’leh. The song was last sung and danced when I was a kid spending my days naked, splashing in water on the beach of our little hamlet, Muote’.

But the writing was not all, as I had to sing what I had written. Breathing heavily I gathered whatever courage was left in me and managed a few spluttered lines all the while picturing grandpa tapping his wooden head-rest with his fingers and whistling.

This time it was me tapping the nearest table top with the palm of my right hand to maintain the desired tempo.

I sang with my eyes fixed on the wall. I wished grandpa was there to meet my eyes and guide me with his bony fingers.

I didn’t know how I looked in front of my friends that night but the compliments at the end of the practice said it all.

After several days I gained quite a degree of popularity among my fellow Sepiks. Of course it was a relief listening to them sing on their own the two pieces of wale b’leh I had taught.

The DWU cultural day had arrived and the show was just hours away. The sun was up early and we expected the usual hot sunny day in beautiful Madang. Excitement was in the air as were students in varied and colourful traditional attire. The sound of kundu, garamut and tinkling sea shells filled the air.
Finally, after the call for us to take our place was blared over the PA system, I nervously led my troupe of beautifully decorated dancers to the arena.

The *wale b’leh* comprises various dances complementing the songs, and the one we performed had dancers in two straight lines, one of which I led.

The moment my lips parted to let the lyrics out, I felt nothing else in the world mattered.

With sharp female voices providing the backdrop and unremitting cheers from the audience, I moved to the *kundu* beat like I never did before.

“*Bika bika narandue…e-e Narandue’ narawae…*”

I knew old Wapar would have been a proud grandpa if only he was there to see me sing and dance.

I thought of myself as a true Papua New Guinean, as I had done something to promote my unique identity.

Nonetheless I didn’t get to tell grandpa all about this special event. Wapar died several months into the third year of my study.

Sitting beside his brown wooden coffin just metres away from the fireplace, I chanted a few lines of *wale b’leh* between heavy sobs.


I guess he must have smiled at me and proudly sang along with his most beautiful voice as he sailed to the land of the dead.

*Kuokei, tei beleb’ kileyunnande’!*
The corrosive effect of westernisation on nuptial tradition
FRANCIS NII

AMONG THE PROBLEMS THAT IN exist in marriage in Papua New Guinea today are the domino effects of disintegration and adulteration of customary nuptial principles by the callous forces of westernisation.

The other day I was returning from town back to Sir Joseph Nombri Memorial Hospital where I live.

Beside the road at Agua Market, I noticed a commotion. People were shouting and using obnoxious language. My wheelchair pusher and I stopped to find out what was going on.

A mother and her son-in-law were having a fracas and the mother was hurling all kinds of invective at her in-law.

“Lukim em, sem blong em – Look at him, shame on him. Wanem taim bai yu baim Susan – When are you going to pay for Susan? Karim pikinini nating na nogat pay; yu mas sem long yu yet – Producing children without paying the bride price; you must be ashamed of yourself,” she shouted.

“Nogat wok, nogat haus, pipia karim pikinini natingnating osem dog – No job, no home, rubbish-bearing children senselessly like a dog.

“Tupla pinis na namba tri klostu bai kam na kain piapia man osem yu bai yu lukautim ol osem wanem – Two already and the third one is about to come and a trash like you, how are you going to look after them?

“Yupla olgeta lukim em, sem blong em – Everybody look at him, shame on him.”

The man retaliated with provocations and the woman was still barraging him with her diatribe as we left.

On the way my mind reflected on the fray and the sad reality dawned that I had witnessed an example of the disintegration and adulteration of customary nuptial principles.

The incident was a result of a classic domino effect triggered initially by that callous force of westernisation.

In Papua New Guinea, every ethnic group has its own traditional marriage kastom, but the triumph of peace, happiness and prosperity in marriage is a universal precept and Papua New Guinea and Simbu
present no exception.

In Simbu society, there are four main elements in the marriage enterprise. Building a new home and making a new garden. Bride price fixing and bride price payment. The marriage contract or *holim burs bilong pik* (holding pig’s breast). And the initiation of the groom and bride into manhood and womanhood and independent living.

There are slight variations in the order of the events and the manner in which the rituals are conducted in each tribal group but, on the whole, the four elements are the pillars of Simbu marriage custom.

In South Simbu, when a boy and a girl are in love and have agreed to get married, the first thing the boy’s relatives do is build a new house and make a new garden for the couple-to-be.

And then they look forward to the call by the girl’s relatives to set the bride price.

Word goes to the girl’s relatives that the boy’s people are ready to marry their daughter.

The girl’s relatives host a small feast and invite the boy’s relatives to attend.

The purpose of the feast is threefold: to give official recognition to the relationship; to unite the two families; and, the core one, to fix the bride price – the girl’s relatives informing the boy’s relatives of the amount they want for their daughter.

In response the boy’s relatives set the tentative time they will pay the bride price.

The bride price amount set for a girl depends on whether she is working, the status of the parents and other minor factors.

If the girl is working or comes from a high class family, the bride price set is high and vice versa.

When the appointed time for payment comes, the boy’s relatives bring the bride price - mostly cash these days - to the girl’s people.

In the old days they used shell money, stone axes and birds of paradise feathers.

But today it is cold hard cash and, in some cases, a Toyota Land Cruiser is included, especially when the girl is highly educated and the boy’s parents are business tycoons.

The wedding feast is reciprocal. It is the bride’s people who host the first feast for the groom’s people and this is when the *holim burs bilong pik* rite is conducted.
Later, the groom’s people host the payback feast for the bride’s people and this time the bride and groom are initiated into manhood and womanhood.

The night before the bride’s people host the wedding feast, the groom and his people congregate with the bride and her people in the bride’s parents’ house or the hausman and the elders and sages of both sides give skul tok.

The skul tok extends until dawn and covers all aspects of life from morality to survival, leadership, prosperity, charity, warfare, raising children and problem-solving interspersed with singing and tanim bet (turning head ritual), jokes and meals.

In the morning, the bride’s people line up the pigs, cattle, and goats they intend to slaughter for the groom’s people to inspect and agree - because they are going to match them in the payback feast.

Once a consensus is reached, the animals are slaughtered and cooked in big mumu pits.

While the mumu is cooking, all kinds of bilums, clothes and cooked and raw food that the bride’s people gathered for the groom’s people are given to them.

When the mumu is ready, the bride is dressed in the finest traditional regalia ready to be received by the groom’s people.

The groom and some strong men and women are also dressed in traditional regalia and await the call for holim bros bilong pik.

As soon as the mumu is removed from the pit, word goes out to the groom that it’s time for holim bros bilong pik. The groom and his friends sing and dance to the mumu place where the reception takes place.

The most colourful and exciting part of the ceremony is the receiving of the groom and bride by the respective sides.

Both sides mingle and dance in a warlike fashion and carry the bride and groom away before bringing them together for holim bros bilong pik, equivalent to the exchange of wedding rings in western culture.

The exchange and eating of the pigs’ breasts then proceeds. The bride holds one breast and the groom holds another and they exchange them. The marriage is sealed.

The groom and the bride each take a bit of pork and carry the breasts to their relatives who finish them.

This is followed by brief, wise and heart-moving speeches by both
sides (which also includes the timing of the return feast) before the bride is released to the groom’s people amidst tears and dirges by close relatives.

The groom’s people take the bride, the meat and all the other stuff and return to their place.

The bride is taken to her new home and, in the days that follow, introduced to her new garden.

When the appointed time for the payback feast comes, the groom’s people repay all the *bilum*, clothes, foods and animals that were slaughtered for them and sometimes even extra.

Before the woman’s people go away with the food, the final ritual is conducted.

In front of the whole assembly, the woman is presented with a *bilum* (symbol of fertility), a spade (symbol of hard work), a female piglet (symbol of prosperity and wealth) and several *kaukau* vines (symbol of copiousness).

The man is presented with an axe (symbol of manhood, independence and hard work) and a sugar cane or banana seed of a special kind (symbol of prosperity and leadership).

Making a new home and garden, *skul tok* and initiating the bride and groom into womanhood and manhood are vital elements of the whole marriage venture for the Simbu people.

The couple is now well prepared to face the challenges of marriage and, a few months after the bridal ceremonies, they are living an independent life.

Today, though, the unfeeling influences of western culture have disintegrated and adulterated marriage *kastom* and some important elements of the vital nuptial rites are on the verge of dying out.

*Skul tok* and manhood and womanhood initiations are forlorn rituals.

*Holim bros bilong pik* has been replaced by the exchange of rings in church. Traditional *bilas* is replaced by suits, ties and gowns.

For most marriages, the bride prices are not paid until some years after the women have children.

The couples don’t have their own means of survival. They depend on their parents for shelter, food and clothes. Even after they have children, they continue to depend on their parents and become a liability.

When the bride price is paid, they have not gone through the *skul*
tok and other initiations and, as a result, don’t know how to start a new and independent life.

All they know is sex and they think this is what marriage is about, but it’s not. Only if they go through the skul tok will they know that marriage is more than having sex and producing children.

When problems confront them they are confused and don’t know how to handle them. Violence, desertion and marriage break-ups are the ultimate consequences.

Some even wander into promiscuity and end up with HIV and AIDS.

Worse still, today’s young people are already practicing marriage before they are betrothed.

The whole matter is a national issue. It affects the entire nation. It affects the moral fabric of our society.

Society is continuously evolving and, if this kind of cultural disintegration continues, Papua New Guinea is heading for a culture embedded in lost identity and moral decadence.

Perhaps one way to preserve not only the nuptial but the other valuable and beneficial customs is to institutionalise them.

Each province could establish a cultural education institute where all the valuable and beneficial customs are documented in written and electronic form and are taught to the children in schools as part of their lessons.

This is a complex and difficult issue that has no easy solution. The best each and every ethnic group can do is to continue to practice the customs. In this way keastom is preserved; it is kept alive and passed from generation to generation.
Customary marriage protocols among the Aekyom and Gogodala

TERENCE AKO

CULTURES EVERYWHERE ARE UNIQUE AND diverse. And the people who make up these cultures view and interpret the world differently.

The Aekyom from the Ok Tedi area of Western Province have a custom where parents make all the arrangements and decide who their child should marry. However, this practice is dying out today because of internal and external influences.

Parental engagement and marriage meant there were delays. A man had to prove he was mature enough to marry. The same applied to women but not so strictly and a young girl was sometimes forced to marry at an early age.

For those mature enough to marry, there were several qualities they had to show. The man had to be a good hunter and provider and also be fit for other activities like warfare. Any young man who possessed these qualities had the opportunity to marry sooner rather than later.

The woman had to know how to make sago, make a garden, look after children, fish and, above all, be obedient to her parents.

The aim of arranged marriages was to achieve a good and prosperous union.

The Aekyom people practice the system of first cousin marriage. Marriage outside the family is also practiced but only under certain circumstances.

The first cousin, the son of a sister, would automatically marry the daughter of his mother’s brother.

An important reason for arranged first cousin marriage was to avoid argument and revenge. When the couple encountered problems, they would be a family matter and be settled within the family.

Most often, who a man or woman was to marry was never disclosed until the day of marriage.

When all the arrangements were complete and when all parties
agreed, a marriage feast would be secretly organised. The organisers would decide where to host it and set a day. Invitations were given out to all the close relatives.

The bridegroom’s family and relatives would get materials of value and a pig or pigs, maybe a cassowary, and have them ready for the occasion.

When the day of marriage arrived, the bridegroom’s closest friends (also known as the persuaders - friends who were aware of what was happening), would stay close to him and cook something, tell stories and jokes and keep him company to keep his mind occupied.

The bride’s closest friends did the same. However, the woman was always the first to know the secret because, in marriage, a woman is required to wear a simple grass skirt made from a special ‘tulip’ orchid which is used only in marriage ceremonies.

As soon as the bride had been told, people would gather around her and begin chanting.

While the chanting was going on, the bridegroom would become suspicious and ask his friends what was going on. This is the time when one of his closest friends got up, danced around him and told him the meaning of the chanting.

Sometimes the bride or the bridegroom resisted but people were been appointed to calm the man and the woman before they did something silly.

The reasons why people kept the marriage secret is unclear to me, but one could guess it was to keep the bride and the bridegroom away from each other to avoid them having sex before marriage.

Usually, the wedding took the whole night. Family members and relatives of boy and girl met in a house and usually one of the uncle’s from the girl’s side stood up and announced the occasion.

He calls the niece by name and tells her, “Tonight we are officially announcing that you will become the wife of – and calls the bridegroom’s name. In the same way, he calls the boy by name and repeats what he said to the girl.

By this time, everybody in the community has gathered at the meeting place. Most of them are older people who have advice for the new couple. They offer advice on issues of life and marriage. This usually takes the whole night.

Throughout the night, the girl will continue to stay with her best
friends on the women’s side while the boy stays with his friends on
the men’s side.

If the girl is from another village, the two may not have seen each
other’s faces before. This will have to wait until daybreak when they
are sharing sago.

At daybreak it is either the uncle of the girl (the one who
announced the marriage) or another close relative who declares the
two as married. He then instructs the girl to cook sago and come to a
central public place. As she comes forward, he invites the boy to join
her. Both of them are instructed to sit.

As they sit down, the uncle tells the girl to break the sago in half
and hand over the other half to her husband to be. They both then
share the sago in full public view. This indicates that the two are now
one.

The ceremony ends with feasting and then the man is ready to
take his new wife home.

The newlyweds are expected to go out together on their first
fishing or hunting trip. The wife must at all times stay close to her
husband. If they find a pig or cassowary in the bush, and the husband
shoots it, his new wife is required to touch the elbow of the hand that
let go of the arrow.

Whatever they gather, they bring home, share and begin a new life
together.

The Gogodala people of the Middle Fly River have two head clans
or moieties, white and red. All other sub-clans fall into either of
these.

Among the Gogodala a person from the white clan cannot marry
into the same clan. He or she must marry someone from the red clan.

When a man wants to marry, he must prove that he is ready. He
must be capable of making a canoe, paddling, preparing yam gardens
and building a house.

When the man’s parents see their son is ready, they decide to find
a partner for him.

So they ask a family from the other clan if they can give their
daughter in marriage. If the parents of the girl agree, they set a date
for engagement *kaka*. Before then, the boy and girl will not know
about their engagement.

Both families are required to cook food and come together in the
girl’s family’s house and share the food. Here the boy’s father
announces the engagement to the chosen girl. The father of the girl accepts the engagement and agrees to give away his daughter in marriage. During this process they will set a day when their children are to marry.

In the engagement period the boy’s family will test the girl to see if she will be loyal, trustworthy and faithful to the boy and see if she is capable of looking after their son and his family.

Whenever she makes sago she is required to bring a bundle of sago to the boy’s family and when she goes fishing she has to take some of her catch to them. This also applies to garden produce and firewood until the day set by both parents for them to marry arrives.

At this stage the whole village readies the wedding feast. Men go hunting for game while the women make sago, catch fish, gather tulip greens, collect firewood and dry coconuts and get them ready for the wedding feast.

On the marked day, the women wake up early and begin preparing the food for cooking. At this time the men also start cooking the game they have killed.

When the food is cooked an announcement is made sent to the girl’s family and clan members to bring her to the feasting area.

The girl’s parents and clan dress the girl in traditional attire and, with the food they have prepared, paddles her brothers have made and other gifts, take the girl to the boy’s family compound.

The girl’s clan members beat *kundus* and with singing and dancing take the girl to the boy who she is to marry. The boy gladly receives the girl and the gifts she brings with her.

The boy’s family and clan members in exchange give their share of food and gifts to the girl’s family. There will be happy singing and dancing until the end of the feasting in the evening. The girl is now part of a new family. She will be required never to return to her family and clan again.

After all this, the girl’s family will ask for an exchange from the boy’s family. This custom, strong in the past, is now dying out.

So there are significant differences in marriage protocols between these two close neighbouring language groups. The Aekyom people practice first cousin marriage while the Gogodala people practice the exchange system.

The Aekyom do not made known the marriage to the man and woman until the wedding ceremony. The Gogodalas inform the two
during the engagement ceremony.

However, the Aekyom marriage traditions and the Gogodala marriage traditions have some things in common: the parental set up; feasting and proving they are capable of looking after themselves.

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Gag-gauamo: the baby cleansing ritual of the upper Simbu
ARNOLD MUNDUA

GAG-GAUAMO, OR BABY CLEANSING IN the Kuman dialect, was one of many obligatory rituals performed on new born babies in the Upper Simbu and other parts of Simbu Province in pre-modern times. 

Gag-gauamo was performed by elderly women to prepare the infant for a healthy and trouble-free growth into adulthood. The ritual was performed on a new born baby immediately after birth. The ritual used the leaves of dodon, a waterside shrub with a soft, moist sponge-like leaf, and moro-kiglaua, a deep-forest piper plant with huge ovate leaves that emit a cool, sweet menthol fragrance when pressed or squashed.

In the modern context, gag-gauamo can be likened to the modern day immunisation clinic conducted by the doctors and nurses in hospitals and health centres.

It was part of the natal process, beginning at about the eighth month of pregnancy when the mother started experiencing occasional movements and kicks in her abdomen.

A temporary hut, like a maternity ward, was quickly constructed, usually by the husband. The hut was constructed in a secluded site away from the family home and kept warm by constant fires in readiness for the new ‘tenant’.

As soon as the early labour pains hit the mother, she isolated herself by moving into the hut with midwives, two or three elderly women. Along with her went all the items she needed for labour and for the new infant.

The latter would include a nursery bilum for the baby, a freshly stitched baby mat made out of pandanus leaves, and sun-dried dagle-muno leaves to keep the infant warm inside the bilum.

As soon as the baby was safely delivered, the umbilical cord was cut with a sharp object, often a bamboo knife. The cord was taken outside with the placenta and buried. A tangel (cordilyne) cutting was planted over the burial spot to mark it.
When the infant matured, the spot would be indicated to him and, if the *tangent* survived the test of time, there would often be a good story to tell about the significance of this historical plant and the ‘sacred’ place in which the plant was growing.

After the severed umbilical cord was buried, the natal mess and rubbish were thoroughly removed before anyone could visit the maternity hut. The rubbish was piled in a heap outside the hut and burnt. It was the belief of the Upper Simbus that the trail of smoke from the burnt natal rubbish indicated the infant’s destiny.

If the baby was a girl and the smoke trailed south, it was forecast that the girl would one day marry someone from the tribes in the south. If the smoke trailed north over the Bismarck Range, a handsome bridegroom would come from the Ramu Valley (Geregl or Gende). Through him all the good things of that area like *marita*, cassowaries and cuscus would come.

The same predictions occurred for male infants. Brides, riches and wealth from the locations where the smoke trailed would be forecast for the male child. If the smoke trailed towards the forest, it would be forecast that the infant would be a great hunter.

News of the birth would fan out into the community. Words of praise and appreciation would fill every household. Amidst the excitement, the women would prepare to visit the new baby. Men were not allowed into the maternity hut still.

Mothers and girls who lived near the forest searched for fresh *dodon* and *moro-kiglaua* leaves for the *gag-gauamo* ritual. They would wander off and return with the best leaves these plants could produce. If the infant was a boy, the search for a praying mantis’ nest also got underway to make sure a sufficient quantity was amassed.

Satisfied with their collecting, the women would make courtesy visits to the labour hut, where the infant would be sleeping peacefully on the *pandanus* mat amongst the sun-dried *dagle-muno* leaves in the nursery *bilum*. The visiting women would pile their presents of *dodon* and *moro-kiglaua* leaves, including the praying mantis nest if the baby was a male.

The nursery *bilum* would be passed around amongst the excited women, and for the first time the day-old infant would be viewed and greeted.
Specially prepared delicacies would be presented to the mother to enjoy and to assist recuperation from her labour ordeal. The *gag-gauamo* ritual would be performed during this visitation.

The honour of performing *gag-gauamo* often rested with the infant’s grandmother, but if she had no experience the job would be performed by another elderly woman who knew the ritual and the associated incantations.

The first part began with the formal cleansing using the *dodon* leaves. The day old infant would be gently lifted from the nursery *bilum* and the cleansing began.

The soft and spongy cotton-like leaf was used to cleanse the baby.

As the woman did this, she would chant the incantations: *let this area shine…let this area be dirt free…let no dirt settle in this area* and so on.

A new leaf was used as required until every surface was thoroughly cleaned.

This was the first phase of the cleansing ritual.

The second part of *gag-gauamo* followed with the *moro-kiglaua* leaves.

The *moro-kiglaua* is a gigantic piper plant that grows in deep forest beneath the tall trees. Unlike other piper species, *moro-kiglaua* grows fast and gracefully tall without any hint of defect or deformity.

The fascinating and widely spaced internodes along the smooth bole make this species unique amongst piper plants and very attractive. It stands rigid during its entire lifespan until it reaches senescence and dies, allowing new suckers to take over.

Because of these unique characteristics of the plant, the ancient Upper Simbus believed that the use and application of *moro-kiglaua* leaves during *gag-gauamo* would make the baby grow fast, tall, big, strong and healthy without any deformity.

Hence, the application of *moro-kiglaua* leaves in this second phase of cleansing was specifically to enhance and prepare the infant for speedy, healthy and trouble-free growth.

The *moro-kiglaua* leaves were first warmed over the fire, allowing just enough heat to avoid burning the infant. Then, accompanied by chanting for goodwill, fortune and health, the infant’s tiny body was stretched and the muscles massaged and rubbed with *moro-kiglaua* leaves.

The infant’s face, front, back, ears, scalp, torso, buttocks, limbs and ten tiny fingers were then massaged and rubbed.
The ritual performer would chant: *Let no injuries touch this area, let this area be protected, let this hand grow big and strong, let these eyes see properly, let this leg grow tall and strong like the moro-kiglaua and walk many miles, let these fingers be free of harm and injuries, let this ear hear properly, let this head be wise* as she continued with the moro-kiglaua leaf.

For the male child, the praying mantis’ nest would be used to rub and massage the tiny penis and testicles of the infant for a modest testicle size when the baby grew up.

The specialist would make sure that every surface on the baby’s skin was attended to. Then she would carefully place the infant, who by now would be signalling discomfort from the unusual things that were happening, into the nursery *bilum* and hand it back to the mother to comfort him with breast milk.

The used leaves and the used praying mantis’ nest were gathered and taken to a river where they were disposed of with the words: ‘*Let all the misfortunes on the baby be washed away forever*’. The formal gag-gauamo ritual then ended.

The unused gag-gauamo materials would be left with the mother. The remaining praying mantis’ nests would be used by the mother in her own time to continue massaging the testicles until the stock was depleted.

For the donon and moro-kiglaua leaves, the mother would need them for as long as the baby remained in the nursery *bilum*. They were substitutes for the modern day diapers and baby blanket.

On the pandanus baby mat in the nursery *bilum*, the donon leaves would be nicely arranged in the area where the infant’s buttocks lay to absorb wetting and waste matter.

The moro-kiglaua leaves, on the other hand, would be used as covers to keep the infant warm in the nursery *bilum*.

Mother and infant would remain in isolation in the labour hut for about a week before moving back into the family home.

The gag-kambe-gaiglkwa or the naming ceremony would follow, including a feast.

The gag-gauamo ritual died out in the early 1970s but it was performed with such great faith that elderly Upper Simbus of today still boast of the wonders caused by this ancient cultural practice.

At a time when soap, daily showers (or full baths), hospitals, doctors, nurses, blankets and medicines were unknown, Upper Simbu babies of the past defied all odds under the spell of the gag-gauamo to
become towering men and women, filled with bulging muscles to
tackle the rugged terrain of the Upper Simbu, unlike the Simbus of
today.

Equally, at a time when underpants were unavailable to the Upper
Simbu men, who were only clothed with kondai (apron) in the front
to cover the genital areas and arbuglo (tanget or cordyline leaves) to cover
the buttocks, the invisible powers of the praying mantis’ nest - that
looked like an infant’s testicles - kept the men’s testicles at a modest
size and avoided miserable inconvenience in the routines of life.

Perhaps the gag-gauamo ritual could hold the secret to the creation,
survival and existence of those gigantic Upper Simbus of the past.
Memories of boyhood – a typical school day at Tarawai
DAVID KASEI WAPAR

I AWOKE TO THE CHORUS of cock-a-doodle-do and the familiar smell of burning frami, a highly flammable wood that can be found in the stack of firewood in almost every home in Tarawai. Sluggishly I sat upright, cursed the fowls roosting on the young kalapulim tree and looked through the window. It was Friday.

From the rhythmic swaying of the coconut leaves I could tell that Rai, the north-easterly breeze would be moderate today and that the ocean tide would be fit for a little fun with my bow and arrows after school.

Bathing was the toughest of my morning routines as I had to walk a few hundred feet from home with a bucket and old towel, fetch water from the well and, if unlucky, wait a couple of minutes for the people who managed to book the bathroom before me.

The bathroom consisted of sticks deposited firmly into the soil on which the old remnants of woven sago leaf roof covering were tied right up to the desired height. Inside this topless stand-alone square cubicle, white beach gravel was laid over the loamy soil that sucks up water from every shower session.

Sensing that I might miss out on the morning’s round of the latest gossip and stories of my friends’ adventures the previous evening, I tossed water over the foam of cheap bath soap on my hair, covered myself with the towel and rushed home.

After getting myself into a clean pair of khaki shorts and a singlet, I tossed my stationery into my old school bag and raced to the kitchen, which by then was choked with smoke from burning embers and filled with the smell of freshly boiled sweet potato.

Using a coconut frond as a fork, I put five pieces into my nu boroma (lunch basket woven from coconut leaves) and dashed to the main village path to catch up with the colleagues who together made a mischievous bunch on the way to school.

From Muote’, my little hamlet, we’d have to pass Se’etem and Urate’ before a half a mile walk along the stony track that weaved through dense coconut plantations and shrubs.
A fine morning’s walk as you get to enjoy the view of the ocean, the coast of Dagua and the blue Torricelli Mountains. And if there was a dinghy heading to Wewak, we’d keep chase on the stony track until it disappeared behind Cape Isua, the only entrance and exit for vessels. A long reef stretches from Isua to Tamba’uati which is another headland past Wolomu, the last village, making entry impassable for big ships and even many smaller ones.

We were dispatched to our respective classrooms after morning assembly, looking forward to another day of learning.

Classroom activities were the usual arithmetic, dictation and composition, which we completed before lunch. And as the assigned bell-ringer walked out, we shoved books and pencils into the home-made wooden desks and went after him to the thatched-roof lunch hut, the lunch baskets hanging from suspended hooks made of string and young tree branches.

A group of friends would have a favourite secluded spot, usually filled with white beach sand in the shade of the trees, or among little shrubs along the beach. We would gather to discuss our test results or just go on a marathon of storytelling while enjoying our boiled sweet potatoes and coconuts.

The days always seemed bright with the sun hovering above puffy cumulonimbus clouds. We searched for a spot far enough from the vicinity of the girls so that, naked, we could enjoy the soothing cool sea and achieve a couple of good dives from the kalapulim trees.

The school bell, which was a small old gas cylinder, would ring and halt our fun. We scrambled for our clothes on tree trunks and branches.

But we were eager to get back to class and put up with the teacher until 2pm, when we’d leave the classroom for some physical action. Volleyball was our main sport and we flocked to the volleyball court for a couple of matches with mixed male and female teams. I remember that my team was called Dugongs and we were quite a hit when it came to volleyball.

Finally, as the last game ended, we’d congregate for another assembly where general announcements were made and at times discipline executed.

I raced home thanking God that it was Friday and that I’d have two full days to go on a fishing spree or just doze.

The low-tide greeted me with its smell of sulphur blended with
salt water. I reached Manarawa, a small sacred lagoon surrounded by reef, and jogged home under shady *kalapulims* and other leafless trees that cast silhouettes over the lengthy patches of sand.

I reached home and changed into my old raggedy clothes, fetched my bows and arrows and took to the reef.

I’d almost reach my favourite spot for parrot fish when Mum would yell at me. From the tone, I knew I was in for my usual afternoon chores of coconut scraping or fetching water from the well.

I’d sigh, stumble over rocks, coral and empty clam shells and head for the shore.

What a way to start my weekend.
The story of Nembare
BOMAI WITNE

IN THE GORGES AND GULLIES of the Mon and Maril Rivers, in the tribal land of the descendants of Alai-bia, within the Nulai-kia clan of Omdara, were two sons Kurkaul and Tolpari.

According to Kurkaul’s grandson Guna Nembare Maikel, brothers Kurkaul and Tolpari could have been born and raised in the 1910s.

This was an era when the coastal part of the island of New Guinea and New Guinea islands were more than two decades on from official German and British colonisation. But the highlands area, in particular the birth place of Kurkaul and Tolpari, was devoid of European contact.

Nembare remembers little about his grandfather Kurkaul and his brother Tolpari but knows that, if he had mastered the skill of those who wrote the Bible in those days, he could have recorded the histories of his grandfather and great-grandfather.

He did not learn how to write 1, 2, 3 or A, B, C even after contact with first Europeans. He still cannot write his name but does not regret it. He says he spends most of his time doing things that men did during his time and loves smoking his brus (rough tobacco).

He lives a few metres away from the gorgeous, crystal Maril River. He says he owns the river and bathes whenever he feels like it and doesn’t need a towel. But he adds that the travels he has done have shaped his world view.

Nembare’s grandfather, Kurkaul, grew up among his clansmen and earned his position and inherited his share of the Nulai-kia heritage of the Yuri tribe.

He was respected for his skills as a gardener, warrior, orator and hard worker. He inherited traditions of respect for members of his clan and to avoid mischievous conduct that would bring disrepute to his family and clan.

Tribal warfare had been an inherent part of the Nula-kia tradition. It did not matter which side was in the wrong but the Nulai-kia clan would take it on itself to send warriors to the battlefield and the success of the day’s battle was measured by how many of their men returned unhurt.
Destruction of property was part of war but not the ultimate goal. The rituals associated with war were strictly observed and followed. Among the norms were that young men could not visit their girlfriends or eat at their mothers’ house.

Kurkaul strictly adhered to his clan’s tradition not to court girls from within the clan and neighbouring clans that shared common traditional myths and totems.

So he was compelled to go east to the Golin tribe in search of a girl who would later become his wife.

In mid-1920, Kurkaul married a Golin woman from the Nilki’gaulin clan who had four children, Kulame, Sipa, Bomai and their sister Guan. Kulame and Sipa followed their mother and grew up among the Nilki’gaulin clan and their children occupy parts of modern day Yani village in the Gumine District. Guan married a Milin’kane man of the Golin tribe.

Bomai was left behind with his father at his birthplace of Omdara. He grew up and ventured south-east to marry a woman from the Guna’gaun clan of the Era tribe. Bomai’s wife was known within Nulai-kia circles as Era’mbia (meaning woman from Era tribe) who had a son in the mid-1940s and named him Nembare.

Nembare being the only child added his mother’s clan name Guna to his name and a Christian name Maikel when he later came into contact with Lutheran missionaries. Nembare now goes by his full name, Guna Nembare Maikel and his Nulai-kia clansmen call him Guna Nembare.

Nembare could not remember exactly what year he was born but he remembered growing up in his birth place and was among the first young men of his clan to be recruited for plantation duties in Rabaul.

He had to walk from Omdara to Omkolai and was flown to Goroka where he stayed for two weeks working in the laundry at the hospital. During his short stint in Goroka, he remembers running away from work because he was shocked to see blood-stained cloth and the thought of washing it scared him.

He travelled to Rabaul by way of Lae and worked as a plantation labourer performing wood cutting, grass cutting, cooking, cleaning, picking copra and other tasks that required his skill.

At the end of his contract he recalled buying clothes for his parents and neatly packed them in a wooden box with some kina shells. His return with European goods created news among the
Heritage Writing

Nulai-kia clan and the neighbouring clans.

Soon the news of tea and coffee plantations in parts of Jiwaka in the 1960s attracted their attention. They had to walk more than 30 kms from Omdara to Kudjiip in Jiwaka Province to pursue their dream of working on a plantation.

Nembare, returned to his birth place at a request of his parents and now lives at the River Maril Bay in Omdara, guarded by the walls of Pildimna to the north and Dekawi to the south.

In 1966, Nembare followed his father Bomai to Mormapir village. It was a journey that required stamina.

They got up in the morning and walked more than 10 kilometres along the bush tracks of Eka’pa to Pildimna and across the fast flowing streams of Yon’ma, Genabona, Kom’kamale, Talpmina until they eventually arrived at Mormapir.

At Mormapir, Bomai introduced his son to his cousin’s sister. After a few days, Bomai returned to Omdara but Nembare decided to spend some time with his aunt.

After that first visit, Nembare would occasionally travel to and from Omdara to visit his aunt himself and, in 1967, Nembare met Mir Dongo’al Martina, who later became his wife.

Dongo’al was from the Kiri’gauma clan of the Bari tribe and was related to Yal Bom. Whenever, Nembare visited Yal Bom and his family, Dongo’al detected Nembare’s visit as if by instinct and would visit Yal Bom at the same time.

In 1968, Nembare convinced Dongo’al to follow him to Omdara, where she was welcomed with a lengthy shout from an experienced shouter from the Nulai-kia clan.

In Yuri, a gathering of clans-people is called Wi si mala for men and Ala’sa for women. The men start in a chorus with si puuu and ended with a’a uuuuu and women join in with aiya uuuu. This marks the beginning of formal welcome of women into a man’s clan.

A clansman shouted Nembare and Dongo’al’s identity to the neighbouring clans after the wi si mala and ala’sa event. The neighbouring clans wait anxiously for the news whenever hearing the shouts and screams from the other clan.

To the Nulai-kia clan of Omdara, this ceremony cemented the tradition of courtship between the young men of Yuri tribe courting Bari girls and Bari young men courting Yuri girls. The Bari tribe of Kerowagi has always held the Yuri tribe in high esteem, often
thinking of them as their parents and calling them *nen-man* in the Bari language.

The myth remains that the Bari people were assisted to settle in their current location by the Yuri people, thus the Bari people regard Yuri people as ‘parents’. This understanding has been inherited and embraced by the two tribes over many generations.

This is evident in the two tribes sharing a common land border without ever fighting. In most parts of Simbu, neighbouring tribes have often fought wars to settle scores.

The Yuri Ela’kane, Mian’kane and Kumai’kane clans share common hunting grounds with the Bari tribe. Other clans including Nulai-kia live further inland and so interact less with the Bari tribe.

Nembare’s marriage to a Bari woman created a breakthrough for Nulai-kia men to marry more Bari women.

Today, the children of Bari women in Omdara call themselves, *Bari gal* (Bari children) to trace their origin to their mother’s tribe.

I was born and raised in my mother’s clan and, when I visited my father’s land at Omdara after almost 30 years, the younger members of the Nulai-kia clan members at Omdara did not know of my existence so took me as just another visitor during the Christmas festive season.

Those over 35 years, however, did recognise me, called me by name and introduced me to others in the Yuri language. “*Guna Nembare, wan Dike Bomai wa dungo plngra mala ungi*” (This is Guna Nembare’s son, Dick Bomai).

Donogo’al settled in quickly with support from the Nulai-kia clan members and towards the end of 1969 she gave birth to her first daughter and named her Salome. Salome, like other kids of her time, was nursed by her mother and clothed in soft and tender leaves from the bush.

The cool breeze off the River Maril would fan Salome to long hours of sleep, leaving her mother with more time to work and chat with other women.

Salome was brown-skinned and healthy. She inherited dark curly hair from her father. Guna Nembare recalls with tears that, if she was alive, she would have grown as tall as her great grandmother’s mountain Wikauma and the clan that married her would boast of its healthy grandchildren.

It was on a fine afternoon in 1975, when the Yuri tribe was
settling to reminisce over its pig killing ceremony (*bolma’ike*), when her mother placed her in a *bilum* and hung it on a post to allow the evening breeze of the River Maril to fan her to sleep.

Her mother didn’t know that she was hanging the little Nulai-kia queen close to the burning *mumu* stones and this would lead to Salome’s death some years later.

A piece of splintering red hot stone landed in the *bilum*, burning the lower part of little Salome’s right knee joint. Salome’s parents saw that the burn was serious and had to take her to a Catholic Church aid post at Neragaima, several kilometres away on the border of Yuri and Bari tribal land.

The medical experts at Neragaima saw that Salome needed specialist attention and took her to Mingende Hospital, which is located some kilometres towards the north-west of Neragaima. At Mingende, the parents were told that Salome’s burns were serious and she would be admitted to the hospital.

Days turned into months and Salome’s parents were wrought with sorrow for their hurting daughter, while family members from Omdara and Nergaima brought their food rations.

The health battle continues until the end of 1975, when the doctors politely told Salome’s parents that they had done their best to treat Salome but her burns had deteriorated to a point where her tendons were affected and the lower part of her right leg had to be amputated to save her life.

The parents consented and the medical doctors proceeded with the operation. The Catholic nuns recognized the agony the parents were going through and offered to take care of Salome and asked if the parents would consent. Salome’s parents agreed and went home.

Salome was left in the care of the Catholic nuns at Mingende after the operation and she recovered and lived among the nuns happily and was introduced to her lifelong companion, the crutch.

Whenever, the nuns visit Neragaima Aidpost, they would bring Salome to visit her mother and uncles. Salome lived in her adopted home until she passed away in 1985 at Neragaima Aid Post and was buried at her mother’s place, Kamtai, near Neragaima Catholic Mission.

The incident of the burning red hot stone landing on little Salome in her sleep created tension between her parents.

Dongo’al wanted to stay at her place with her son, Bomai, who
was born in a hamlet in Imil-Tomale in 1973.

Guna Nembare decided to go back to his birthplace Omdara and would find time to visit his family and contribute his share of duties. It appears that Nembare never lost sight of his river Maril heritage, guarded by the walls of Pildimna and Dekawi.

Before 1984, Nembare would come to visit his family at Neragaima and return to Omdara, and at times would take his family to Omdara.

Nembare and his wife also took on parental responsibility when Dongo’al’s mother, Anna Apane, died in 1969, leaving Dongo’al and her three siblings behind with their father Waim Kral.

Dongo’al being the eldest child and being married, with kind assistance from her husband would help take care of her younger sister Kulba Erkina and her brothers Raphael Witne and Dama Masalai.

Since Salome was in the care of the Catholic nuns, Dongo’al and Nembare would take care of their son Bomai and all of Dongo’al’s younger siblings.

One of Dongo’al’s younger brothers, Raphael Witne, was selected to do his high school studies at Gun Topil, a boy’s only school about 10 kilometres to the west of Neragaima. It is now called Rosary Secondary School Kondiu.

Witne completed his high school studies in 1975 and went on to complete his Primary Teaching Certificate towards at the end of 1977 at Holy Trinity Teacher’s College.

Dongo’al’s younger sister, Kulba, followed her Gelua’gauma Onn’bi cousins to Goroka where she met Winterford Haoda, a slim-built man from the Orokaiva tribe of Popondetta. They married and moved to Mount Hagen where they live still.

Dongo’al’s youngest brother, Dama, stayed at his birthplace, Imil Tomale, and later moved to Banz to live with his cousins. He sells betel nut, tobacco rolled in newspapers and Cambridge cigarettes whenever he can afford to buy a packet to resell.

Waim Kral’s children, Witne and Dama, would follow their adopted parents Nembare and Dongo’al to Omdara. Dama would skip school at Neragaima to stay at Omdara and Witne would go to Omdara during school holidays from Kondiu.

At Omdara, Nembare and his wife worked hard to look after Dama and Bomai. Whenever Witne came home for holidays, he
would be treated differently, a treat reserved for a few high school students at that time.

He was the envy of the Nulai-kia girls, who would be jealous of each other and try to win Witne’s attention.

Witne can still recall the names of the most beautiful Nulai-kia girls he courted. He describes the girls as the great beauties of their time. Their beauty resembling the orchids of Kubor Range, their voices soft and their laughter like the sound of the River Maril. They had eyes that could make men melt at first sight.

Witne adds that this was why he would miss classes during his college days, to court the Nulai-kia and Nombri-Kepa girls of the Yuri tribe, and he almost failed his college courses.

Witne completed his teacher training and was posted to teach at schools in Simbu, his home province. He taught at Mogi-yagi, Gaima, Karil-maril and other primary schools.

But he left teaching after a few years and pursued a new career in the security industry, where he excelled and became national operations manager with the Securimax Company in 1997 before resigning to contest the national election.

In the 1970s through to the early 1980s, there had been continuous tribal warfare within the Yuri tribe. In 1984, Nembare realised his son Bomai, 10 years old and of school age should go to school.

Iri-maule Primary School near Omdara was used as a battlefield and the classrooms and staff houses were gradually destroyed. The staff members feared their life and left the school. So Bor’mil Primary School, which has been recently elevated to high school status, was the nearest school for the children of Yuri at that time.

The Nulai-kia children who attended school at Bor’mil had to walk from Omdara to Waramon on level land then climb the stiff ridge from Waramon to Bormil, a walk that required stamina.

Nembare sensed his son Bomai was unfit to walk the long distance to school and back each day. When he attempted to enrol Bomai at Iri-maule for first grade in 1984, after the tribal warfare, he was told that his son could not reach over his head to touch his other ear, thus was too young for enrolment. Bomai had one short arm.

Had Nembare kept the birth record of his son, he could have argued that Bomai had met the age of enrolment and was already 10.

Nembare told himself that carrying a bow and arrows around to
defend his tribal and clan territory from invading tribes and clan was not going to help Bomai get to school.

He contemplated moving to his wife’s place to settle. So in 1984 Nembare and his wife moved out of Omdara for Nergaima, taking the few possessions they owned with them.

Nembare came and settled at Kamtai, on his wife’s family land, and later moved to Kilma, where he settled on a big block of land where he could build a family house, make gardens and raise one or two pigs to sell for school fees and other necessities.

The Erula Nolai’gauma tribal land at Kilma had been left unoccupied since mid-1970 as a result of inter-tribal warfare between the Erula-Naur and Yuri tribes of Simbu.

Dongo’al’s uncle, Ulne Kama married Wakai Paulina, a woman from the Erula-Nolai’gauma clan. When the Erula-Nolai’gauma clan members’ territory was invaded during a tribal fight, they evacuated to settle on the other side of the Wahgi River, now Siur’nile.

Ulene moved with his wife Pauline to settle at his wife’s place, Kilma. Ulne invited his niece Dongo’al to move to Kilma with her husband. Dongo’al and Nembare were given a big block of land to settle on and they started working hard and soon had big gardens and a number of pigs in the backyard.

Bomai was doing Grade 1 at Saint Paul’s Primary School, Neraqaima. He had to sleep at Kilma and walk about four kilometres, mostly climbing the Mekul Plateau, and descending each day. Bomai would join his peers in playing marbles, hide and seek and other games on the way home.

On weekends, he would joint his peers in searching for keme along the River Dipi’nile and sometimes ventured further to the River Kola’kawa nile.

At school, Bomai settled in and began to do well. He was confident in speaking and writing A, B, Cs and 1, 2, 3s. His parents ensured he had kaukau to eat and take to school for lunch. His father would attend almost all parents and citizens meetings and do manual work every Thursday.

Most Thursdays, he would walk his son to school and watch him assemble with students and listen to the teachers giving directions, acting as if he understood the English language. He did it because of his pride in his son.

At that age, Bomai could not understand why his father took so
much pride in his early years of schooling. It became apparent later when Bomai started to reminisce after his father told him of his thoughts and feelings in those years.

From 1984 to 1987, Bomai continued to do well at school and was among the top students of his age. He was often among the top three students. He was a naturally talented boy and his father was happy whenever he heard that his son had topped his grade in term assessments.

But hope turned into despair in 1987, when there was an election-related tribal war between the Dom tribe of Gumine District and Bari tribe of Kerowagi District after the national elections.

The fight lasted for three months with many casualties on both sides and the school was closed. Parents who wanted to put their children into other schools were provided with official transfer cards.

The fight was a double blow for Nembare’s family. Kilma became a battlefield and the family house and property were among the first to be destroyed by the Dom tribe. Nembare did not know where to relocate his family members, his few pigs and other household goods.

He negotiated with a Garin from the Alane’gauma clan of Bari and temporarily relocated his family to makeshift accommodation. Fortunately; it didn’t rain for most of that time.

Nembare had to join his in-laws to fight the enemy tribe and ensure his family had something to eat. He would carry a bag to the battlefield and search for *kaukau* and yams to bring home for the family and the pigs. Nembare did not have time to think properly about his son’s school and encouraged him to stay with his mother at home.

In the Simbu tradition, a clan whose member was involved in instigating a fight is accused of ‘*kura mapir*’ (the people or clan who instigated the tribal warfare) and the 1987 fight had been instigated by a Bari - Kiri’gauma Dama Yalkop - an extended cousin of Dongo’al.

When the other clan sought redress and some form of compensation for their members killed and property destroyed, Nembare, by virtue of his marriage, was obliged to accept the destruction of his home and property at Kilma and contribute to the Kiri’gauma clan in paying compensation to other clans.

This tribal warfare also marked the beginning of many Kiri’gauma clan members migrating from their tribal land. They had to go and
labour on plantations or settle on fertile land where they could raise pigs and money to compensate other clans who had their members killed or property destroyed during the war.

Nembare had to find new land to build house and settle his family so moved back to Kamtai.

In 1987, normalcy was restored and the Dom and Bari tribes made peace. Bomai went back to school to repeat Grade 4. Nembare had to look for money to pay school fees and had to work hard. From some money he had hidden the previous year, he started a small canteen and sold basic goods such as salt, rice, fish, cigarettes, oil and roll tobacco.

He said he was paying too much to transport these goods from town to the village and could not make enough money so he decided to close the business.

In a conversation with Bomai, a few months ago, Nembare revealed it was difficult for him to raise his children among his in-laws. He knew his in-laws would assist paying his children’s school fees if they had extra money but it was not right to demand assistance from them.

Nembare left the Bari tribe for Omdara in 1998 when his son Bomai was accepted to pursue studies in Political Science at the University of Papua New Guinea.

Nembare now enjoys his rolled tobacco each noon at the River Maril and prepares land for his grandchildren to play on when they visit him during vacations.

Bomai realised during his school days that his father Nembare had to leave his younger children in the care of his wife and travel to places as far as Aviamp in the Western Highlands and work in a tea plantation to earn money for Bomai’s school fees.

Nembare did not possess the knowledge and skill that would allow him high level plantation work so dug drains and performed similar labouring work.

He would keep the money in a plastic bag and hide it in a corner of the house. Nembare worked hard to pay Bomai’s school fees throughout his schooling.

Bomai’s uncle, Raphael Witne, had meanwhile made his way through the rank and file of the Securimax Company and was stationed at Mount Hagen. With the consent of his Yangoru wife, Raphael decided to come to the aid of Nembare by taking over
Bomai’s school fees and general welfare.

But Nembare would not give up and continued to work on the plantations to contribute his share of the fee.

He continued to leave his family in the Bari tribe for long periods and his younger daughters, Rose Arasi, Anna Apane and Gabriella Witne, missed his fatherly care. This continued until they all left school and got married at an early age.

Rose married a man from East Sepik and rarely came to visit her family in Bari and Omdara. Anna married a Bari Maima-gauma man and they have now settled at Kamtai with their four sons. Gabriella married a Yuri Kumai-kane man and decided to follow the Galkope legacy in settling at Kup-Gamar near Jiwaka Province.

Bomai continued his studies to Grade 10 and had made up his mind to pursue the priesthood. He spent most weekends with the vocational director at Mingende Catholic Mission seeking guidance and finding out information he needed to know.

It was on a Saturday afternoon that Bomai broke the news to Nembare of his intention to pursue studies for the priesthood and explained to him the consent form that Nembare had to sign.

At that moment, sadness filled Nembare’s face and thick tears rolled from his eyes as he turned away from Bomai. He took control of his feelings and turned to Bomai and spoke in Yuri language.

“En patere elangga, wai dina, ele er ban ta po. Er kol na molaka ai wen ta u kio. Na garpa, eri kan ya nil ala u kene elame?” (It’s good you want to be a priest. Go, become a priest and go elsewhere, don’t come back to me. Who will take care of my land, tree, plants and river?).

Bomai and Nembare were silent for five minutes, Bomai thinking of how to explain his decision differently.

Bomai realised that the priesthood was against Nembare’s wishes for him so promised him that he would not pursue this dream.

Nembare was happy that Bomai had listened to him and encouraged him to continue with his studies.

Bomai applied to continue his education at Rosary Secondary School, Kondiu. Nembare left for Aviamp to work in the plantations to secure Bomai’s fees. Nembare was counting the days until he could return to Omdara.

However, his wife Dongo’al wanted to stay among her Bari people with her children. Nembare understood that he had used most of his energy labouring in the plantations of Jiwaka and did not have the
strength he used to.

While contemplating going back to Omdara, Nembare met a woman from the Kia tribe in the Gumine District of Simbu Province who was also toiling for survival at Aviamp.

Nembare told Kia Maria his story and his thoughts of going back to his birthplace, Omdara.

Kia Maria could not hold back the stories of her husband who left her with the children. They would regularly meet to tell stories in 1996 and 1997.

In 1998, Nembare decided it was time for him to depart Aviamp for his Nulai-kia clansmen. Kia Maria followed him with her two daughters, who are now Bomai’s half-sisters.

The last time Nembare visited his grandchildren in Goroka, he told Bomai’s wife that he was raising pigs to pay for her bride price, adding that it was his last job for Bomai.
The boys transition to manhood – the Madang way
DAVID KASEI WAPAR

I WAS FORTUNATE TO JOIN the Yagaum and Teitab clans in the south Ambenob Ward of Madang for a special occasion during the Christmas holidays of 2011.

The manhood ceremony is an important part of the Madang culture, particularly in the Ámele, Bel and Rai Coast areas where it has been practiced for countless generations.

The *haus man* is a sacred place where boys are gathered and kept away from their homes and all impurities while taught to live as mature men.

Despite recent accounts of sorcery and cult movements associated with such traditional practices, this particular custom of the Ámele, Bel and Rai Coast is nothing like these dysfunctional traditions.

As one young participant put it, “It is like *rebirth*”.

He said the *haus man* is a place for complete cleansing and reform.

Nonetheless, much of what is done indoors or in the vicinity of the *haus man* is strictly sacred. Strangers, foreigners and tourists are allowed to witness only the final stage of the initiation, which is the parade.

“It has been that way and will remain so,” Ámele men say.

The parade, or *taim bilong kamap* as it is called in *Tok Pisin*, is a time to feast and witness the conversion of boys to men. Pigs are slaughtered according to the number of initiated boys.

At this ceremony, six pigs were bought and prepared for the day along with garden food such as taro, bananas, greens and other vegetables.

People from as far as Umin village on Astrolabe Bay had come to see and share in the feast. This does not include only immediate and extended family members, but others who come to see and tell.

All was quiet when, in colourful fashion, the young men took to the village arena to show their mothers and womenfolk they had successfully completed their initiation and were fit to live as responsible adults.

Their skin glimmered in the bright sun as they made a grand
entrance. All were painted red with specially prepared oil, had similar hair styling and each wore a red laplap. They all appeared biologically as one.

As I found out later, this was intentionally done to strengthen the brotherly bond, respect and love for one another - the work of skilled haus man elders. Partly this implies to the transition from ordinary boys to young, beautiful men prepared to be active members of their respective communities.

Mothers and the womenfolk of the Yagaum and Teitab clans could not hold back tears of sorrow and joy. Six weeks of separation was behind them as they stood struggling to pick out their sons and grandsons among the other young men. No fly nor the scorching heat could distract their incessant gaze.

“Today marks a new beginning for these young men,” announced the haus man elder.

Total silence followed his introductory remarks. In the middle of the village arena stood his troop of four initiated boys and their respective mos or guardians.

The six-week ritual hadn’t enjoyed smooth sailing but rather encountered problems or threats posed by rivals (other haus man elders), an elder told me.

In the early hours of that Saturday, rain poured relentlessly on the thatched roof of the haus man creating a deafening noise. However, the elders of Teitab proved too strong for whosoever was behind it.

The first ray of sunshine shot through the coconut and banana leaves bringing hope to the enthusiastic young men and their guardian. As they watched in awe, the burning ball eventually made its way above the dampened tree tops at the same time drying their muddied path.

No initiation proceeds unchallenged, I was told later.

After initial annotations the haus man elder now officially welcomed the public who had gathered to see his handiwork.

While waiting for the food, our short betel nut break ended as we turned to watch the spectacular Daik, a traditional dance performed as part of the initiation celebrations accompanied by food distribution.

Normally, the feast and singsing continued to the next day, however recently elders have come to limit this due to alcohol related problems.
The initiation is often scheduled for Christmas to cater for schoolboys, especially those who meet the *haus man’s* age requirement. 

Madang is among other fortunate provinces that are likely to experience development through an industrial boom. I wonder, however, how many of these traditions which make up the rich cultural identity of this beautiful place can be preserved.
Malaria, red bananas and small fish in the palm of the hand
GARY JUFFA

THE DUSTY ROAD FROM MY grandfather’s block to the Dame Mary Kekedo Memorial School always seemed shorter on the way back than when going there.

Kids happily sang and skipped on the way home anticipating waiting meals. The chatter was louder and games were played on the way home after school.

There were exceptions. For instance when one was sick the road seemed to go on forever and the tropical sun felt even hotter than usual.

I fell ill several times during my primary school years in Kokoda, Oro Province. Malarial fever, an upset stomach from eating young guavas or perhaps a horrible cough that I couldn’t shake thanks to the wild mango season and playing in the streams and rivers each day.

The school had no nurses or medical staff nor teachers who seemed to know or care much for the illnesses of childhood. Certainly there was no infirmary.

Fortunately for us children, the school was located next to the Kokoda General Hospital. It was four minutes’ walk to the hospital to see the duty nurse or orderly and get some treatment. Some kids who lived in remote villages seemed to put in a few hours of school while in Kokoda to get treatment!

If you had leg ulcers, scratches or a cut, they would deftly swab the sore with hydrogen peroxide, the sting of which was enough to make a grown man cry out aloud, and then they would cover the sore with purple ointment or yellow paste, all the while smiling gleefully at your pain and discomfort.

If you had a cough, they would make you drink some antibiotic mixture right then and there in case you took it home and gave it to someone else or threw it away en route. If you had the dreaded malaria, you would get a shot in your buttocks.

An aside on this English word “buttocks”, which someone had promoted so much around Kokoda that it was in common use. Teachers would say, “John, for coming late you will get one cane on...
each buttock!” Or a girl would say to a cheeky boy who had shoved her in line, “Look at him, dirty buttocks!”

No doubt the word originated from the hospital where children’s buttocks were subjected to giant veterinary syringes meant for cattle. It seemed someone in the Health Department had made a mistake in logistics and these giant syringes intended for the Mamba Cattle Station about an hour from Kokoda were diverted to the Kokoda Hospital Children’s Outpatient Section.

A shot of quinine (I am sure it was quinine but it could have been some other poison) was the most painful medical experience. The orderlies and nurses seemed to take pleasure in not being gentle.

They stood back as if playing darts and literally threw the syringe as if they were Oro Province representatives at the Papua New Guinea National Dart Titles. To this day whenever I see a syringe my buttocks clench instinctively.

I had my share of falling-ill experiences growing up in Kokoda. I once fell ill during school and the sickening thought of a bulumakau injection was too much to bear, so I shivered with a high temperature fever all the way home. Two hours of walking down that dusty, lonely road.

The tropical sun seemed to be making a determined effort to fry me alive as I teetered and tottered, my teeth chattering, my knees knocking and my arms folded around me for added warmth as I doggedly walked home. I was about nine.

What relief when I turned the corner at Awuki and Beleni’s Block and sighted the entrance to where we lived. My dog Santo was waiting at the entrance and bounded towards me and I already felt better and wiped away a tear of self-pity.

I was familiar with tears of self-pity on such days of illness. I also prayed a lot. It’s funny how God is forgotten until one is ill or staring at perceived death, then suddenly He is actively sought out and urged to forgive and care and love and help one recover.

That day, with Santo bounding along beside me, I walked through the cool shade of the cocoa trees, crossed the tiny brook and was home. My Grandmother was busy cooking me a meal of flour dumplings in coconut, and upon seeing me immediately knew I was ill.

She quietly placed a mat in the house wind and poured a glass of water. “Drink this and lie down, the meal will be ready soon.” Self-
pity tears flooded, accompanied by an appropriate face mask of utter misery and dejection.

My Grandmother ignored self-pity and such displays of weakness, but her matter of fact voice was always soothing and I lay down and immediately fell asleep until she woke me to drink a hot, spicy broth made from a bitter fern that our tribe used to cure fevers and counter malaria.

My mother, being the dutiful nurse, had left a box of medicines and appropriate instructions and my Grandmother knew exactly what to give me.

“It seems we will have to send for your Aunty Glen to administer an injection,” she said quietly. I did not mind Aunty Glen at all, she was gentle and considerate and, before you knew, it was over.

Though I was unable to go to school, I did not miss it at all during that period of recovery; it was the furthest thought from my mind.

In fact, I was much distracted. The time was filled with treats of mushroom soup and fried river fish - the ingono that were abundant in every river and creek in Oro and were especially plentiful in the numerous streams in our cocoa plantation.

These days, this small indigenous fish is a fast disappearing species. It is like a tiny trout, the largest of which would fit in the palm of your hand. It is silver or darkish brown with colourful rainbow flecks along its white belly.

Ingono were caught by children with earthworms on a small steel hook or in a net or, if in shallow water, even with your hands. During a certain time of the year they were plentiful and it paid to block off a small stream, piling boulders across a selected part, using breadfruit and banana leaves to plug the gaps, and beating a poisonous vine called anasi into the stream with a rock.

The poison caused the fish to rise up to the surface because they could not breathe, to be scooped up by eager, chattering children. This fish was so small you need not gut, scale or debone it. Fried with dripping or lard and salt, they were in a word delicious.

Sadly, along with many other indigenous species of fish, they are threatened with the arrival of the prolific tilapia (introduced by some short sighted over-enthusiastic government department) that breed and feed everywhere and eat anything.

I sometimes think that the tilapia is very much an apt symbolic representation of the human race - proliferating effortlessly at the
cost of every other living creature.

The other treat I savoured and consumed wholeheartedly during my bouts of illness as a Kokoda plantation child, were the sweet ripe bananas of Oro.

Oro has so many species of bananas but the most delicious of all, the king of them, is *hakere*, revered by those throwing feasts and always a bride price favourite.

It is a deep red, medium sized plantain banana in a jungle green skin and, when ripened and cooked slowly either in its dark green skin or peeled and soaked with thick coconut cream, there is simply nothing as delicious to savour in the jungles of Oro.

Of course for those who do not know the etiquette of cooking bananas, you have to peel it first before you eat it.

Many years later, as a student at the University of Papua New Guinea, an uncle of mine, who had a way with words, scoured a vivid description of the banana by once declaring, after eating a whole potful his wife had cooked, that Oro people migrated from Mars, the red planet, and brought these bananas with them for all humans to consume. But they landed in Oro and for some reason they only grow there.

Overhearing this, my aunt, who is from another province, muttered, “Tall tales and cargo cult-like fantasies are also products of Oro.” Most likely true on both counts I thought at the time.

I had my share of illnesses like most children growing up in Kokoda, and while major issues required a nurse, doctor or hospital, basic childhood ailments were readily treated by tribal remedies that worked very well for stomach upset, cough and cold, a cut or an insect bite or a boil.

Many of these ancient treatments have long since disappeared along with their practitioners, though some linger as devout followers of this generation continue to swear by them and apply them were possible, but gradually they are being ignored by the globalised generation, technologically adept and culturally bereft.

Upon reflection, I believe there are lessons from those challenging days that, while not what one would call fond memories, were necessary for a reason: that being ill health can develop strength and resilience. It makes one realise that one is fragile and not a machine, prone to stumble and falter in life’s journey.

Those days in Kokoda, when I was ill, make up my memories of
growing up. I look back with a fond memory, too, of the beautiful people who were there to nurture me back to health and who showered me with love and care.

I learnt that life cannot be all about the good, for, if it were not for the bad, painful and hurtful experiences, one would never be able to appreciate what is good about life.
Pabaa-bere – the house warming ritual of the Nasoi people of Bougainville
LEONARD FONG ROKA

THE NASOI PEOPLE OF BOUGAINVILLE have a special ceremony when a new house is built and before it is occupied.

Dancers gather at the fringes of the hamlet where the new house is located not far from the new and still unoccupied home.

Then they suddenly charge at the house hysterically singing the Nasioi songs known as the uuva and the whole world comes to life as everyone around cheers, laughs, sings and dances around the new house to officially declare it open for use by the owner.

All of these practices of the Nasioi people are connected to the spiritual realm of a life that has existed since time immemorial. And pabaa-bere (sometimes referred to as pabaa-kenaa) is the ceremony that declares a newly completed home open for use by its owner.

A Nasioi individual or family building its house anywhere in the Kieta area bears in mind that a pabaa-bere must be held at the end of the project and they must be prepared for this small but epistemologically significant occasion involving the surrounding community awaiting to celebrate the new addition to their communal life.

The Nasioi term pabaa means ‘house’ and bere means ‘to open’; the added version, pabaa-kenaa, means ‘to sing songs to the house.’

The pabaa-bere ceremony is led by an appointed female or male elder who has the respect of the people in the area. Mostly the elder comes from the new house owner’s extended family. For the Oune people of the Panguna District, it is always a grandmother or great grandmother of the house owner who ministers the ceremony.

Once the building of the house is complete, the family cleans up and prepares some small foodstuffs that they will eat as a community together with the dancers who come for the opening ceremony.

That done, the person responsible for administering the pabaa-bere ritual goes out to collect special fine smelling herbs - laru, sisika, oneaa and sirivi. These herbs have healing and protective powers against harmful spirits. After the herbs are gathered (most Nasioi people have them planted around their homes or in their gardens), the elder
has to get a *tuking* (young coconut fruit) and cuts a tiny opening at its base into which the herbs are pushed into the coconut juice inside.

Having done that, the elder gets a piece of *piiko*, a dry reddish clay traded to most parts of Kieta from areas around Torokina and Wakunai. *Piiko* is always available in dry bamboo tubes on the mantelpiece of every Nasioi household as a protection and aid to rituals.

The *piiko* is the centrepiece for rituals that have significant outcomes for people and their connections to the spiritual realm. A ritual without the application of the *piiko* is deemed powerless; and bad administration of the *piiko* brings disaster. With the *piiko* placed in the coconut juice with the herbs, the hole is sealed by placing a banana leaf in it. The elder, with a *karamani* (traditional mat) locked under the armpit, joins the singers and dancers of the *uuva*. The *uuva* are composed songs connected to the owner of the house. As the dancers sing they also dramatize the lyrics. There is laughter and joy.

In the modern age, the Nasioi people have adapted their *uuva* songs and dances. If the owner of the new house is a teacher, the *uuva* singers and dancers will dress like a teacher and dance, acting as teachers teaching in a classroom; getting paid and building a house. They will dance the whole process from the classroom to the completed house.

There will be dancers dressed and acting as a teacher, a banker, a carpenter and so on making sure that every person or individual involved in the house is included.

The *uuva* singers and dancers enter the house singing and dancing inside every corner. Once satisfied, the elder calls on all the immediate relatives to gather in front of the house and the *uuva* dancers and singers are called to halt as a *karamani* is thrown over the gathered family.

From the veranda a speech is made to the gods, spirits and the gathered people of the land thanking them for all the good things the land has offered to make the people happy. After the speech, the elder pours the spiritually protective and sacred coconut juice on the *karamani* and the *uuva* now picks up new songs to declare the house open and dances and sings around the family.

Laughter and jubilation ensue until nightfall, as people share food and sing and dance around the house until the *pabaa-bere* is complete and the family moves their belongings into the house.
‘Bye Nigel’ – mourning in the true spirit of Melanesia

DAVID KASEI WAPAR

FOR SOMEONE WHO HAD NEVER witnessed the famous Wopaka of the Western Highlands, the heavy chanting and wailing, and the feet-stamping almost made me run for dear life.

Not to mention the sharp clanging of knives and the hefty thud of wood against the pavement, which I shifted my full attention to in case the participants chose something more human than the lifeless bricks.

I still marvel at the spirit of aggression and sorrow that this famous war cry drew back then, and I got to learn a little bit more about the Wopaka while writing this.

The crowd of mourners, friends, relatives and colleagues dutifully made way for the mud-clad troupe which led the late Nigel Laki’s casket to the Divine Word University’s St Freinademetz Chapel for his funeral mass on that bright sunny afternoon of 19 March 2014.

For me, it was moving to witness such a dramatic ceremony in a university setting. It was indeed an illustration of how some of Papua New Guinea’s noble traditional rituals and ceremonies are still maintained today and it was commendable that a group of university students took the lead.

The late Nigel Kupamu Laki, of East Sepik and Eastern Highlands parentage, was a third year journalism student who died tragically at the hands of reckless youths on the evening of 14 March outside Divine Word University’s Nabasa campus. His death was the first of its kind for the university.

There was solemn observation while the body was repatriated first to Port Moresby and then to Malu village in the Ambunti region of the Sepik.

A hauskrai or mourning hut was set up by the East Sepik Students Association on campus and other student groups and university staff gathered to contribute financially for the body’s repatriation and other funeral expenses.

At night, as is the usual practice in Papua New Guinea, students would assemble in and around Arnold Jensen Hall to share the
sorrow of losing a dear colleague.

One night whilst sitting alone and observing students at the *banskrai*, I recalled a phrase: “In Papua New Guinea we don’t just feel sorry but we do it.”

“We don’t care what it takes or if the ceremony is time consuming. All we care about is that we truly show our feelings by offering a hand, money or even just showing up,” I thought.

That particular cultural virtue is also applicable to other gestures such as ‘thank you’, often symbolised with the exchange of gifts.

But the most heart-breaking experience was the departure of Nigel’s body for Port Moresby.

A convoy fit for any VIP accompanied the casket to Madang airport with police sirens blaring.

Three buses of students, one of which carried me with Nigel’s colleagues and close friends, trailed the casket in a smaller vehicle. As we swerved around the junction leading to the airport the blanket of silence was shattered as his closest friends sobbed heavily realising that, when the convoy next passed this point, it would be without Nigel.

After the casket was checked in and weighed, students were granted access to share a few moments and pay their final respects.

Finally the aircraft touched down, all procedures were attended to and the plane was cleared for departure.

Students, most of whom were dressed in black, formed two straight lines between which the casket was moved to the plane. They made sure to touch or gently tap on the casket before it reached the plane.

“Bye Nigel,” was all I could hear from his colleagues as they struggled to bid him farewell while weeping uncontrollably.

And as the plane lifted off the tarmac, the spacious parking lot of Madang’s Air Niugini cargo depot came to life with car horns and wailing that the airport staff will remember for a long time.

Nigel had left us in spirit and then physically.

While his friends and colleagues recovered from the heartbreak, those closest to him will need more time to accept the fact that life without Naibodo, as he is affectionately known, will never be the same.

But the good thing is that his name will have a special place at DWU in the form of the Nigel Laki Award for Peace and Order.
According to DWU President, Fr Jan Czuba, the student who makes a significant contribution to peace and order in DWU will receive the award each year.

Rest in eternal peace, Nigel.
Tapa and Tattoo Festival: a glimpse of the rich Oro culture
EURALIA PAINE

AT NIGHTFALL A SILVERY MOON a silvery moon slithers its way across the starry sky casting its glow over the ocean like diamonds on a sheet of glass. That’s when the maidens come out to dance the kere.

Dressed in tapa cloth, coconut shell armbands and scented leaves, their bodies glisten in the moonlight. The maidens have gathered on the beach to serenade young men.

Their seductive melodies waft through the night air accompanied by the swish-swish of the tapa. The kere beckons the young men to leave their fishing canoes, lay down their hunting spears and join the maidens on the beach for a playful rendezvous.

It is a dance I learnt as a school girl. It is a dance that was performed by the mothers and daughters of Killerton village at the inaugural Tapa & Tattoo Festival held in Popondetta, Oro Province in November last year.

The event was officially opened with the national anthem sung magnificently in the Orokaiva language by school children and the festival stage was set for a truly unique experience.

Oro Governor Gary Juffa did not mince words when he reminded the 4,000 or so people who gathered on the first morning that they were once proud warriors who should maintain their unique culture.

The Oro culture is steeped in stringent unwritten protocols recollected and passed down through generations. The people believe that their culture is a beacon of light that identifies who they are and denotes the character, manners, values and practices that should be followed in their daily lives and during rituals and ceremonies.

It is their proud heritage. It defines where they come from, ancestry as well as province. It is the sharing of common values and knowledge by people who live in Maisin near Milne Bay, Manau on the north coast, and from Kira to Kokoda and Afore to Banderi in the hinterland. The area comprises of 21 local level governments taking in the entire Oro society.

These are the people who showcased their cultures at the
inaugural festival. They are the people who are proud to welcome visitors to their home with cheers of ‘Oro, Oro’. The word Oro means welcome and is synonymous with tapa, tattoos, Tufi fjords, Queen Alexandra’s Birdwing (the largest butterfly in the world), and the Kokoda Track and fierce fighting during World War II. Such contrasts are what make Oro Province special.

In the Oro culture, women are the custodians of the intellectual property that encompasses tapa and tattoo designs. Walking through the tapa wear and finery stalls at the festival, one couldn’t help but notice the arduous task involved in concealing modesty.

Women showed how they beat the inner bark of paper mulberry with a baton-like stick until it is stretched to the shape they want. Large rectangular pieces are worn by women as wraparound skirts and cloaks, and smaller long pieces are worn as *sibi* (loincloth) by men.

Patterns are intricately painted using line and dot methods onto the tapa cloth with natural dyes. Each design on the fabric identifies what clan or family the wearer comes from. In another stall, a demonstration on facial tattoos took place.

There is a similarity between the design of the tattoos on a woman’s face and the tapa she wears, indicating that art comes in different forms but has its roots in past ancestry and lineage. In the past, tattoos were not only an icon of beauty but a reflection of the character and strength of a woman.

It was not uncommon for male suitors to enquire about the extent of tattoos on a woman’s body before asking her hand in marriage. A wise old woman once told me, “If a girl had tattoos on her face, chest and thighs, she was regarded as a great beauty. It indicated that she had withstood pain and would endure whatever the future held in store.”

The manifestations of human art forms have evolved; some slowly disappearing such as the tattoos on Oro women particularly amongst those who have left the province. These days the display of tattoos usually occurs at festivals and celebrations.

Unlike tattoos, tapa cloth has gained enormous popularity and has become an item of commercial value due to increasing demand from visitors and fellow Papua New Guineans. From practical items like bags and tee-shirts to fashion shows, tapa cloth and designs have taken pride of place here and overseas.
This has prompted the people to look into how they can patent and protect their ceremonial sacred patterns and designs that appear on tapa cloth. However to tap into the commercial windows of opportunity, they have developed contemporary designs for tapa that are sold in craft markets and artefact shops.

In many other countries steps are being taken in order to preserve traditions and art forms. For example, the Andean Community in South America has introduced regional laws to protect traditional knowledge and genetic resources. The Oro people, particularly those who own the tapa designs hope to go down this path.

Modernisation is rapidly changing society and cultural traditions are losing their significance. The way food is prepared defines a culture and in some parts of Oro province, women still prepare food in clay pots especially during feasts.

During the festival Orokaiva women were invited to cook food in clay pots which was served to VIPs for lunch. Women play a pivotal role during feasts or bonda. The men may set the dates but it is the women who will tend the gardens, organise the harvest and feed the crowds. They advise the men on who should be invited and who will bring clout to the occasion. Throughout the generations, successful Oro chiefs have been propelled by strong women.

Festivals such as the Tapa & Tattoo Festival provide an avenue for people especially the young generation to appreciate and enjoy traditional art forms in their full colour and glory.

The first day of the festival was dedicated predominantly to school children and youth. A Tapa Queen contest attracted four young girls who were part of the performing groups. They were required to explain their traditional attire and answer questions on culture. The youngest contestant was eight years old. The winner, Blanchley Gagari from Kokoda, won the hearts of judges with her poise, grace and beauty.

It was a delight to see large dance groups from Agenahambo, Sasembata and Kokoda that had more than 100 dancers in each group showcase their best finery. The bamboo dancers from Afore rattled our spirits and the caricatures from Kira had us in stitches.

I may be biased in thinking the tatao'on dance performed by the Yaudari people of Sangara, was not just exceptional but also awe-inspiring.

Line dancing Oro-style came in the form of a large group of
Kokoda dancers who performed to the Papas string band. Topless women clad in tapa cloth danced their way into the hearts of the crowd while their male counterparts did not miss a beat. The line dancing was definitely something to behold and is sure to make a come-back at this year’s festival.

Flamboyant headdresses and traditional heirloom jewellery topped off rhythmic dancing to the beat of kundu drums. As is customary for the Oro people, dramas, comedies and parodies were served as appetisers before serious dancing took place.

Children and men led the way and women took centre stage. The dances conveyed creation stories, imitated birds and other animals and the songs and chants narrated stories of someone’s life or sent hidden messages to loved ones afar. It was poetry in motion!

Culture also defines how one communicates in a particular society and it was interesting to learn that there are 25 languages in the Oro Province, which has an estimated 200,000 inhabitants. Children from the Higaturu Oil Palm International School had spent weeks researching languages before the festival. They had a stall in which they showed that some of the 25 languages are disappearing while new ones are being created.

Many Oro people speak English as their second language, not Tok Pisin or Motu. Don’t be surprised if an elderly woman or man strikes up a conversation with you in eloquent Queen’s English. They would have most likely been taught in schools by early Anglican missionaries or teachers from Great Britain.

The two-day Tapa & Tattoo Festival attracted over 10,000 people. With the construction of a new stadium at the Independence Oval, and the rebuilding of four main bridges that were destroyed by Cyclone Guba in 2007, the festival promises bigger and better things to come.

The festival is an opportunity to reconnect with the past and gives you a glimpse of the rich Oro culture. The experience is truly sublime.
The origin of the human race in Watut mythology
GODWIN J AIAWA

A LONG, LONG TIME AGO there lived a man and his two wives, who were sisters. The husband’s name was Pawoyawo, and the two wives names were Maikuni and Naboai.

They lived alone in a house deep within the forest. They had no children. Their house was constructed from wood, tree bark, dried grass and was circular in shape, resting on the earth floor covered with dried grass and leaves.

Each day Pawoyawo went hunting while his two wives tended their gardens, planting new food crops and harvesting vegetables to cook for dinner.

The husband, being a great hunter, enjoyed it so much that when a pig, cuscus or cassowary was killed, he cooked and ate the whole meal alone in the jungle, then collected all the bones and took them back home.

“Pawoyawo, you’re a great hunter, we would like to eat some of your meat,” the wives said. “I don’t think I can do that, I have eaten it all,” was the usual reply.

He never liked sharing with his two wives. Nevertheless, they brought home vegetables to cook and share with their husband.

After dinner Pawoyawo dozed off to sleep without telling them what he had done during the day. He kept the animal bones as souvenirs, stacked away inside the smoke-scented grass roof immediately above the fireplace. This was his normal daily routine.

One day Naboai, the younger sister of the two wives, had an idea that she would weave a bilum by fashioning it after her husband’s scrotum.

“I have made a bilum for you” she said. “You can put the bones inside and hang it up in the roof”. The man was pleased and took the bilum from his wife without thanking her and began filling it with animal bones.

Pawoyawo was always inconsiderate and greedy despite his wives’ kindness and generosity and it reached a point where they could bear it no longer. The women began plotting to murder him. They were
very careful not to raise his suspicions or expose their secret for fear of what might transpire.

“Today when our husband goes out hunting, we must collect many bush vines,” Maikuni said to Naboai.

“At dinner time, make sure he eats the best meal to the fullest,” she continued. “He will fall into a deep sleep without ever suspecting our plans to kill him.”

Both sisters arrived home from their garden in the evening and proceeded to cook *kaukau*, bananas, taro and cabbages garnished with creamy red *maritas* and other vegetables. As usual, Pawoyawo brought out his fresh bone collection and displayed it above the fireplace to smoke and harden before decorating the interior of the roof.

Dinner was served and both sisters made certain their husband had his stomach full to the brim. He enjoyed his meal so much, he could hardly move, and slumped down to the floor to sleep.

As their husband snored, the sisters waited for a few minutes to ensure he was truly sound asleep before proceeding to the next stage of their plan.

It was cold and damp outside, with thick fog covering the house and surrounding vegetation, in contrast to the warm and cozy interior. The fire flickered, glowing silently, leaving Pawoyawo completely hypnotized in his sleep.

Slowly and quietly the sisters made their move and crept outside and began tying the house as fast and tightly as they could with vines collected earlier in the day.

They tied and retied until the entire house was so tight it was impossible to escape. The sisters then set the house on fire on all sides before dashing into the nearby bushes to hide and see what would happen next.

Inside, Pawoyawo was awakened by the smell of dense smoke and the sound of flaming walls and straw roof.

Fire engulfed him from all sides and his eyes, throat and nostrils were scorching as he rushed to escape. To his great surprise, the door did not open and he kept pushing it as hard as he could while shouting out for help.

“Maikuni help! Naboai help! I can’t get out, the house is on fire!” he screamed repeatedly at the top of his voice.

The sisters heard his loud, agonising screams but kept quiet,
observing the flames growing bigger with each passing moment, fuelled by the cold evening breeze, and eventually swallowing the entire building.

The excruciating yelling for help slowly dwindled until there was only the crackling noise of burning material under the gigantic flames which lit the night sky.

Finally a weird explosion emerged from the house as it collapsed into greyish, black ashes. This was Pawoyawo’s stomach exploding. His skull and bones and the collection of animal souvenirs then cracked one after the other, producing eerie sounds in the intense heat produced by the fire.

The sisters found shelter under some kauri trees and slept. Early next morning, they went to the remains of the house and began collecting bone fragments. They meticulously collected all that remained of their once greedy husband, placed them in bamboo containers and took the remains for burial to a place deep within the forest.

“Where do you think we should bury Pawoyawo’s bones,” asked Maikuni. “We must not allow wild animals to scavenge for them.”

“There’s a large rotting tree,” said the elder sister, pointing to a massive, hollow tree trunk containing a pool of water gathered over time by rain and moisture.

“We will pour his remains into the pool where they will be safe.”

Both women poured the bone fragments into the pool and planted *tanget* leaves around the tree to mark the burial spot.

Starting life without Pawoyawo brought a great sense of relief for both Maikuni and Naboai. They built a new house and continued their daily activities of gardening and hunting. Food was shared equally and life was peaceful as it should have been.

A month after the burial, the sisters visited Pawoyawo’s remains inside the hollow trunk. They noticed that the bones were nowhere to be seen. But there were little fish-like creatures with fins and gills swimming inside the pool of rainwater.

It was a startling sight, but they decided not to disturb anything and planned to come back another day to see what would happen next.

The fish-like creatures developed into tadpoles with long tails, two forelegs and two back legs. There were so many, it was impossible to count them.
“What is happening, here?” they whispered to each other. “Let us not disturb them but keep waiting to see what will happen next.”

With much anticipation and excitement, Maikuni and her sister journeyed back to the burial site on the third month to see what was in store for them.

Upon arriving, they peeked into the hollow tree trunk but there were no tadpoles swimming inside. They checked and rechecked to no avail.

“Where have the tadpoles gone,” they asked, puzzled and confused. Suddenly they heard human voices talking a short distance away from where they stood.

“Where are you?!” they shouted.

“We are hiding behind these trees!” the voices responded in a chorus.

The sisters scurried towards the voices.

“Where are you, we can’t see you!” they shouted again.

“We are here behind these bushes,” the voices replied.

The sisters, realising they were being fooled, quickly devised a clever plan. Naboai would remain hidden while Maikuni would go after the voices when they called out again.

“Where are you? We can’t see you!” Maikuni asked again.

“Over here, behind these pandanus leaves,” came the voices.

Carefully, without making any noise, Maikuni tiptoed to where the voices came from.

Inside a hole in the ground, to her amazement, she saw many little children. They came in all sizes, shapes, skin and hair colour.

“Naboai, they are here, come and see them!” Screaming with excitement they rushed to the hole and began pulling the children out one by one, asking where they had come from.

The children told the sisters that they had evolved from Pawoyawo’s bones into fish then into tadpoles and finally into humans.

The sisters divided the children into ethnic and racial groups based on skin colour, hair colour, physical features and language.

Next they went about weaving unique traditional attire for the children to wear. The children were then directed to go their separate ways to settle on land allocated by Maikuni and Naboai.

Those with fair complexion, perceived as abnormal, were taken to the river and put in canoes to sail away.
Those that remained started the first generation of twelve clans within the Kukukuku tribe as we know it today.

Others were sent away to eventually form the various nations of the world as we know them today.

This is how and where the entire human race originated according to legend passed down from generation to generation by the Upper Watut people of the Wau-Bulolo District, Morobe Province.
Buk bilong Pikinini Award for Children’s Writing

Buk bilong Pikinini (BbP) seeks to establish children’s libraries across Papua New Guinea and foster a love of reading and learning. Each library has at least 3000 books for children. Our Teacher-librarians provide an early childhood Literacy, Numeracy and Awareness program every day for the many children coming to our libraries.

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Buk bilong Pikinini would like to encourage Papua New Guinean authors to write for children. We believe that it is important for PNG children to be able to access books written for them and relating to their culture, their history and their lives.

For more about Buk bilong Pikinini & how to support our work to make Papua New Guinean children happy literate bookworms please visit our website:

www.bukbilongpikinini.org
The boy who conquered the Paaro of Tairengku

LEONARD FONG ROKA

IN THE HILLS OF IORO there was a little, lonely village that people from far and wide called Koori.

Koori was tucked peacefully into the steep slope of the Tairengkuu Mountain ridge that drained into the ever-singing Biampa River. Koori was seen to be happy always.

Every day the smiling sun rose in the east to warm Koori and its people; the old, the young and the small babies. But all was not well. The people all feared the Paaro – the harmful, half human-spirit who lived in the jungle.

Soon in each day, the rugged Tairengku Mountain stole the warmth from the sun.

Bimako, a little boy just five years old, was unhappy with Tairengku stealing his warmth.

“Why is Tairengku stealing our sunlight?” Bimako asked his mother, Deeanu. “Grandfather told me that the Paaro lives there and that he stole my friends who should be hunting with me on the slopes or fishing with me at the Biampa River.”

“Son,” Deeanu said, stroking her son’s curly hair, “You know that Tairengku is the home of the Paaro with its glowing eyes and awful screams. In the dream time he stole all the children of Koori and carried them to his home in a cave. That is why we never wander in those mountains.”

“So there is a cave up there?” asked Bimako, moving onto his mother’s lap.

“Yes, bauuring,” Deeanu replied, “a big, dark cave where the Paaro lives and sleeps.”

“Does he have a bow?”

“Yes the Paaro has a big ummpaang to kill children and a bilum to keep them in and carry them through the jungles and rocks of Tairengku to his cave on the other side of the mountain where the sun sets.”

“Then I will kill the Paaro with the ummpaang that Kaaka made for me!”
“Oh, baauring,” Deeanu chuckled as she carried her son through Koori village. “The village would no longer be afraid if you chased the Paaro out of Tairengku and beyond the Toio River, across the Nagovisi plains and into the deep sea.”

Upon hearing these words, the whole village came to life and danced to the new hunter of the feared Paaro.

The people sang and ate food through the night until just before the sun rose. Then they cried for the lost children the Paaro had stolen. They blessed Bimako, this brave new child of Koori, and asked that he should free them from the Paaro that terrorised their lives.

“Paaro, Paaro, you will pay for all our children you stole,” the villagers sang. “Our brave son, Bimako, will drive you from Tairengku and chase you to Torokina and into the deepest part of the Solomon Sea.”

So early the next morning, when it was still dark, Bimako left with his ummpaang and a food parcel. Morning birds and insects sang praise to the brave new son of Koori who was going to wage war in the mountains. Bimako climbed across the low ridges and higher and higher up the slopes towards the feared peaks of Tairengku.

As he walked he could feel the earth trembling beneath his feet, the birds and animals fled and rocks rolled down towards the Biampa River taking with them bushes and huge trees.

The Paaro was angry with the intruder.

As Bimako came near to the Paaro in its dark cave, the half human, half spirit creature growled, “Who is this new blood?”

Heavy rain fell and the wind blew hard setting the wild jungle dancing in fear. All around lightning struck turning huge rocks to ashes.

“I am the son of Deeanu,” Bimako called, getting his ummpaang ready to shoot an arrow, “A woman in Koori where they mourn the lost children.”

“Oh, you,” the Paaro roared from its dark cave. “It is you the bats who fly at night told me was the hero of Koori.”

The Paaro moved forward to the entrance of the cave. Bimako waited with his ummpaang ready.

“I want to fight you, Paaro,” Bimako called boldly.

“Yes I am coming for you,” growled the Paaro, now much nearer the entrance to its cave. “And if I win I will take Koori and all its
people.”

Bimako was losing his concentration because of the powerful spells of the Paaro and felt himself becoming weaker.

And then he saw the glowing eyes of the Paaro and he released a flying arrow.

The arrow penetrated one of the eyes of the Paaro with enormous force. The Paaro screamed and roared louder than the thunder and the earth trembled like it would break.

Bimako kept concentrating and shot another arrow and another, each one piercing the glowing eyes of the Paaro.

Bimako watched as the dying Paaro fell to the ground and rolled in a huge landslide far down into the Toio River valley and beyond towards the Nagovisi plains and into the Solomon Sea at Torokina.

“Now the people of Koori will be free!” He shouted to the sky.
The doorknob
MARLENE DEE GRAY POTOURA

When we least expect it, the minor things can cause major problems.

RUTH DID THE HOUSEKEEPING FOR Mrs Bee. She came to work at 8 o’clock every morning from Monday to Friday.

On this Tuesday, Ruth came to work, just as Mrs Bee and her children were driving out. She closed the gate after them and quickly walked up the steps. She pushed her hand into the red gumboot at the top of the steps and got the house key.

Ruth inserted the key into the lock and opened the door and went into the kitchen, snatching the note that Mrs Bee had left on the fridge.

Mrs Bee had left a list of chores that she had to do today. Ruth decided to use the restroom first, before she started her chores for the day. She opened the door to the bathroom and then locked it. She took her time and washed her hands in the basin.

When Ruth turned the doorknob, it came off the door. She inserted it and turned it again, but once more it came off. She inserted it again and again, trying to the door, but the knob came off and the door remained locked.

Ruth had to get help, so she reached for her mobile phone in her skirt pocket, but it was not there. It was in her bilum and the bilum was in the kitchen.

Ruth wanted to call for help, but it was not in her character to yell and shout. She sat on the tiled bathroom floor and hated the knob. Why did it come off now? It never gave any problem before. Why now?

So Ruth decided to clean the toilet. She opened the cupboard under the basin and got all the cleaning materials out. She poured the cleaner around the toilet bowl and used the brush to scrub it clean. She wiped the sides with a cleaning cloth and then poured in the Lysol toilet bowel cleaner to do its job.

Ruth soaked some cleaner into a washcloth and started scrubbing the tiled shower. Then she wiped the tiled walls and floor.

Using a sponge she cleaned the basin and wiped the sides of the
Then she poured bathroom cleaner on the bathroom floor and wiped the floor with an old towel.

She flushed the toilet and sat in a corner, next to the basin. She did not know what time it was, maybe ten o’clock.

Ruth stood up and inserted the knob into its place on the door. She turned it and it came off again. She tried pushing the door, but it wouldn’t budge. She sat on the floor again.

She opened the cupboard under the basin and took the cleaning detergents out. She rinsed an old piece of cloth and put some Jif on it and cleaned the cupboard thoroughly, taking her time.

After she cleaned it, she put the cleaning detergents back and closed the cupboard. She got the knob and inserted it into its place and turned it. The knob turned and fell off. She inhaled deeply and sat on the floor against the door.

Finally, she lay down, folded her arms under her head, curled her legs and went to sleep.

Ruth awoke to the sound of a lawnmower next door. She washed her face under the tap and sat on the floor. When the noise stopped, she called out.

“O, O, busat stap ausait yia....kam opim dua o (hello, anyone outside, come and open the door).”

But nobody heard her soft voice. She heard a woman calling her son, “Henry O.....ron go na baim wanpla flex O (Henry, run along and buy a flex).”

Ruth realised that it was already past 3 o’clock as Henry was already home from school.

She decided to wipe behind the toilet pan. She poured Jif onto the cloth and wiped the dust. She opened the cistern and dropped in cleaning tablets and then closed it.

She started wiping the walls of the bathroom. After she wiped the walls, she washed her hands in the basin. Then she got the knob again and pushed it into its place and turned it. It opened.

She ran outside and looked at the clock. It was 4:30 pm. Goodness, Mrs Bee and her children would be home any time.

She quickly cleaned the kitchen and washed the dirty kitchen utensils. She swept the floor and made the beds. She collected the laundry and put them in the laundry basket. Then she heard a car driving up the driveway. She ran to the window and looked outside.
Mrs Bee had arrived.

She went outside and put on her thongs. She walked past as Mrs Bee got out of the car.

‘Ruth, apinun. Yu go lo haus nau? (Good afternoon Ruth, are you going home now?),” Mrs Bee asked.

“Yes, mi go nau. Apinun (Yes, I am going now. Good afternoon),” Ruth replied softly.

“Ol pikinini, stap lo swimming pool. Mi kam kisim niipla Jif blo ol Janet lain. Aste, mi karim ol lo kar na ol lusim. Mi faul na putim aninit lo beisin. Yu lukim tu? (The children are at the swimming pool. I came to get the new Jif, that Janet and they left in the car, when I gave them a lift yesterday. Actually, thinking it was ours, I put in under the basin. Did you see it?).”

“Em stap (It’s there),” Ruth replied and hurried home.

Mrs Bee, got the key out of the red gumboot and opened the door. She walked into the house and realised that the louvers were not clean, the shelves were not tidy and a big pile of laundry was left outside the bathroom door.

She opened the bathroom door and it smelt good and looked marvellously clean. She closed the door and bent down and opened the cupboard under the basin.

She got the Jif and somehow, it felt much lighter. Oh, I should have just bought another one for them, instead of driving all the way here to get this. Ruth must have used it, she thought.

She turned the doorknob and it came off in the palm of her hand.
Rice

JIMMY DREKORE

Rice
I love rice
Mummy is nice
Cooks me rice
Rice
I love rice
With fish & spice
Feels like paradise
Rice
I love rice
Food for the wise
One day I will be wise
Mice
I hate mice
They are not nice
They steal rice
Mice
I hate mice
They slice
They steal rice
Mice
I hate mice
They are not wise
They steal rice
Rice
I love rice
Mice
I hate mice
Mice
Don’t come near my rice
Unless you want to be a sacrifice
IN A VILLAGE ALONG ALONG the coast of a northern Solomon island lived Koteu, an orphan boy who was looked upon by the villagers as an outcast.

The boy had been orphaned when he was just five years old, his parents killed by the sorcery of some of the village elders who grew jealous of their hard work, wealth and happiness.

After his parents’ death their killers shared the wealth and belongings of the family among themselves and left Koteu to work as a slave to help and feed the old people of the village.

“Koteu! You have to hurry to fetch the water, you have firewood to collect for Kua’s grandparents and don’t forget that old Dasieton has also requested you to go and see her,” screamed the wicked nangkaii witch, the wife of the chief, who was so cruel and wanted to see Koteu punished with unrelenting work.

The boy quickly fetched water for the house of the chief and collected fire wood for Kua’s grandparents and then went off to see Dasieton. Dasieton, a wise old witch, who had been a good friend to Koteu’s parents and she always supported and encouraged Koteu never to give up doing his duties, because one fine day fate would take its course and everything would go back the way it should be.

Dasieton was highly respected throughout the village because she was a good nangkaii but could never overthrow the cruel chief, because he was wealthy and only a wealthy person could be leader of the village. The chief was also a powerful sorcerer and only the power of another chief - a rightful heir - could defeat him.

After the boy’s parents were killed, a cruel, jealous man named Tukuru and his kin became the leading family of the village through the influence of their wealth and magic. Tukuru and his wife, Doveah, had two daughters and one son, all of whom were just as cruel as their parents.

With their supporters they were able to unjustly acquire the property of the villagers whenever they wanted. The villagers could not rise against them because of the chief’s sorcery.

Koteu was like his parents. He worked hard and did his daily
chores as required, yet even then he was not allowed to play with the village children.

So, to occupy himself while waiting for the afternoon chores, he started to make a small garden near the village dump away from the land owned by the chief.

On the land Koteu planted flowers, small fruits and vegetables, like tomatoes, capsicums and corn. He made his land beautiful, but it was hidden from the view of the villagers.

“Hi, Koteu,” the children of the chief’s supporters would shout at him while he slowly, silently made his way to his secret garden near the dump. “Going to eat the waste in the dump again!” They would tease him with all kinds of mean comments and laugh. But Koteu, with his head hanging down, would continue walking towards the dump, to his secret garden, ignoring their taunts.

One day after completing his daily chores, Koteu sneaked out to his secret garden, as he usually did after seeing that nobody was watching. Unfortunately on this occasion he was followed by the chief’s cruel children and they discovered Koteu’s secret and wonderful garden.

Filled with jealousy and anger, they destroyed his beautiful garden and beat him. “What do you want to prove, you slave boy, with this garden of yours?” That garden was his only happiness in his life, but the barbarous children cheered as they watched Koteu crying against the soil of his garden.

“Mummy, Daddy, why did you leave me like this!” cried Koteu as the kids teased him and beat him. “This would not happen if you were here Mummy,” he wept bitterly as the children laughed and danced around.

“Hey leave him alone you kids! Go and play with marbles and leave Koteu alone!” commanded a voice coming towards them from the bush.

“Oh it is the old nangkaii, lets run away before she eats us,” shouted the Kua, the chief’s only son, to his two sisters and their friends, and they all ran away towards the village.

Koteu, with his tears running down from his face slowly turned his eyes towards the sound. He could not believe his eyes. It was his Mum…. his own Mum was walking towards him.

With tears streaming down his face he tried to move towards her, “Mummy, Mummy is that you?” The lady moved quickly towards
him. “Yes it is me, my son,” said she. “Stop crying! It is okay now. I am here with you. They won’t hurt you anymore.” She kept on speaking while hugging him firmly and covering his tender and tearful face with sweet kisses.

Later, she sat on the ground comforting the boy on her lap and was amazed by the beautiful garden the boy had been secretly tending to. The boy, feeling the comfort of the woman who he missed so much, slowly dozed off and fell asleep.

“Koteu, Koteu wake up, wake up!” a voice like in a dream woke him up.

Koteu opened his eyes and saw that he was not in a dream “I must have been really beaten up,” he thought as the side of his body throbbed.

“Where am I, where am I?” he shouted as he sat up on the bed he was sleeping. He was sweating profusely. He turned, but instead of seeing his mother he saw Dasieton, the old lady from the village, smiling at him.

“Where is my mother? Where is my mother?” he screamed in despair and confusion.

“Koteu you have to calm down and eat, you must have been dreaming,” said Dasieton. “But for now you have to eat and make yourself strong. You haven’t eaten for two days now,” explained Dasieton as she gave him a plate of roasted taro and prawns.

“Two days ago, I carried you from the secret garden, after the children beat you up and destroyed your garden. You were saw me as your mother because you were badly beaten up, confused and longing for her,” the old lady recalled.

“You were crying about her and I know you missed her so much, but you have to be strong now. It has been eight years since you lost your parents. But now the time has come for you to stand up for what is right,” she explained as the boy ate the taro and prawns.

“This cave we are in is a secret place where your parents hid some of their wealth that will help you regain your rightful place in the village.”

“They knew something bad was going to happen, so they hid these important things, which the Chief is still searching for because he knows these are the only things that can defeat him,” Dasieton explained.

“Why didn’t you tell me this earlier, so these cruel things would
not have happened to me,” the boy interrupted looking at Dasieton with anger.

“Koteu, I had to know that you could keep secrets and make sure that you were ready to overthrow the chief and lead the people,” replied Dasieton, “and by the secret garden you have been keeping all these years, you have proved that you are now ready.”

“I brought you here for initiation, from now you possess power beyond the current chief and can take your rightful place,” Dasieton said, showing Koteu the things that he was going to use to overthrow the cruel chief.

After Koteu understood everything the old lady had told him, they prepared to return back home.

He spent five days being taught the secrets and preparing to conquer the chief.

Early in the morning of the sixth day, they set out for the village. The boy wore a headdress which only the chiefs wear and with that he knew he could defeat the power of the sorcerer chief.

As soon as they arrived the feeling in the village changed, because the people knew the rightful heir had returned. The villagers could feel the positive presence entering the village and came out to see what was going on.

As they saw the boy walking in his parents’ chieftain costumes they bowed in respect. “Koteu is really the rightful heir! Remove the heartless chief and all his supporters,” the villagers shouted in support of the boy.

A battle followed and the boy defeated the ruthless chief with the support of the villagers and the chiefly power of his parents’.

Later, with the decision of the new village council, he sent the chief and his supporters to work as slaves for allies and trading partners faraway across the sea.

So the villagers again lived a happy, kind and caring life. People were happy because Koteu was a fair leader and distributed the wealth of the village equally among them.

In the new system only a fair leader was to be chosen by the people not based on his wealth but on his character – responsibility, resourcefulness and fairness.
The myth of Bakokora, the makutu maker
LEONARD FONG ROKA

ONCE UPON A TIME, in the mountain village of Danai in Koromira, there lived a young woman called Bakokora.

She was a lovely but lonely woman. The villagers abused her because her ornamental makutu necklaces, leg bands and wrist bands made them jealous. Makatu was shell money that people used in those days. The villagers called her a sorcerer.

Bakokora had no garden; she did not fish in the river or sea, she did not hunt for animals; but she always had plenty of food to eat that she bought with her makatu and she cooked the finest meals around.

Every day the villagers went to their gardens and worked till sunset but Bakokora never worked in the gardens. She was more than happy in Danai. She was humble and loving to the children who often cried with hunger when their parents worked late in the mountains in their gardens or hunting and fishing.

One afternoon, with a heavy cloud creeping in, Bakokora was cooking and, across the creek separating her house from the rest of Danai, she heard the village children crying for food.

The toddlers hung onto their elders and wept. The older children, unable to calm their little ones, looked up or down the tracks for their parents and also wept. Bakokora felt sad.

She went across the creek with a pot of fish and taro. The children rushed at her and ate and ate.

All the children admired her makutu.

“Bakokora,” they asked sitting around her and licking their hands, “who gave you the nice necklace?”

“Oh my children,” Bakokora said, laughing, “I made them myself from shells from the beautiful sea.” The children looked down at the blue sea that seemed endless below their mountain home.

“And how do you get them?” the children demanded.

“Oh my lovely children,” Bakokora said. “I will tell you when you are old enough to swim in the sea. Now I must go to my house and sleep.”

“Okay, Bakokora, go well,” the children sang out. “Make sure you
come back and chat with us when the next sun comes. We wish you a good night’s rest and dreams.”

Bakokora left, happy with the joy she had in her heart after chatting with the children.

From then on Bakokora came across the creek and chatted, danced and sang with the children every day. Every day she brought joy to them with stories of great hunters, fishermen and warriors.

And every day Bakokora looked clean and beautiful in a new *makutu*. The children always asked where she got her *makutu* or how she made them and Bakokora always told them that *makutu* was theirs when she is too old and they are strong enough to swim in the sea.

As the days passed, the parents of Danai were confused about why their children were not eating dinner. What was happening? But there was no answer. The children were not ailing but always happy and their share of dinner went stale and was fed to the pigs.

One day the adults decided to see what was happening. They pretended to go gardening and hid in the bushes near the village. As the day waned, Bakokora appeared dressed nicely and singing a fine song.

The children rushed towards her joyously shouting, “Come children, mother Bakokora is back.”

The shocked adults rushed at Bakokora with fighting clubs and spears. They chased her and burned her home. She fled down the mountain towards the sea.

Bakokora swam out to sea and hid beneath Ovoring Manu reef but when she resurfaced she saw the Danai Mountains so close and fled again. She swam and swam for hours until she saw the Daurava River Delta where she tried to hide beneath the Kiritana Swamp.

But when she resurfaced, she saw the Kiavai Mountains and fled.

She entered the calm waters of Tonolei but her enemies were following her. As a warrior was about to spear her, an octopus grabbed her and carried her deep into the sea.

“Bakokora, the *makutu* maker,” the urita said tearfully, “you are not safe here so I will take you far away. Danai can be punished for your misery later.”

The urita sat Bakokora in a canoe and told her to follow after it.

So they went. Between Ovau and Fauro Islands they paddled; and on to Wagina Island. Then they went to Finuana Island; and on to
Marau. At Marau the people were friendly, so Bakokora began teaching them her skill of *makutu* making.

She paddled from island to island, teaching her new friends the art of making *makutu* and finally saw the beautiful land and bush of Bina on the Kwaio coast. It reminded her of the Danai land in her far away homeland.

She taught the Bina villagers *makutu* making and planted plot after plot of taro that attracted a Kwaio warrior to her.

“Who is that young woman from the north?” the warrior cried.

“Oh warrior, she is Bakokora from the land of Danai so far in the north,’ the Bina villagers told him. “She is young and sweet; she is loving and kind.”

“That’s why this Kwaio man is in love with her,” the warrior said. “I love her kindness to the taro of our land.”

The warrior married Bakokora and they settled in the heart of Langalanga Lagoon teaching and producing *makutu* for the local people’s use and for trade to the distant islands.

The runaway woman from Danai, Bakokora, was so famous that people from many islands came to trade with her.
ONCE UPON A TIME IN a garden there was a little green grasshopper named Oa and a little green caterpillar named Kaipa. Oa and Kaipa were best friends.

Kaipa was much slower than Oa so Oa would always visit Kaipa. Oa and Kaipa lived on an *aibika* plant.

Every morning after Oa woke up he would hop over to Kaipa’s leaf and they would eat breakfast together then tell stories. Oa would tell Kaipa about his adventure and Kaipa would listen with great interest.

“You’re so lucky, Oa,” said Kaipa. “I wish I could go on adventures like you. I wish I could see new places like you do.”

“Don’t worry, Kaipa,” said Oa. “You keep eating and I’m sure one day you’ll grow legs and wings like mine; and be able to hop and fly like me.”

As the weeks passed, Oa and Kaipa began to change. Oa became big and strong – his legs longer, his jumped higher and his flight became better.

Kaipa became fatter and much slower. “Oh Oa, I’ve been eating and eating *aibika* like you told me to but nothing has changed,” cried Kaipa. He wiggled his legs, “My legs are fat and wobbly and they sure can’t hop… and I have no wings,” he complained. “What’s the use?! I’ll never be like you!” Kaipa hung his head. He was sad.

Oa kept quiet. He didn’t know what to say to his best friend. He
walked over to Kaipa and put his arm on his best friend’s back to comfort him.

One morning Oa hopped over to Kaipa’s leaf to have breakfast like he always did.

“Kaipa? Kaipa, where are you?” said Oa.

“Down here,” said Kaipa.

Oa climbed down the stalk to a lower leaf of the aibika and looked up and there was Kaipa – hanging upside down.

“Hey Oa,” said Kaipa. “Why are you upside down, Kaipa?”

“I don’t know. I just felt like hanging upside down last night so here I am,” replied Kaipa. “Are you going to come down and have breakfast with me?” asked Oa.

“I’m not hungry but you go ahead and have some aibika,” said Kaipa.

Oa munched away at the aibika leaf while Kaipa hung upside down listening to him talk about his adventure yesterday.

The next day Oa came over for breakfast, Kaipa was still fast asleep so he ate breakfast alone not wanting to disturb him. For three days straight Kaipa was asleep when Oa came over in the morning. On the fourth day he decided to wake Kaipa up.

As soon as Oa woke up he made his way over to Kaipa’s leaf.

“Psst... Kaipa,” he whispered, not wanting to be rude. But Kaipa didn’t respond so he decided to yell,

“KAIPA! WAKE UP!” Not a single movement came from Kaipa. Oa flew up onto Kaipa’s leaf and hopped up and down, “Wake up, wake up, wake up, Kaipa!” But still there was no sound and no movement from his best friend.

Two weeks went by and Oa had stopped going over to see Kaipa. He was very sad that Kaipa wouldn’t speak to him and they didn’t have breakfast together anymore. He didn’t like his grasshopper friends; he just wanted his best friend, Kaipa, back.

One beautiful sunny morning as Oa opened his eyes he saw a bright yellow butterfly in front of him.

“Hey friend,” said the yellow butterfly with a big smile.

“Ah! Who are you? And why are you on my leaf?” shouted Oa. Oa was frightened of the butterfly.

“Oa,” said the yellow butterfly as he walked towards him. “It’s me – Kaipa.”

“Kaipa?” Oa moved closer to inspect the yellow butterfly. “You
look so different.”

Kaipa grinned. “I know. And look, I have wings now, Oa,” he said joyfully as he flapped his big bright yellow wings. “We can go on adventures together now.”

“Oh Kaipa, I missed you so much!” cried Oa.

The two best friends had breakfast together like they used to but this time on Oa’s leaf. And after breakfast they set off for their very first adventure together.
The day that Onana made friends with the pirung
LEONARD FONG ROKA

AS A PANGUNA BOY ONANA had never seen the ocean but he had dreamed about it.

One night Onana asked his mother, “Ungko, I hear that children who go to Arawa - where you also go - say there is a big river there. They say it is an angry river called pirung that howls like a furious dog. Is it real to have such a river?”

“I will take you there to see for yourself,” his mother, Teruinu, said hugging him. “Uncle Miriuui will be happy to take us in his truck.”

Early the next morning, even before the waking cry of the village roosters, Onana was on the grass of Tonanau Village running from house to house singing, “Little Onana is going to see the sea for himself,” joyfully repeating the refrain.

In all the village houses, the children awoke to see Onana running and jumping on the grass. He was hopping, rolling and somersaulting with joy.

The children came and joined him in his dance and song. They danced until the sun was over Enamira Ridge. Then they went away to breakfast.

Onana went into his family’s kitchen hut and there was his mother with breakfast of taro and fish.

“Ungko, what things live in the pirung?” asked Onana.

“Many things,” Teruinu said, “like this fish. Many kinds of fish - big and small - live there for the pirungnumpong, the coastal people, to catch and sell at the Arawa market for us mountain people.”

“And is Arawa friendly with the pirung?”

“Yes, it is friend because it is close to the pirung,” Teruinu said.

“Is the pirung friendly with us mountain people who fear it?”

“Yes. Why not? It will be in friendship with my son Onana today,” Teruinu told him.

“So eat your food quickly and we will go down to the road to get on your uncle’s truck and travel to Arawa so you can see the sea.”

The trunk arrived and the people smiled at Onana as the truck
moved off.

Onana sat silently sitting on his mother’s lap. As the truck moved, Onana was afraid and held tightly onto his mother’s hands. He saw the mountains move away from him and he slept.

“Okay, Onana,” his Uncle Miruuii called, “you are now at the pirung.”

Onana woke and stared in disbelief. The pirung was huge, bigger than the River Kavarong, and was coloured like the sky. There were birds high above it and there were other lands within it. It was really amazing.

Onana bravely left his mother’s grip and walked onto the sand. The sand was soft and he felt like sinking and he cried. But Teruinu comforted her son and told him to be brave and touch the sea.

He walked across the wet sand to where sea waves crashed with a roar before him. He darted for safety but soon ran back to the pirung again. Then he was in the water.

The pirung rolled him on the sand and Onana was laughing and the pirung was happy also. Wave after wave came to wet him and roll him over and over again.

“Ungko,” Onana called, “the pirung is happy with me.”

“Yes, my brave son,” Teruinu called back, “you have conquered the sea and the pirungnumpong will say you are one of them.”
Books
ESSY JOYCE

Books ... books!
You are my friends
You talk to me
You make me happy
You make me sad ...
And you make me angry too
Books ... books!
You are my friends
I love you
Sometimes you become my enemies
I hate you ...
And I curse you too
Books ... books!
You take me to strangers
You fly me to faraway lands
You take me to the highest peaks
You take me to the deepest places ...
And you make me discover the unknown
Books ... books!
You make me think
You make me act
You make me rich
You make me to be some body
Book ... book!
I shall never leave you
My flower that glows in the night
LEONARD FONG ROKA

“MY BEAUTIFUL GRANDDAUGHTER, TORONANI, IS returning to her papa’s land of Kupe,” Toboinu danced around the little child.

“She will leave me crying in Kokore and go away over the great mountains of Kaupara.”

“Grandma, but why would you be crying,” the toddler prattled as her grandmother lifted her up.

“I will be crying because you are leaving me and travelling away.”

“Sorry Grandma.” Toronani wrapped her little hands around her grandma’s neck.

Toboinu carried her grandchild around her garden as she inspected her plants. They went round till Toronani screamed in pain.

“Hiii...hiii, Grandma you me,” she wailed in pain.

“Sorry my baby...sorry my baby,” the old woman hugged her grandchild tightly as she blew air onto her scratched cheek. “This naughty plant hurt my little baby. Who hurt you, Toronani?”

“That naughty iio,” Toronani pointed at a greenish plant that was swaying slowly.

“Yes, this naughty iio,” the old woman smacked it lightly. “Why did you hurt my little baby?”

“Yes, naughty,” little Toronani threw her hands in attack but did not reach the plant. “Grandma, let me down and I will shoot the iio with pebbles.”

“No, I won’t let you fight,” the old woman whispered to her grandchild. “The iio will hurt you again.”

“But it already hurt me.” Toronani look sad.

“Yes, my sweet child, it hurt you because we disturbed it,” the old woman advised. “Iio are good things and they are friends to us; they take care of us by giving us fresh air and joy.”

Toronani listened carefully hanging onto her grandma’s hands.

“You and the iio that hurt you will make peace,” the old woman continued, “and you will go away to Kupe carrying its little seedling. At Kupe you will plant it and it will grow and later in the night it will always bare bright glowing white flowers for you to feel peace and
The old woman directed her grandchild to the "iio" and the trio reconciled. Toronani was happy when her grandma presented her with a seedling of the "iio" that had hurt her as she and her parents were about to leave.

“Goodbye grandma,” little Toronani said to her grandma.

“Go in peace, grandchild,” the old woman answered the little child.

The walk was tiring and Toronani cried a lot. Over the great Kaupara Mountain Range her Mama, Betuko, and Papa, Siomari, kept walking and staggering; sweating and resting under the swaying trees and singing birds high in the blue sky.

And Mama Betuko often felt sorry for Toronani and felt like hugging her baby and crying with her too. But they were not yet home.

Sometimes Mama Betuko would say, “My baby Toronani, you are tired and crying a lot, please hand me your "iio" and I will safely carry it for you.”

“No mama, this is my beloved "iio" and I will carry it,” and she would cry on and her papa would laugh and feel happy and strong to carry his little baby on and on along the jungle trail.

Toronani sometimes was disturbed deep in her crying by her papa who told her funny things and she would laugh.

“Toronani,” her papa would say, “the hornbill will hear you and carry you away from me. It will steal you away across the valley of Kupe and over the sea.”

“Where will it bring me to?” she would ask her papa sneezing.

“To Bakunai, a place faraway and hide you in the Bakana volcano that is there.” Papa Siomari would chuckle.

“Mmm… I will smack it with my "iio" and it will cry and cry and go away,” Toronani would laugh.

Little Toronani would talk and talk about attacking the hornbill, and fall asleep.

Toronani would sleep on her father’s shoulders or remain awake. Sometimes she would be surprised by leaves and tree branches brushing against her but her little grip on her little wrapped seedling of "iio" would not weaken. She loved it so much that at every break her family took on the journey she would ask her papa to wet it in the cold mountain streams and give it more life.
Later in the afternoon they arrived. Toronani was relieved and fell asleep.

“Toronani, you are not kind to your *iio,*” her papa whispered into her little ears and she sprang to life.

“Papa,” Toronani said to her father, “get a spade and dig me a hole in the ground and I will plant my *iio.*”

Toronani and her father planted the *iio* and watched it every day as it grew and grew. Other plants grew near it and Toronani removed them. Insects came and Toronani screamed at them and they fled too.

Many days and nights came and went and Toronani’s *iio* was taller than herself and she loved it so much. Sometimes she slept near it hoping to see the flowers in the night but her papa would take her into the house.

Then one night she was crying with tears of joy.

Toronani was asleep on her mama’s lap near the glowing fire in a chilling rainy night and her papa spotted a number of flowers, so white and multi-petal, firmly attached to the *iio.*

He told his wife and together they did not wake their daughter but brought her outside the Cooking hut for a surprise.

“Toronani,” her mama whispered to her and she woke. “What are these white things?”

“Flowers!” She screamed in tears of joy. “Mama, my flowers?” “Yes, they are your flowers,” Betuko said to her dancing and jumping daughter.

The little girl touched her flowers; she kissed them and talked to them. She sang songs and danced for them until she was exhausted. Her happy parents held onto each other and watched the show of their joyful child and her glowing flowers.

The glowing flowers of the night have been a joyful dream for little Toronani ever since that night.
ONCE UPON A TIME IN the deep ocean there lived a red fish. His name was Rex.

Rex was a lazy bones. He did not play with the other fish. Every day he would do nothing in the sea. All the fish hated him.

One day he was sitting in his house and was thinking about his parents.

Rex was very small when his parents had disappeared.

I will go and ask the old mermaid, Rex said to himself. She is the only oldest person from the old times. She will know all the old stories. He quickly went to the mermaid’s house.

“What are you here for?” the old mermaid asked lazy Rex the red fish.

“I’m here to hear some old stories about my parents”, Rex answered.

The old mermaid told Rex some stories about his father and mother. She told him that his father and mother were beautiful young couple.

At one time a very strong undersea current came and swept the
whole fish village away. His parents disappeared with the rest of the people.

“That’s all I know about your parents,” the mermaid said.

The red fish was very sad. He thanked the mermaid and he went home.

He slept in his house. In the night, while sleeping in his bed, Rex was thinking about what the mermaid had told him.

Some minutes later, he heard shouting.

He rushed out and saw a giant undersea current as wide as a big mountain approaching the fish village.

Rex had already heard the story about the current from the mermaid.

He quickly gathered all the other fishes and took them to cave under the water. He told them to stay in the cave until the current had passed.

As soon as the current had gone, he called everybody out.

All the other fishes were proud of Rex. They didn’t call him bony or Rex the lazy red fish any more. They respected him and called him a hero.

A rainbow called Violet

Jimmy Drekore

She paints her lips red
She wears an orange hat
She paints her nails yellow
She slips into a green dress
With those lovely blue eyes
She steps out with an indigo bag
Violet the beautiful rainbow
Congratulations!

to the 2014 Crocodile Prize winners and contributors
- your essays, poetry, journalism and stories continue to inspire!

PNGAA is proud to be involved in promoting your writing achievements and to be part of this successful Papua New Guinea national literary contest.

Supporting friendly and positive relationships between the people of PNG and Australia, the PNGAA is a dynamic association for people interested in contemporary and historical events in Papua New Guinea and the preservation of historical material related to Papua New Guinea.

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E admin@pngaa.net
Our Writers

Godwin K Aiawa is 40 and a lawyer. He is employed as a legal officer with PNG Power in Goroka. His home province is Morobe. He is married and has children.

Terence Ako was born at Rumginae in Western Province in 1989. He is a third year Papua New Guinea Studies & International Relations student at Divine Word University in Madang. He is the second child in a family of three. His father is an accountant by profession and his mother, now deceased, was a nursing officer, specializing in midwifery. In his spare time he loves to cook, read, write poetry and song lyrics and listen to music.

Tanya Zeriga Alone. “I grew up with my grandparents. My late grandfather was a missionary and he is my hero; I learnt a lot from him. I believe in using stories to contrast our past from our current lives. Currently, I have taken time off a salaried job to experience life as a haus mama in the city. I hope to use my experience to assist women in cities to attain financial freedom. I have also been working on my writing skills.”

Dominica Are was born in Mount Hagen in 1986. She works for CARE International in Goroka. Besides her busy work schedule and studies she loves writing. Growing up and going through so much has inspired her to write about her experiences and share them with others.

Gregory Jaze Avira was born in Madang in 1992. He enjoys writing and this is one of the main factors that encouraged him to study Communication Arts at Divine Word University in Madang. He is interested in development issues and passionate about bringing about
change for his country through the field of the profession he is undertaking.

**Getrude Bakaie** was born at Goglme, in Simbu Province, in 1995. She was inspired to write after seeing many young people making quick decisions on who they would like to be their life’s partner. She says that, sadly, this never works out in the end and becomes a story to tell. Seeing that situation with her step brother prompted her to write her creative story for the Crocodile Prize.

**Chris Baria** is 53 and from the hamlet of Kuri near Arawa in Bougainville. He is Second Secretary in the national ministry of Communications and Information Technology. Chris is a firm believer that what makes a good writer is a voracious reader. He has an unusual poetic technique: “Sometimes when I am about to doze off to sleep a thought may come into my mind and I get up and write it down before I forget. That is how poems find me. I don’t just write them. There is so much to write about. But to do a good poem, I really have go into some kind of a trance. That’s very challenging, the transportation into deeper level of consciousness.”

**Baka Barakove Bina** was born in Kotiyufa Village near Lufa in Eastern Highlands Province in 1962. He attended the University of Papua New Guinea and now works in the Registry at the National Court in Waigani. He has been writing since 1993 and has published one book, *Zymur*, with Oxford University Press in 2003. He has a pile of short story manuscripts and is currently publishing them through Amazon and Create Space. He has four children.

**Doreen Bauloni** was born on Dobu Island in 1975 and lives at Alotau in Milne Bay. She hopes to be a successful writer.

**Kela Kapkora Sil Bolkin** was born in the Galkope area in the Simbu Province. He studied to become a Catholic priest but quit soon after completing his philosophical studies and attended the University of Papua New Guinea where he completed a BA majoring in Social Development and Anthropology. He also has a certificate of Leadership in Strategic Health Communication from the Johns Hopkins University (USA). He is a Senior Policy Analyst at the National AIDS Council Secretariat in Port Moresby but is currently undertaking further tertiary studies in policy and governance at the
Australian National University in Canberra. His work has appeared in all of the Crocodile Prize anthologies. He is the author of *The Flight of Galkope*, a book about Simbu men’s houses, published by Crawford House.

**Cecilia Vangeke Bula** was born in Port Moresby in 1986. She works as an administrative assistant to the Deans of the Faculties of Arts and Business & Informatics at Divine Word University in Madang. She enjoys reading, swimming, spending time with friends and family. She also likes photography and travelling to new places. She has only recently started writing poems and says that she is enjoying every minute of it.

**Norm Kava David**

**Michael Dom** was born in Port Moresby. He graduated from the University of Papua New Guinea and now works as an agricultural scientist for a government organisation. He says he writes poetry because he likes to have his say. He also feels that poetry is often underestimated as a powerful means of expression for the collective conscience of people. His work was published in all of the previous anthologies. In 2012 he won the Crocodile Prize for poetry. He is a strong supporter of literature in Papua New Guinea and a mentor for many young writers. He is currently pursuing post-graduate studies in South Australia.

**Jimmy Drekore**, hailing from the Simbu and an industrial chemist by profession, is known as Papua New Guinea’s bush poet and is a previous winner of the Crocodile Prize. He left his job with a mining company and returned home two years ago to work full time with the Simbu Children Foundation, one of PNG’s most successful home grown charities which he established. Jimmy is an eminent poet and a real stylist who emphasises social issues in his writing.

**Caroline Evari** was born in Vanimo in 1988. She is the sixth child in a family of seven children. She attended the University of Papua New Guinea and now works for the World Bank. She grew up writing and always loved writing as a child. She says that she has
many collections of poems, scripts, songs and stories that she has written.

Mary Fairo was born in Port Moresby in 1983. She works for the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission. She has just returned to Papua New Guinea after taking a two-year study break to undertake a master’s program in the field of political science. She is interested in women in politics, especially in Papua New Guinea.

Jeffrey Mane Febi comes from Simbu Province. He is a geologist working in the oil and gas industry and lives with his wife and child in Port Moresby. Writing and reading are his favourite hobbies and he has had some success in publishing his work locally. He is an accomplished poet and writer and won the 2011 Crocodile Prize for a short story.

Michael Geketa was born in Gagan on Buka in Bougainville in 1968. He is a policeman, currently studying at the University of Papua New Guinea.

Steven Gimbo is from Madang. He is senior communications officer at the World Wide Fund for Nature.

David Gonol is a Port Moresby based lawyer who is Assistant Registrar of the National Court. His is author of I’ve Grown to Love Jesus (2011) and many academic papers and is writing a book on the ‘underlying law’ of PNG.

Yvonne Hani is a Community Affairs Officer at InterOil Corporate. She was previously a tutor at the University of PNG where she was a pioneering medical anthropology honours graduate. Her particular areas of interest are medical anthropology & applied anthropology (social mapping & social economic impact assessment).

Obed Ikupu was born in Port Moresby in 1990 and is a student at Divine Word University in Madang.

Betty Isikel was born in Port Moresby in 1988. She grew up in Port Moresby but has links to Milne Bay, Oro and Central Provinces. She
graduated from Divine Word University in Madang in 2013 with a BA in Social and Religious Studies. She is currently employed by Divine Word as the Executive Officer at the Postgraduate & Research Centre. She has a passion of the arts and loves sketching, design, singing and most of all literature.

**Diddie Kinamun Jackson** was born in Mount Hagen in 1986. She loves words and says that the English language amazes her and that she loves learning new words.

**Joseph Ambane John** lives in Port Moresby and works at the PNG Tourism Promotion Authority. He comes from Kerowagi in Simbu Province and was educated at Rosary Secondary School at Kondiu.

**Essy Joyce** is 19 years old and comes from Gera in the Sinesine district of Simbu. She is a Grade 9 student from Ku High School.

**Gary Juffa** is the Governor of Oro (Northern) Province. He was formerly Papua New Guinea’s Customs Commissioner, a role he occupied for five years following 10 years as a customs officer. He is widely credited with transforming the department into a highly efficient organisation. He is a thinker and a writer with a clear idea of his mission. He wrote earlier this year: “Leaders are elected to serve, promote and protect the interests of their people, those who elected them into parliament for that purpose.” This year he has let his muse wander into the realms of fiction and memoir and looks to be a significant talent.

**Hela Abu Awira Kaiabe** is a young writer from Hela Province. He is currently writing a novel based on the Hela people, their land, culture and genealogy. The poem in this Anthology is from his novel.

**John Kaupa Kamasua** comes from the Sinesine area of Simbu Province and lives with his family in Port Moresby. He attended the University of Papua New Guinea and University of Reading in the UK. He has extensive professional experience in community development and project management in the South Pacific region and currently heads the Social Work Strand at the University of Papua New Guinea. He says that, although he had a passion for reading and writing while attending school, the Crocodile Prize really
motivated him to seriously consider writing as a way of expressing himself and escaping from the realities of everyday life.

**Reilly Kanamon** was born in Port Moresby in 1970. He comes from the atolls of Rambutso Island in the south-east of Manus Province and began his schooling in 1999 at Loamat Primary School and continued with Grades 9 and 10 at Manus Secondary School before going to Divine Word University in 2011 where he is a Communications Arts student.

**Tom Kaupa** is thirteen years old and lives in Kundiawa in Simbu Province. He is a member of the Simbu Writers’ Association.

**Ivy Karue** was born in Port Moresby in 1993. She is the youngest of three children and has two brothers. She says her family is responsible for her love of reading. She likes the way writers paint pictures with words and says a lot of her poetry is about love in all its forms.

**Mathias Moya Kin** was born in Deri Village, Salt Nomane, Karimui, Simbu Province in 1966. He trained as a metallurgist and spent 20 years with the public service, three years with PNG LNG and one year with SPSN (AusAID). He has eight children and is currently a private citizen living at Wara Simbu in Kundiawa.

**Gabriel Kuman** was born in Kerowagi in 1976. He has a Master’s Degree in international Public Health from the University of NSW in Sydney. He is a social researcher at the Melanesian Institute specialising in social research and research methodologies.

**Lapielh Landu** was born in Port Moresby of mixed Eastern Highlands, Milne Bay and Sanduan parentage. She has completed an Arts degree at the Divine Word University in Madang studying international relations. She is someone who realises the need for culture and traditions to be captured and maintained through writing but also its importance in today’s technological society. She was the inaugural winner of the 2011 Crocodile Prize for Women’s Literature.
Agnes Maineke was born at Monoitu on Bougainville in 1957. She is the first in a family of six and completed her secondary education in 1975 at O’Connor Catholic High School in Armidale, NSW. She graduated with a Certificate in Primary School Teaching from Balob Teachers College. She is the mother of six children and a grandmother to three beautiful children. During the Bougainville Crisis she was one of many mothers who survived sickness due to the lack of medications and the regular movements from one camp to another and is thankful that she survived. She is now teaching at Turiboiru Primary School in the Buin District in South Bougainville. She was encouraged by her daughter, Eleanor, to write about what she went through during the Bougainville Crisis.

Eleanor Maineke was born at Boku in South Bougainville in 1989 on the day that the state of emergency was declared. She is the third child out of six in her family. She completed a Bachelor in Art in, Social & Religious Studies in 2013 and is currently on attachment to the Buin District Administration as support staff. She has passion for Bougainville and wants to contribute its future.

Nigel Matte is from Bougainville and a student at Divine Word University in Madang.

Michel Mel was born in Adelaide in South Australia in 1995. Her parents come from the Western Highlands and East Sepik Provinces and she grew up in Goroka. She is a first year student at the University of Papua New Guinea taking Science Foundation. She enjoys travel, sport and reading.

Arnold Mundua was born at Gembogl in Simbu Province in 1965. He is a forester by profession and is currently employed by the Papua New Guinea Forest Authority as the Provincial Forest Officer in Simbu. He has written two novels, *A Bride’s Price* and *Elap Returns* and is currently working on a third book called *They Call me Yaetep*. He is a founding member of the Simbu Writer’s Association.

Martyn Awayang Namorong was born at Baimuru in the Gulf Province and grew up in a logging camp at Kamusi on the border between Western and Gulf Provinces. His parents come from
Francis Sina Nii was born at Yobai, Karimui Nomane in the Simbu Province in 1962. He has a degree in economics from the University of Papua New Guinea and was a banker with the National Development Bank until an accident left him paraplegic. He is now a patient of the Sir Joseph Nombri Memorial Hospital in Kundiawa. He has had an interest in writing since his UPNG days. He was an entrant in both the 2011 and 2012 Crocodile Prize Competition and his work features in the anthologies for those years. He won the Crocodile Prize for Essays in 2013. He also re-published a novel now called Fitman, Raitman and Cooks: Paradise in Peril in that year. He is a founding member of the Simbu Writer’s Association.

Hinafumi Onafimo was born in Goroka and now lives in Port Moresby. He is a graphic artist who likes writing in his free time.

Euralia Paine comes from Tufi in Oro Province. She is a journalist and worked in the financial sector for 13 years before branching out into public relations and marketing. She has been working for Exxon Mobil PNG for the last three years.

Ishmael Palipal was born at Karubita in Central Bougainville in 1992. He is in his third year of studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree at Divine Word University in Madang. He loves to read and write and keep up with current affairs.

Timothy Pirinduo was born in Wewak in 1973. He is a human resource management professional who likes to write as a hobby. He hopes one day to publish books. One of his goals is to set up a publishing company to produce a human resource management magazine in the not too distant future.

Marlene Dee Gray Potoura was born at Tabago in Buin on Bougainville in 1970. She has a Bachelor of Education and has been a teacher for more than 20 years. These days she runs a Learning Centre for children 3 to 12 year old and totally enjoys it but says her
days are very busy, waking up at 5 am and sometimes not going to sleep until 2 am after writing stories. She lives with her two children. Martin is 9 years and is in grade 4 and Dahlia is 5 years and is in Preschool. There’s a dog, Dudlee, too. She writes, grows pot plants, cooks and reads a lot. Paul Jennings is her favourite children’s author and she also reads Virginia Andrews and has nearly all her sequels. She says she works hard and can’t really put up with lazy people.

Sonja Barry Ramoi is a political activist and writer. She was educated at Hibiscus High School in Wewak and she and her husband Gabriel are well known traders of vanilla beans and long term residents of Wewak.

Axel Rice was born in Lae in 1996. He is completing his final year of high school in Ipswich in Australia. He is interested in reading and writing and while preferring academic study over sport enjoys being active and outside. He plans to go to university and study something in the technological field. He won a Crocodile Prize Encouragement Award in 2012.

Pauline Flavian Riman was born in Port Moresby in 1981. She studied literature at the University of Papua New Guinea, graduating in 2007. She works as an Online Marketing Officer with the New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority. She believes there isn’t enough creative literature out there for women and this has inspired her to write poems and short stories. She enjoys writing and promoting tourism in Papua New Guinea.

J P Richard (Peter Richard Jokisie) was born in Lae in 1987. He likes travelling, movies, adventure and writing. He reads conspiracy, science fiction, fantasy and horror books. His favourite authors are Dan Brown, Michael Cordy and John Grisham. He hopes to publish his first fantasy/sci-fi novel by 2015.

Leonard Fong Roka was born in Arawa and grew up in the Panguna District during the years of the Bougainville crisis. He began writing poetry as a student at Arawa High School. He is in his final year as a student at Divine Word University in Madang. He had some of his earlier work published in all of the previous anthologies and has recently published three books. *The Pomong*
Our Writers

_U'tan of Dreams_ is a book of poems; _Moments in Bougainville_ is a collection of short stories and _Brokenville_ is a memoir of growing up in Bougainville during the crisis. He is a prolific writer and champion of Bougainville.

**Sioni Ruma**

_Ilangin Sangkol_ was born in Port Moresby in 1980 and is employed by the Bank of Papua New Guinea as a statistical officer. He is passionate about writing and believes in the power of words. He is married and have one son.

**Robin Suang** was born in 1988. He says he writes to promote his country as well as his community but is a simple, quiet sort of person who is always looking for opportunities to improve himself as a person and a citizen.

**Stacey Nahi Tarura** was born in Port Moresby in 1990. She is currently attending the Pacific Adventist University and is in her final year majoring in History and English with a minor in Fine Art. She is the eldest child in her family with two sisters and a brother. She likes fine art, including drawing, painting, pottery and ceramics and has a passion for studying history. She would like to be a children’s writer one day but also has aspirations to study law and become a lawyer.

**Albert Kaupa Tobe** was born in Minj in Jiwaka Province in 1981. He is a lecturer at Divine Word University in Madang specialising in project management training, especially for adult distance and flexible learning students.

**Pamela Josephine Toliman** is the Laboratory Research Coordinator for the HIV and STI Laboratory within the Sexual and Reproductive Health Unit of the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research. She has worked in this field for nearly ten years. She is the mother of two wonderful children.

**Jeanine Tuguru** was born in Port Moresby in 1991 and comes from Milne Bay Province. She has recently completed undergraduate studies at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology and
holds a Bachelor of Science degree. She has been writing poetry and short stories for many years but has not entered any competitions until now.

Emma Tunne Wakpi is from Tombil in the Minj District of Jiwaka Province. She is a business graduate and community development worker with Evangelical Brotherhood Church Health Establishment based in Goroka. Emma says she was discouraged from pursuing a career in writing by her family due to the “lack of opportunities” it afforded. “However, I have always been interested in writing,” she says, “especially essays and poetry and in my spare time try to write and have done so since 2006.” She won the Crocodile Prize for Women's Literature in 2012.

Iriani Wanma, 24, is the daughter of parents from Kairuku in Central Province and West Papua. She is an unemployed health science graduate. Iriana moved to Brisbane with her family in 2004 and has lived there since. Her interests include reading, gardening, cooking, arts and craft, and Pacific Island culture.

David Kasei Wapar was born in Port Moresby in 1985. He is currently working as the Public Relations Officer for Divine Word University in Madang. He says that writing short stories and poems has always been part of him. His writing is inspired by simple village life and Papua New Guinea’s cultural diversity.

Paul Waugla Wii is an English teacher at Rosary Secondary School in Simbu Province. He says he lives and interacts with people in a rural setting and is aware of the socioeconomic reality confronting their lives, including those of his students. He hopes to bring these issues to the fore in his writing.

Boma Dick Witne was born at Neragaima in the Kerowagi District of Simbu Province in 1977. He is a Senior Tutor in the Division of Social Sciences at the University of Goroka.

Imelda Yabara was born in Port Moresby in 1977. She was the winner of the Crocodile Prize for Women’s Literature in 2012. She says she has been writing since high school as a way of coping -
writing to escape, writing to understand, and writing to rage against what she felt was her lot in life. She says she also wrote to tell of things she could not speak of to her family. Since last year she says she has had the urge to write novels and starts but cannot continue, so she starts another and another and another. So far she has started 6!

**Bernard Yegiora** was born in Kundiawa in 1983. He is a lecturer at the Divine Word University in Madang. He enjoys reading and learning about new things. His interests are in China-PNG relations and how Papua New Guinea can benefit from the Asian Century without affecting its relations with Australia. He is a long-time correspondent on *PNG Attitude* and an enthusiastic supporter of the Crocodile Prize, encouraging many of his students to read the blog and contribute to it and the competition. His essays have been published in previous editions of the anthology.

**Cover Designer**

**Joe Bilbu** is a designer in Fiji who originally comes from Babaka Village in Central Province. He completed his primary education at St Peters School in Erima and his secondary schooling at De la Salle High, Bomana, before moving to Arawa High in Bougainville, and finally Passam National High School in the East Sepik. He has a Diploma of Graphic Design from the National Arts School and a Certificate in Electronic Publishing from RMIT in Melbourne. He is married to a Fijian citizen and has three children.
The Entrants 2014

AGNES ARE
AGNES MAINEKE
AGNES TAIYO
AKILINO POWESIU
ALBERT TOBE
ALFRED KAWO
ANNIE NDREWEI
ARNOLD MUNDUA
AXEL RICE
BAKA BINA
BARRY KALUWIN
BENJAMIN BARCSON
BENNY GETENG
BERNARD YEGIORA
BETTY ISIKIEL
BETTY WAKIA
BOMAI WITNE
BONIFACE TONY
CAROLE CHOLAI
CAROLINE Evari
CECILIA BULA
CHRIS BARIA
CLEMENT QUINA
DANIEL WAINGE
DAMBE KAWAGE
DARREN A TALYAGA
DAVID GONOL
DAVID WAPAR
DEBET AKA
DIDDIE KINAMUN JACKSON
DINAH KYAKAS
DOMINICA ARE
DONALYN PIPINO
DOREEN BAULONI
DOTTY TEARAKI
ELEANOR MAINEKE
EMILY BINA
EMMA WAKPI
EMMANUEL MAROSI
ESSY JOYCE
EURALIA PAINE
FELIX BARAKA
FRANCIS NII
FRANCIS SALIAU
GABRIEL KUMAN
GABRIEL RAMOI
GARY JUFFA
GEORGE KAGL
GEORGE KUIAS
GETRUDE BAKAIE
GODWIN AIAWA
GREGORY AVIRA
HELA KAIABE
HELEN KULI
HEZRON WANGI JR
HINUVI ONAFIMO
HOGANDE KIAFULI
ILANGIN SANGKOL
IMELDA GRIFFIN
IMELDA YABARA
IRIANI WANMA
ISHMAEL PALIPAL
IVY KARUE
JANE PUMAI AWI
JANET KEN
J P RICHARD
JEANINE TUGURU
JEFFREY MANE FEBI
JIMMY AWAGL
JIMMY DREKORE
JOANNE WAYANG
JOE WASIA
JOHN KAMASUA
JOSEPH AMBANE JOHN
KELA KAPKORA SIL BOLKIN
KERRY LINA
LAPIEH LANDU
LEANNE RESSON
LEONIE BAPTISTE
LEONARD FONG ROKA
LINA SIWI
LORRAINE BASSE
MAC DANDAVA
MAIMA KIAGI
MARLENE POTOURA
MARTINEZ WASUAK
MARTYN NAMORONG
MARY FAIRIO
MATHIAS KIN
MICAH AINA
MICHAEL DOM
MICHAEL GEKETA
MICHEL MEL
MINGA SIMON
MIRIAM BEN
NIGEL MATTE
NOAH AGINO
NOGLAI KIN
NORM DAVID
OBED IKUPU
PAMELA TOLIMAN
PATRICIA MARTIN
PAUL WAUGLA WII
PAULINE RIMAN
PETER KEPA
PHILOMENA OAEKE
REILLY KANAMON
ROBIN SUANG
SIONE FA’AFASIMENI ATAHU
SIONI RUMA
SONJA BARRY RAMOI
SORIA SUGOHO
SHARIMA PALIOU
SIWIN MIAMI
STACEY TARURA
STEPHANIE AISI
STEVE LABUAN
STEVEN GIMBO
STEVEN ILAVE SNR
TANYA ZERIGA ALONE
TERENCE AKO
TIMOTHY DIRINDUO
TINA ITULAMA
TOM KAUPA
The Crocodile Prize Entrants 2014

TONY FLYNN
TRACEY TERRY
VERONICA PETER
WINIFRED KAMIT
YVONNE HANI