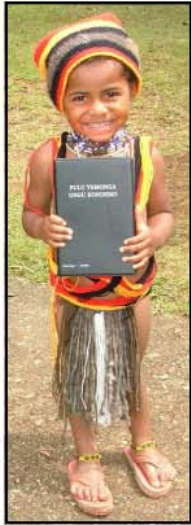


SIL's 50th Anniversary Celebration

August 2006

April 21st SIL* celebrated 50 years of service here in PNG. It was a special day of celebration and will be long remembered.

The program started with a celebration of God's greatness and the power of His Word, as hundreds of voices swelled in song.



Meanwhile dozens of our Papua New Guinean colleagues gathered outside, many arrayed in spectacular traditional decorations of feathers, leaves, flowers, bark cloth, teeth, fur, seeds, beads, paint, and shells. Each man, woman and child held one of the 159 New Testaments, plus the 1 complete Bible, that's been completed in the last 50 years. The Narak New Testament was one of those carried in, having been completed in 1981.

When their time came, they entered the meeting house and streamed

across the stage as the names of their languages were called. On and on they came, in a procession that left many onlookers in tears. I don't think anyone could have seen those faces—and the growing piles of Bibles—without crying out in thanksgiving to God for all that He had done.



Then another procession came through, a procession representing all of our ongoing translation programs throughout the country—nearly 200!



Alex and Lois Vincent



Des and Jenny Oatridge

After the processions was a time of reminiscence, introduced by a film dramatizing the arrival of the first Wycliffe personnel in 1956. Then we got to hear from some of those people in real life. Alex and Lois

Vincent and Des and Jenny Oatridge are four of our pioneers. The two men arrived in 1956, and their wives-to-be arrived a short time later. As they talked about those very early days, we laughed together, and we all ached as they remembered tragedies of long ago. Through it all, for 50 years, God has always been faithful.

Our guest of honor was Papua New Guinea's Governor-General, Sir Paulias Matane. Sir Paulias was clearly touched by the procession of New Testaments, and by the testimony of our early pioneers. "I was very moved by the faith that you people have," he said. "Thank you very much for your faith in God."



"Only God," he continued, "could fully repay what you have done, and your sacrifices for the people of Papua New Guinea."

As we thought about the past 50 years, we also looked toward the future.

"You have a long way to go," Sir Paulius quipped during his speech. We laughed at that, but we also understood the gravity of his challenge. Today, 350-400 communities in this country are still without God's Word in their mother tongues. We have received more than 100 requests for assistance with translation and language programs, but we do not have the personnel or the resources to respond.

Only God can fill a need so big. So we continue to press forward in the ministry to which He has called us.

Many friends like you are a vital part of that ministry. We remembered your prayers, your giving, and the countless other ways you support the work in Papua New Guinea. Without you, the work could not go forward. I want to express a deep thankfulness for *your* part in my ministry here the past 30 years that has allowed me to be part of this great work.

"By the grace of God, we will carry on," we sang in the morning worship time.

By the grace of God, we *will* carry on. And won't it be amazing to see what He's going to do?

Trip to the Islands

Joan returned to PNG mid-April just before the 50th celebration. When that was over, we began making plans for a trip to Kimbe on New Britain Island, east of the mainland of PNG. A number of Narak people are living there working on various oil palm plantations.

They were asking for Narak books, so we arranged with Mollíng & Peter to come to Ukarumpa and join us in this trip. However, when the time came to go, they had not appeared, and we had no way to contact them. Because part of our tickets were non-refundable, we decided to go anyway.

We had been having many foggy mornings that prevented our SIL aircraft leaving early morning, yet we had an 8:25 flight to catch in Lae. Many people prayed and our plane was able to leave on time, although there was still lots of cloud and fog around.

When we got to Lae, we discovered that the Air Niugini flight we were booked on was unable to fly to Kimbe as they were doing maintenance on the taxi lanes at Kimbe and the airport was closed to big planes. Our little Cessna 206 that flew us to Lae was actually going on to Kimbe en route to Rabaul and could land there; but they were taking two other ladies, translators on Duke of York island not far from Rabaul and didn't have space for us. What to do? It ended up that we gave our commercial tickets to these two ladies (as we were booked to fly on to Rabaul a few days later), and we took their places on our little Cessna 206. We had to buy new tickets from Kimbe to Rabaul. Later after we got back we sorted out the finances with the two ladies.

We stayed with colleagues Brent and Sandi Wiebe, and Brent kindly lent us his vehicle to drive into Kimbe each day visiting the market and other sites to find Narak people. One afternoon Brent took us to one of the plantations and we found more interested Naraks. We ended up selling 77 Narak books, including 3 New Testaments, while we were in Kimbe.

We then spent a weekend with a translator friend of ours, Margie, on Buka Island, before going to Rabaul to wait for the Cessna 206 plane to pick us up again to return to Ukarumpa.

While on Buka with Margie we heard via the radio that Mollíng and Peter had just arrived at Ukarumpa; both the men were unwell which is why they didn't arrive sooner. Peter had a large boil under his arm the size of a tennis ball! We paid to have both men treated at the Ukarumpa Clinic, and after a few days they returned to the village.

Trip to Narak-land

Because I needed a trip to Cairns, Australia, for medical tests, I did not go out to Narak-land with Joan; instead a friend of hers from Western Australia flew up to accompany her. Dawn Lithgow had been to PNG in 2004 and spent 10 days with us in the village. Their departure date was changed 3 times, and finally on the 4th date the ladies flew out on June 12th for a month, returning here on July 13th.

Meanwhile my appointments in Cairns kept getting changed and in the end I didn't end up going down there until mid-July. I'm thankful to say that all was normal; I did order new glasses as my eyes had changed somewhat. It was good I was at Ukarumpa during that month as the Regional Assistant Director for the Highlands was out of the country, and since I serve as part of the Highlands RAD team, I could handle things that came up while he was away.

It was not an easy time in Narak-land for the ladies as many unreasonable demands were put on them, including from the two men who have worked with us for years. If we didn't meet their demands, they said, they were no longer going to continue to work. They did, in fact, quit working, but then a week later came back and apologized and asked to be reinstated! — which they were. However not all the issues have been resolved, and your prayers for wisdom in relationships with the Narak people are much appreciated. There are always challenges to face in this work.

Present Plans

Joan and I overlapped by a few hours after I returned from Australia and before she left the following morning to return to her home in Western Australia. She will continue with the Narak work from Australia while I work here at Ukarumpa.

I was able to attend a Lexicography (the process of compiling a dictionary) workshop in June which was very helpful. The workshop will be offered again next year. Maybe it will work out for Joan and me to attend it together. I have quite a bit of updating to do to the dictionary from the checking Joan was able to do with the Naraks while she was in Narak-land.

Thank you for your friendship and for the many ways you continue to bless and encourage me. I appreciate you!

With love,
Pat
Pat Brien