PAPUA NEW GUINEA: THE LAST PLACE YOU'VE NEVER VISITED

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"Tourists don't know where they've been; travelers don't know where they're going."

Friday, August 15

After a 32 hour trip (Philadelphia-New York-LA-Brisbane, Australia-we arrived in Brisbane, a clean, pretty city with upscale shopping malls and teens so hip that they make American kids look dowdy. The next morning we headed to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (PNG), a three hour flight. We're on an Asian Transpacific adventure travel trip. There is really no other way to go to PNG in a short time. Much of the country has no roads; in fact, Port Moresby, the capital, is inaccessible by road so one has to get there by airplane. One also cannot have more than 22 pounds of luggage and 11 pounds in a backpack on internal PNG flights because they are on small planes. You need a boat to go down the Sepik River, and if you do not have a canoe, there is no way to go down the river without access to a company who takes groups. Asia Transpacific arranges everything so it's possible to get into the back country.

There are 14 other people on this trip, all of whom have been everywhere. Most are retired or near retirement and spend a great deal of time in third world travel. Some are bird watchers, others are interested in learning about or expanding their knowledge of local cultures and some are determined after many years of work to see the world. On our trip are an anthropologist and member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, an epidemiologist from the National Institutes of Health, several business-people, and two physicians, and two nurses. PNG-known as "the last place you've never visited"-attracts a particularly well traveled and adventurous crew. There are few places in the world that someone on this trip hasn't visited. Irian Jaya, Borneo, Solomon Islands, Antarctica, Bhutan, Easter Island—name it, someone's been there. One person said he particularly liked Torajaland and probably no-one else had been there, but we and some other folks had! One couple had recently returned from 44 days of bird-watching in China, including the Taklamakan desert in Western China. They are an interesting bunch of folks, and knowledgeable about where they'd traveled. They are travelers, not tourists.

PNG is 14 hours ahead of Philadelphia, so it's exhausting to get re-oriented to time. It is not developed economically. Only the major cities have phone service (about 1% of the island), though cell phones are being introduced into a few other small towns. However, cell phones cannot call out of New Guinea. There are very few or no roads in most of the country. Most of the population (about 5 ½ million people on an island that is the second largest in the world) live on subsistence agriculture. There is some industrial activity, notably gold and copper mining and the beginning of an oil and natural gas industry. Most of the workers, however, are ex-patriots and the money goes out of the country, mostly to Australia. The Tedi-OK gold mine, one of the largest in the world, has polluted the Fly River, damning it up with sediment. Coffee and tea are exported, but they are not really competitive in the world market because small farmers can't compete with our and other country's subsidized agriculture. Larger coffee plantations, foreign owned, are more likely to be profitable. Much of the urban food supply in Port Moresby is imported from Australia. There is a serious urban crime problem in the three major cities (Lea, Port Moresby, and Mt. Hagan), due to the very high levels of unemployment in urban areas. The "rascals", as young men who have no employment and commit crime are called, are a serious enough problem in Port Moresby that tourists are warned not to go outdoors at night. In fact, tourists are warned not to walk alone during the day, though a lot of this is Australian hype about PNG and thus the concern of this trip's staff who worry that if someone is hurt, it will damage their business. Since we stayed overnight near the airport and came in during late afternoon and will leave the first thing in the morning, we have no time to test these theories.

There are 867 languages in PNG, about a third of the languages in the world. Although English is an official language, Tok Pisin-or pidgin English-is the second language. The airline's name is Niugini in Tok Pisin. The dialect is a combination of English, German, and native languages and is taught in schools as well, since given the huge number of ethnic groups, there is an attempt to get them to communicate with one another.

PNG was first visited by Europeans in the seventeenth century. Britain, German, and the Netherlands each had part of it by the late 19th

century. After WWI, Australia was given control of both New Guinea (the German part) and Papua (meaning "fuzzy hair"), the British area. The Dutch got the western part of the island, formerly known as West Papua, but now called Irian Jaya, which became part of Indonesia. In 1933, the Leahey brothers, Australians searching for gold, were the first Europeans to go into the interior of PNG and they discovered a huge population in the Western highlands of whom no-one in the outside world was aware. The western highlanders had no idea there was an outside world, and they thought the airplane was a spirit coming down from the sky and the white men were their ancestors returning.

In 1975, PNG became an independent nation from Australia. The government is democratically elected. However, loyalty is to ethnicity, and there is not much sense of nationalism. The prime ministers change or are challenged regularly, although the recent one, Sir Michael Somare, has been in power for 10 years. There is political unrest in Irian Jaya, which wants to unite with PNG. Refugees are spilling over the border, which is creating tension between PNG and Indonesia. There is apparently a lot of corruption in government. The wontok system is key in PNG; that is, you are connected to everyone from your language group. You must help them, and they owe you help in return. Thus, there is a lot of nepotism in government.

PNG has one of the largest number of missionaries in the world. 2,000 Americans live in PNG, almost all missionaries. The missionaries translated the Bible into tribal languages. They also provided education, because people needed to be able to read the Bible. Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists tend to be the largest groups. People are nominally Christian but it is a thin overlay on native religions.

Only 2-5% of the country is public lands. Private lands are extremely important. Each family group has its own private property which is demarcated by type of plant, ditches, or walls. If someone not in your wontok enters your land without permission or takes your pig (more about pigs later), this can start one of the frequent clan wars. Wars between villages or clans can be brutal. They are fought with spears and shields, as well as bows and arrows and occasionally guns, and are fought over land, pigs, and women, the three most important types of property in the New Guinea highlands in that order. They are the source of wealth, and bride prices are paid in pigs. There are arranged marriages and polygamy, as well as a high rate of domestic violence. There is also a high rate of AIDS-58,000 counted cases, but of course there are many uncounted. In Port Moresby, as well as in other cities and small towns, we noticed signs warning against AIDS. They are non-specific-for instance, "family forever, AIDS never."

We are now on our way to Mt. Hagan in the western highlands, an hour or so from Port Moresby by air, for the sing-sing, a yearly festival where all the ethnic groups gather in traditional dress for singing and traditional dress contests. So far, things have gone as expected, except that instead of a pair of sandals, I mistakenly brought I sandal from one pair of shoes and 1 sandal from another pair. They were totally different, and alas I had to buy sandals in Brisbane so I had something to wear besides hiking boots and sneakers, which, we were informed, will get soaked and muddy shortly.

The leader of this trip is Suzanne, an Australian anthropologist who has spent 18 years traveling in PNG and is peppy, enthusiastic, has connections in the back country villages, and is extremely knowledgeable. So far, so good, except I keep forgetting whether or not I took my anti-malarial in the morning. Since I don't want to double up on pills, I'll settle for spending the rest of the day in a long sleeved jacket and slathered with mosquito repellant, "eau de mosquito."

As soon as we landed, we went to a dress rehearsal for the sing-sing in a local village. It was set up with several performance groups to give visitors a chance to interact with the performers and take photos. Performers is really the wrong term. The singsing was started by missionaries because the tribes were continually fighting with one another and there was an attempt to bring them together in a ritualized competition. Over the years, it has evolved into a yearly gathering of the clans, mostly from the Western highlands but some from other areas as well. Each village enacts a traditional ritual, involving traditional dress (or

undress) and chanting. Each performer gets a small gratuity from the judges, because when prizes were awarded it started huge clan fights. It is funded by the Western highlands provincial government and believe it or not, Coca Cola. They see a ready market, since tomorrow there will be 2000 performers and over the course of the singsing, 40,000 locals who come to view it. There are usually only 300-400 tourists who attend the singsing.

The dress rehearsal was mind blowing. Each group performed a traditional dance, while chanting (which is why it's called a singsing). The dress was incredible. Women were bare breasted and some groups were hung with cowrie shells around their necks. They wore huge headdresses made of bird of paradise and other colorful feathers, and their faces were painted red, white, and yellow. Men wore what is the equivalent of jock straps or short grass front pieces covering their penises. Their asses were covered by "arse grass" as they call it, or leaves hung over the ass. Some groups were covered with black body paint with white stripes and little else.

The Mudmen wore huge distorted mud masks and their bodies were covered with a white substance (probably ash). Most groups had small drums that accompanied the chanting. We were able to communicate somewhat with the clan groups. Their English is hard to understand and we don't obviously speak Tok Pisin or local languages, but they were friendly and willing to tell us where they came from. It was truly incredible.

Saturday, August 16

If we thought yesterday was incredible, today was truly mind blowing! The real gathering of the clans took place. Eighty village groups participated. The singsing was held in a soccer field, and we got there early and had the opportunity to see them preparing for their performance. People were being painted on their faces and bodies, assembling their feather headdresses, being oiled so their skin glistened, and putting their performances together. We wandered around, observing the preparation and asking folks where they came from. The groups stay, for the several days of the singsing, in straw longhouses put up for them. I went into one of them, and the women told me they came by bus, carrying what they wear in their performance in bilum bags, colorful bags made from natural materials that are worn with a strap over the head. Most of the groups are local; there are a few roads but since Mt. Hagan is the second largest city, there is bus access from closer villages. They cook over an open fire in the longhouses. I had someone paint my nose blue, but alas no-one invited me to participate. What was really interesting-a harbinger of the syncretism between the traditional and the modern- was that a lot of people had white face paint mixed with colored face paint. The white face paint was being applied with white out!

The singsing was utterly incredible. Group after group marched on to the field and did their performance. The Western highlanders all were adorned in huge feather headdresses, face paint, "arse grass," and each group was dressed differently.

The Mudmen were there as were the Flying Foxes, groups of young men dressed in black capes and covered with black ash who flitted around like bats (flying foxes is the name for bats in PNG). There were several groups of young boys painted white, who were dragging logs. Clan groups enacted fights between clans, where they really whacked one another with wooden swords; agricultural rituals (where one group dragged a man who represented a pig); death rituals (where a child lay on a bier representing the dead and everyone chanted mourning rituals); and anti-colonial histories, where the clans represented slaves with a slave master who whipped them. Group after group performed in front of the judges. Soon the field was full of groups chanting, playing drums or flutes, and dancing. The rituals they enact are real, unlike the mummers who do make believe themes. Many represent importuning the spirits to protect them in clan rivalries and battles, as well as in harvests. They are all actually preformed in villages on appropriate occasions. By the time each group had finished its individual performance and they were all in the field simultaneously chanting and dancing, the cacophony of sound, color, face paint, gorgeous plumes, and dancing was truly overwhelming. We were able to go onto the field and converse with them. Jerry took their pictures on a digital camera and showed it to them and they were delighted. A number of children were included in the performances, and they were especially delighted to see their photos. Most of the adults had red teeth from chewing beetle nuts, the PNG narcotic.

Although these Western highlands people are still living traditional subsistence agriculture lifestyles, since Mt. Hagan is an urban area (such as it is—a few tin shacks and small stores with women selling beetle nuts by the side of the road), the modern world has clearly intruded. Between performances, the village teams smoked and drank Coca Cola. A few wore shorts under their grass skirts. People clearly dress like this in the Western highlands for ritual occasions, but on regular days wear rejects from thrift stores in the U.S. It's a mix between traditional lifestyles with some modern intrusions.

The only problem we had was other visitors. Given the outstanding photo opportunities, people were virtually killing one another to get good photos. Especially obnoxious were the Germans and the Taiwanese. They pushed their way into performance groups, blocked people's vision, and one Taiwanese woman pushed Jerry aside and he pushed her back. One man actually put his hand over my camera lens because he accused me of taking his spot. There aren't a lot of outsiders here, but the ones that are here are set on getting an outstanding photo. Vendors were selling cultural artifacts, and the tourists not only jockeyed to take photos of the participants in the singsing but also to buy the artifacts. We will have to use Photoshop to get rid of the western tourists in our photos. It is clear that the combined cost of the camera equipment tourists were carrying was greater than the GNP of Papua New Guinea. Our major purchase here was an old shield, with some spear marks from inter-clan rivalries still visible.

The locals viewed the singsing from the hillside, as well as enjoying the gambling and food that was also an attraction. When it was over, a large group, including many children, gathered to look at us. Suzanne, our guide, asked them to sing the PNG national anthem for us. After several tries, they sang the anthem. Then we sang them the Star Spangled Banner and Suzanne insisted we dance the hokey pokey, to the merriment of our audience.

We then went to the airport for a charter flight to the Sepik River, the longest river in New Guinea and one of the most isolated spots of an isolated country. We flew in a very small bush plane to Timbunke, a small village on the Sepik.

Catholic missionaries have built a church here, but it is a traditional village with a cooking hut and a climate that is not only hot but terribly humid. The local kids came out to see the plane land in a field. We were the "entertainment" for the day. Two of the kids wore Bob Marley shirts; we've seen them everywhere we've been, including Africa. The bush plane took off and we were left on the Sepik, in an isolated area with no communication with the outside world. We will spend three days going down the Sepik by boat, and thank God the boat is air conditioned. One of the amusing things about this trip is that 10 of the 16 people are Jewish, most of whom either were raised, are living in, or lived previously in New York. Wandering Jews describes this group. We have multiple connections; one of the women was in the class behind me at Cornell; one man dated Marjorie Margolies, whose daughter Dan dated; someone else got a PhD from Harvard (in anthropology) the same year I did, and it went on in that vein.

Sunday, Aug. 17

We are now on the Sepik Spirit, a boat on the Sepik river. There are no large land animals in PNG; thus, agriculture and transportation that in many countries depend on animals like horses or oxen are here done by human labor. However, there are two creatures that PNG is noted for—crocodiles in the Sepik river and mosquitoes (called Nat-Nat in Tok Pisin). The malarial mosquitoes start biting at dusk. The mosquitoes carrying Dengue fever (known as bonebreak fever, a viral disease) bite during the day. We were warned to cover every exposed place with mosquito repellant, including our ass in case we needed to go the bathroom in the rain forest or a pit toilet, since mosquitoes just love any exposed place. We were also told to cover everything we could. Despite the high heat and terrible humidity, we obediently were decked out in long pants, long sleeves, heavy socks, hiking shoes, and hats.

We left the Sepik Spirit to get on a small jet boat that it tows, to visit villages along the Sepik. An hour downstream, we get out of the boat and walk 45 minutes to reach the first village, Palembai. The village has straw houses on stilts and two spirit houses. The spirit house is the center of the village and is the men's house.

Village women are forbidden to enter, but they make an exception for us. Boys who have not undergone the initiation ceremony also cannot enter. The spirit house has a peaked dried palm leaf roof with a long first floor with wooden posts holding up the second story and long platforms on the sides in the first floor where men sit. A number of village men were sitting here observing us. There is also a large stool with a big mask attached to the back. This is the village spirit, the key figure in their animist religion. The purpose of the men's house is for the elders, the big man, and the other village men to make decisions. If someone violates a decision, he or she is penalized according to the decisions of the council of elders. If he does not pay the penalty, usually in chickens or beetle nuts, the spirit will cause him to die. Apparently, the violator is so frightened by this threat that if he does not or cannot give payback, he usually dies, probably due to fear. The other function of the spirit house is ritual initiation of young men, which can occur anywhere from age 16 to the early 20's. The boys in the initiation are isolated from women, fed little, given a mild hallucinogen, and then scarred with a razor (formerly, with a

sharp shell). The scars which we saw resemble crocodile claws, many small raised circular scars on the back, and often a few other patterns that resemble something else about crocodiles. After this initiation, they are now considered men and their maternal uncle is considered to be their mother. The function of the ritual is to remove women's blood from their bodies (the impurities associated with birth or being cared for by the mother during menstruation). The local guide said this didn't take place any more. However, we saw many young men with these scars, so I think this comment was for our consumption.

We were allowed into the spirit house and greeted by drums made from a hollow log with a large stick to pound on the log. The village-elected councilman told us to remove any head covering, and we were not allowed to photograph the stool which contained the spirit.

Although the people in this village are nominally Seventh Day Adventists, the missionary group that first converted the village, it is a light covering on animism, which is really what the dominant belief and ritual system represents. The village has no electricity, running water, or formal communication (telephone, TV) with the outside world, other than what they can trade with other villages by boat. There is no school. There are lots of kids, however. Everyone wears fourth hand western clothing; for instance, one guy was wearing a LA Lakers shirt. The clothes are ragged but the kids look reasonably healthy, something we saw throughout PNG. They have fresh fruit from the trees and cultivate the ever present yams and taro, which are the staple foods. In this area, they also have fish.

The village has two clans and two spirit houses. The Japanese took it over in WW II, and the Americans bombed it for that reason, destroying the spirit house, which had to be rebuilt. These folks were headhunters until 1939. The practice stopped when the missionaries arrived, although collecting the heads of enemies continued sporadically until the early 1950's. The missionaries eventually stopped the practice. The village survives on fishing and subsistence agriculture. The only source of monetary income for the village is wood carving, which is a real art here. The carvings are sold in Port Moresby, to the occasional tourist here, and in other places.

It is terrific art with traditional themes. The statues and masks are all related to animistic beliefs, though the art itself has been updated over time and is not 100% traditional.

We got back on the jet boat and continued down the Sepik. The second village we visited, Kanganamun, is in better shape than the previous one. It is closer to the river bank and has a historic spirit house where the poles have beautiful carvings on them. It resembles the first spirit house, with a stool where the spirit resides. The carving tells of the myth of the cormorant, among other myths. Two women went fishing and one left another on a log to fish and then forgot about her and went home. A cormorant asked if he could sit on the log. When the woman agreed, the cormorant thanked her and took her to the bottom of the river where the water spirit gave her two eggs in thanks. One egg hatched a crocodile and one hatched a cormorant. Forever after, the bird provided fish and the crocodile provided meat to the inhabitants of the villages.

The houses and layout were the same as the first village, as was the people's dress, but the grass was in better shape with fewer weeds. The village is part Catholic and part Seventh Day Adventist. The Catholic villagers have red teeth from chewing beetle nuts, the Papua New Guinea drug of choice or "get high", but the Seventh Day Adventists aren't allowed to chew them. This village also did headhunting. Enemy's heads were stripped of flesh and the skulls were placed in the spirit house until the advent of missionaries ended the practice. The village has a primary school. Although no missionaries are currently there, they do visit

occasionally and local teachers are trained by the missionaries. If a student wishes to attend secondary school, he or she has to pay. This means that a lot of kids don't attend school. In many villages, there are no teachers, because they don't want to go to remote villages. If urban teachers are sent, they don't last and rural teachers often don't want to return. Most of the education has been done by missionaries, but now that they have "converted" most villagers, they don't come around as often and they train teachers rather than doing the teaching. There is little motivation to teach, because the government doesn't pay teachers here. The village is supposed to do so, but often they cannot pay, so they won't have a teacher. The literacy rate decreased after the Australians left, since they worked with the missionaries to establish schools. Bartering is much of the economy. When someone sells art or jewelry he or she has created, the money goes to the artist, but the artist can be asked by the village to chip in, for instance by paying toward hiring a teacher or getting a motor for a boat.

There is very little health infrastructure. There is no nurse in this village and if someone is ill, they will have to paddle a canoe for several hours or pay someone with an outboard motor to take them upriver to Timbunke to a medical clinic.

When we arrived in this village, we were met by dancers covered with huge conical straw masks, called tumbuan, that cover the head and body. They represent spirits and are used either to scare women and unwanted visitors away from the spirit house or to welcome guests . They are also used during important occasions since by dancing in the mask, the spirit is believed to be present at the ceremony and its power and support will guarantee success.

The men in the men's house were cordial and answered questions. This village had a different style of statues and masks from the first village. The art is great, very inexpensive, and we are doing our part to support the village financially and bring in a cash economy. Luckily, Trans Niugini, which runs the tourist industry, will decontaminate the statues and masks from insects burrowed into the wood and ship them to the US. Both villages we visited were in the Yatmul wontok (language group)

We headed back to the Sepik Spirit to take a well deserved shower to decompress from the awful humidity. The people on this trip are great. To continue Jewish geography, one couple (the Millers) has kids that live in Brooklyn near our kids. The epidemiologist graduated from Friends' Central where our kids went to school. Where else can you find a minimum of 4-5 people who have visited Timbuctu!

Monday, Aug. 18th

This morning, because of stomach cramps and nausea, I thought I had picked up some intestinal bug. Other folks asked me if I was taking my antimalarial (malarone) with food. I was taking it on an empty stomach, which could have caused my symptoms. I took Pepto Bismol and ate something and felt better.

We started out this morning at two villages, Kaminabit I and Kaminabit II. The villages are all similar, with straw houses on stilts, sago palm leaf roofs, rooster running around, and a spirit house ("haus tamburen") with a peaked sago palm leaf roof and traditional decorations. There also are lots of kids. Nobody, adults or kids, wears shoes. Little boys usually wear only ragged shorts and the very littlest kids and babies wear nothing. There is no electricity or running water in these villages, although some villages have generators, and wooden dugout canoes are parked by the shore of the river, where people are washing clothes and getting drinking water. The first village (Kaminabit II) had no school or church. People in this village, as in all the villages along the Sepik, rushed out of their houses with carved masks and statues as soon as we landed.

We visited someone's house, climbing up a steep ladder into the house on stilts. It was one room On one side were some braziers to cook on, fueled by wood, and also some metal pots. On the other side was a contraption to dry fish. Carved hooks holding food hung from the ceiling. In the far end of the room were mats on the floor surrounded by mosquito netting, where the whole family slept. Clothes hung from a tree limb inside the house. The family seemed to have 3 or 4 kids, but the average number of kids here is seven per family. An old man walked around the village with his pet cus-cus on his shoulder, a fuzzy orange and white opossum with big yellow eyes and a prehensile tail that held tightly to him.

A small boy was sitting with a colorful parrot on his head. People aren't aggressive about selling carvings. There is no bargaining; it's just first price, second price, and that's that. They just lay out their carvings and hope someone will come over and buy them. The men in the village did a traditional dance for us.

They were dressed in feathered headdresses, cowry shell jewelry, straw penis coverings with “arse grass” in back, and one man wore a large penis gourd. It actually sticks straight out and keeps his penis parallel to the floor. The men played sacred flutes and danced in a circle. This ritual is performed in villages that still do initiations of boys, because it stifles the cries of the boys when they are being cut. People are willing to have their photos taken, if asked, especially photos of their kids, and enjoy seeing them. The little kids follow us around and observe everything we do.

In the second village, the school was closed, but it closely resembled the first village in all aspects. There was a pen with small crocodiles which had been caught in the river and were being raised to sell the skins and eat the meat. Women here did a demonstration for us of weaving grass skirts, making penis gourds and fish traps, and cooking sago palm pancakes. The sago palm flour is made from the interior of the palm and is a soft, spongy flour. It’s poured into a griddle over a wood stove and the resulting pancakes looked as tasty as ingesting a commercial sponge. The women were dressed in their finest traditional attire. Although they normally wear rejects from western thrift shops, they were bare breasted and draped in cowry shell necklaces over their grass skirts. The village is nominally Catholic. Bob Marley shirts were once again in evidence on young men. It was really hot with killing humidity, and after a visit to the spirit house we returned to the small ship we were staying on for lunch. We then took a two hour trip on the jet boat to Tambunam, the village Margaret Mead stayed in, a village of 3,000 people with several famous carvers. Unfortunately, they made a bad marketing decision for this group. The art here is a lot slicker, varnished, much more brightly colored and modernized to westerner’s conception of New Guinea art, though it still had the traditional crocodile forms.

On this trip at least, and my guess is that in many trips which are helping to support the villagers by buying art, the type of people who travel here are looking for more authentic-looking pieces and not what Pier 1 is interested in buying. By this point, we were all sweating profusely and broiling in our own sweat, so after a cursory visit, we went back to the ship. Adventure travel companies try to rotate travelers among the villages, so each village is visited by a few people every three weeks during the dry season, which is when most visitors come.

Kaminabit I apparently was very upset we went to Kaminabit 2 first and had a big discussion with John, the head of the boat staff, to get him to explain why they were slighted in this way. John said that village people reported that they had seen an enormous crocodile. He looked out of the boat last week as it was going down the Sepik river and a 27 foot crocodile was right next to the boat!

Tuesday, August 19

It is now pretty clear that my stomach is not cooperating. One of the doctors on the trip told me to take two immodium, which appeared to settle things. We are supposed to leave the Sepik river from Timbunke to go to the Southern highlands, and we and the Millers, with whom we hang out, insisted on going to Timbunke early on the jet boat and be left alone to wander. Timbunke is a village of 2,000 people. It looks like the other villages already described, although a bit larger. The Catholic church provides most of the services for the village. We wandered around and heard children singing “Jesus is my friend.” It’s based on “Jesus Loves Me,” but since there is no concept of love in this culture the missionaries changed the words. We realized that the song came from a school. We walked in and there were 50 children, 5-8 years of age, seated on the bare floor of a room in a hut on stilts with a blackboard in the front. Two

nuns, who were indigenous New Guineans, were leading the children in song. We asked if the children would sing something to us, and they sang two songs about Jesus. Marilyn Miller and I then led them in a kids' action song, "Head, Shoulders, Knees, Toes," that we thought they would enjoy and would teach them body parts in English. They giggled and had a lot of fun participating.

We then taught them the hokey pokey to uproarious laughter. We weren't sure how the nuns would react to "put you backside in and shake it all about," but we proceeded anyway, with the nuns enthusiastically participating and wiggling their backsides. The nuns said they could not find a teacher for the 'kindergarten," so they took the kids for an hour a day and tried to teach them something. There is another school in the village for the older kids, but their opinion was that it was providing an inadequate education.

We then went to the Catholic church, which was a building made of tin and sago palm leaves. It was a fascinating mix of Catholicism and local culture. A statue of St. Paul had a crocodile carved into it.

In front of the church two statues labeled Adam and Eve were carved with traditional cultural elongated faces and body parts and symbols of crocodiles. In the church, the pillars that held up the roof were carved with traditional animist symbols and in paintings of the Stations of the Cross, the figures were depicted as members of Sepik tribes. I had a long talk with the seminary student who is from Indonesia and is studying to be a priest. He is stationed there by the church for two years. He comes from a Catholic island in Indonesia. He said that the people in this village still have very strong animist traditions but at the same time, identify as Catholics. They don't come to church regularly, but many do come on Sundays.

There are 4 priests in this area of the Sepik, each with his own region. They travel to outlying villages in their district during the week. There are two seminarians who stay in this village. Two of the priests are Polish and one is from Paraguay. Although they are able to communicate in Tok Pisin, he has problems with them because he feels they stigmatize and judge the villagers and are "rough" with them. They don't seem to grasp the importance of local culture, although the church has integrated it and is using this syncretism to attract people and move them more toward Catholicism. He felt the Protestant missionaries aren't as consistent as the Catholics. In one village, they came and left, turning the people off to Christianity. However, he admires them for translating the Bible into native languages.

The most amazing thing to me was the local medical clinic. It is a central clinic for this area, founded and run by Catholic missionary nuns. It consists of several concrete and tin roofed buildings, one of them a TB ward, another for antenatal care, an adult ward, and a maternity clinic. The clinic is run by a Polish nun who is a nurse. They get medications every two months from the government. There was a small stock of medicines in the pharmacy. I couldn't identify most of them, but doxycyclin, which is used to treat malaria and as an antimalarial, was there. The nurse is assisted by some local nurses, although I don't know what their training actually is. Malaria, both vivax and falciparum (cerebral) malaria, is the major killer. TB, pneumonia, and diarrheal diseases are also serious health problems, especially in dry season when water levels are low. They do rapid HIV-testing. There

isn't a lot of HIV in the village here, but there is some. If someone has full-blown AIDS, they send them to Wewac, the major town in this area of the Sepik, five hours away by canoe. They can get antiretrovirals there, some provided by the government and some by NGO's. The clinic buildings have one large room with a long line of beds with plastic hard mattresses surrounded by mosquito nets. The clinic is very clean and orderly. There are two British medical students sent there for three weeks of training. The clinic walls are full of posters with pictures and Tok Pisin headings advocating safe hospital childbirth rather than dangerous home births, prevention of childhood diseases, and proper infant care (clean water, breastfeeding, and other health issues). There appears to be no disease prevention outreach, but the walls of the clinic buildings provide health education with these posters. One thing we kept seeing is white spots all over the bodies of many kids. It is a fungal infection called grille, that is easily treated by medication which isn't often available. Also, there are a fair number of kids with swollen bellies, which implies parasitic intestinal infections.

The seminarian also took us to the spirit house, which looks like the others we have seen. The platforms along the side are divided by clans, of which there are 12 in this village.

We then took off for Tari, in the Southern highlands. Our plane was a tiny bush plane with 8 seats that flew low over land.

We then transferred to a single engine 8-seater bush plane which transported us to Tari. The first plane took off from a grass runway and the second had a grass and gravel runway for takeoff. These bush pilots are damn good! Tari is the center of Huli culture. The town is a few tin shacks that house Chinese-run small stores and also a local market. Women sit on the ground under umbrellas selling beetle nuts, meat, and second (and third and fourth)-hand American clothes. The dress is traditional to some extent; the women wear long skirts and overblouses. Men wear used western clothes, though some are more traditionally dressed with grass skirts and feathers and large triangular or circular shaped hair wigs. This is the area of the famous Huli Wigmen. Widows have upgraded their outfits recently from white painted faces and cowry shell necklaces to red blouses with a star, grass skirts, red and yellow face paint, and umbrellas they are supposed to leave closed.

This area is very interesting. There was no contact with the outside world until 1937. Four years after they came to the Western highlands, the Leahey brothers, Australians in search of gold, penetrated this area of the Southern highlands and found half a million people living there. We later saw First Contact, a marvelous documentary with original footage made by the Leaheys and interviews with two of them and with local Huli who were children when they first arrived. It was amazingly only 71 years ago! There is some individual coffee growing, and the coffee is sold to distributors in Wewac. The economy otherwise is subsistence agriculture and barter, though there is some cash economy from people who work in western jobs and send money home, as well as from people who work in the eco-lodge 45 minutes from here. As in the rest of the highlands, the most important parts of the economy are land, pigs, and women, in that order. Women are considered property, and pigs are a major form of currency. They are eaten only on ceremonial occasions. Clan wars over land and pigs are very frequent in this area and can go on for months. Suzanne said that she had tried to bring in malaria nets that were treated by insecticide; however, this heated up to the point where a clan war was in the offing, because each clan felt they had not gotten their fare share of nets compared to other clans. She had to stop the program for this reason, an aspect of medical prevention that isn't usually recognized. Bows and arrows and machetes are the weapons of choice in clan wars, although guns are occasionally used.

We headed for Ambua lodge, rated as one of the 10 major ecotourism lodges in the world. It is located at 7000 feet and is absolutely beautiful. The “rooms” are huts looking out over the mountains and surrounded by dense rain forest.

It was pouring rain when we got there, so instead of going for a hike, Alice, one of the hotel staff, talked to us about women in Huli culture who, as I said, are essentially their husband’s property and are purchased with a bride price in pigs. She told us her own story. She attended 10 years of school (primary and part of secondary school). However, due to a clan war, she had to stop school and went to work as a waitress in this lodge. She met her husband there, and as a bride price he paid 31 pigs (10 big, 10 medium, and 10 small), plus one for her mother and he married her. They had one son who died of measles and then a daughter. He was extremely jealous, wanted her to stop work, and he accused her of seeing other men and of being a “prostitute woman”. She accused him of seeing prostitutes. He tried to get her fired so she would stay home and take care of the yam garden and the pigs, and he beat her. He also wanted to control the money she made from her job. She got a depo provera shot to prevent further births. She did not tell him this, a real cultural violation. She secretly saved money from her job for five years and left it with the lodge manager. Then, as her situation worsened and she confirmed he was having sex with a young girl, she decided to divorce him and went back to her village for a conference with her family. He demanded 31 pigs as a condition of the divorce, as repayment for the bride price he paid her father. The combination of her wages and the the pigs her family could contribute left her six pigs short. She went to a “magic man” in another village to whom she told her story. The “magic man” took a string, marked off some sections with red ink, and told her to take it to a place where many people walked and bury it so they could walk over it, and her husband would not notice that there were six pigs too few. She did so, and to make sure it was deeply buried, she stamped it down so hard that the mud came up to her knee. She and her family then put out the pigs for her husband to see. He was so pleased with the pigs and a little cash that he took them and left, without counting them. He even left her daughter with her. He said he would marry again (the Huli permit a man to have up to ten wives). The family was so delighted that the magic worked that they threw a big party.

She has now been divorced for a year, has other boyfriends, and has helped to start a woman’s cultural center in Tari where guests who come to Ambua Lodge can become familiar with local women’s culture. The money collected from fees paid by the tour companies will help the women to buy sewing machines so they can sew their own clothes with cloth from the Chinese store rather than depend on used western clothes, and they can also sell the clothes to local women in the market to get some independent income. It is difficult to introduce microcredit to this area because men are challenged by it, but these women are going to earn their own money rather than borrow it. More power to them!

Men and women among the Huli live totally separately. Men live in the men’s house and cook for themselves. Women are considered to pollute food if they touch it. Men only have sex with their wives, who live in the women’s house, for procreation, and only four times a month. When the woman is menstruating, she gives her mother in law a red leaf, which is then shown by the mother in law to her son, and he then must totally avoid his wife and everything she touches. If by mistake she touches something that comes in contact with him when she is menstruating, she is fined. If she is pregnant, they may not have sex and they cannot have sex for four years after the child’s birth. Since the men can have multiple wives, this is not a hardship for them. Boys stay with their mothers until they are 8 or 9 years old, and then they move to the men’s house. Men hunt, make headdresses with incredible feathers, and make clan war. Women tend the pigs in the garden (the yam patches), which is the staple food for both people and pigs. The standard bride price a man must pay is 10 big, 10 medium, and 10 small pigs and one for the mother of the bride, because she breastfed the bride.

Our huts at night were guarded by security, since the lodge manager was concerned that “rascals” from Tari might try to rob guests. The security guards were armed with bows and arrows and hunting knives to protect us.

Wednesday, August 20

We arose before dawn to go birding, going up to 10,000 feet before the sun rose. It is dense rainforest. As the sun rose, we saw a bird of paradise with a long black tail and iridescent breast and a King of Saxony, a bird with a yellow breast and long threadlike tail feathers. Our bird tracker found the birds and Bill, the birder in our group, had an amazing scope with him-$3000 worth-and we were able to see the birds up close. It is exciting to be at 10,000 feet in the interior of PNG at dawn in a dense rainforest.

Later, we went to a Huli Wigman village. The Wigmen were dressed in short grass skirts covering their penis, "arse grass," face paint, and some had a stick through their noses and all had gigantic hair. When boys are in their late teens they are sent to Wigman school for the price of a pig or 200 kina. They first are decontaminated from any contact with women (they can attend only if they have not yet had sex). A spell is said over water, and the water is taken in by each man and blown out of a long pipe. This blows out any contact the men may have had with maternal wastes during birth or being handled by their mother during her menstruation. The boys then stay there for 18 months and grow their hair. At night, they sleep with their heads propped up on a branch so that their hair remains fluffed up. It is wetted with water three times a day and then fluffed up with a long stick. As it grows into a mushroom shape, it is supported around the edges by wire mesh. After it becomes long and bushy at 18 months, it is cut and a wig is made of their hair and fastened onto a wire mesh frame.

They may do this procedure several times. They are kept isolated from women during this initiation. After they make their wigs, they may go back to the village and get married, but once they do so, they can no longer be permitted to grow their hair. However, they can still wear their wig and if they have several, they have an everyday wig and a fancier ceremonial wig which is shaped like a half moon and decorated with feathers. They now carve and sell painted wooden dolls representing their culture.

The second village we visited was also interesting. The chief welcomed us. We first were invited by the chief to see the men's house.

Women are absolutely forbidden to come anywhere near it. It is very dark and has platforms on which the men sleep, a fire in the middle, and a few clothes and cooking objects in the corners. It is made of straw and woven palm leaves. Each tribe has its own land which is divided among clans. Each clan divides its land among family groups, who surround their private property with high mud walls to keep out intruders and to protect them in clan wars. Each family group has a men's and a woman's house on its private property. One of the men showed us how he made fire by using a bamboo strip and a stick. We were invited to visit the

women's house (the chief's wife's house). She was bare breasted and was making grass skirts, one of which she wore. She had both face and body paint, as did her small daughter.

The woman's house was also dark and had only a fire in the middle, a few items of food, and a few personal possessions but no furniture. The women lived in the front end of the hut and five small pigs lived in the back end of the hut. The pigs live inside the hut with the women. The daughter and her small children lived in a third hut, which was built in what the chief said was a newer style, though the difference appeared to be only a fancier leaf. She had on more face paint than her mother, but was similarly dressed. She is living in her parents' compound because her husband is a miner and he will be away for several years. One of the men showed us how to shoot bows and arrows. The arrows are wooden and appear to have a thick tip, but we saw them go through a piece of wood. The bows are rigid and hard to handle. Jerry tried to shoot one, but it was difficult because they are hard to aim.

As we went back through the town of Tari to the lodge, it was interesting to see how the modern and traditional are intermingled. Some men wear secondhand western clothes, others wear the same type of western clothes plus face paint and grass head wreaths, others (especially older men) are totally traditionally dressed with the grass skirt, arse grass, face paint, and huge headdresses. Women generally wear long skirts and overblouses and have large bilum (woven string) bags with produce, babies, or whatever else they are taking, carried by a strap around their heads. There was a payback in process as we went through Tari, where someone was repaying pigs for a murder.

It was pouring rain after our village visit. Rather than stay in the lodge, we were accompanied by a staff member on a long walk to a waterfall. The rain forest is very dense, and the small path on which we walked was extremely muddy and slippery. We had to use walking sticks to keep from falling. I had a long talk with Steven, our guide. He is a local Huli, who attended school to the Seventh grade and had to leave because his father died. He worked as a gardener for awhile in Port Moresby, then returned to the village and did typical men's work. He has just started working at the lodge to support his family. He does not see his wife very often (his village is only a 1 ½ hour walk away) and says he gets together with her (I assume he means he has sex) only when he wants more children (he has 3 already). He has only one wife, because he says he is a Methodist and believes in the Bible. However, he lives in the men's house, his wife lives in the women's house, he has a headdress, and he follows clan rituals. He says he would never be accepted in the village if he deviated from these, and he thinks they are valuable. It's a great example of the syncretism here. We asked him if life was better or worse since the white man came. He said it was better, because now they can cook faster.

The waterfall we hiked to see was outstanding; very high and beautiful, surrounded by dense vegetation. We hiked back through the mud, stones, and alternately pouring and drizzling rain.

We all have our tribal uniforms-wick dry clothes from either Eastern Mountain Supply or Travelsmith, quick dry pants with many pockets, aerated shirts, all in similar colors. I guess we're a tribe also.

The lodge here is spectacular, surrounded by dense vegetation, a fantastic view of rain forest and valley from the huts in which we stay, in the middle of nowhere in the interior of New Guinea. It was built by an Australian bush pilot who developed several of these lodges and who still flew us here in a bush plane. It is cool here during the day and cold in the evening because of the altitude.

Thursday, August 21

We went bird-watching again before dawn this morning. We saw a bird of paradise, a Papuan green and red lorikeet, and a red throated honeybird. More impressive than the number of birds was the view and the sounds of many birds. Last night Jerry woke up and thought he was wheezing, because that's what it sounded like. He realized it wasn't either one of us but rather a bird, whose call sounded like an asthma attack.

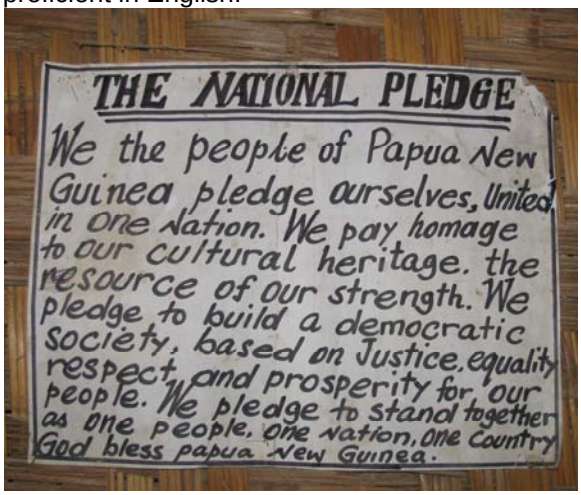
After returning to the lodge, we went to a school. The lower school, ages 8-15, had boys and girls sitting on separate sides of the room. The room was hung with the children's art, a lot of it about sports. There were about 45 kids sitting at desks, who were excited to see us. They had no visible books but were copying English sentences on the board, with beautiful handwriting, into copybooks. The sentences were simple, something like "the pig ate the yam." English is taught in the morning and math and social science (community life) in the afternoon. We asked if they wanted to know anything about the US and either they were too shy to answer or didn't understand as well. We asked if they knew who the U.S. president was. They had no idea who was president of the U.S., but they did respond correctly when we asked who the prime minister of New Guinea was.

They wanted to have their photos taken and were delighted to see their digital portraits. The school was in several low tin and wood buildings. The next building was the school for grade 6, from ages 16-20. The teacher said that he was paid by the government. It is interesting that the government pays teachers here but the village must pay in the Sepik region. He teaches seven subjects. He attended two years of college and received a teaching certificate. He said the students take a national exam at the end of 8th grade, and those who pass go on to secondary school. Those who do not pass become subsistence farmers. After 12th grade, there is another exam, and those who do not pass become subsistence farmers and the others go on to college. However, students must pay for each grade. For college it is 3000 kina ($1500) a year, which few families can afford. In the lower grades, they pay much less, but some families still cannot afford it.

There were 16 teenagers in the schoolroom, and far fewer girls than there were in the elementary grades. We asked what they would like to know about the U.S. and they asked where we came from. Jerry drew a map and we described where we lived. They had heard of New York and snow, but had no idea about much else.

There was a math class in progress, because descriptions and names for regular polygons were on the board. Jerry explained to them the measure of the angles of the polygon which they were interested in but it's not clear they understood. He then put some lengthy addition problems on the board and they quickly came up with the answers. We asked what they wanted to do when they grew up. Two boys said pilots, the girls said teachers, though one girl wanted to be a doctor. Jerry felt that their education was simply rote learning, which also seemed to be the case in the elementary school. There were no books or clocks in the room. These kid spoke English reasonably well. One boy said it took him three hours to walk to school every day. They seemed bright and responsive and motivated. We asked them to identify various body parts and they were able to do so easily in English.

This class was grade 6A. We also visited 6B. The students were not responsive at all to our questions. One boy spoke good English and said the others did not understand us because they spoke only Huli. However, from what we could see on the board, they were being educated in English. This class is the slower 6th grade, probably because the students are less proficient in English.



When we left the school building, we were surrounded by young female students who wanted to shake hands and get to know us.

We played "Duck, duck, goose" with them, except we called it "bird of paradise, bird of paradise, pig." They laughed uproariously as we chased one another around the circle. The boys watched but hung back from joining. As the group grew larger, we demonstrated the hokey pokey, which cracked them up. They then all sang for us. The boys had to be prodded to do so, but the girls actively participated, and then we sang "Old McDonald had a farm" to the delight of all.

We then visited the local clinic. It has two nurses and a community health worker. She told us that the leading diseases here were malaria and pneumonia. There is some AIDS, but people hide it and there is no HIV testing.

There is some HIV testing in a Catholic facility in the general vicinity. This is a government clinic, and its major orientation is pre-natal care and childbirth. Women must pay to come here. They are seen regularly if they show up. They are delivered by nurse midwives in the village if they cannot pay for the clinic or don't choose to come, and the community health worker trains the village midwives. They provide birth control, but only give shots of depo provera after five children as the sole means of contraception. They see people on an outpatient basis for a variety of diseases. The clinic was filthy. In the delivery room, there was an open overflowing garbage can underneath the syringe boxes, which were open and lying haphazardly on the table. There was a sign on the toilet that it was broken. The delivery room itself had two beds with bare plastic mattresses and stirrups, and a plastic cloth on the floor,

where they also delivered babies. An IV bottle with an uncapped syringe hanging from it was next to one of the beds. We could not tell if it was being re-used, but it clearly wasn't sterile, given the general lack of cleanliness in the room. A small cupboard had more equipment, which was uncovered. One of the doctors in our group was an obstetrician, and he recognized a suction extractor, which is used instead of a forceps to get the baby out. However, this one was out of date, metal instead of plastic. The doctor said the only other one he'd seen in years was in the Smithsonian. The clinic is not equipped to do C-sections. One woman was recently sent to Ambuan for a C-section. The baby died, and on the rough ride home, the woman's stitches opened and she died. In another section, a woman was sitting on the floor with a leg wound covered by gauze, but the room also was not clean. In yet another section, someone was giving a shot of penicillin to a baby who had pneumonia. The community health worker said there was a hospital in Tari but they had no doctor and since the only electricity was from a generator, the hospital only treated people during the day. In this clinic we were visiting, if babies were delivered at night they used hurricane lamps to see. The clinic was far from adequate, but probably better than what the villages had to offer. They do have malaria medicine and use chloraquin and in severe cases of falciparum malaria, artemisinen. We were told that one man raped a child, and his testicles were set on fire by village men.

We ended up at the women's center in Alice's village (the story I reported earlier). Women in grass skirts, bare breasts, and necklaces were planting yams, the staple crop. They have long, pendulous breasts from breastfeeding their kids until the kids are four years old. The kids come up to their mothers while they are working the yam gardens and pull at their breasts and suckle while their mothers are bent over. Not only the kids do this to the women, but the piglets do also, which probably explains why their breasts look the way they do.

Family pigs were tied up in the garden and allowed to root in the ground. This stirs up the soil so the women can make mounds of dirt with their hoes in which to plant the yam vines and let them root. It takes eight months to produce a crop. Small children were caring for still smaller children while their mothers worked.

The women were concerned about the pigs and trying to keep them cool, but the small children were running around naked and unprotected.

Alice had arranged demonstrations of women's work in the newly opened women's cultural center for us. The village women demonstrated weaving of bilum bags, the making of pig ropes, the making of protection from the rain with leaf coverings, and other crafts. Two of the women were widows. One was painted white with a plain bilum bag around her head and the other was a more modern widow dressed in a dark long skirt, overblouse, and head covering.

One woman had a small baby and demonstrated how it was carried in a bilum bag. The baby was covered with untreated scabies. We went into the women's center and a "magic woman" showed us the spells she uses with leaves to enable a woman to prevent her husband from taking a second wife. We were assured that if the leaf concoction was put under the man's pillow, there was no way he would acquire a new wife. We asked if she would prevent rain this afternoon by casting a spell so that we could take a hike. She assured us she would do so. Amazingly, though it rains heavily every afternoon here, it did not rain this afternoon!

Bill, the bird watcher in our group, had a problem. He went out of sight to pee, and an irate man told him to get off his land and was quite aggressive. Bill offered payback, and gave him10 kina. That settled the feud. This is the second time Bill has had a similar incident and made a payback.

We ended the day by observing some birds of paradise in trees at the lodge and walking to a waterfall and suspension bridge of wooden planks suspended by vines over a stream.

July 21, Friday

We're leaving Ambua today, so all we were able to do is take a walk through David's orchid farm. David is the Huli owner of the land on which the lodge is built. Private property for family groups is the key factor in this society. One cannot sell one's land, but he rents part of it to the lodge. This can create problems, because he can always demand it back. It is unlikely he will do so because he gets rental payments and is also employed by the lodge and paid to take guests to see his orchid farm, which is on a muddy hillside. He noticed guests were interested in orchids, so he collected 45 types from this area and planted them. They are small and delicate, and the trail is in the rainforest. Australian and American guests have sent him orchid books, so he is able to identify what he finds. The notion of private property as inviolable and taking rented land back creates real problems for development.

For instance, the lodge hired Huli women to build an airstrip. Suzanne, our guide, brought in the first group of people, and the pilot cheered when he made a successful landing. Unfortunately, the bags were unloaded right behind the plane, and when the plane took off,

the bags were all blown into the rainforest. The Huli women were literally rolling on the ground with laughter. Now, however, since the airstrip includes several people's land, it cannot be used because some families have demanded more rental compensation. It is too dangerous, thus, for a plane to land because it can start a payback war.

We have made our mark in the Southern highlands. Our group collected money for the women's center, which will be left in an account and any disbursement will have to be cosigned by the Catholic priest, to prevent any altercations among the women. It will be used to buy sewing machines to start their business. The school needs soccer balls and other athletic equipment, but one of our group is a professional fundraiser that has contacts with the McArthur Foundation that has an officer in New Guinea who can arrange this. The wife of the obstetrician has paid for medication for the baby with scabies, and our guide will arrange for it to be brought in. Several people in our group now have intestinal symptoms. Bill, the birder, has giardia, but he's a nurse and has brought flagyl with him.

Last night I heard people speaking loudly, and I thought it was the guards. However, it turns out that the chief justice of the Supreme Court, the prosecutor, and the defense attorney, who travel around the country together to hear major cases, were staying in the lodge. They drank all night and refused to leave for their rooms when the guards requested that they do so. At 4 a.m. they were escorted out but the chief justice insisted he was in hut 19, which was already occupied, and he began physically attacking the guard when he was prevented from entering hut 19. One of the other two walked into the wrong room and terrified the guest. The yelling woke up many of the other guests. The trio left in the morning, still drunk or hung over, and immediately drove their vehicle into a ditch, blocking the exit for anyone else until the car was hauled out. So much for the PNG Supreme Court. Luckily, there's no TV or radio here to report this.

We were supposed to fly from Tari to Madang on the coast. It took us an hour to get to the air strip by vehicle. The Highlands highway is the country's major road, mostly dirt, rocks, and mud, and that's the good part of the road.

Unfortunately, we found that the charter airplane company thought we were leaving tomorrow. Suzanne found another plane willing to take us. It's the smallest bush plane we've been on yet.

Only half of the group could barely fit into it. It's a tiny, single engine prop plane with no co-pilot, which is lucky because the only way our part of the group could fit into the plane is that one of us was in the copilot's seat. The plane was short of fuel, so we had to fly back to Mt. Hagan. We flew over a number of mountains, and the pilot seemed to be confirming his direction by looking out the window. We refueled in Mt. Hagan and started out again. We had on our initial stop in Mt. Hagan seen Karawari spirit hooks for sale. They were first discovered in the 1960's in spirit houses. They are tall, carved wooden sticks with one foot. We regretted not buying one at that time, but our unexpected return trip to Mt. Hagan let us do so. Our stick is a hunting spirit, also used to protect against enemies and ensure success in battle. We finally got to Madang. What should have been an hour flight took most of the day.

Madang is the fourth largest city in PNG, 30,000 people. It is a seaside town with tin

shacks on the outskirts, and people selling beetle nuts and other food by the side of the road. The town center has a supermarket, some bigger shops, and industrial warehouses.

We are staying at Madang resort with a TV, a large room, and a nice view of the Bismarck Sea, allowing us to wash out some of the mud of Ambua lodge. Unfortunately, the other half of our group didn't make it. Their plane never arrived because of bad weather, so they are stuck in Ambua until they can find a charter flight.

Saturday, August 22

We took a brief look at Madang this morning, a seaside town that is terribly hot and humid. We started out in the post office, with long lines and expensive stamps. A young girl walked by wearing a "University of Brooklyn" t-shirt.

We checked out the supermarket, which was fully stocked with a variety of food, clearly imported from Australia. It is outrageously expensive. A box of Kelloggs cornflakes is $10 (US); a package of American cheese slices is $10; a small package of frozen crocodile meat is $7.00. Hamburger is $20 per kilo and a small package of disposable diapers is $15.00; toothpaste is $3.00; juice is $4.45 per 750 milliliters (I've converted all prices to U.S. dollars).

Only people who have jobs can afford this. The 61% unemployment rate in Madang means that most people shop in the open air market in the center of town. It's full of fresh vegetables and fruit and freshly caught fish. Women sell these things from stalls, and the veggies are kept moist. Peanuts and fruit are piled in attractive piles. Women wave palm fronds to keep the flies off the fish.

There are also Maria dresses on sale, which look like muu-muu's, as well as the long skirts and overblouses women wear to town. The market is jammed, and the prices are very cheap; a few kina (1 kina=50 cents) at most. We also stopped by the pharmacy. One person

in our group was taking valium to treat a medical condition, and she needed more. The pharmacy was well stocked, with a variety of medicines and other things one would expect to find at a Rite-Aid. Her husband is a doctor, and he wrote out a prescription and got 32 valium for $9.00. There was also a variety of medications to treat indigenous diseases like grille and white spot disease.

A small amount of condoms were on sale behind the counter. Trust condoms (their brand name) are from China. There was also K-Y jelly. However, the clerk said very few people brought them. There are generic signs on billboards in town to prevent AIDS and occasionally we saw them along the road. Many of the young guys wear Bob Marley shirts, and I even saw a "50 cent" shirt on a young guy.

In the afternoon we visited Bilbil village, noted for its pottery. The villages here have a totally different culture from the highlands. Pigs are not important. Boys are taken to an island at age 14 for six weeks and circumcised. When they come back to the village, there is a big singsing celebration with food. Men have only one wife. The houses are next to the sea, on stilts with palm frond roofs. A few outboard motors are visible on boats outside the houses. The houses themselves have a few small rooms with mats on the floor for sleeping and the mats have mosquito nets over them.

Babies sleep in bilum bags hung outside the houses, and piles of pots and pans dry in the cooking area in the sun.

The village did a singsing for us, with traditional ritual clothing very different from what we saw in the highlands—tall headdresses built like ships, and the standard arse grass and lap laps covering male genitals, The completely different aspect was that women danced with the men and in fact some of the women led the dancing, although the village elder played the drum and led the singing. In the Mt. Hagan singsing, women only performed with women's groups.

They showed us how they make their traditional pottery, which is used in barter with inland villages for garden products and also sold.

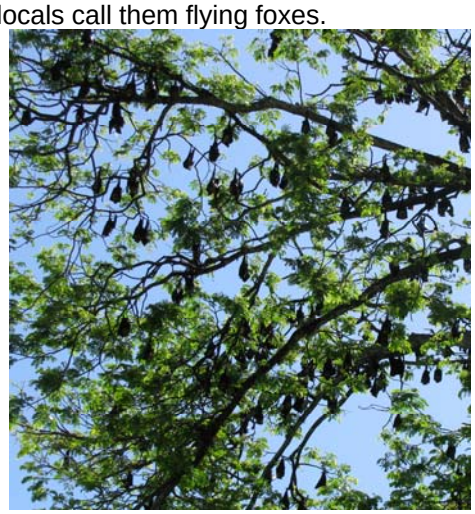
Beetle nuts, which come from a type of palm tree, are the drug of choice as I've already mentioned. Most people have red, stained teeth from chewing them in this village, and years of chewing them greatly raises the risk of oral cancer. The nut is chewed and when soft, chewed together with powdered lime from

ground up seashells and “mustard”, which looks like a small piece of a pepper. After chewing, the juice turns bright red and is spit out. It’s a stimulant. We tried it. It tasted awful, very acid, and it left my mouth dry and puckered up. I spit out the juice before it had any effect on me.

We then visited another village with a sulpher springs leached from limestone caves. Big eels and turtles were living in the sulphurous water.

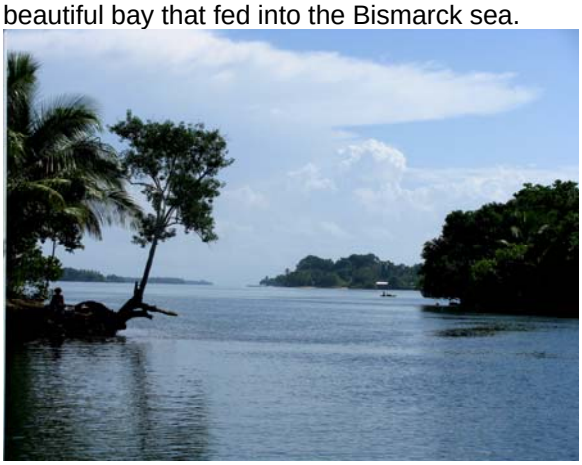
Earlier in the day we visited a small local museum with an outstanding collection of PNG carving. This area of New Guinea was German-controlled originally and the major Christian religion is Lutheran. The allies (Australia and the US) bombed Madang to rubble during WWII because it was a major location of the Japanese army. Australian ship watchers were hidden here at great risk, to report on ship movements of the Japanese. The war in the Pacific (WW II) was fought in this region, and the museum also honored this history.

The trees are full of bats hanging upside down. At night, large numbers of them come to feed on fruit and fly over the sea in back of our room. They make a shrill chirping sound, and the locals call them flying foxes.



Sunday, July 23

Today was snorkeling day. We were on a beautiful bay that fed into the Bismarck sea.



Houses on stilts made of different parts of the Sago palm lined the banks, and water taxis crammed with humanity took folks back and forth between the mainland and outlying islands. Men in outrigger canoes, stabilized with wooden frames to keep them from tipping, plied the bay. The scene was idyllic. We stopped at Pig Island (aptly named for PNG) and snorkled. Since I can’t swim, I was terrified but determined. Joseph, the boat’s captain and guide, got me outfitted. The minute I put my face in the water, salt water rushed into my mouth. It wasn’t until someone told me that you had to put the snorkel tube in front of rather than behind your teeth that I realized what my problem was. Joseph towed me over the coral reefs with small, brilliantly colored fish. It was a beautiful sight to see them through the snorkel mask, but I doubt if I could have done it on my own. I also kayaked for the first time. I am sure I will never join the navy.

We re-fought the war in the Pacific in WW II this afternoon. The Japanese took over the Solomon Islands and the coast of PNG, as a jump-off place to conquer Australia. Madang was a major part of the Japanese supply chain. The Japanese were only defeated when they tried to take Port Moresby by marching 60,000 troops down the Kokoda trail. They did not realize that after awhile, the trail went through a total wilderness and became very narrow. The U.S. was busy in Guadalcanal, the Australian troops had been sent to Turkey, and only the Aussie reserves were left to fight, called the ‘chocolate soldiers” because it was assumed they would melt in battle. However, they were able to pick of the Japanese who were sitting ducks on a very narrow trail. The Battle of the Coral Sea off the coast of PNG cut off the Japanese supply line, and they were defeated. Deep in a jungle-like area, there still sits a Japanese bomber shot down by the U.S.

It is rusted and vines are growing out of it, but the Japanese flag is still visible. Seeing it in this isolated location, in the extreme heat and humidity, with sprouts of greenery adorning it, is an eerie feeling, bringing an understanding of what our military who fought there faced. The guide who took us there owned the land,; however, the Lutheran church appropriated it and never paid him. There are other remains of WW II--bomb craters now covered with grass, a sunken supply ship, and a rusted tank (moved by the Lutheran missionaries near their church) are eerily reminiscent of the past. Busy Bee (named by missionaries), our local guide, said when he brought Japanese tourists there, the locals were angry. Great grievances have a way of lasting.

We finished the day on top of a hill with a gorgeous view of where we had been. The house on the hill is currently inhabited by German Lutheran missionaries. 120 Lutheran missionaries were killed by the Japanese, and although the Germans left after WW I, Lutherans and German Catholics have left their mark.

In a stop at a village market, once again we saw women selling fish and waving palm fronds over them to keep off the flies, lots of women selling beetle nuts and lime and peppers to go with them, and lots of fruits and vegetables. In every market we've been in in PNG, women do the selling, as in West Africa. They do the farming and though the money goes to the family, I wouldn't be surprised if they kept some of it. One baby, about 1 ½ years old, began to cry hysterically as soon as he saw us. When we walked away, he stopped crying. When we came back, he began to cry again and tried to hide from these strange looking creatures. All in all, though, people are very friendly, wave at us or shake hands, and seem pleased that we have come all the way from the U.S. to visit them. Unfortunately, some locals are happy for another reason. The Millers had an expensive camera and binoculars stolen from their hotel room, with all their photos of New Guinea now lost. PNG has a small tourist industry, and we don't see a lot of Americans here. The major tourists are Japanese.

Monday, August 24

We had to get up at 4:30 a.m. to catch a flight to Port Moresby to start our trip home. This, however, is PNG, where time is casual. The airport was closed. Suzanne sent someone to find out what was going on. She did not hear from him for quite a while. He had apparently stopped for a beetle nut break.

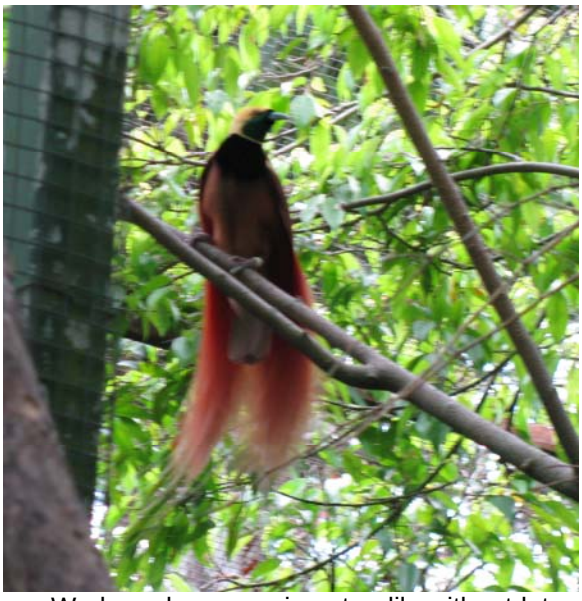
To pass the time before the flight would eventually leave, we went to a village half an hour away from Madang. We were greeted by the wife of the Lutheran pastor. Both she and her husband are from this area of PNG, and he is the son of the village chief. She told me she

has five children. She knows their ages but does not know her own (we have experienced this elsewhere in PNG). She sells beetle nuts in the market. This is the cash economy of the village, which relies basically on subsistence farming. Everyone in the village is chewing beetle nuts constantly—not one but 3 or 4 at a time, with lime from crushed seashells and the little peppers. She has a bilum bag hanging from her shoulder with beetle nuts and the other two ingredients, and as soon as she finishes one mouthful, she chews another. She says the effects are to give you energy and to make you happy. You would be listless and sad if you did not chew them. Everyone in the village was constantly chewing and stoned. Their teeth were all deep red. Even the schoolteacher had teeth that were so stained they were almost black. We went to the school. 47 young kids, approximately 6-8 years old, were sitting at long tables writing in copybooks what was on the board, Tok Pisin words translated into English. There were no clocks or books. The schoolhouse was a long building built out of a combination of sago palm leaves and wood. Marilyn Miller and I did our usual teaching routine of singing the ABC's, doing "head, shoulders, knees, toes", and the hokey pokey. We are sure the hokey pokey will now be featured in the next singsing in Mt. Hagan. The kids participated and sang to us. The teachers don't have a lot of education. The village built the school and the government pays the teachers. Children must pass an exam for secondary school, but it's expensive even if they pass. Some people in this area go to the local teachers' college for six months and then go back to villages to train local people as teachers. The three teachers here who come from this village have this type of local training.

The minister's wife said her children had not gone beyond primary school, that men usually have only one wife, and that pigs do not have the importance they do in the western highlands. The bride price her husband paid for her was 1800 kina ($900 U.S.) and one pig. Domestic violence is frequent, but she said if people love each other it shouldn't occur. This is the first time we heard anything about love. Children are disciplined by hitting them with a stick. There is a clinic which is 1 ½ hours walk away. There is no electricity or running water; they get water from a well. However, there were two TV antennas on huts. The TV is run by a generator. The village looked like all the other villages we've seen.

The village headman offered us coconut water. I politely refused because the cups had moisture in them, and I was not enthusiastic about possible parasites. There aren't any men who emigrate from this village. Australia has a cap on immigration. Many of the men who go there to work don't come back.

By 1:00 our plane left Medang for Port Moresby. We were scheduled to leave at 6:45, but hey this is PNG. A sign inside the plane (and also in our hotel room) said "No smoking or beetlenut chewing." We took a quick tour of Port Moresby in the afternoon. The city doesn't have a real center. There are some large bank buildings, embassies, and hotels, but there are also some smaller Chinese-owned shops and street markets where people bring in produce from the country. The hills are ringed with settlements of tin shacks with no electricity or running water. The land is rented from the landowner; however, there are also some nice homes. Some people live in shacks on stilts over the bay. There is a large botanical garden which has cassowaries, which are huge and beautiful birds; multicolored parrots; cockatiels; and tree kangaroos. One had a baby in her pouch, and the little joey hopped out and looked lost until he was reunited with his mother. The bus driving us around stalled on a hill overlooking the city. It was being driven by the bus driver's son, who looked to be about 16 years old. We had to exit the bus until they got it going again. As I said, this is PNG.



We have been moving steadily without letup for two weeks. Tomorrow, we start our odyssey home. On our last night in PNG, we went out to dinner with the Millers from Westchester and the Fillers from California, with whom we've become friends. We had dinner in an elegant restaurant in the hotel, which rivaled the standards of fine

restaurants in New York, with all the amenities. The pianist played American show tunes. Talk about a mix of cultures! It was totally discontinuous with the rest of PNG. However, PNG culture intruded. We tried to communicate to the staff that we wanted to divide the check three ways and put it on our credit cards. They were totally unable to handle splitting a bill three ways and entering the credit card division into the computer. Jerry had to take the maitre d'hotel to the front desk so the procedure for this could be explained to him.

July 25, Tuesday

The flight from PNG left late, which was not surprising. We made it onto the plane to LA with ten minutes to spare. PNG-LA-New York and an airport transport by car to Philadelphia-36 hours and we're home.

This trip was fascinating, and raises a lot of questions about economic development. I don't see that happening rapidly. PNG is isolated and has very little transportation infrastructure. The government is corrupt and riddled with nepotism. The few crops that are exportable, like tea and coffee, are priced out of the international market because of western farm subsidies. Mining is a big industry, as is the potential development of oil and gas; however, Australian companies (and potentially others) are the ones who extract these resources and depend on ex-pat labor and take the majority of profits out of the country. The issue of private property means that ownership by industry is dubious, and clan loyalty far exceeds any sense of national identity. There is little educational infrastructure, and clan wars make it difficult to unite groups. The cash economy is only how being introduced into villages, and there is little mass communication outside of urban areas. PNG has only two newspapers, distributed to the larger cities. Most of the population, however, is still rural. Given the lack of jobs, there is also a high crime rate. It is a beautiful island with terrific people with lots of potential. It will be interesting to see what the future holds.