

## THE BEGINNING OF NEW GUINEA LUTHERAN MISSION - MISSOURI SYNOD

To establish the date of this event, the question is: Is it the day the first Lutheran missionaries arrived in the Wabag Valley, or is it the day the Gospel was proclaimed there the first time to a gathering of the Enga people?

Perhaps I had better give both dates. The first Lutheran missionaries arrived in the Wabag Valley on August 26, 1948.

The first proclamation of the Gospel to a gathering of Enga people by a Lutheran preacher was on August 29, 1948. See I WILL UPHOLD YOU, page 119, line 15 to 22.

The mission workers who arrived on August 26 were: Missionary Felix Doering, Lay-missionary Armin (Pat) Kleinig, Missionary Harold Freund (writer of this information), Teo' Ain-Lapu (an indigenous teacher from Siassi), Petere, Kuru, Yasaptung (3 indigenous evangelists from Siassi) and Pokon, one of Doering's local evangelists from Ogelbeng.

How did all begin? Let me tell you. Fortunately, ever since I graduated from Concordia Seminary, Adelaide, South Australia, I have kept a diary. So, dates of events and other main facts do not come from memory (which could be hazy or mistaken after 49 years), but come from a record written the day it happened. As for details, these are fixed in my memory, since this was one of the thrilling parts of my service in the Lord's Kingdom.

In 1947 the Administration of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea (formerly Deutsch-Neuguinea- i.e. German New Guinea) announced that it would permit missionaries to begin work in the Restricted Area west of Mt. Hagen in the Western Highlands.

What is meant by "Restricted Area"? Why was it restricted? To clarify this, I had better go right back into the history of mission work in German New Guinea, i.e. the northern part of the eastern half of New Guinea and islands north- and eastwards.

When the Deutsch-Neuguinea Kompagnie established itself at Finschhafen in New Guinea in the second half of the 1800s, it would not allow missionaries or other white people to come to New Guinea. But in 1886 they allowed missionaries from the Neuendettelsau Mission Society in Germany, Johannes Flierl and Kart Tremel to come and begin mission work in the Finschhafen area.

When an alarming number of their staff had suddenly died, the Company fled to Madang, further west on the north coast of New Guinea. In 1887 two missionaries from the Rhenish Mission Society in Germany were allowed to begin work in the Madang area. Roman Catholic mission fields became established in the Madang area, along the Sepik River, and in the Rabaul area. Methodist and Anglican missions also became established in German New Guinea.

The Protestant missions reached an agreement that they would never compete in the field of any other mission. But the Roman Catholics insisted, "The world is our field", and that they had every right to break in and work in other missions' fields.

Mission organisations have to be corporate bodies in order to own land for mission stations and have legal status. When German New Guinea had become the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, the Administration instituted a system of Property Trust Ordinances for missions, which included a legal title for each mission. So the Mission of the Neuendettelsau Society became LUTHERAN MISSION FINSCHHAFEN. And the official title of the Mission of the Rhenisch Society, which was taken over, after World War 1, by the American Lutheran Church (one of the many Lutheran church bodies in the USA at that time) , became LUTHERAN MISSION MADANG.

If I have to refer to these Missions hereafter, I will give merely the initial letters of their names, namely LMF and LMM.

In the lists of the Administration and of business organisations the names of these two Missions, naturally, came right together. Result: endless mix-ups with documents and shipments going to the wrong mission. And if we had eventually called ourselves Lutheran Mission Siassi, we would have got tangled up in an even worse confusion. So we chose the title AUSTRALIAN LUTHERAN MISSION, to ensure that, in alphabetical lists we would not be close to the other Lutheran Missions, and our short name became ALM.

For many years the interior of New Guinea was a mystery to the government, the civilians, and the missionaries. Because of the horribly mountainous nature of the island, very few explorers managed to get inland. When an aircraft had to be brought to New Guinea to transport dredges, people, supplies and equipment to the Bulolo Valley gold bonanza, flights were made over the inland, and the heavily populated Highlands were discovered.

LMF had already been pushing inland from the upper Markham area into the eastern end of the Highlands. The Catholics immediately began establishing missions far and wide in the far-flung huge population. If the Highlands were not to become a completely Catholic field, LMF and LMM just had to compete to the best of their ability.

How this became the reason why the Rooke-Siassi island mission field was transferred to us of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia in 1936, is recorded at the bottom of page 43 and top of page 44 of my wife's autobiography, I WILL UPHOLD YOU.

By 1936 LMF and LMM had established five mission stations in the Central Highlands. This is an area about 110 miles from east to west and about 60 miles north to south. The Lutheran system of evangelists (Christian men from established coastal congregations) going into new mission areas, and living among the heathen there, and bringing them the teachings of the Bible, entailed that each of these five stations had anything from 20 to 50 evangelist "stations" dotted around it, many a long way from the white missionary's station. The Catholics tried to copy the Lutheran system by putting New Guineans, whom they called catechists, to live with the heathen.

What was to be expected happened. Rivalry and conflict developed between evangelists and catechists. What Frerichs records on page 63 in ANUTU CONQUERS NEW GUINEA may have resulted from this rivalry, which he does not mention. And there is no need for me to go into details here. But the restrictions the Administration imposed on the mission workers are correctly recorded by Frerichs. (I will try to make a copy and enclose it.)

But in addition, the Administration decreed that henceforth no missionaries would be permitted to go into a new area until the Administration officers had been there long enough to have the local population under control. This was decreed about 1936.

That is how the huge area west of Mt. Hagen (the Western Highlands) came into the category of Uncontrolled Areas. But because that name did not sound good, it was "improved" in later years to Closed area, and finally to Restricted Area.

How long it would have taken for Administration stations to get established there, and for the patrol officers to reach the stage where they felt they had the people under control cannot be calculated or imagined. In 1939 World War 2 began in Europe and made normal continuation of Administration and mission activity impossible.

In December 1941 the Japs struck Pearl Harbour, and the following month they established their first stronghold in New Guinea.

All Administration and mission and business activity ceased in New Guinea Territory until the end of the war with the Japs in 1945.

Then everything became established again, and one of the many matters the Administration attended to was to let missionaries begin work west of Mt. Hagen.

And I hope the foregoing long presentation has enabled you to see what is involved in my question, not far from the beginning of this treatise, "What is meant my 'Restricted Area' "?

Soon after Lutheran mission work resumed in New Guinea (in 1946), LMF and LMM decided to amalgamate, and they called themselves LUTHERAN MISSION NEW GUINEA (LMNG), headquarters at Lae, which became the most flourishing city in New Guinea.

We, ALM, were delayed badly by the long time it took to build a new mission vessel (in Sydney) for us, without which we could not have resumed our work on the Rooke-Siassi island mission field. Early morning, December 22, 1946 we dropped the anchor of our UMBOI 2 at Gizarum, Rooke Island, and resumed work.

By the middle of 1947, in the midst of the high-pressure activity in the villages and on the station and in getting materials for buildings, we heard from our Board of Foreign Missions in Australia, that the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in USA was preparing to begin mission work in the Wabag Valley, Western Highlands, New Guinea, and were requesting that one or two of us, ALM, would assist them in pioneering the establishment of their mission.

It appears that our Board figured that this was to be a co-operative undertaking of our ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia) and the LC-MS.

You see, when our ELCA, at its Synod in 1935, decided to launch into mission work in New Guinea, the intention was to pioneer a mission among people where no missionary had worked yet.

God saved us from that inevitable disaster when LMF ceded the Rooke-Siassi island field to us. But that was an established field, and our Board felt that we should still carry out the resolution of that 1935 Synod and pioneer work in a new field, and that by going into the Wabag Valley, even though only as a minor partner with LC-MS this intention would be fulfilled.

They could no know that God had a glorious opportunity developing for us at Menyamya, where we began work among raw savages, killers and cannibals, in 1951.

At the end of August, 1947, Pastor O. E. Thiele, the Secretary of our Mission Board in Australia came and visited our mission field on Rooke-Siassi for six weeks, and on October 16 he and I flew to Goroka, where Mr. James (Jim) Taylor, the "King of the Central Highlands" (the top Administration officer) had his office. We thoroughly discussed all aspects of opening a mission field in the Wabag Valley with him and were assured of his full co-operation. Two days later we were taken by jeep to the Lutheran mission station at Asaroka, where we were able to discuss mission work among Highlanders and see what advice we could get. On October 21 we flew on to Mt. Hagen and were taken by jeep to Ogelbeng, at that time the westernmost mission station in the Highlands. Felix Doering from Canada was the LMNG missionary there.

With Doering we thoroughly discussed plans for going into the Wabag Valley, which is on the western side of the Mount Hagen mass (over 12,000 feet high), while Ogelbeng is right against the eastern side of this mountain mass.

Here are some of the facts we learnt.

Though the huge Mount Hagen mass separated the people around Ogelbeng from the people on the eastern end of the Wabag Valley, there were trade connections. Men from either side used to climb over the barrier and trade with trade partners on the other side. So, much information about the great blessings received by the Ogelbeng people from mission work was brought by these traders to their people in the eastern end of the Wabag Valley, who became very keen to have Lutheran missionaries come and work among them. And one of their men had come over several times, stayed with Ogelbeng people, and sat in on a baptismal class and learnt Bible stories and Christian teachings, which he then tried to tell to his people at home.

We could have planned to fly with all our supplies and equipment to Wabag, the government station at the western end of the Wabag Valley, But it was know that the Seventh-Day Adventists, who had begun working in New Guinea between the two World Wars, and who heretofore had usually gone into the fields of other denominations, "sheep-stealing" and causing confusion, were about to be the first in the Wabag Valley, And the Catholics were hurrying in to be the next.

Since both the foregoing had no conscience about competing in the fields of other missions, and especially in view of what the Catholics had done to us on the Rooke-Siassi field, we had no compunctions about going in and competing with them for a change.

If we had planned to fly in to Wabag, we had no reason to assume that we would be able to establish ourselves near Wabag. And we could assume that we would have much difficulty getting carriers to carry our supplies and equipment to the eastern end of the Valley, the part where the people were most likely to accept us.

And even here, the Catholic missionary would probably quickly put in dummy catechists there to induce the people not to accept us.

So, obviously we had to plan to get all our supplies and equipment to Ogelbeng, get a large number of carriers there, and do that tremendous portorage task all that distance over the south shoulder of Mount Hagen, and suddenly be in the Wabag Valley before the other two missions knew we were coming.

By now it had been decided that one of our laymen, Armin (Pat) Kleinig and I were to go and pioneer the work of the LC-MS in the Wabag Valley. But I could not possible leave the island field until our work had been restored nearer to normal after the confusion caused by the Jap invasion and the War.

Eventually, on Sunday, June 6, 1948 we had a special "Mission Service" to mark the participation of the Siassi Christians in launching Christ's work in the Wabag Valley. Four local men: a teacher and three evangelists were commissioned for the work in the new Mission. That evening Pat and I and these four men left on the UMBOI for Lae.

Much had to be attended to at Lae, especially applications for our Permits to enter the Western Highlands Restricted Area.

On June 24 I flew to Goroka, leaving Pat at Lae to finalise the lists of all that was considered necessary for our establishment in the field, to purchase and pack and have everything ready to be flown in. The Siassi men stayed with Pat and assisted him.

At Goroka I again was the guest of Mr. "Jim" Taylor for two days. Jim Leahy was also there. I was able to ensure that Taylor would endorse our Applications for Permits, and informed him of our plans, and sought his advice. Officials are more kindly disposed to missionaries who confide in them.

My plan was to try to fly on from Goroka to Hagen. On June 26 I went out to Asaroka, having been told that a plane might land there on its way to Hagen. On June 29 I went back to Goroka, having been (mis)informed that a plane on its way to Hagen, was to land there. After two more such to-and-fros, I flew back to Lae, and on July 11 I flew back to Lae, and on July 11 I flew to Hagen and was taken to Ogelbeng.

Before WW2 an airstrip was constructed at Ogelbeng. LMF had its own aircraft. After the war, LMNG applied to the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) to have this airstrip registered so that planes could land at Ogelbeng, and passengers and cargo no longer need to come to or go from Hagen, which necessitated road transport from or to Hagen.

It was hoped that any day word would come that the airstrip had been registered, and we could get our five tons of supplies and equipment landed at Ogelbeng, thus avoiding the bother and expense of portorage from Hagen to Ogelbeng.

On July 14 Pat Kleinig came in via Hagen. And we waited and hoped and waited. Both of us found work to do helping the Doerings. I sharpened pitsaws and other saws, and we both did construction and repair work for them.

Eventually we had to get our cargo flown to Hagen. The Dragon planes, still the chief means of air transport at that time, could lift less than 2,000 lbs. from Lae for the long flight to Hagen. Since we had about five tons of cargo and equipment to fly in, we had quite a few loads, though some came in as filler on mail planes. My diary shows that during the period August 11 to 18 cargo reached Hagen and was brought to Ogelbeng.

We had a busy time getting as much as possible out of the boxes and packing it in rucksacks - about 70 lbs. per load. But much had to be left in the boxes. These we tied to poles for the carriers on Friday, August 20. Then we had a final week-end at Ogelbeng.

Meanwhile Doering had been sending out word to the villages for carriers. Sunday afternoon 25 were there, and Monday morning 180 lined up. But they were not nearly enough; so Doering added 40 sturdy school boys, and about 10 a.m. the huge carrier line moved off.

In my wife's autobiography, I WILL UPHOLD YOU, page 115 onward, there is a fairly good record of what happened hereafter, though 1947 in line 8 from the bottom of page 115 must be corrected to 1948, and in line 20 on page 116 the 150 should be 180.

Praise and thanks to God for all His blessings, support and guidance in our efforts in pioneering this Mission, and especially for the very valuable assistance that Missionary Felix Doering rendered in enabling us to prepare for the big transport at his station and for procuring the huge number of carriers and controlling them on the four days portorage and after arrival at Yaramanda.

*A.P.H. Freund*

Typed May 19 to 24, 1997.

Note: For additional personal information read on in Dora Freund's Memoirs.

*This photo-copied page from Friedrich's book is what I refer to in line 25, page 2 of my Article here with*

The Era of Expansion (1920-1940)

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mann west to accompany the two brethren to Hagen. He has done more than any other missionary to open the Central Highlands of New Guinea to Lutheran mission activity. The party reached Ogelbeng on November 21, 1934 and broke ground for the mission station. Thus two mission stations had been established in the Highlands by the Finschhafen Mission.

Ogelbeng

(Ega, Mt. Hagen)

But as in every other place, opposition to the gospel soon manifested itself. Two months later, when a Catholic priest and a brother were murdered in the Upper Chimbu, restrictions were placed on all mission activity in the Highlands. No new evangelists were permitted to go into the area. Evangelists stationed among the people were not allowed to leave their stations, not even to travel to the main station to see their missionary. No new evangelist stations could be established. It was also difficult to get permission for new missionaries to enter the Highlands. When it was finally granted, it was with the stipulation that the new missionary remain six months on the station before he visit the people. The old restriction that no wives could enter the Highlands also remained in force. Travelling of the experienced missionaries was under strict supervision of the government officer-in-charge and on the condition that he have at least ten guns of specified caliber in his party.

The first setback—restrictions imposed

On August 1, 1936, a further order came that all evangelists and teachers who had been stationed among the people were to return to the main mission station and would not be allowed to travel unless accompanied by a missionary.

In the Ega circuit 70 evangelists and teachers were affected, in Ogelbeng 40; in Kerowagi 20, and in One-rungka where the evangelists and teachers had worked for 15 years, more than 100 had to return to the main mission station.