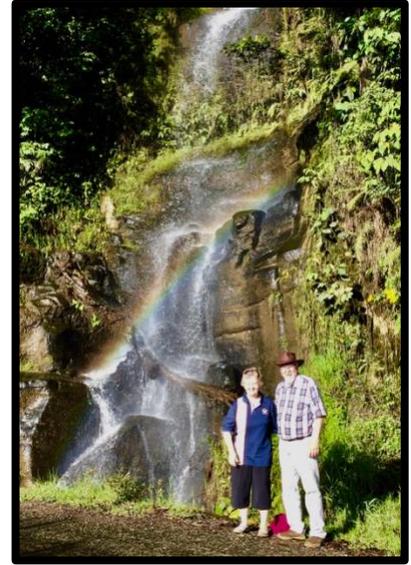


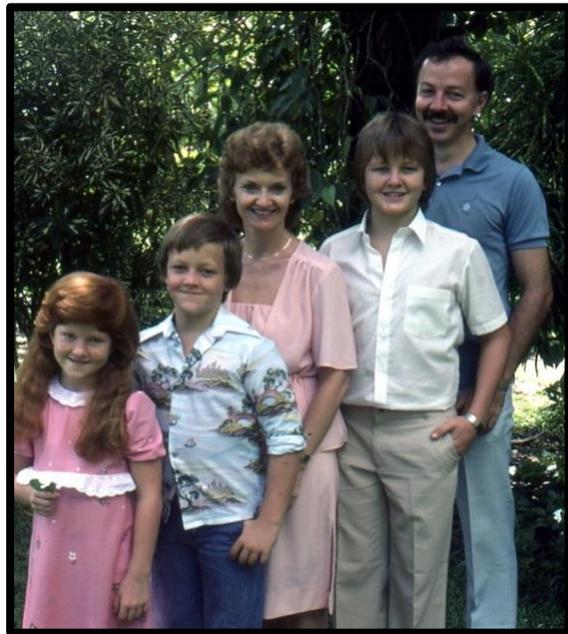
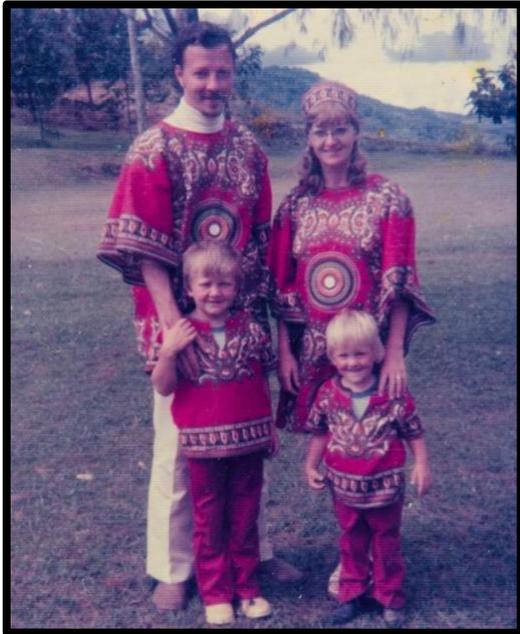
Todd and Janet Luedtke PNG Memories (Written July, 2020)

Jan and I have been married now for just over fifty years, all of which have been blessed by the direction and strength of God our Heavenly Father. He has led us as His teachers from one adventure to another including fifteen years in Papua New Guinea, fifteen very different years in Oregon and southern California, ten years in Shanghai China and a retirement spent volunteering both in Papua New Guinea (picture at right under the Pausa road falls 2017), and China. We like to say we have been on a fifty-year honeymoon.



It all began at Concordia University Chicago, then Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, where we met and eventually were married – I a city kid from upstate New York and Jan a farmer’s daughter from mid-state Illinois – the perfect cross-cultural marriage. When I was doing my final year of college and Jan was teaching her first year in the inner city of Chicago, we volunteered for teaching positions overseas, and soon thereafter agreed to join Jan’s brother Garry Wolff as teachers in Papua New Guinea.

After three months of orientation and language training, we were assigned to Highland Lutheran School, Amapyaka, where I spent the next two and a half years teaching nearly all of the grades at different times and serving a year as principal, and Jan gave birth to our two sons. Then in Mid 1972 we moved to St. Paul’s Lutheran High School, Pausa, where our daughter was born and we served until the end of 1977, with a year’s furlough in 1974. We then served six more years at Martin Luther Seminary in Lae, myself as teacher and administrator and Jan as instructor at Balob Teachers College and then as first grade teacher at Bulae International School. (The pictures below show our family in matching clothes that Jan made on Independence Day at Pausa in 1975, and in Lae at MLS in the early eighties.)



We returned to the USA in 1984, and after fifteen years in Oregon and California, ten more years helping to start Concordia International School Shanghai in China, and then additional years in

Oregon, we have retired on a rural Illinois farm home that is our inheritance from Jan's generous parents. We have also had the pleasure of returning to Papua New Guinea to serve at all three of the schools where we served in the seventies and the honor to teach some of the children of the students we taught earlier. The one constant through our journey along the joyous but curvy, potholed mountain road of PNG and of our lives has been the ever-present love, strength and guidance of our Savior Jesus.

In 2009, I had the opportunity to return to Martin Luther Seminary and teach for a term and to facilitate the visit of our son Rhett's nine-member drama group from George Fox University for some wonderfully cross-cultural dramatics at MLS, Ukarumpa Summer Institute of Linguistics and Raun Raun Theatre in Goroka. Then later that year, former student (now governor of the Enga Province), Sir Peter Ipatas invited me to serve for a time as the principal of St. Paul's Lutheran Secondary School, Pausa, which by that time had grown to almost a thousand students in grades 9-12. Meanwhile Jan was starting a preschool at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Tigard, Oregon.

2010 for me was a year of paying down significant school debt and working to build school spirit and Christian servanthood. Then in 2011, student leaders in competition set off a student fight, which was followed by the expulsion of ten students and subsequently a fire which destroyed an entire boys' dormitory (picture below left). In utter frustration I asked God for help and He immediately touched me when I looked at the calendar on my wall and found the daily reading was 2 Corinthians 4:7-10. "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."

A month later we held the first Pausa Cultural Show since 1977 (picture below right).



Our time in PNG, both in the seventies and more recently, was also filled with smooth places along the road - rich memories of friends, students and family: playing tennis with other missionaries on clay courts and softball and rugby with Pausa students, walking through unknown bush and unfamiliar vegetation, visiting strange homes with low doors and kunai roofs, dancing around a giant fire at Pausa on Independence Day in September of 1975, snorkeling over coral reefs in Madang on vacation, thrilling to the double beat of singing drums, cooking wheat cakes and presenting puppet shows with Pausa art students at a booth at the 1977 Hagen Show, sharing God's Word on Sunday mornings or during Wednesday chapels at Pausa or Highlands Lutheran School or MLS, 25 inches of rain in 24 hours flooding the Lae area, building a play house in our back yard at Pausa, our sons playing with Kunerts' boys - zooming down the Pausa driveway on big wheel trikes, the first steps of our three children, Mother's Day pictures with Jan and the children, firewood bridges on dirt roads that later became concrete

bridges on new blacktop (later with myriad potholes), swimming at the waterfall near Finchafen, canoes to the Tami Islands and kwila wood bowls carved by the islanders, buying Cadbury chocolate at Burns Philips on Sunday mornings after church, Andrew racing motorcycles, Rhett performing cossak dancing, DeAnna dancing ballet, over twenty friends as guests one Thanksgiving at a long table in our MLS carport, playing worship songs in a traveling band of four in Lae, clown worship services at MLS, hundreds worshipping and communing on kickball fields, the sadness of funeral ceremonies especially involving students or friends, the joy of Easter sunrise worship on a hill at Pausa or on a beach in Lae, driving and walking miles for a giant four-hour worship in the Kandep, visitors selling or giving items at the door or in the living room for coffee, weekly Bible studies with teachers and other friends, racing to get the laundry off the line before the rain descended, long newspaper cigarettes, purchasing fire wood with newspaper, live pigs being butchered and mumed for celebration feasts and the tears of leaving.

While we were volunteering at HLIS in 2017, we had the special joy of hosting our son Andrew and his whole family for most of the month of December. The whole family visited multiple mission stations including the Enga Cultural Center in Wabag, toured Monokam Lutheran Church and medical facility recently built by sponsor and former student Jacob Luke, CEO of Mapai Trucking, and with Jacob as guide and protector took a road trip to Lae and back for Christmas. On one occasion at Yaibos, Andrew made a gift of money to the daughter of our former cook boy Sakatao and received the traditional charge of the spear-carrying bride and friend as a thank you. The visit was a fitting way for Jan and I to bid a final good bye to PNG and for Andrew's family to experience the country of his birth. (The picture below shows Andrew and family together with Sakatao and family with the traditionally dressed bride and friend.)



Unworthy as we are, we have been privileged to serve as God's tools in His Kingdom in PNG and elsewhere in His wonderfully diverse and sometimes frightening – always challenging - world. Our time volunteering at Highlands Lutheran International School in 2015 and 2017 brought us full circle from where God had first placed us as His servants. He is faithful.