Only the Beginnings

by Blaine Burkey, O.F.M.Cap.
Unfinished Draft 14 of

Only the Beginnings

commemorating the coming of the Capuchins
and their co-workers
to the Southern Highlands
of Papua New Guinea

by Blaine Burkey, OFMCap

introduced by Angelo Cardinal Rossi,
President of the Administration of the
Patrimony of the Holy See and
Former Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the
Evangelization of Peoples

St. Conrad Archives Center
3613 Wyandot St.
Denver CO 80211
2016
After I visited Papua New Guinea in the summer of 1979, I wrote this manuscript on an IBM System 23. For some reason the effort came to a halt in 1984; and then for many years it sat virtually untouched in my rooms in Hays, St. Louis and Denver, where it constantly reminded me of a failed effort. Realizing someone might pitch it in the trash after my demise, I eventually transferred it to the provincial archives, where it again has rested in peace.

The book was far along, and contained much invaluable and even interesting material, but it was not finished. It was especially unfortunate that most of the planned footnotes did not get inserted at that time, when it would have been much easier to add them.

Various people over the years have wanted to read what I had, but there was only one much-scribbled-over copy (774 pages) which I was not about to loan to anyone. Anybody who wanted to read it would have had to sit in the archives and read it. And no one did.

Things took a turn for the better, when my friend and former student, Father John Pfannenstiel of the Pennsylvania Province’s Mission Office, recently reached me at the right moment, asking if he could have a copy of the unfinished work to place in the archives of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

The floppy disks on which the book was written probably exist somewhere, but the IBM System 23 is one of the earliest fossils of Digidaldom, and even if found would have been very expensive to use. Attempts to scan and reformat the text into a Word document were unsuccessful due to the scribbled-over nature of the pages and oft ill-formed letters of the IBM System 23 type font.

Jim Little, our provincial IT, suggested that I get 27 of my friends to each retype a chapter, and he offered to do one himself. Though doubtful that I had that many friends who would be willing to type, I thought I would at least ask. That spurred an amazing effort which eventually saw seven friars and 10 lay people (one a layman) very generously pitching in during the 2016 Easter season to resurrect the manuscript.

Those who are interested in the first 25 years of the history of the Capuchin Mission to Papua New Guinea can now read in Draft 14 much of what I found in 1984. And it is possible to develop an updated draft at some future date.

Copies of Draft 14 are being made and distributed with that understanding. Ownership of a copy of this draft in no way includes permission to publish the book further, either in part or in whole. I am not opposed to having someone finish the book as originally planned, but I would want to be involved—mostly in a collaborative way in assuring that I am agreeable to what is being done in the process. For that reason, this cover letter must be kept as a constitutive part of the Draft.

Ownership of the text rests with the Capuchin Province of Mid-America, Inc., and only its current superior has the power to authorize publication thereof, which authorization must be done in writing.

Denver, Nov. 2, 2016

Father Blaine Burkey, OFMCap

Confirmed by Father Christopher Popravak, OFMCap
Provincial Minister, Capuchin Province of Mid-America
Nov. 2, 2016
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<td><em>Annals of the Capuchin Province of St. Augustine</em> (Pittsburgh)</td>
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<td><em>Analecta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Cappucinorum</em> (Rome)</td>
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An Introduction

by the Pope’s chief minister
for missionary activities

For twenty-five years this Sacred Congregation has noted with deep admiration and sincere appreciation the care with which the Capuchin friars of the Province of Pennsylvania, and more recently also the provinces of Great Britain, Mid-America, and Switzerland, and the Vice Province of Australia, as well as secular clergy from Australia, other religious from ten different congregations, and lay workers from many nations, have devoted themselves to bringing God’s Good News to the peoples of the Southern Highlands in Papua New Guinea.

In his germinal history of this adventure, aptly entitled “Only the Beginning,” Father Blaine Burkey calls attention to the first Gospel passage which was quietly proclaimed at Mendi during the first Mass celebrated in the Southern Highlands. In it Jesus said, “Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a Kingdom.” (Lk 12,32).

The land that time forgot, where fear of evil spirits previously held people in terror, where hardly anyone had ever heard of the Lord Jesus twenty-five years ago, has now seen the coming of His Kingdom, to the extent that 45,000 Catholics have already been brought to a new, joyful life in the waters of Baptism.

Hundreds of these people in turn have sought further training so that they might continue bringing the Gospel’s joy to their own people as catechists, as religious brothers and sisters, and as priests. The ordination to the priesthood in 1977 of Father Simon Apea Soge was a particularly noteworthy day in the history of the Diocese of Mendi, but the numbers of young men training in both the minor and major seminaries nurtures the hope that that happy event will be repeated many times in the future.

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1 2016: This letter was written to Bishop Firmin Schmidt at the time of the 25th anniversary of the Mission, and was written with the understanding that it would be used as an introduction for this book which was being written for the jubilee celebration. Man proposes, and God disposes. The book was not ready for the anniversary and entered limbo in 1984. It is being made available now in 2016 basically in its 1984 appearance. Anachronistic footnotes will be labelled 2016.
As Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, which is charged with the competence of the world’s foreign missions, I wish to take this opportunity in particular to thank the Capuchin friars and their numerous collaborators—priest, religious and lay persons—who over these twenty-five years have given not only to the nationals of the Southern Highlands, but also expatriate missionaries of many other areas a sterling example of what His Holiness Pope John Paul II was talking about when he commended the Bishops of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, gathered at Rome under the leadership of Mendi’s own Bishop Firmin Schmidt, for “the great witness of Christian love that has been given by the missionaries.” (Audience, Oct. 23, 1979).

Mendi’s missionaries from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, England, Ireland, France, Canada, Austria, Trinidad, South Africa, Belgium, Holland, Scotland, and Germany—strikingly representative of the universal Church—have given the witness of their living, praying, and working together as a family under the fatherly leadership of Bishop Firmin. Their sincere concern for one another and lively camaraderie is well known throughout Papua New Guinea and can well be expected to greatly aid in the current all-out effort of the Church in Mendi to form in every area basic Christian communities, whose members will help one another to grow in the love of Christ. With Pope John Paul II, I hasten to add, “May this witness of love go on forever in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.”

Finally a word of thanks to all those throughout the world who have participated in this special design of God’s providence: families who have sacrificed the presence of their sons and daughters, individuals who have been praying tirelessly for the missions, those who have given generously of their material possessions, and those who, like the Capuchin Nally brothers, Father Cecil and Don Bosco, have literally devoted their entire lives to promoting the cause of the foreign missions. To one and all, I express the gratitude of the Holy See and of this Sacred Congregation, which, when it asked the Capuchins to go to Papua New Guinea twenty-five years ago, was confident that their friends would go with them in spirit.

I pray therefore that God will crown all your efforts with successes that rival those of the first twenty-five years. With every best wish, I remain,

Devotedly yours in Our Lord,

Agnelo Cardinal Rossi, Prefect,
Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

It pleased God to call men to share in his life and not merely singly, without any bond between them, but he formed them into a people, in which his children who have been scattered were gathered together (cf. Jn. 11, 52)…. In order to establish a relationship of peace and communion with himself, and in order to bring about brotherly union among men—men who were sinners—God decided to enter into the history of mankind in a new and definitive manner…” (Vatican II, decree on Missionary Activity, 1965, no. 2-3.

1

Time Almost Forgot

Viewing a map of the South Pacific, very little imagination is required to regard the island of New Guinea, the world’s second largest, as an imposing prehistoric bird of prey soaring from atop Australia’s Cape York Peninsula toward Asia’s Malay Peninsula. The western anterior of this animal, once known as Dutch New Guinea, is now Irian Jaya; and along with innumerable islands to the west, it forms the Republic of Indonesia. The other half of the island and some 500 other islands—large and small—to the east form the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, which achieved its independence in 1975.

Running nearly the entire 1,500 mile length of this bird-shaped island is a formidable backbone of mountains from 50 to 150 miles in width and everywhere pitted with yawning valleys and deep gorges. To the south of the third quarter of this spinal column, just behind the wings, are located the Southern Highlands, with which this book is mainly concerned.

More precisely the Southern Highlands lie at the headwaters of the Strickland, Kikori, and Purari Rivers. Through the formidable limestone barrier dividing the Southern Highlands’ more populous northern half from its sparsely-populated southern half, five major rivers—the Tagari-Hegigio,\(^2\) the Wage-Mubi, the Angura-Erave, the Yaro, and the Kaugel-Tua—fed by scores of

\(^2\) Government maps based on early government patrols call the river the Tagari. Local people and most missionaries call it the Tagali. Some have called it the Dagali. This disparity exists in numerous place names. This book would be thoroughly peppered with footnotes were one to try to note them all.
brisk mountain tributaries, poke plummeting passages to the Kikori and Purari, which in turn feed the Gulf of Papua.

Inhabitants of the area belong to the Melanesian race and are thought by many scientists to have been pushed into the Highlands about 10,000 years ago by hostile tribes on the coast.

Accustomed to fighting for untold generations in a maze of deep valleys, individual tribes have become so locked in geographically that a throng of distinct, yet highly sophisticated languages has developed. All of these were exclusively spoken languages prior to the appearance of the white man. Save for some very limited literacy programs, they still are. The local people consequently have very little clear knowledge of events preceding their own recollections; and due to the absence of readily discernible seasons, even those recollections are somewhat jumbled.

Turnabout, however, is fair play. While the Southern Highlanders had to a large extent forgotten times past, time also somehow lost track of the Highlands. Hidden away in Papua New Guinea’s vast hinterland, the highly populated central Highlands were until the mid-1930’s almost completely cut off from the rest of the world and its development. Australian Mick Leahy, one of the first “Europeans” (as all white men are called in this part of the world) to enter the Highlands, appropriately dubbed this mountainous region The Land That Time Forgot, in the 1937 book he wrote in collaboration with Maurice Crain.
Here in the five present highland provinces was a land which the progress of history with its various epochs and eras had left untouched in pristine Stone-Age condition, and the Southern Highlands had the distinction of being the last of the five to welcome the dawn of recorded history. Almost simultaneously the Stone Age stood vis-à-vis the Iron Age, the Industrial Age, and the Space Age.

The first foreigners to enter the Southern Highlands usually came as leaders of large patrols of one of the various territorial governments. Led by a pair of Europeans, each patrol consisted mostly of well-trained native policemen recruited throughout the rest of the island and a large number of local porters recruited near the starting point. There were several parties, however, which consisted solely of a couple of European gold seekers and a line of carriers.

The earliest European explorations of the Southern Highlands were limited to the sparsely populated area south of the Great Limestone Barrier. Donald Mackey of Great Britain’s territorial service led a coal-seeking expedition up the Purari River in 1907 and turned west to the mountain which he named Mt. Murray after Lt. Governor Sir Hubert Murray. Three years later, when Murray himself went on leave, the acting administrator, Staniforth Smith, left his office in Port Moresby and went to Mt. Murray via the Kikori River to personally lead an exploratory expedition from there to the headwaters of the Strickland. On a trip strongly reminiscent of American General George A. Custer’s escapades in the previous century, Smith passed through the Sambergi Valley south of Erave and then wandered on for many weeks before mistakenly descending the Kikori, the very river he had ascended on his way to Mt. Murray. In the process he lost 11 men, all of them indigenes. This was more than a third of the members of his expedition, making it thus one of the worst disasters in the history of the territorial administration. Without fully informing itself, however, London’s Royal Geographical Society honored Smith with a medal.

Assistant Resident Magistrate (ARM) Leo Flint and Patrol Officer (PO) H.M. Sauders explored the Sambergi valley more thoroughly in 1922. Afterwards they crossed into the Kerabi Valley, eventually reaching, but not crossing the Erave River.

Another government patrol, led by B.W. Faithorn and Claude Champion, crossed Mt. Murray in 1929 and went on to the Erave River, whose right bank they followed downstream to the Purari. Along the Erave, Champion crossed a vine suspension bridge and followed the path to the top of a ridge on the northern side. His presumption that the well-worn path denoted a large population further north was confirmed when one of the policemen climbed a high tree and saw distant grasslands with numerous rising columns of smoke. Had they checked this possibility further, as Claude wanted to, the opening of the rather populous Southern Highlands might have been pushed forward a couple decades. Faithorn, however, judged such a detour would exceed instructions; and they continued on downstream.

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3 From 1884 until 1905, the southeast quarter of the island of New Guinea was a British protectorate called British New Guinea. From 1906 until independence in 1975, it was an Australian territory known as the Territory of Papua. From 1945 until 1975, it was jointly administrated by Australia with the Territory of New Guinea (the northeastern quarter of the island previously known as Kaiserwilhelmsland). This joint administration was known from 1949 until 1973 as the Territory of Papua and New Guinea and from 1973 until 1975 as the Territory of Papua New Guinea.
In June 1930, a private expedition led by Mick Leahy and Mick Dwyer entered the eastern end of the Southern Highlands, but again skirted the most populous areas. The search for gold brought Leahy and Dwyer from the other side of New Guinea’s backbone—in other words from the Mandated Territory of New Guinea (old Kaiserwihelmsland) which Australians had been separately administering for the League of Nations since World War I. Having started April 12 at
Salmaua, south of Lae along the northern coast, Leahy and Dwyer had gone inland to the eastern slopes of the Bismarck Range and then turned southwestward along the tributaries of the Tua River. Entering Papua June 18, they went along the left bank of the Tua, in the area now part of Simbu Province, until they reached the Purari River, and headed downstream to Port Romilly and Kikori.

The first Europeans to enter the real population centers of the Southern Highlands were this same Mick Leahy, and his brother Dan. From April 28 until May 10, 1934, the Leahy brothers and 35 carriers, 30 of them armed, were in the Southern Highlands, as a prospecting expedition financed by a company in Melbourne. The Leahys went counterclockwise around Mt. Ialibu (Yalbu, as they called it) and back to Mt. Hagen. Mick Leahy’s map indicates that they probably visited Lake Onim and Lake Bune (lakes they called Tangigi and Unimi) and area around Muli (which they called Pua), then over to Walapape (Warababi), Loluapu (Luluabo), and Kumiane Kumeana), before turning back up into the Mandated Territory. In mid-June, the two brothers also climbed to the top of Mt. Giluwe (Keluwere).

Later that same year, two burly Englishmen, identical twins named Tom and Jack Fox, on another gold-prospecting expedition from Mt. Hagen to the Digul River in Dutch New Guinea, returned by way of the Southern Highlands.

It has previously been reckoned they came by way of the Tari basin and Mt. Giluwe, thus going through the Wage, Lai, and Mendi Valleys; but closer examination of the bearings, mileage, and other information in Jack’s diary would indicate rather a route entering the Southern Highlands between Mt. Sisa and Mt. Bosavi and proceeding due east to the Ialibu basin, thence across Mt. Ialibu and directly into Mt. Hagen. A straight line through Pomberel and Muli would approximate the route thus suggested. If this be true, then the Fox brothers missed the large population concentrations of the Tagari, Wage, Lai and Mendi Valleys, and Hides and O’Malley were, as was widely reported, truly the first to penetrate the land of the Huli.

When ARM Jack Hides and PO Jim O’Malley ascended the Fly, Strictland, and Rentoul Rivers in 1935 and made an agonizing trek across the limestone barrier into the Tagari-Hegigio watershed, they were genuinely surprised by the large population they stumbled into.

Hides later called his book describing the trip Papuan Wonderland, but the patrol was anything but a wonderful experience. Surrounded by abundant food, Hides’ starving men more often than not found the people of both the Tagari and Wage Valleys unwilling to sell or give them any. Steel axes, knives and other trade goods they had were of little interest to the mountain people who wanted cowrie and kina shells.

These shells, so readily available on the coast, were highly prized in the Highlands long before the first white men arrived, apparently introduced there by a bartering chain reaching clear to the coast. Explorers who came from the Central Highlands of the Mandated Territory were well aware of this and went prepared. The Fox brothers, who discovered the shells in many parts of the vast unknown they penetrated in 1934, had at the very top of their list of trade goods “shells, beads, mother pearl…”

Hides’ patrol through the Tagari and Wage Valleys was marked with hostility on the part of the highlanders, and on nine different occasions his men opened fire in self-defense on attacking
warriors. None of Hides’ party was killed in these attacks, but inquest records show that well more than 30 local people were shot to death by the defenders. In Papuan Wonderland, Hides suggested by selective inclusion that only three highlanders were killed by this patrol.

Hides clearly failed to understand the animosity he encountered. “Spontaneous treachery,” he wrote, “was unheard of in previous first contacts with primitive peoples.” It is quite possible, however, that the anger stemmed from events which Hides himself countenanced and chronicled, namely his permitting two of his armed constables to needlessly embarrass one of the Huli leaders soon after entering the Tagari watershed.

Once they had left the Wage Valley, Hides and O’Malley recrossed the limestone barrier and then followed the Erave River towards Samberigi, whence they took the Faithorn-Champion trail back to the coast.

Early the following year, Hides and Ivan Champion, Claude’s brother, took a closer look from an airplane at beautiful Lake Kutubu, which Hides had seen in the distance as he was approaching the Hegigio River. Soon afterwards Ivan and C.J. Adamson ascended the Bamu River, crossed over to Lake Kutubu, proceeded through the Mendi Valley, around the northern slopes of Mt. Giluwe, and then down the tributaries of the Purari.

Champion and Adamson were still at Tugiri, on the south shore of Lake Kutubu, when Cecil Abel of the Kwato Extension Society, became the first Christian missionary in the Southern Highlands.

Abel, who had carried on the work at Kwato after his father’s death in 1930, received permission in 1936 from Sir Hubert Murray to visit the Southern Highlands and explore the possibilities of evangelizing the area. According to Abel, Champion and Adamson agreed to his taking three young men from the area back to Kwato with him. These were Giligi and Hewago from the Lake Kutubu area itself and Mina, who was probably from another area, since he wore a wig. After several years at Kwato, these young men returned to the Southern Highlands.

Meanwhile exploration of the Southern Highlands continued. Claude Champion and F.W.G. Anderson ascended the Kikori and on June 19, 1937, established a base camp at Tugiri, whence they made additional patrols into the Tagari and Wage Valleys. That same year, K. Atkinson led a patrol from Kutubu into the Kagua area.

In 1938 a mapping expedition made more detailed explorations of the Mendi Valley and took several astro-fixes which thus put the valley on the map. Australian anthropologist D’Arcy Ryan

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4 Cecil was the son of Rev. Charles William Abel, founder of the Kwato Extension Association, which is now part of the United Church. Kwato is off the southeast tip of New Guinea, near Sideia.

5 Upon returning from Kutubu, Abel decided that Tugiri was too far away to bring people to Kwato on a regular basis. He subsequently turned his attention to the Abay district southeast of Port Moresby. Abel later taught at the Administration College in Port Moresby, labored toward independence, and was one of the architects of the PNG constitution. Knighted by Queen Elizabeth II and raised to the Order of the British Empire, he died at the age of 92 on June 25, 1984 (“Vale Sept 1994” (Papua New Guinea Association in Australia, Roseville NSW).)

wrote in 1961 that a few local people still recalled these two visits “and remember that they were frightened, believing that the white men were their ancestral ghosts.”

When Australia entered World War II in 1939, it abandoned much of its territorial activity, including the Tugiri patrol post. Several local men were taken to Port Moresby at that time, however, to train as policemen.

Though the war reached into New Guinea, it had very little direct effect upon the Southern Highlands. Numerous sightings of airplanes were made in the Nipa, Kagua, and Ialibu areas—possibly American bombers based at Port Moresby—but the only reported physical effects of the war on the Southern Highlands were in the area south of Ialibu, where a number of bombs are said to have been jettisoned, killing a woman, her child, and a number of pigs.

After the war, it was 1949 before the government was ready to resume its work in the Southern Highlands. Bringing this last stronghold of the Stone Age into the 20th century began again with Sid Smith’s reopening the Lake Kutubu patrol post in 1949.
From Kutubu, Smith entered the Mendi Valley that same year, accompanied by PO Desmond Clancy; and in September 1950, Clancy opened a government post at Murumbu (later named Mendi) and built the area’s first airstrip close to the Mendi River. Though accomplished solely with manual labor, this was done so rapidly that a plane was able to land at Mendi in October. Meanwhile Sid Smith was making the first government patrol through the Ialibu basin east of Mendi on his way to Mt. Hagen.

It was during 1950, too, that Christian missionaries reentered the area. Rev. Gordon Young of the Methodist Overseas Missions (now known as the United Church) established a station at Mendi; and Mr. Donaldson of the Unevangelized Field Missions (later the Australasia-Pacific Christian Missions), began another at Inu on the north shore of Lake Kutubu. When Rev. Murray Rule (who was still in the Tari area in 1980) took over the Inu station in 1951, Donaldson opened a second UFM station at Orokana, about 20 miles to the east.

Sid Smith, Des Clancy, and Ron Neville made a patrol from Mendi via Lake Kutubu into the Tari basin in July of 1951, and the following year a government station was established there and work began on an airstrip. The first plane landed at Tari, Aug. 18, 1952, and soon thereafter Mr. Len Twymann of the UFM set up a station at Walidigamabu, and Rev. Roland Barnes of the MOM established one at Hoeibia.

Government personnel spent much of 1952 and 1953 quelling heavy tribal fighting in the Nakop area at the base of Mt. Giluwe and Kuare sector of the Kagua Valley. To discourage further outbreaks, the government set up patrol posts in both Ialibu and Erave in 1953 and kept much of the population busy constructing airstrips in both places.

These airstrips were both finished in 1954, and that same year Des Clancy escorted a survey party of the Australian Petroleum Company from Lake Kutubu to Tari and thence on to the Strictland River. This patrol was the first to traverse much of the Huli and Duna districts northwest of Tari.

So by the middle of 1954, there were five small Australian government patrol posts in the Southern Highlands (Lake Kutubu, Mendi, Tari, Ialibu, and Erave) and except for the Pangia area, most of the larger valleys and basins of the Southern Highlands district had had initial contact with the Australian officers and indigenous government personnel from other areas of the Territory of Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. A small number of Christian missionaries were also in the area working with the native languages, making initial contacts, and building up stations of Lake Kutubu, Mendi and Tari.

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6 Clancy entered government service in May 13, 1946.
7 By 1984 already it was renamed again.
8 These two territories were only later merged into the nation of Papua New Guinea.
9 But they were restricted in movement to within three miles of a government patrol post.
By then Father Joseph Krimm, SVD, from Ulga and Kiripia in the New Guinea territory and Father Taphanel from the Papuan coast had already made brief incursions in the Southern Highlands.  

It was now, however, in 1954, that authorized missionary personnel of the Catholic Church finally managed to reach and begin its permanent evangelization of people of the Southern Highlands.

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10 The surprising story of the unauthorized visits of these two priests will be told at some length elsewhere in Chapters 2 and 9.
As herald of the Gospel, Christ first of all proclaims the kingdom, that is, God’s rule, which he regards as so important that everything else can be summed up as “the other things” which also will be given to men. Pope Blessed Paul VI, “Evangelii Nuntiandi,” 1975, n. 8.

2

A Kingdom Come

It has been suggested that Only the Beginnings should start back in the Old Testament and trace the entire history of God’s goodness as it enfolds itself upon the people of the Southern Highlands. Without question, it should!

To some, this may sound ridiculous, but to Papuan eyes, the Old Testament is not that far away. Father Simon Apea Soge, born about 1947 near Ialibu, has already described an Old Testament understanding of God prevalent in his home area long before the arrival of the Europeans – as whites are called in the South Pacific – and Capuchin Father Walbert Bühlmann has included a synopsis of Simon’s essay in his study of the encounter between Christianity and the religions of Asia. Unfortunately Father Simon’s study stands singularly alone; and before church historians of the Southern Highlands can hope to take up this subject, similar studies of other tribes and clans will need to be made by educated local Christians or by people who have mastered local languages sufficiently to enter into the nuances of complex and often esoteric concepts. Obviously such studies need to be undertaken while people predating the arrival of Christianity still survive, Otherwise there will be no satisfactory way of separating imported European concepts from Melanesian indigenous folklore.

Suffice it to say at this point, however, that Christian missionaries did not bring God to the Southern Highlands. Long before missionaries were riding the waves of the South Pacific, God was quietly working among his people in Papua, preparing them for the fuller revelation of

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11 Simon Apea died July 30, 2007, and is buried in the Mendi cathedral cemetery.
himself that, in his special providence and in his own good time, he would bring to them through foreigners. Paradoxically those whom God had sent with the Good News of the Christian dispensation were themselves to learn as much about God in the process as those to whom they were bringing the message.

Initial attempts to bring God’s Good News to the South Pacific are already somewhere near history’s lost horizon. Franciscan friars were roaming through Oceania already in the 1500’s, and the claims are probably true that a friar on Antonio de Abreau’s ship celebrated Mass on the island of Sideia in 1511 or 1512 and that another friar, Francisco de Gálvez, who accompanied Alvara de Mendaña de Neira, planted a cross in the Solomon Islands in 1567. Whatever contact, however, there may have been with the people of what is now Papua New Guinea was of a transitory nature; and these early missionary efforts surely rest in a category similar to the pre-Columbian discoveries of America.

The Christian missionary movement took permanent root in Oceania only in 1797, when the London Missionary Society established stations in Tahiti and Tongatabu. Within a very short time, a variety of other Christian sects were on the scene. The American Congregationalists began work in the Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands in 1820; and the Wesleyan Missionary Society arrived in Tonga two years later. After that, Catholic missionary groups also began to appear.

It is only fair to say that right from the start there was a lively, usually unfriendly, and at times downright bitter rivalry, which sought “to get there first” before either the “papists” or “the heretics” – depending upon one’s viewpoint – had “muddied the stream.”

Generally the various Protestant missionary groups were satisfied to divide the territory into spheres of influence, but they seldom sought to include the Catholics in this partitioning, and conversely the Catholics were never willing to agree that any sector would be off limits to their influence.

The Catholic Church established a prefecture in the Hawaiian Islands in 1825 and committed its care to the Picpus Fathers. A long string of new mission territories then began bringing Catholic missionaries closer and closer to Papua New Guinea and its Southern Highlands.

The first Catholic circumscription to actually include Papua New Guinea was the vicariate of Western Oceania committed to the Marists in 1836. Four Marists began work on Wallis and Futuna, northwest of Fiji, in 1837, including St. Peter Chanel, who was subsequently martyred in 1841. Two other Marists and the mission’s apostolic vicar, Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier, set up headquarters in New Zealand.

Pompallier’s vast territory was reduced by the establishment in 1842 of the vicariate of Central Oceania (which included Wallis, Futuna, and New Caledonia) and in 1844 of the joint vicariates of Melanesia and Micronesia.

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13 Ralph Wiltgen, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania 1825 to 1850*. Canberra: National University, 1979, 11.
14 Wiltgen 116.
16 Wiltgen 206 ff.
the first of which included New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, and the Solomon Islands. Melanesia and Micronesia’s first apostolic vicar, Bishop Jean-Baptiste Epalle, was martyred almost immediately after landing on Santa Ysabel, Dec. 16, 1845.

Most of the 13 Marists accompanying the fallen bishop settled on San Cristobal Island, but further murders and sickness so reduced them in number that Epalle’s successor, Marist Bishop Jean-George Collomb, moved mission headquarters to Woodlark Island. The bishop then set about exploring the rest of his vicariate, but fell sick on the way and died at Rooke (now Umboi) Island, midway between New Britain and the New Guinea mainland, July 16, 1848. Father Jean-Pierre Fremont then took charge of the mission.

Plagued with continual sickness and numerous deaths among its members, the Marist congregation eventually asked to be relieved of the mission, and Father Paulo Reina of the Milan Foreign Mission Institute was named prefect of the territory. With six other members of his community, he began taking over the mission in 1852; but when Blessed Giovanni Battista Mazzucconi was martyred on Woodlark in September of 1855, Reina and the others left for Hong Kong; and it was to be another 26 years before Catholic missionaries would return to the area.

In the meantime several members of the London Mission Society, whom the pro-Catholic French government had expelled from both the Loyalty Islands and New Caledonia, arrived in the area in 1872 and began establishing their Loyalty Island teachers along the southern coastline of New Guinea.

Three years later, on Aug. 15, 1875, Rev. George Brown of the Australian Methodist Mission also arrived in the area with nine Fijian and two Samoan teachers and resumed the evangelizing of New Britain and New Ireland.

For two decades the Catholic mission office in Rome had tried to get the Marists to return to the Melanesian mission. The Vatican gave up in 1876 and began looking for others. It approached many religious orders – including the Capuchins – but all to no avail.

In 1880, therefore, when a French diocesan priest, Father Réné-Marie Lanuzel, asked permission to minister to the settlers of Port Breton, New Ireland – where Charles-Marie de Breil, Marquis of Rays, was attempting to set up his own “La Nouvelle France” colony with himself reigning as King Charles I – the Holy See immediately agreed and appointed Lanuzel as apostolic missionary to Melanesia and Micronesia.

Lanuzel arrived in the ill-fated Port Breton, Oct. 14, 1880, and worked there about five weeks. In late November, he went to Sydney to obtain information on the Melanesian mission from Marist and Milanese missionaries. Returning to Port Breton in February and finding that the colony had

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17 Wiltgen 304.
18 Wiltgen 330 ff.
19 Wiltgen 474 ff.
20 Wiltgen 522 ff.
21 Wiltgen 545-547.
folded, he promptly moved to Blanche Bay on New Britain’s Gazelle Peninsula, where in March of 1881, he began that island’s first Catholic mission.

Later that year the Holy See arranged for the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC), a group founded in 1854 at Issoudun, France, by the Servant of God Father Jules Chevalier, to assume charge of the Melanesian and Micronesian vicariates. After a roundabout journey, Chevalier’s first three foreign missionaries joined Lanuzel at Blanche Bay on Sept. 28, 1882.

Father Louis-Andre Navarre, their superior, moved the mission to Volavolo in 1883; and when four more members of the community arrived the following March, he began a second station in Malagunan.

Until 1884, much of the territory of the vicariate of Melanesia was wide open. It had been virtually unclaimed by any of the colonial powers, and there were no colonial government authorities. Only the western half of the mainland New Guinea had been claimed by the Dutch. But now in very short order, Germany claimed the northeastern quarter of the island (naming it Kaiserwilhelmsland) and the islands of the adjacent Bismarck archipelago (especially New Britain which it renamed Neu Pomerania and New Ireland which it called Neu Mecklenburg); and Britain established a protectorate over the southeastern quarter of the main island and the islands to the east (which then became known as British New Guinea and later the Territory of Papua).

With control of the territory of the Melanesian vicariate thus divided, Catholic leaders were anxious to see the church established in both new colonies. In November 1884, therefore, Father Navarre landed on Thursday Island, just off the tip of Australia’s Cape York Peninsula, and began preparation for what amounted to an invasion of Papua.

The governor, Sir Peter Scratchley, had led Navarre to believe there would be no problem in the Sacred Heart missionaries’ going to Papua; but Navarre did not realize that he would be unable to go wherever he wanted. His targeted area was Yule Island, a small island visited by the Italian explorer D’Albertis in the 1870’s, which Navarre envisioned as a stepping stone to mainland activity. Yule Island, however, was already claimed by the London Mission Society; and this was bound to cause friction. London missionaries had already been pushed out of two previous missions by the French government and did not at all appreciate the thought of French Catholic missionaries threatening their new hegemony.

This was long before Vatican II and its push for ecumenical understanding, however; and when it became apparent to Navarre that, in order to avoid inter-sectarian squabbles, the government was not going to allow them into the territory, Navarre rented a boat and sent Father Henri-Baptiste Verjus and Brothers Salvatore Gasbara and Nicolo Marconi to Yule Island, where they landed June 30, 1885. After negotiating for a piece of land, Verjus celebrated the first Mass at the new Papuan station on July 4.

In September, Governor Scratchley sent a London Mission Society ship to Yule to persuade the Sacred Heart missionaries to move at government expense to the Louisiadas archipelago. In all

23 Vunapope and Chanel College are now on the Gazelle Peninsula.
likelihood, Verjus had no idea that the Louisiadas included Woodlark Island, where the Marists had suffered so much 40 years earlier; it was rather on principle that he refused to move, saying that only his superior, Father Navarre, could make that decision. The ship’s crew had an answer for that problem; it promptly transported Verjus and his companions to Thursday Island, where they could discuss it all they wanted with Navarre.

Navarre reaffirmed their right to go wherever they pleased in the work of the gospel, as long as the people themselves had no objection. In fact as soon as word was out that Scratchley had died in early December, the French missionaries bought a boat and headed again for Yule Island – where the congregation has remained to this day.

Navarre was named the third apostolic vicar of Melanesia and Micronesia in 1887; and the following year, he managed to have the mission divided into three vicariates, with himself as vicar of New Guinea and administrator of Micronesia and Verjus as vicar of New Britain. Navarre’s poor health, however, prevented Verjus from leaving for New Britain, so the Holy See appointed him Navarre’s coadjutor and named Bishop Louis Couppé, MSC, apostolic vicar of New Britain.

Despite the condition under which he was named coadjutor, Verjus preceded Bishop Navarre in death in 1892. He died with such a reputation for sanctity that in 1949 the Vatican officially opened his cause for beatification and on March 3, 2016, the Pope declared his practice of the virtues heroic, thus naming him Venerable.

Bishop Alain-Marie Guynot de Boismenu, MSC, became Navarre’s second coadjutor in 1900 and succeeded him as vicar in 1908. During De Boismenu’s long incumbency – more precisely in the 1920’s – various explorations uncovered the immense, previously unknown populations of the Highlands. De Boismenu, of course, was technically responsible for evangelizing the entire Territory of Papua, but his limited and already over-taxed resources and the prior presence of the London Mission Society along the western coastline kept him from seriously looking westward to the 60 per cent of his mission territory totally without Catholic missionaries.

Once preoccupation with World War II had passed from Papua, De Boismenu’s 38-year administration also came to an end. On June 13, 1946, the Holy See formed the easternmost fifth of the vicariate of Papua into the new prefecture of Samarai and entrusted it to the Sacred Heart missionaries’ Australian province, which had been working there since 1932. The remainder was renamed the vicariate of Port Moresby and left in the care of the French province. In conjunction with these changes, Bishop De Boismenu resigned. He died in 1953 and was declared Venerable in 2014.

De Boismenu’s education secretary, Father André Sorin, MSC, was then named bishop and made apostolic vicar of one jurisdiction and administrator of the other. He maintained his headquarters, however, at Yule Island.
One of Bishop Sorin’s first official acts was to commission Father André Dupeyrat, MSC, author of both *Savage Papua* and *Festive Papua*, to study the possibilities for another division of what was still too much territory for the manpower of the French province, since at the time, Sorin had reason to hope that members of the Irish province of the MSC would take over part of Papua.

Dupeyrat’s report, finished in July of 1947, urged that most of the western 60 per cent of the Territory of Papua be formed into a new jurisdiction to be known as the Fly River mission. This jurisdiction would include 130,000 square kilometers (50,193 square miles) of land between the Purari River and the Dutch New Guinea border, and was expected to contain about 90,000 people.

Not included would be the 11,000 square kilometers (4,247 square miles) of land and “30,000 people” in the Central Highlands of Papua, as the highest areas of the Southern Highlands were then known. The thinking of the time was that the upper part of what is now the Southern Highlands should be transferred from the Port Moresby vicariate to the Alexishafen vicariate, headquartered in Madang. Since access to the mountains was clearly easier from the north, the people there were more closely allied ethnically and linguistically with the mountain folk of the U.N. Mandated Territory of New Guinea (old Kaiserwihelmsland), and the Divine Word missionaries had already been working with the latter for many years.

Dupeyrat’s bibliography indicates that he had consulted every available source in arriving at his conclusions, including Jack Hides’ *Papuan Wonderland* and numerous annual reports of exploration in the 1930’s. This makes it all the more incredible that his report contains such an understatement of the population in the upper Southern Highlands – 30,000 as opposed to Hides’ estimation of in excess of 250,000. Coupled with the suggestion of shifting the area to another jurisdiction, this deflation possibly diverted church authorities for some time from making a more serious effort to find missionaries for the area.

Actually there were more people in the upper Southern Highlands alone, than in the whole vast area which Dupeyrat had described as the Fly River mission. Indeed there were far more than 30,000 people in the Huli area alone.

Bishop Sorin corrected the population figures in another report to the Vatican in October of 1953 and then argued that the Highlands should remain attached to the Fly River mission, since the Divine Word missionaries already had too much to do, and flying into the Southern Highlands from the south was far safer than coming over the mountains. As evidence of this, he said that the government itself was building up Kikori as the base from which the Southern Highlands would be developed. “As these new regions are in the territory of the vicariate,” Sorin added, “I intend to send a priest to make a reconnaissance as soon as possible; my own health prevents me from doing it myself.”

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26 In 1954, the government estimated the Southern Highlands population at 169,000, divided thus: Mendi-Kawuku-Nembi 15,000; Ialibu (Ialo Valley) 14,000; Erave Valley 24,000; Kutubu (Bosavi) 16,000; and Tari (Waga) 100,000. The 1980 census showed the population had increased by then to 235,647, divided as follows: Koroba 33,253; Tari 41,413; Nipa 42,815; Mendi 40,744; Kagua 34,466; Pangia 19,899; Ialibu 23,057 (1980 National Census: SHP: Preliminary Field Count, p. 1.01).
Sorin reiterated, however, his own inability to staff the newly opening areas of the Highlands, especially in the light of the French province’s accepting a new mission in Senegal, and then stressed upon the Vatican’s mission office the urgency of finding a new source of manpower to counter-balance Protestant influence in the new areas.

In July of 1953, Sorin instructed one of his veteran missionaries, Father Alexis Michellod, to plan an exploratory trip to the Highlands.\(^{27}\) His consultors, however, strongly opposed such a course of action; and the bishop called the trip off.

Over the years numerous groups are said to have considered taking on the Fly River mission, but one after the other they turned it down; the Irish MSC, the Australian Redemptorists, and a group of Franciscans.\(^{28}\) About the same time as Sorin filed his 1953 report, he tried to interest the American Maryknoll Fathers in taking over the western sector, but with no success.

Catholic missions in the South Pacific, however, were about to receive their champion in the person of Archbishop Romolo Carboni, new apostolic delegate to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific islands. Encouraged by Bishop Thomas Wade, SM, of the North Solomon Islands, Carboni began to visit the missions and in the spring of 1954 started a campaign of writing letters to religious congregations, mentioning the subject in speeches, even personally buttonholing individual religious superiors in an effort to expand the Catholic mission into areas of the South Pacific where numerous Protestant missionaries were rapidly becoming more visible.

Carboni’s success was remarkable. At his arrival in 1953, there were in the area now represented by the Bishops’ Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands eight Catholic ecclesiastical jurisdictions; Alexishafen (Madang), Wewak, Aitape, Port Moresby (Yule Island), Samarai (Sideia), Rabaul, North Solomon Islands (Bougainville), and South Solomon Islands (Honiara). When he left for Peru six years later, the number had doubled, with new jurisdictions existing at Mt. Hagen, Goroka, Lae, Daru, Mendi, Yule Island (Bereina), Kavieng, and Gizo. In more than two decades since then, only Vanimo, Kerema, Wabag, and Kundiawa have been added to this list; and even Vanimo was formed around the Passionists whom Carboni brought to the area.

Where there had been only Sacred Heart, Divine Word, Franciscan, and Marist missionaries before Carboni’s campaign, now there were also Passionists, Marianhills, Montforts, Capuchin-Franciscans, and Dominicans.

The first serious nibble in Carboni’s campaign came from the Australian Province of the Passionists, who after expressing an interest, referred the matter to their own general superiors. Plans for

\(^{27}\) Sorin, Report Concerning Erection of a new prefecture apostolic in the Southern Highlands of Papua (1958) 2.

\(^{28}\) Kusnerik to Green, March 30, 1955.
accepting all or part of the Fly River mission were in progress already in April of 1954, with the Passionist general predicting that the Australian provincial chapter would make the acceptance official in September of 1954.

Bishop Sorin learned of these developments while in Paris, where he had gone for a spinal operation. He wrote on May 2 that the new Passionist mission would be one “where our missionaries have had practically no contacts at all. It will be a task for pioneers and will need men of initiative and courage.”

Perhaps the Passionists had not envisioned a field quite so untouched. For some such reason or other, the bottom fell out of things in June or July. The Passionist general changed his mind and decided to send his men to the vicariate of Alexishafen instead.

Carboni, and according to him also the Vatican’s mission office, were disappointed at this change of events; and on July 14 he also informed all the parties involved, including Bishop Adolph Noser, SVD, of Alexishafen. Carboni wrote that the vicariate of Port Moresby, “more than any other in the region of New Guinea,” needed the Passionists’ assistance. “The north-western section of the vicariate… is one of the most difficult and hardest missions in the Pacific,” Carboni conceded, “… but… the Passionist Fathers have a great zeal and spirit of sacrifice and they will receive much help from God and His Church.” Urging the Passionists to follow their original plan, since “in doing so they will help the neediest mission and will please the Holy See,” Carboni then pulled out all stops, saying more explicitly, “No one should interfere with, or hamper, the plans of the Holy See.”

Hoping that Carboni would eventually resolve the situation and that the Passionists would soon be ready to take over the Highlands mission, Father Pierre Guichet, MSC, superior regular of the Sacred Heart missioners and Sorin’s vicar delegate, wrote Carboni that in the bishop’s absence, “I am gathering information on the Western part of our vicariate and I am sending two missionaries into the…Highlands for a long visit to get all information possible in this very little known part of our vicariate

Guichet – destined to one day be bishop of Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands – had no way of knowing, of course, when he wrote Archbishop Carboni on July 27, 1954, that the first Catholic “missionary trip” into the Southern Highlands had already taken place. This bizarre undertaking had cut through a lot of epistolary talk and in short order brought many of the natives of the eastern end of the Southern Highlands into their first, be it ever so brief, encounter with Catholic missionaries.

Legend has it that it was in a bar in Kikori that Father Paul-Joseph Taphanel, who it seems was still smarting from being asked to leave the Yule Island mission, decided – on a dare – to penetrate the forbidden territory of the Southern Highlands and to do it in the hardest possible way – without carriers and thus with very limited supplies.

Taphanel’s own more plausible explanation of the event is that he made the trip to demonstrate his theory about the Hides-O‘Malley patrol on which so many people had been killed. “I wanted

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29 Taphanel to Sorin, Mt. Hagen, [July 1954].
to show this it was easier to go alone, without an escort,” Taphanel wrote. “One man by himself is an object of curiosity rather than the subject of defiance.”

Taphanel says he came to Kikori looking for Mr. Edwards, a former government officer, who had frequently ascended the Purari. Using a 100-horse-power motor boat, Edwards took Taphanel and his dog and five native carriers for nine days up the Purari River to the first village on its tributary, the Supu. Leaving Port Romilly on May 24, they zig-zagged 90 miles through much of the lower meandering of the mighty river so as to avoid the enormous crocodiles.

A priest of the Diocese of Bourges, France, and at one time an exile in Spain under a Gestapo death sentence, Father Taphanel had been on loan to the Yule Island mission since 1947, and had been the first missionary to work among the Ralili people at Yarima on Mt. Yule. He was now presumed to be on his way back to France; instead on May 25, after taking leave of Edwards and the carriers near the mouth of the Supu River, he took off into the bush, accompanied solely by his dog.

With him he carried a little rice and a .22 rifle for shooting game. For the most part, however, he ate what the natives would share with him along the way. In return he gave them medical attention, using fever-reducing and antiseptic medicines. To gain their attention and establish rapport with them, he also used various magical illusions.

Following bush trails, Taphanel first made his way through Pore country to Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands at the headwaters of the Supu. From there he went to Mingende and Dirima in Simbu Province (then known as Central Highlands Province), where he talked Father Paul McVinney, SVD, of the Dirima mission into accompanying him back into the area restricted to missionaries for an exploratory trip through the Bomai area on the southern slopes of Mt. Ao. After visiting villages at Malaiwamage, Dobe, Murmeki, Biamu, and Zurida, the two turned north towards Minj and Ulga, a little more than six miles east of Mt. Hagen. One of Taphanel’s maps indicates that he and McVinney thought they were exploring to the south of the territorial boundary, but most of his other maps locate the Kaugel River much nearer this line, which indicated they were probably in what is now Simbu Province.

30 Taphanel to Burkey, Plou, France, Dec. 14, 1979: “je voulais dimontrer qu’il etait plus aisi d’y alle seul, sans escorte – un homine seul est un onjet de curiosité et pas un sujet de défiance.”
32 Taphanel journal, May 24, 1954, in archives, Capuchin Province of Mid-America, Denver.
33 Taphanel to Burkey, op.cit.
34 Taphanel journal, op.cit.
35 Taphanel to Burkey, op.cit.
36 Missionaries later called it Fore, and had other spellings for places. Place names in this and the next six paragraphs are from Taphanel’s own maps, which themselves have many variant spellings.
37 In his 1958 Report mentioned above, Sorin said, “This was done in defiance of all the laws, but it was such an amazing feat that the government officials in Kainantu did not even consider taking action against him; they were only too glad to have information about the area which no one had ever visited before.” Taphanel himself said, “When I made contact with the first Australian post, I gave a report on my trip and a tentative road design for the region I had covered. The officer thanked me for the information and the map and added that he would use them for his next patrol operation. I received thanks and no blame” (Taphanel to Burkey, op. cit.)
38 McVinney is not mentioned by name in contemporary documents available, but Taphanel wrote of “the two priests who accompanied me,” adding, “they are Americans” (Taphanel to Sorin, op.cit).
One of Taphanel’s many maps of his three-fold incursion into restricted territory indicate he covered 90 miles by small boat and then about 600 miles on bush trails (dotted lines) during his two-month exploration of the restricted territories (44% reduction. Original in archives, Bereina diocese).

At Ulga, Taphanel involved in his scheme another Divine Word missionary, Father Joseph Krimm, a 6’7” (2.006 m) giant, who had already been told by his SVD superior to gather information about the nearby Southern Highlands. The two set out together to explore the area all the way around Mt. Ialibu. The first entry by Catholic missionaries of what is now the diocese of Mendi took place in July 1954. It was only the second time Europeans had been in the Ialibu-Pangia area, the Leahy brothers having gone through there 20 years earlier.

Leaving Ulga July 8, Taphanel and Krimm entered the restricted area somewhere between the Wahle and Truk Rivers. After crossing the latter and passing through Tibendi and Wigi, they crossed the Kaugel and visited Airia, Aponda, Mele, Anke, and Kaugu, most of which later became Catholic stations along the northern edge of the Pangia parish.39

Even though the priests had not actually been sent by their superiors, the journey was of a missionary nature. At Aponda and Anke they picked out locations for mission stations, and at Aponda they also made overtures in acquiring ground for an airstrip.

They then went on around the mountain to Ialibu, where government officials must have been aware of their unauthorized presence.40 Still they continued along the eastern slopes of Mt. Giluwe on through toward Ulga, visiting on the way Kande, Mondada, Kambu, Puga, Nakop, Tugupangi and Tona. Again they marked a mission site at Kambu near Nakop and one for an airstrip at Tugupangi.

39 Taphanel, journal, f. 6 r.-f. 8 r.
40 Taphanel later recalled that the Ialibu government station in 1954 had been nothing more than a tent (Stakem, chronicle, Aug. 13, 1959).
Another one of Taphanel’s many maps shows his visit to the Pangia and Ialibu areas (50% reduction. Original, archives, Bereina diocese).

Seven of the land owners – Wiru, Wava, Lebonko, Kiro, Werema, Taono and Peke – accompanied the missionaries to Ulga, where on July 25 they affixed their marks to an English document by which they declared “we want Catholic missionaries in our tribes of Wiri and Awa (referring thereby to the Witu – and Kewa – speakers). We promise to keep for them the land they marked for our school and church.” There was also a similar message written in one of the Hagen dialects. On the reverse of this bilingual deposition, Taphanel added in French, “the owners of the land marked in the Ialibu basin have come to Ulga looking for their presents and have solemnly signed this present declaration. P.T.” The presents were steel axes that Father Krimm provided.

Looking forward to the future, Krimm also took four Southern Highlanders with him to Ulga; Wariba from near Ialibu, who had proven an excellent guide for the Wiru and Kewa peoples, and three boys who began their schooling at Ulga: Tuga, Iambu and Tandai.

Taphanel was possibly responsible for some of the inter-denomination acrimony later experienced by Capuchin missionaries in the eastern end of the Southern Highlands. He wrote with braggadocio of how he and Krimm had gotten ahead of the Methodists at Mendi and the Bahamas Bible Mission personnel at Paparabruk in the Western Highlands: “The heretics are disturbed; they are bound by law and cannot cross the forbidden frontier. The officers imprison their teachers if they venture into the forbidden land.” Taphanel went on to tell Sorin “I saw crowds at the mercy of the heretical dust…;” and he told the bishop, “We must act very quickly in the Purari in order to be present before the government and the heretics. The Bible Mission and Methodists have submitted their request for the Ialibu Basin.”

41 Taphanel and Krimm actually passed through very little of the Kewa area and one of Taphanel’s maps labels the Imbongu area as “Awa.”
As shall be seen eventually, Taphanel and Krimm’s visit also had more effect on the local people they visited than the report thereof did on Catholic mission officials.\(^{42}\) Regardless of when Taphanel’s report finally reached Yule Island, Guichet had already in July called in Father Alexis Michellod and told him to prepare again to enter the Highlands. At the beginning of September, Guichet sent the 40-year-old Michellod and 41-year-old Brother Jean Delabarre into the Southern Highlands to look over the districts already open to missionaries, namely Mendi, Tari, and Lake Kutubu.

The explorers left Port Moresby for the Southern Highlands on Sept. 2, and went on to Lae, where they spent two days with Father George Bernarding, the future archbishop of Mt. Hagen. By an awkward coincidence they arrived at Lae while Bishop Noser of Alexishafen was showing the area to the Australian Passionist provincial. Despite Carboni’s plea, the Passionists had not returned to their original plan. They settled at Lae for a few years and later took over the western half of the Franciscans’ Aitape mission, in an area now known as the diocese of Vanimo.

Undaunted by this surprise turn of events, Michellod and Delabarre continued on to the Southern Highlands, flying by way of Goroka, Minj, Mt. Hagen, and Ulga, and arrived in Mendi at 2:30 on the afternoon of Sept. 9.

In a patrol officer’s house in Mendi, on the morning of Sept. 10, 1954, Father Michellod celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the first time in the Southern Highlands, with Brother Delabarre the sole attendant. Michellod was particularly moved by the appropriateness of the Gospel assigned for that day’s feast of St. Nicholas of Tolentino and never tired of repeating it; “At that time Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom.’”\(^{43}\) Even Michellod, however, did not realize that the Father’s kingdom had already come to his flock in the Southern Highlands.

Guichet’s intentions were that the two should return to Yule Island after a month in the area, so that he could send a full report to Carboni. The Archbishop himself, however, was busy in the meantime, and a series of new developments was afoot that would keep Michellod in the area for another two years, thereby solidly sealing his legacy as the Apostle of the Southern Highlands.

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\(^{42}\) Taphanel returned to his Bourges diocese, where he was pastor of six parishes 1954-1966, and after that in charge of the Holy Childhood Pontifical Work for Missionary Propagation (Taphanel to Burkey, op. cit.). Taphanel published a 96-page memoir, entitled *Avec les papous*, at Issodun, France, in 1966.

The apostles, on whom the Church was founded, following the footsteps of Christ preached the word of God and begot Churches (St Augustine). It is the duty of their successors to carry on their work so that ‘the Word of God may run and be glorified (2 Th. 3,1), and the kingdom of God proclaimed and renewed throughout the whole world. 


3

The First Stations

While Sacred Heart Missionaries Father Alexis Michellod and Brother Jean Delabarre were the first Catholic missionaries to enter the Mendi Valley, they were neither the first Catholics, nor the first missionaries there.

The first Christian missionaries to enter the area had been Methodists. Rev. Gordon Young set up his station north of the government post on the west side of the Mendi River in 1950, almost at the same time that the post was being established. By September 1954, the personnel at Young’s station consisted of him and his wife; agriculturist David Johnson and his wife, nursing sister, E.J. Priest; a teacher, Miss Wilson, and teachers from various tribes elsewhere on the island.

No one likely would know for sure who the first Catholic was. Perhaps it was Desmond Clancy who explored the valley at some length in 1949 and then returned the following year to begin building the government post at Mendi. This much is certain, however; when Michellod and Delabarre flew into the mile-high valley of perpetual spring on Sept. 9, 1954, they found a least 20 Catholics living at the government station. Besides Clancy, who was now assistant district officer (ADO), there was also Cadet Patrol Officer (CPO) Paul Conroy and his domestic, Mariano Aite, carpenters Charlie Koe and Michael Teao, mechanic and sawyer Severista Budu, and several Simbu and Mingende policemen.
The Yule Island missionaries were quite surprised, however, by the cool reception they got from Clancy and his superior, District Commissioner Robert Cole.\textsuperscript{44} They could later laugh about this, but at the time were genuinely nonplused. As it turned out, both officers had just been reprimanded by territorial authorities in Port Moresby for allowing Father Paul-Joseph Taphanel and Father Joseph Krimm to journey through the restricted areas to the east. Very soon, however, Michellod had become good friends with both Cole and Clancy.

Michellod and Delabarre stayed the first few days with Paul Conroy and his fellow CPO, George Oakes, the son of a Methodist bishop. As described earlier, the first Mass in the Southern Highlands was celebrated by Michellod, attended solely by Delabarre, in their room in the cadets’ house on Sept. 10.

Later that day Commissioner Cole told them what areas were open for settlement, and the missionaries examined several sites. Cole’s interpreter helped them find a site near Kumin Creek whose owner was agreeable to their having it. The Department of Civil Aviation (DCA), however, said it was in the line of approach to the airstrip, and they could camp there only until they would find another site.

The Sacred Heart missioners were traveling light, since they had come only to survey the area and prepare the way for others who might come after them. Their supplies consisted of a shoulder bag with two augur bits poking out, a four-gallon can of dried rice, and another of kerosene. Clancy lent them a tent, and even sent police and prisoners to erect it on the site near Kumin Creek. The government also gave them fresh vegetables; and Kapipi, the apparent owner of the land and leader in nearby Kombeyekipu village,\textsuperscript{45} gave them sweet potatoes.

After Sunday Mass in the cadets’ house on Sept 12, attended by Conroy and 21 Catholics from the New Guinea territory, a Simbu infant named Peter became the first Catholic baptized in the Southern Highlands.

Michellod spent the next four days dickering with the local people and with the DCA over various sites for a station. Clancy favored the missionaries’ settling to the west of the Mendi River, but Michellod preferred to be on the opposite side from the Methodists and in an area where he and Delabarre had already made many friends.

Kapipi offered the missionaries about two acres of land southeast of the airstrip on Sept. 16, and had his men start clearing it and bringing in logs for a house. The Kumin people also started regularly bringing food and firewood.

\textsuperscript{44} By July 1968 Cole was police commissioner.

\textsuperscript{45} It was learned much later that Kapipi acted as a front for many years, with both the government and the missions, for his father, Yakopi, the real big man of the area (Claude Mattingly, interview by Burkey in April 1984). Kapipi’s mother was later baptized Ann (Schmidt chronicle, May 18, 1968).
On the missionaries’ second Saturday afternoon in the Mendi area, most of the Catholics of the government post brought their children to the tent site to chat and have choir practice and catechism class. They were very friendly and offered to help. A Simbu policeman named John, who had experience as a catechist, offered to serve as one again, once his contract with the government expired at Christmas; and he led the singing and prayers for Sunday Mass at the tent site.

The first house on the Kumin station was 15’x11’. While Michellod started moving their meager belongings into it Sept. 23, 1954, Delabarre returned the tent and with seven men started working on a road between Mendi and Kumin. The first Mass was celebrated at Kumin on Sunday, Sept. 26, on a little altar set up in front of the new house.

During their days in the Mendi Valley, the missionaries took time out one day to visit the area southward to Wa and Kipuru villages, and on another occasion Kapipi showed Delabarre sites at Kambekipu, Long, Umbimi, and various other places. The two missionaries had not come, however, with any idea of settling at Mendi. Their job was to check out the entire Southern Highlands. So after leaving tools and instructions for the Kumin people to continue work on a station, they flew to the Tari area Sept. 30 to begin a second station.

For better or for worse, the Duna and Huli nations in the west end of the Southern Highlands had had their first, albeit brief and unhappy, contact with Catholics and with Western civilization in 1935 in the persons of Jack Hides and Jim O’Malley, leaders of the first Australian government patrol to penetrate that part of the Southern Highlands.

When the government returned to the area 15 years later, other individual Catholics, such as PO Ron Neville, were among those who set up the Tari government station and began the patient process of pacifying the warring instincts of various families of the Hulis.

During these years, Christianity was passively introduced to the area by numerous other government workers who belonged to a variety of Protestant churches. After 1952, a more active evangelization began through the Methodist and Unevangelized Fields missions, each of which had nearly 50 boys in school when the first Catholic missionaries arrived Sept. 30, 1954.

When Michellod and Delabarre came to the Huli territory, following their three-week visit to Mendi, ADO Bill Murdock and his medical assistant (MA), Lloyd Yelland, were at the airstrip to give them a warm welcome. Murdock promptly offered the missionaries a supply of food and put at their disposal a patrol officer’s house and bathroom at the Rumu government station. “What a difference from Mendi,” Michellod wrote of the reception.

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46 The people don’t really live in villages, but the word is used here to stress the idea of a group of people.
49 Michellod to Guichet, Oct. 16, 1954.
The following day, Oct. 1, after Michellod had offered Mass in the patrol officer’s house— which incidentally, being the first Mass celebrated in the area, was celebrated for the intention of all who had ever died there. Murdock then took the two missionaries to examine two available tracts of land: one along the road on the plateau behind the Rumu, and another at Gubari.

Michellod and Delabarre at first favored the site west of Rumu, but further discussion with Murdock convinced them there would be better chances for expansion at Gubari, as well as a greater population to work with.

When they visited Gubari the following day, the interpreter Homogo led them to the neighboring ground called Guluanda, where his father Ibag offered them a piece of land. That same day, Homogo and Ibag set up boundary posts and CPO Gordon Brown surveyed the land for them.

Upon returning to Rumu that evening, the missionaries greeted two newly arrived public servants, both of whom later proved themselves good friends of the Catholic mission: Bill Crellin, the new ADO, and Bert Speer, the new MA.

During the rest of their three weeks at the 5,300 foot high Guluanda site, Michellod and Delabarre pegged a road between the airstrip and Guluanda, built a rectory and boys dormitory, and fenced in and began developing a garden.

Though the rectory still lacked doors, windows, and beds, and the missionaries would have to sleep on the ground near a fire to keep warm, they decided to move from Rumu on Oct. 8. The following morning Michellod said the first Mass at Guluanda in the new rectory, which he described as a “true Bethlehem for Jesus.”

Brother Delabarre left with a government patrol for Lake Kutubu Oct. 20, hoping to make initial contacts there. Michellod meanwhile was to make quick visits to Mendi and Erave and join Delabarre at Kutubu for a flight on a Catalina flying boat back to Yule Island before the end of October.

Michellod was leaving Tari on Oct. 23, when a cryptic message arrived from Father Pierre Guichet, which said: “Stay. Start foundation of Southern Highlands. Helpers coming soon.” Michellod was unaware of what this was really all about, but he flew to Mendi the same day to begin establishing the mission there; and in his chronicle, he added a final thought: “Man proposes, and the superior disposes.”

Brother Delabarre arrived at Kutubu on Oct. 25 after a six-day trek, with CPO G.H. Brown via Tauri, Tambera, and Lokrobu Porako. He then had acting ADO Tim Terrell mark off five acres of land, and he built a two-room house thereon about 500 meters southeast of the east end of the government airstrip at Moro. Since most of the local population was already connected with the

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50 Michellod to Farkas, Nov. 9, 1969.
52 Michellod to Farkas, Aug. 12, 1962.
54 Patrol Report #4, 1954-55, Tari, SHD.
Unevangelized Fields Mission, Delabarre built his house, not so much as a mission station, but rather as a stop-over place and storehouse for men and supplies coming into the Southern Highlands via Kikori and Kutubu. Delabarre left for Yule Island on Nov. 12.

Meanwhile Oct. 26, Michellod began at Kumin the first Catholic school in the Southern Highlands. To provide room for the 18 boys who enrolled, he immediately drew up plans for a new residence for himself. Unlike any other structure in the Southern Highlands, this building was to be two stories high and modeled on a chalet in Michellod’s native Switzerland.

That same day, Michellod wrote Guichet of his intentions to visit Erave as soon as possible to acquire ground and make contacts there. He said he would like to start building a station there also, but was too low on trade goods to do so. The next day he added that he had already lost the race to be there first, for the Lutheran plane had just come in from Erave. “I will stay here at Mendi, waiting for reinforcements and for supplies,” he finally told his superior.  

The first reinforcements and fresh supplies arrived together on Dec. 1. Three young Mekeo men came from Yule, bringing with them 250 pounds of cargo. Louis Vangu’u, aged 18, had completed Standard 8; Ferdinand Maino Kap, aged 23, Standard 6; and Peter Peleka, aged 25, Standard 5. Michellod put Louis to work teaching at Pinj in the Karint, Ferdinand at Tombol, Peter at Komia, and a later arrival, Marcus Yok, Standard 2, he posted at Ekari.  

Michellod had already finished a second bush hut for his school boys by Dec. 1, and had completed his two-story chalet, which was 27’ wide, 18’ deep, and 21’ high. With bamboo floors and pit-pit walls and ceilings, the building had three rooms on the ground floor, including a chapel for the Blessed Sacrament. A stairway led up to the veranda, behind which were three more rooms, with a garret overhead for storage. What made the bush building even more unique was the fact that not a single nail had been used; all the beams were notched and pegged.

By then Michellod was already speaking the local language, which he called Anga, and already had a 500-word vocabulary.  

Additional help for Michellod arrived Jan. 26, 1955, in the person of 44-year-old Father Alphonse Rinn, MSC, and three more Mekeo teachers from the coastal area: Ambrose, Francis, and Edward.  

Michellod and Rinn were still together at Kumin, when the Paris Match team of explorer-journalists, Pierre-Dominique Gaisseau and Tony Saulnier, arrived. They were on their way to

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56 Though not from the Southern Highlands, Ferdinand was the first native within the Southern Highlands to express an interest in becoming a priest (Michellod, annual report, July 1956).  
57 A year later, Louis and Ferdinand married on the same day (Gallagher to Sorin, Feb. 14, 1957). Otmar added, “Whether they will follow their teaching course is still doubtful.  
58 Matting made from cane grass beaten into flat strips.  
59 Which was nothing more than the local word for “language”.

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Tari, but stayed several extra days at Mendi waiting for Michellod to finish his work there, since they were going to stay with him at Guluanda.

In his book, *Visa to the Prehistoric World*, Gaisseau spoke of there being 30 school boys at Kumin at the time. In the evening the priests “knelt before the little bamboo altar and, by the light of the hurricane lamp, said the evening prayers in pidgin,” wrote Gaisseau. “The children in their blue loincloths – the mission uniform – responded in a single, firm chorus.”

As he lay that night on his bush-model bed—reed springs, dried grass mattress – Gaisseau listened to the rain beating against the thatched roof and the whistling of the wind. Later he wrote:

> A reed curtain, recalling those that one sees in Provence, hung between us and the balcony, but let through a pale light. Despite my four blankets, I was miserably conscious of the damp and cold. I thought of the Fathers, already sleeping. To pass 10 years of one’s life in such a manner implies a far higher degree of self-sacrifice than any voyage of exploration.  

Once Father Rinn was ready to take over the Kumin mission, Michellod accompanied the journalists Feb. 23 on the visit to Huli-land that Gaisseau later recorded in his book.

Michellod found his rudimentary station at Guluanda in much better shape than he had expected. ADO Crellin had put a local man in charge of the station and, assisted by Bert Speer, had personally planted lettuce and cabbage there. None of Michellod’s cargo had arrived, however, even though ordered already in December. Fortunately, the next day his government friends at Rumu lent him and the journalists such things as forks, spoons, plates, blankets, etc.

Gaisseau and Saulnier remained with Michellod until April 2, save for the three days in mid-March when, in an attempt to enter the fabled “Shangri-La” of the Levani Valley, they made the unauthorized visit to Uaganda for which they were expelled from the territory.

Another early visitor at Guluanda was Bob Glasse, pioneer anthropologist of the Hulis, who on his first visit to the area boarded with Michellod April 16-23.

Michellod’s first project on returning to Guluanda in February was the establishment of the school. The day after his arrival, he had the local people start building a shelter for his Mekeo teachers, and sometime during the week of Feb. 27, Ambrose, Francis, 61 and Edward arrived from Kumin. A school house, built during the following week, was ready for Sunday Mass on March 12.

The first group of students included Magobe, Pogaya, Pandago, Tarola, Porabe, Mayalu, Mendene, Iabalia, Alimbu, Koai, Lambali, Timbalu, Aguana, and Hengene. Agilu and others joined them a little later. Some of these had once been pupils at the Methodist mission at Hoiebia, but in the meantime had switched their allegiance to Michellod.

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61 Francis was still there in July 1956, being assisted by Agilu.
The priest’s first year at Guluanda was spent almost entirely in learning the language and culture, in training these few boys, and in building up a main station from which activities could eventually radiate into the rest of the Huli-land. He was forced to this curbing of his activities by government regulations which restricted all foreign missionaries to within a mile of the airstrip.  

Once the school building was in order, Michellod began work on a new two-story rectory, much like the one he had already built at Kumin. Begun on March 14, this chalet was ready for occupancy the night of April 9.

In succeeding weeks, Michellod built a number of other buildings: a kitchen, a new teacher’s house, a shelter for a pit-saw, a work shop, another boys’ house and a carpenter’s house. Finally, on Sept. 12, he began the first church, in which he was able to start celebrating Mass on Nov. 6. This would probably have happened a fortnight earlier, had 18 of his helpers not gotten into a fight which landed them in jail.

During May and July, Michellod also worked on translating into Huli several prayers, as well as a catechism – which was to be used for many years thereafter by the missionaries among the Huli.

While Michellod was thus engaged at Tari, his confrere Father Rinn, managed not only to maintain the Kumin station, but also to begin another Catholic station further east. This third main station was in the midst of a vast marshland in the broad 6,600-foot-high lalibu basin along the upper reaches of the Iaro River. To the east of this new station lay Mt. Ialibu, and to the northwest Mt. Giluwe, at 14,200 feet the 10th highest mountain on the island, the fourth highest in Papua New Guinea, and the highest in what was formally the Territory of Papua.

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62 Each area of the district had to be contacted and evaluated by government officers before the government would declare the area safe for ex-patriot missionaries to enter.

63 Berard later noted that one of the boys fell from the roof during the construction, but was “miraculously” unhurt.

64 This church was replaced in 1957 (Farkas chronicle, March 21, 1957).

65 Re Ialibu, see Kusnerik to Tomassetti, Sept. 26, 1956
The first known Catholics in the Ialibu basin had been the prospector-explorers Mick and Dan Leahy who went through in 1934. Much more recently, in fact just the previous year, Fathers Taphanel and Krimm had been the first Catholic missionaries to go through.

So far as is known, neither one of these priests carried a Mass kit with him. If this be true, the first Mass in the present Ialibu parish was probably celebrated by Father Rinn in the jailhouse of the government station on May 29, 1955.  

“One of our priests has been able to go to Ialibu, where no other sect has yet been permitted to go,” Bishop André Sorin wrote July 9. At a later date he added,

> The administration officers were kind enough to let him know that there was an excellent opportunity to go there for a first visit and that they would be delighted if the Catholic mission could have the first influence in this new area... Rinn was extremely well received by the natives. They came in great crowds to help him in putting up the first temporary buildings and showed a real enthusiasm at the thought that he would come back and settle with them.

Sorin made his first visit to the Southern Highlands from mid-July to mid-August and visited Ialibu, Tari, and Mendi – probably in that order. His visit to Ialibu was especially memorable since adverse flying conditions forced Rinn and him to stay there a fortnight, living in a very crude bush house and dependent solely upon locally grown foods.

During previous weeks, the Lutherans had arrived “to establish a center on a ground just adjoining ours.” The bishop later wrote.

> We have found that 12 out of 13 headmen have remained faithful to the ‘Popi.’ It is impossible to say now what population is there, but it is an open door to a district which includes more than 10,000 people and where natives seem to be much easier to deal with than in the Mendi area.

The Lutherans had a distinct advantage, however, among the Imbongu-speakers, since they were able to make use of many teachers from the neighboring Mt. Hagen area who spoke a related dialect. Thus they were able to flood the area with local pastors and Europeans from other areas in making first contact and purchasing land.

There also were priests and catechists in the Mt. Hagen area familiar with the Imbongu, but Michellod and his associates were depending on help from back on the coast, where totally different languages were spoken. Better communication and cooperation between the various bishops and superiors could have painted a whole different picture.

The permanent Catholic mission station in the Ialibu area dates from Aug. 13, 1955, when Father Rinn brought in two Papuan religious from Yule Island, Brothers Paul Idomaka and Felix Walaba of the Oblates of St. Joseph, or “Little Brothers” as they were also called. These

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66 Ialibu chronicle, May 29, 1956. The date is obscured somewhat by Rinn’s saying he arrived in Ialibu Wednesday, May 25, 1955, and had been there three days by June 1 (Rinn to Sorin, June 1, 1955).

67 The Pope.

68 Michellod, annual report, July 1956.

69 This same pattern later occurred when the Kagua area opened in 1958. Cf. Chapter 10 below.
brothers promptly set to work building a mission compound at Amburugi on land which had previously belonged to a man named Agena.  

In the week previous to this, Sorin and Rinn visited Michellod at Tari, and the three were together Aug. 6-10. This first mission conference led to the arrival from Veifa’a, a station near Bereina, two weeks later of 66-year-old Father Louis Van Campenhoudt, a Belgium MSC who had been in the Papuan missions for 33 years. In the latter half of the 1920’s, Van Campenhoudt had helped explore the Kunimaipa area in the mountains northeast of Yule Island. He had also begun collecting information on that language.

Van Campenhoudt spent from Aug. 30 to Sept. 13 with Michellod at Guluanda in the Tari area. Then he went to Kumin near Mendi, and sometime during October took over from Rinn, who after several months of commuting to Ialibu, now took up residence there. From then until the beginning of 1956, Van Campenhoudt’s activities are completely obscure except for a reference to a visit to Dimipa in the upper Mendi area in the company of Vivian Solien, a coastal-born Catholic government saw mill worker.

In all likelihood, Van Campenhoudt and Rinn passed the intervening months at Kumin and Amburugi in much the same way Michellod did at Guluanda, giving the witness of a good Christian life, sowing seeds for future co-workers by running a school, making contacts for the future with people of the area who visited the station, and working at building up a vibrant station which missionaries later could use as a home base for excursions into the surrounding terrain.

What little evidence is available would suggest Michellod’s confreres did not share his incessant interest in the local languages. Considering that they were planning on remaining in the area only until other missionaries could take over, this is not at all surprising. It does, however, tend to highlight Michellod’s linguistic talent and his apostolic determination to use it generously to assist those who would follow. He worked tirelessly at building up dictionaries and at writing primers, prayers, catechisms, and lives of Christ in both the Huli and Mendi languages.

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70 Ialibu chronicle, Nov. 28, 1957.  
71 Ialibu chronicle, July 15, 1956.  
72 Fr. Berard added the observation that Van Campenhoudt’s energy was already greatly diminished when he came to the Highlands.  
73 Michellod, annual report, July 1956. In the same annual report, Michellod noted that work had been done at Ialibu on a catechism, a first reader, and a dictionary. Presumably this was by Fr. Rinn.
Although the Church possesses in itself the totality and fullness of the means of salvation, it does not always, in fact cannot, use every one of them immediately, but it has to make beginnings and work by slow stages to give effect to God’s plan.”

Vatican II, decret. on Missionary Activity, 1965, n. 6

Enter the Capuchins

For simplicity’s sake, nothing was said in the last chapter of the progress being made in obtaining a group of missionaries to take over the work Sacred Heart missionaries had already begun in the Southern Highlands.

The fact of the matter, however, is that during most of the 15 months just described, Father Alexis Michellod and his confreres were well aware of plans for the Capuchin Franciscans to take over this new mission field.

Michellod and Brother Jean Delabarre had already discovered at Lae Sept. 2, 1954, that there was really no longer any likelihood of the Passionists accepting the care of the Southern Highlands. Archbishop Romolo Carboni had also reached the same conclusion; and on Sept. 6 he personally approached Father Anastase Paoletti, superior regular of the Capuchins in Australia, to try to interest him in the mission. Two days later he also wrote Anastase “to renew the request that the Capuchin Fathers of Australia take over the mission of Kikori”.

Anastase discussed the matter with his consultors, and on Sept. 10 he referred it to the Capuchin general minister in Rome, Father Benignus Re Cecconi of Sant’Ilario de Milanese. Anastase wrote that, while he believed interest in a foreign mission would bring vocations to the province which he and others sought to establish in Australia, still it seemed better that the proposed new
mission be taken over by a province already well-established. Since the Tuscan province, mother province of Anastase’s own Stigmata custody (now the New Jersey province), already had many commitments toward missionary work, Anastase suggested that perhaps the Parma province, which had also been sending men to Australia and which reportedly was looking for “a mission of its own,” might be interested in taking over the Papuan mission.

Carboni had stressed to Anastase his desire that the mission be accredited to the Australian Capuchins in particular, because Papua was an Australian territory and government officials there would be more kindly disposed to missionaries acquainted with their own customs and language.

Anastase dutifully informed Father Benignus of this, and then suggested five conditions which might keep everyone happy and still allow the Parmesans to take over the mission:

1. Missionaries headed for Papua should live in Australia for three years and thus become residents of Australia and fluent in English.

2. Present and future members of the Australian mission should be allowed to collaborate in the work of the Papuan mission.

3. The option should be kept open for the Australian group, once it became a province itself, to take over a part of the new mission.

4. The superior regular of the new mission should be directly dependent upon his own provincial, but should also collaborate with the superior regular in Australia.

5. The Parmesan province should continue for another 10 to 15 years to send personnel also to the Australian mission, who in return would help the new mission in every way possible, ordering supplies, making appeals, and giving limited financial support.

Roman officials of the Order wasted no time in acting upon the opportunity Anastase had relayed to them. Benignus wrote Anastase Sept 28 that the Order had decided to accept the mission of Kikori and that he had personally informed Bishop André Sorin who was still in Europe.

There is no indication that the general definitory had yet reached a decision to assign the mission to any particular province; but somehow, Archbishop Carboni remained under the impression that the mission would be assigned to the friars in Australia. On Oct.7, for example, he wrote Father Guichet, who was running the vicariate in Sorin’s absence, of his hopes that “the Australian Capuchins, supported by Capuchin Fathers from other countries,” would be taking over the northwest part of the vicariate.
Fully aware how difficult this mission was, as well as how difficult it was to staff it, Carboni warned Guichet to have the Yule Island missioners give Anastase a warm welcome and generous assistance in the event that he should visit Port Moresby.

Guichet assured the Archbishop on Oct. 15 that they would do their best to follow his suggestion. “One of our Fathers is now in the Southern Highlands for a visit which will keep him there for a certain time,” he wrote. “It would be good if the Rev. Father (Anastase) could come while he is up there and I would take him for a visit in that part of our Vicariate where there are so great possibilities, on account of the very great population which is hardly contacted by the Protestants.” It was then that Guichet optimistically wired Michellod, “Stay. Start foundation of Southern Highlands. Helpers coming soon.”

According to Father Henry Kusnerik, Capuchin superior in Melbourne at the time, Father Anastase went to New Guinea on rather short notice. He had asked Henry to meet him in Sydney, but left for New Guinea without even informing him. It was not until three months later that Henry learned of the plans Anastase was laying for the friars in Australia.

Anastase left for New Guinea with intentions of spending 10 days there consulting with the Sacred Heart missionaries. He ended up spending almost a month. Typical of November conditions in that country, a good five days were spent waiting for an airplane to take him from Mt. Hagen to Mendi.

Anastase arrived in Port Moresby Nov. 15, 1954, just as the annual meeting of the two territories’ Catholic mission leaders was ending. This afforded him an opportunity to meet practically all of the apostolic vicars and prefects. Anastase had not planned to actually visit the Southern Highlands, but these men urged him to do so rather than waste time and money by staying in Port Moresby. Monsignor Ignatius Doggett, OFM, prefect of Aitape, further counselled him to take a close look at what he considered the most difficult thing about the mission, the unavoidable cost of transporting all personnel and supplies by air.

After a week’s visit to the MSC missions at Yule Island and Kubuna, Father Anastase accompanied Father Guichet on his first visit into the Highlands. They took with them the first three catechists and 250 pounds of supplies already alluded to in the previous chapter. Flying by way of Port Moresby, Wau, Goroka, Minj, and Mt. Hagen, they arrived at Mendi Dec. 1 and spent four days discussing with Michellod a wide range of subjects.

Michellod was expecting Father Alphonse Rinn to soon join him in Mendi; then Michellod would go to Tari and build up a station there. The plan spelled out during these days was that, after the Capuchins from Australia had been with these two veteran missionaries for a few months, Michellod and Rinn would start additional stations at Erave and Ialibu. During a period of a year they hoped to have six stations, each with a priest and three or four catechists from the coast. The additional stations would be at Lake Kutubu and Kikori, where one of the friars would act as procurator for the mission, since it was expected that air freight (in 1954 would cost 7.5 cents a pound from Kikori compared with 17 cents from Madang.

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Besides showing his visitors the entire Mendi mission compound, Michellod also took them to two villages in the nearby hills, probably Kombeyekipu and either Long or Umbimi.

Leaving Mendi Dec. 5, Anastase and Guichet visited Bishop Noser of Alexishafen near Madang, who recommended that the Capuchins get their own plane, preferably a Cessna, which would run about $10,000 (U.S.). Noser also told him to try to get an American province to staff and support the mission because of the need for English and the heavy expenses involved.

After stops at Lae and Port Moresby, Anastase left Papua Dec. 8 and began working on his report. In Sydney, he found a letter from Father Benignus which revealed that there would be a problem in sending Italian missionaries to Australia: The Vatican’s religious life office had just recently indicated its temporary opposition to having religious leave Italy for Australia.

Anastase was thus left far out on a limb. Even though Noser and other bishops had told him to try to get an American province to take over the mission, Anastase had everywhere left the clear impression that Capuchins from Australia would soon be taking over the mission.

In a very detailed report which Anastase sent to the general minister Dec. 22, he purposely avoided the question as to which province should be asked to man the new mission. In his covering letter, however, he did allude to what the bishops had said about Americans and added,

I told them all that this would be most difficult, if not impossible. The Apostolic Delegate, on my return, told me that he would prefer it thus, if it would be possible. However, if it would not be possible, even the combination of Americans and Italians would be fine; and, in the final analysis, if even this could not be done, then it might be entrusted directly to an Italian province.

Anastase tried to steer the general minister away from the search for Americans however. Even though he was a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he had more reasons to involve the Italians since, while learning English, they could also help his own ministry among the Italians in Australia. He thus pointed out that even though it was absolutely necessary that the new missionaries know English, since they would be subjected to examination by the Governor before being allowed to enter the Territory, and even though the Vatican’s religious life office objected to Italian religious going to Australia, he still thought the Parma Capuchins could come, simply by being assigned directly to the new mission, but stopping over in Australia “for several months” to intensely study English.

As a seminarian in 1939 Father Anastase lived for several months with Pennsylvania Capuchins at Victoria, Kansas, while trying to regain his health, and Fathers Henry Kusnerik and Rudolph Blockinger from that same province were working with him in Australia. But there is absolutely no reason to think that it was Father Anastase who recommended that the Pennsylvania province be asked to assume responsibility for the Papuan mission. Quite possibly though, it was his reference to the opinion of the New Guinea bishops and the concurrence therein of Archbishop Carboni which put it into the mind of the general definitory to ask one of the American provinces.

As both the Calvary and New York provinces already had missions in Guam, Okinawa, and Nicaragua, it would have been only natural that they turned first to the Pennsylvania province.
True that province already had 28 friars working as missionaries in Puerto Rico; but since that island was already a nominally Catholic area and was in no way subject to the Vatican’s mission office, these men were looked upon by neither the Holy See nor the general curia as working in a missionary area.\footnote{In a 1980’s comment on this text, Fr. Berard said that already in the early 1950’s “some clerics” [i.e. clerical students] had asked Father Victor “to consider another foreign mission for the province.” Berard himself was a cleric at that very time, and perhaps one of those who asked.}

Thus Father Conrad O’Donovan, general definitor for English-speaking Capuchins, wrote Father Victor Green, provincial minister of the Pennsylvania Capuchins, Jan. 24, 1955, asking if his province would consider the possibility of accepting a mission in the Territory of Papua. Exactly a fortnight later, Father Victor answered in the affirmative; and the ongoing evangelization of the Southern Highlands by Catholic missionaries was finally assured.
“Despite the scarcity of priests which besets even the pastors of the oldest dioceses, there should be no hesitation in the encouraging missionary vocations…. Heavenly consolations will soon be derived from this sacrifice, made for the furtherance of God’s cause.”

Pope Saint John XXIII, “Princeps Pastorum,” 1959, V.

5

The Will of Our Superiors

General Definitor Father Conrad O’Donovan’s letter\(^\text{75}\) to Father Victor Green, Jan. 24, 1955, gives the impression that it was during the previous week that the Vatican’s mission office had first approached the Capuchin Order concerning the Papuan mission.

This is surely surprising in light of the letter which Capuchin general minister Father Benignus Re Cecconi had written to Archbishop Romolo Carboni four months earlier. Benignus told Carboni that he had already informed Bishop André Sorin of the Order’s decision to accept the mission. It is thus even more amazing to read in Conrad’s letter to Victor that the Order had not yet made the decision to accept the new mission, this being dependent “on whether or not we find ourselves capable of assuming a new responsibility in the mission-field.” The Holy See, according to Conrad, “would prefer that the Mission, if accepted by the Order, should be confided to American Capuchins.”

Concerning the extent of the commitment, Conrad wrote that four priests would be needed each year until there were about 20 or 25 there. The Vatican, however, recognizing the heavy expenses that transportation would impose in the new mission, was prepared according to Conrad, “to provide a not inconsiderable aid.”

In asking if the Pennsylvania province “would be willing or able to accept this Foreign Mission,” Conrad also let it be known that Benignus was suggesting the possibility of Father Henry Kusnerik’s going along as one of the first four, since he was already an experienced missionary and was very well thought of by his fellow missionaries in Australia. Benignus told Conrad to tell Victor that the friars in Australia

\(^{75}\) Conrad was the English-speaking general definitor from Ireland.
thought so highly of Henry that many of them considered him a serious candidate for the office of superior regular.

Conrad’s letter propitiously arrived in Pittsburgh just a few days before Victor and his definitors—Father Claude Vogel, Alfred Carney, Giles Staab, and Adrian Conrad—were to begin their semi-annual meeting. Minutes from this Feb. 3-4 meeting surprisingly do not even mention that the subject was discussed; but the surviving members of the group remember clearly that, after a thorough discussion of the pros and cons, they unanimously agreed to accept the mission and that they considered the request to be the will of God.

Their only misgiving was that they might have problems in supplying “20 to 25 priests over a period of five years.” In his reply to Conrad on February 7, Victor wrote,

“We look upon this request of the Father General and the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda as the will of our superiors and the decision reached was that we would take the mission gladly if meeting the proposed manpower schedule is not an absolute condition.

Victor pointed out that the province would have no problem sending four in 1955, but that ordination classes for the next few years would be rather small and only two or three would be able to be sent annually for a few years. Victor was confident, however, that Providence would provide larger classes in the future.

The definitory agreed with the general minister’s suggestion concerning Father Henry and asked that, if the general saw fit to entrust the mission to the Pennsylvania province, he would also permit Henry to return home for a vacation, stopping en route a month or so in Papua, so that he could “bring us some first-hand information about conditions and requirements of the mission…” The definitory also asked that, if Father Rudolph Blockinger, another Pennsylvania Capuchin working in Australia, wished to join the Pennsylvania missionaries in New Guinea, he be allowed the opportunity to do so.

Following a meeting of the general definitory Feb. 10, Benignus willingly granted the requests concerning Henry and Rudolph and promised to promptly notify Victor as soon as the Vatican had accepted the Order’s decision to assign the mission to the Pennsylvania province.

Benignus wrote that same day,

“We are most grateful to you and your definitors, not merely for accepting the proposed new mission but also for the generous and traditionally Capuchin manner in which you did so, looking upon the request made, through us, by the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide as the will of your superiors. Individually and collectively the general definitory appreciate that deeply.

That Benignus should have thus remarked on the province’s reading the request from Rome as “the will of your superiors,” powerfully suggests that perhaps the provincial definitory actually took things a bit more seriously than the general definitory had intended; and the opinion that later circulated among many friars of the province that the definitory has been ordered to take the mission was surely not justified.

In his original letter of inquiry, Father Conrad simply said that the Sacred Congregation “has asked if our Order would be willing to accept the new mission.” The Order itself, according to Conrad, would not accept it unless it was capable of doing so. The Congregation said further that it “would prefer that the mission, if accepted by the Order, should be confided to American Capuchins, if that were possible”—which is not very strong language for a command. Further, Conrad wrote only that “Father General
wishes to enquire if the province of Pennsylvania would be willing and able to accept this foreign
mission.” This wording certainly left itself open to a negative reply.

In the letter of Feb. 21, Father Benignus wrote that, when he had submitted an official letter of acceptance
of the mission, Vatican officials had orally indicated that they were pleased with and grateful for the
Pennsylvania province’s offer. Moreover they had assured Benignus that the proposed manpower
commitment was more a desire than an essential condition. “As soon, they added, as you have a
sufficient number on the spot there, they will divide the present vicariate.” Benignus noted that he was
expecting written confirmation of all this once it had gone “through all the formal channels of protocol.”

Father Victor did not wait, however, for the written confirmation, before informing the province of the
acceptance of the mission. Toward the end of his visitation at Capuchin College in Washington, D.C.,
more precisely at dinner Feb. 25, he announced it to the many friars there, and according to the chronicle,
“The announcement came as a complete surprise and met with hearty approval.”

The announcement was perhaps even more of a surprise to Father Vincent Ryan, an Australian Capuchin,
who at the time was finishing his theological training for the priesthood in Washington. Only a few hours
before, in paying a courtesy visit to the provincial, Vincent had casually informed Victor that his own
superior, Father Anastase Paoletti, had written that he was expecting in the very near future to take over a
mission in the Highlands of Papua. Victor, of course, showed more than normal interest in this news, but
did not let on to Vincent that the mission had already been assigned to the Pennsylvania Capuchins.

The announcement made it to Herman, Pennsylvania, the same day, and Father Patrick McGann wrote in
his chronicle: “Greatest News in Capuchin Order. Southern Highlands—Papua.”

When Father Gary Stakem took Victor to Annapolis Feb. 27, another local chronicler wrote, “The news
brought by Father Provincial, that a foreign mission has been assigned to the province in New Guinea—
Papua—spread like wild fire.”

The only written announcement to the province appears to have been a postscript to Victor’s monthly
spiritual conference for March, in which he wrote, “By now you have probably heard that our province
has been entrusted with a mission in New Guinea.” This letter, sent to each house for table reading,
presumably in late February, spoke of sending “four or five men this summer: for work which “will be a
challenge both to the apostolic zeal and to the physical endurance of any friar. We welcome volunteers.”

According to Father Stanley Miltenberger, the copy of this letter which reached the missionaries in Puerto
Rico had an additional phrase indicating volunteers were welcome “even from Puerto Rico.” The friars
did not take the offer seriously, Stanley recalled, until someone came to the island and spoke of
what a great honor it was for such a difficult mission to be assigned to the province. As he recalled, then
the friars got to thinking it would be very useful to have some experienced missionaries among the first
group.

The immediate reaction, according to Stanley, was to get out the maps of Africa and try to find the new
mission. Their frustration in this regard was dispelled only by the arrival of another letter indicating the
new mission was near Australia. Meanwhile in Pittsburgh the friary chronicler editorialized, “All the
books on New Guinea were consulted, and according to them it is the worst spot on the face of the earth,
and thus it is offered to the Capuchins.”

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77 ACPSA 10:2 (August 1955) 33.
78 Fr. Bertrand Brookman.
Such a viewpoint was not prevalent, however, and already in letters sent to Rome March 4 and March 7, Victor was able to speak of the “great deal of enthusiasm” with which the news was being received “all over the province.”

In both letters, he also mentioned his confident prayer that the sacrifices entailed in accepting the new mission would bring special blessings upon the province and the Order. This theme of sacrifice-being-rewarded was not original with Father Victor. The great reorganizer of the Capuchin Order and its foreign missions, Father Bernard Christen of Andermatt had written in his circular letter of Dec. 31, 1884 (a letter which Bishop Hilarin Felder later called “the real Magna Charta of our missions”), that provincial and local superiors were to promote vocations to the missions “without concern for the small number of friars, but rather should be convinced that Divine Providence and divine generosity would bestow on the Province which shows zeal for the missions a bountiful increase in numbers, in material alms, and in spiritual blessings.”

Much more recently another general minister, Father Clement Neubauer of Milwaukee, had written in his June 29, 1947, circular on the Order’s missions that

… the more generously the province sends worthy men to the missions, the more vocations does God stir up within the province. Experience and statistics show that the number of yearly novices had doubled and even tripled after the acceptance of a mission.

Whether scientifically verifiable or not, the theme was a frequently repeated one in the succeeding months. Father Benignus, for example, when commenting upon the province’s increased vocations mentioned in Victor’s 1955 visitation report, added, “Now that your province has … undertaken a new development in the field of foreign missions, we are confident that the Lord will reward the sacrifices that are being made by a still greater increase in the number of vocations.”

Victor also started his May 1955 spiritual conference to the friars saying, “There are undoubtedly many among us who feel that a foreign mission is just what our province needs because it will bring us vocations and the blessings of God in many forms.” Victor made it clear, however, that he did not see the one following directly from the other but rather through the efforts of self-sanctification that the missions would awaken in the friars of the province.

There will be physical hardships in this uncivilized land, but we also know that the real struggle will be with the powers of darkness, and the weapons will be primarily those of the spirit… If in our doubts and fears we are driven to our knees in earnest prayer and self-immolation, the blessings of our new mission will be readily apparent.  

This reference of the powers of darkness undoubtedly flowed from Father André Dupeyrat’s *Savage Papua*, which had become daily table reading in several of the larger friaries of the province and was thus responsible for the first concrete impression most of the friars had of the new mission. In this book, Dupeyrat combined in a concentration surely stronger than real-life accounts of his own skirmishes with native sorcerers, cannibalism, the killing of a firstborn, and other frightening customs. It is not surprising, therefore, that French Academician Paul Claudel, in his preface to the book, called the life of a missionary in Papua “a call to the last and most forsaken land on earth…” among a people who are “a race of humanity… which has remained for centuries sunk in unimaginable ignorance and degradation.”

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79 AOFMC 1 (1884) 44.
80 ACPSA 10,2 (August 1955) 33.
81 This unwarranted characterization has time and again been dismissed by numerous Capuchin friars who ministered in the Southern Highlands.
While such unrealistic pictures were thus being painted in the minds of the friars at home, Father Henry was on site in Papua gathering his own first-hand information for the provincial and definitory. Victor had written Henry of developments and, after inviting him to be among the first missionaries, had asked him to visit the Southern Highlands on his way back to Pittsburgh. Father Anastase Paoletti, it is true, had already gathered much information, but unfortunately none of this was forwarded to Pittsburgh by the general curia in Rome.

Henry accepted the provincial’s offer to be part of the new mission team March 16: “Even before seeing the field I accept wholeheartedly…. I think this is a golden opportunity for our province to work among unspoiled children and real pagans….”

In saying these things, however, Henry had no delusions of the mission being an easy one. He wrote,

From what I can gather, you have accepted a very difficult mission field. There are only two mission stations, built there in the last six months, only bush huts. The people are primitive, still on a cowrie shell and salt monetary system, and they resent the white man coming to these areas…. There are no roads, only bush tracks, hence no need for vehicles. The only means of transport in the Highlands is by walking or by plane…. All supplies and personnel must be flown in; there is no other way…. I’m not trying to paint a discouraging picture; I’m only reporting what I have found out so far.

Henry made preparations to enter Papua and had everything ready by March 30 except for transportation. All planes and boats were then booked solid until April 23.

While waiting, “I interviewed every priest I heard of, who was in Papua and New Guinea, to get all the information I could beforehand.” Among other things Henry was told that the men

… should be old enough to take conditions as they find them, yet young enough to stand up under heavy strain of days of trekking. The country is mountainous and all travelling in the interior must be done on foot. I would say men between 30-50 years old.

A missionary must also have “good health, and more than average talent,” he continued.

He must learn a number of new languages. Besides we shall be laying the foundations of a new mission. Once mission stations are established, each missioner will live on his own with no white contacts for a month or more. This probably will be the hardest part because monotony, lack of companionship with a fellow white priest, with no one except the natives to converse with and to see weeks on end, plus the natural fear he will have being outnumbered will not be easy on the missioner. Some have cracked up under the strain.

Henry managed to move up his departure for Papua to April 14. Just before leaving, he wrote Victor that he had met Bishop Sorin that same day in Sydney and “had a long talk with him, but agreed to nothing.” Sorin was insistent that the Capuchins get five or six men there immediately, because large restricted areas were expected to be opened to missionaries at any moment, and Protestant missionaries were already there waiting. “Natives I’m told,” wrote Henry, “give allegiance to the first missionaries who come among them….” However despite Sorin’s fears that the Capuchins might lose the race with the Protestants, Henry urged the provincial “to wait till I get back and give you the whole story and a better picture of the whole thing.”
Father Henry made excellent connections going into the Highlands and arrived unannounced at Tari April 19. There and everywhere else he went, however, he had to explain that he was not the first of the Australian Capuchins, that he had not been sent by Father Anastase, and that he represented an entirely different jurisdiction of Capuchins which was not bound by any promises that Anastase had made.

Henry remained in Tari until April 27 and discussed conditions thoroughly with Father Michellod and ADO Bill Crellin. Limited supplies which Michellod had been forced to work with vividly impressed Henry, and he worked from then on to see that the Capuchins would have adequate supplies right from the start.

Michellod in turn was impressed with the American’s ability to expedite things. Shortly after Henry returned to the coast, Michellod later recalled, “a special plane came up full of supplies—everything—flour, tinned meat, sugar, tinned fish, and so on.” So much in fact that Michellod made an unsuccessful attempt to give some of it to the government officers who had been so generous to him.

Upon leaving Tari, Henry visited Mendi and had further talks with Father Rinn, DC Bob Cole, and ADO Des Clancy. He then flew to Goroka in the Eastern Highlands April 30 and wrote a preliminary report to Victor, stressing that because of health and stamina he felt he could serve the mountainous mission better on the coast as procurator than in the Highlands themselves.

In both Tari and Mendi, as he saw it, mistakes had been made in going into the area hoping that needed supplies would be sent in regularly. Right at the start, he was now convinced, everything needed for a year should be assembled at a seaport and a plane chartered to take it inland with one of the missionaries along to make sure it got there. “Too many supplies… are lost somewhere on the way,” he added.

Henry was sick the entire time he was in the Highlands, and a doctor told him it was due to changes in altitude and diet.

At 43 I’m too old to be starting into this kind of work. It is a country for young men because of the tremendous amount of walking to be done over mountains, some towering to 13-14,000 feet, and through jungle forests and swamps.

From Goroka, Henry went to Alexishafen and Wewak to speak to Divine Word Bishops Adolph Noser and Leo Arkfeld. He then made his way back to Port Moresby, where by May 19 he had prepared an extensive report for Victor, which he invited Sorin to examine.

One new element to surface in this report was the need for Sisters. Missionaries in the area had told Henry that without Sisters there would be no hope of reaching the native women. Sisters, Henry presumed further, would also help develop greater respect for the native women who were considered inferior, good only for catering to the men by bearing their children, tending their pigs, and cultivating their gardens.

The report also noted the relative strength of Catholic and Protestant missionary personnel in the area. The Catholics had two French Catholic priests and five Mekeo teachers from the coast, and the Protestants well more than 20 Europeans, including several women, and a large number of native teachers.

Mendi, Tari, Erave, Ialibu, Lake Kutubu, and Kikori were still being contemplated as the first six Catholic mission stations, although it was conceded even then that, since Kikori had not yet developed as a seaport, Madang for the time being would have to be port entry for the Southern Highlands.

Henry’s report spoke of at least six priests and eight sisters being needed immediately as well as three lay brothers. In the addition to helping the priests in a spiritual way, the brothers would oversee the material growth and progress of the mission and work as carpenters, farmers, and mechanics, allowing the priests...
to devote more time to the spiritual needs of the local people. Even if all this help were forthcoming, however, Henry noted that New Guinea missionaries had cautioned him not to expect any of the natives of the area to be ready for baptism for many years, except in danger of death.

After conferring with the procurators of several other missions, Henry estimated that the cost of opening the mission would be about $50-60,000 the first year alone. Bishop Sorin promised to ask the Vatican mission office for a special grant to cover this; but the Bishop warned that his own vicariate was already in debt, and no one should expect it to contribute anything financially to the new mission.

American-born bishops Noser and Arkfeld had also told Henry that the Capuchins should consider purchasing a Cessna airplane and training a missionary as a pilot and mechanic. “They have given assurance,” he wrote, “that these planes pay for themselves in less than two years’ time.”

Henry returned to the Province in June and gave the provincial superiors a full report.
When God calls, a man must reply without taking counsel with flesh and blood (cf. Gal. 1:16) and give himself fully to the work of the Gospel...... Therefore, he must be prepared to remain faithful to his vocation for life, to renounce himself and everything that up to this he possessed as his own, and 'to make himself all things to all men.' (1Cor. 9:22). Vatican II, Decr. On Missionary Activity, 1965, n.24.

Pennsylvania’s Papuan Pioneers

The July meetings of the definitory was traditionally the time for making assignments in the Pennsylvania province, and it was customary to speculate what changes might be made. Expectancy was unusually high in 1955, however, with friars anxiously waiting to learn who would start the new mission and whom they would not see again until 1965, when the first home visits were expected.

Suspense was especially great for the 26 friars in nine different U.S. friaries and in Puerto Rico and Australia who had previously volunteered to be part of the Papuan mission. Some 22 of the province's 80 solemnly professed friars 40 years of age and under were on the list. There were also two in their 40’s and two that had just reached 50. Average age of these volunteers was 32.2.

Included in the 26 were 10 priests in education, four priests already in the missions, three in parish work, two graduate students, three other priests, and four lay brothers.

By an interesting coincidence, while these volunteers waited, American filmmaker Walt Disney was inaugurating Disneyland, a colossal amusement park in Anaheim, California, which used every trick of technology and art to create allusions for children of all ages of fantastic, yet carefree journeys into such places as Adventureland, Frontierland, Fantasyland, and Tomorrowland. On July 20, 1955, just five days after the opening of this remarkable American institution, six Capuchins – five priests and one lay brother – were assigned to begin a real-life adventure, with all its cares and apprehensions, on earth's last frontier – an adventure that, without resorting to fantasy, would bring together yesterday and tomorrow in startling contrasts.
Chosen for the venture were Fathers Otmar Gallagher, Henry Kusnerik, Stanley Miltenberger, Paul Farkas, Berard Tomassetti, and Brother Mark Bollinger.

Commenting on the assignment as a whole, Father Victor Green wrote Father Conrad O'Donovan July 25, “We spread our men thin in places to meet the demands of the new mission, but we are confident that God's blessing will carry us through.”

Chosen to lead the group was Father Otmar, 33, veteran of seven years' service in Puerto Rico. He had served there as an associate pastor in Trujillo Alto, Utuado, and Ponce; chaplain of sufferers of Hansen's disease in Trujillo Alto, and chaplain of a tuberculosis sanatorium in Ponce. In 1955 he was pastor, religious superior, and director of primary and secondary schools in Trujillo Alto.

Oldest of the group was Father Henry, 43, who after five years as an associate pastor of St. Augustine's Church, Pittsburgh, had volunteered for the Australian mission, and had already served two years as associate and five as pastor in the Leichhardt sector of Sydney, and another two as religious superior in Melbourne.

Father Stanley, also 33, had for eight years held a wide variety of assignments as a missionary in Puerto Rico – in Rio Piedras and Utuado. Following Henry’s recommendations, Stanley had already begun training as a pilot.

Father Paul, 32, had been an associate at St. Augustine's for four years. During that same time he also served as local director of the Secular Franciscan Order and was assistant national director of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers.

Father Berard, 34, was the only friar besides Father Henry to have already been in New Guinea. During World War II, as Benjamin Tomassetti, he had served both at mainland Finschhafen near Lae and on Manus Island. As a Sea Bee engineer with the 78th U.S. Naval construction battalion, he had helped build naval installations at these places. A 1942 graduate of Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie-Mellon University), Pittsburgh, he had joined the Capuchin Order.
after the war and had taught science and mathematics for a year at St. Fidelis Seminary, Herman, Pennsylvania.

Youngest of the group was Brother Mark, 28, who after graduating from St. Fidelis Seminary high school in 1945, entered the training program for Capuchin lay brothers at Cumberland, Maryland, and from 1948 until 1955 served as door keeper and engineer, as well as in various other capacities, at Capuchin College in the nation’s capital.

Once the group was named, preparations proceeded in earnest. Press conferences and media interviews immediately announced the new mission to the people of southwestern Pennsylvania, home of all the missionaries save Father Stanley, who came from the West Virginia hills near Cumberland.

On one side of the world, Pittsburgh Mayor David Lawrence and U.S. Congressman Herman P. Eberharter assisted the new missionaries in speeding up the passport process, on the other Archbishop Carboni and Bishop Sorin asked Australian Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck to expedite the granting of visas.

Meanwhile through the efforts of the provincial mission office, more than 10 tons of equipment were crated and sent to San Francisco for passage on the “S.S. Orcades,” and plans made for obtaining a similar amount in Australia.

Finally on Aug. 28, feast of St. Augustine, patron of the Pennsylvania Province, after a three-day retreat led by Father Giles Staab at St. Francis Retreat House in Pittsburgh, the Pennsylvania province's Papuan pioneers received their mission crosses and letters of obedience from the Father General for work within the vicariate of Port Moresby.

In attendance at the ceremony in St. Augustine's Church in Pittsburgh were the local bishop, John F. Dearden (later cardinal-archbishop of Detroit); his Propagation of the Faith director, Monsignor William G. Connare (later bishop of Greensburg), who gave the sermon; and Bishop Matthew Niedhammer, Capuchin missionary in Nicaragua.

The evening following this ceremony, Aug. 29, Father Berard flew from Pittsburgh to Los Angeles, for a visit with his parents at nearby Ontario, California. Father Paul and Brother Mark
then left Pittsburgh by train Sept. 6; and after stop-overs in St. Louis (where Father Stanley
joined them) and Ellis County, Kansas, they met Berard in San Francisco Sept. 9.

The next morning was exactly one year since Father Michellod had said the first Mass in the
Southern Highlands, so once again the Gospel reading was: “Fear not, little flock, for it has
pleased your Father to give you a kingdom.” No one has recorded how the reading struck the
new missionaries, but that afternoon the little flock boarded the Orient Line's “S.S. Orcades,”
and at 5 p.m. sharp left the States headed for Sydney by way of Vancouver, Honolulu, Suva, and
Auckland – ultimately bound for the Southern Highlands, the new kingdom their Father had
prepared.

Among the more than 1,200 passengers aboard, the friars quickly met several people from New
Guinea, including Jim Leahy, who had been in New Guinea since 1929, and now had a coffee
plantation at Goroka which employed 185 local people. Jim's brothers Mick and Dan had led the
first expedition into the Ialibu and Pangia areas in 1934, and another brother Pat had also been
involved in the exploration and development of the New Guinea Highlands. All four of the
brothers were Catholics.

Leahy told the friars they were very fortunate in getting into the Highlands. “In his estimate,”
Berard wrote to friars at Herman, “there is no better place in the world. He says this in so matter-
of-fact a way that you can't help but feel being let in on something that smacks of paradise.”
While Leahy helped brighten the friars’ outlook on the area, he did not give them much hope for
making a great number of converts, due to problems with polygamy.82

At Suva in the Fiji Islands, Berard met and discussed with Father Paul Coquereou, a French
Marist, the latter's employment by the governor-general to supervise the building of hydro-
electrical generators throughout the island.83 He also learned of, but failed to meet, Jesuit Father
Marion M. Ganey, who was similarly engaged in introducing credit unions among the Fiji
people.

In every port along the way, someone – apparently one of the ship's crew – had alerted the press,
both secular and religious, that the Papuan pioneers were on board. The missionaries' story
fascinated journalists, who regularly sought them out for interviews and photographs.84

While the shipborne missionaries were headed “down under,” Father Henry and Otmar left
Pittsburgh by air, arriving in Sydney Sept. 29, even as the others were preparing to leave
Auckland, New Zealand. When the “Orcades” docked in Sydney Oct. 1, Otmar and Henry were
there to meet them, as was also Father Vincent Ryan, who over the years since then has extended
similar hospitality countless times to the Papuan-based friars and their co-workers.

The group boarded in a structure called “the green house,” two doors down from St. Fiacre's
Friary, where Father Henry had formerly served as parish priest. Father Rudolph Blockinger now

82 Tomassetti to priests at Herman, Sept. 24, 1955, in PL 1:5.
held the pastorate of the Leichhardt parish, and he and his fellow missionaries to Australia treated the Papuan missionaries royally, while they waited a month for the ship to Madang.

This time was spent in meeting with church officials, in strengthening contacts among the laity, in interviewing experts on New Guinea, and in spreading their own missionary fervor throughout the area.

They had a long visit Oct. 6 at the apostolic delegation with Archbishop Carboni and his official family, which included Monsignor (later Cardinal) Luigi Dadaglio, and Monsignor (later Archbishop) Luigi Barbarito.

Carboni “spoke to us as a father,” Berard noted in his chronicle, “and asked us to make it a point to cultivate a sincere interest in the good qualities of the people we shall be living with, since this attitude will be necessarily reflected in our external behavior. He warned us of the danger of taking note only, or for the most part, of their weaknesses and vices. Should we do this, we will accomplish little of lasting good for the people and the Church.”

Another point the delegate stressed was that they should “begin as soon as possible to form a native secular and religious clergy,” since “there seems to be a move on in some of the islands to get rid of foreign elements even among the clergy.”

Dadaglio had accompanied Carboni to Papua in March and had taken movies, so the missionaries were now, according to Berard, able to see Bishop Sorin, Yule Island, the Eastern and Southern Highlands, and “our natives for the first time... We also saw views of the rugged terrain of our territory and had mixed feelings of hesitation and desire to be there to begin the work that is before us.”

Carboni came to St. Fiacre's Oct. 16 for several hours and again presented the six friars with their mission crosses. The missionaries also had useful visits with Cardinal Norman Gilroy, archbishop of Sydney; Monsignor Albert A. Thomas, national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (and later bishop of Bathurst); and Mother Genevieve, French–born superior general of the Handmaids of Our Lord.

They also had a meeting with Father Henry about food supplies, and another with Dr. Black of the University of Sydney on tropical diseases. Black surprised them with information on the prevalence of malaria in the Highlands and the need for taking regular antimalarial medicine.

During these days several of the friars spoke on Father Anastase's Italian Hour broadcast and engaged in various other apostolic activities in area churches. Father Stanley even baptized one of the crew members of the “Orcades” whom he had instructed at sea.

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85 Later nuncio to Venezuela and Spain, secretary of Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship, and Apostolic Penitentiary.
86 Later papal envoy to Haiti, five western African nations, Australia & Papua New Guinea (1978-86), and Great Britain.
It was also in Sydney where the first of what over the years would become a long line of tragic telegrams arrived. This wire immediately highlighted the special nature of the sacrifice the missionaries had made in leaving their homeland. Father Berard received word Oct. 25 that two days earlier in California his father had died. There was to be no turning back, however.

Three days later, Berard, Stanley, Otmar, Paul, and Mark boarded the Burns-Philp Line's "M.V. Bulolo" and left for Brisbane where they visited old Archbishop James Duhig, appointed bishop by Pope St. Pius X in 1905. 88

Henry flew in from Sydney, rejoining the other five; and at midnight Nov. 2, they left Australia for Port Moresby on Papua's New Guinea's southern coast. Following several choppy days on the Coral Sea off the Great Barrier Reef, the "Bulolo" docked at Papua’s territorial capital Nov. 6. During their three days in this town of about 3,500 Europeans, most of the friars met Papuan people for the first time.

Port Moresby was also the site of several visits with Bishop Sorin, who had come by boat from Yule Island. At the first meeting Nov. 7, Sorin accepted their documents of appointment from the Capuchin general minister -- "obediences" as Capuchins used to call them -- and at that moment their Papuan missionary service officially began.

The six missionaries left Moresby Nov. 9, headed for Madang on New Guinea's northern coast, whence they planned to fly into the Highlands. Even as the "Bulolo" steamed east from Moresby, however, they already knew of a downpour which had flooded the Madang airstrip, and Father Paul was experiencing some discomfort in his abdomen, but little did any of them think that these two things would so severely prolong their entry into the Highlands.

Before they reached Samarai Island off the southeastern tip of the mainland Nov. 10, Paul's condition had worsened to the point that Dr. Tarnekei, a fellow passenger on the "Bulolo," diagnosed it as appendicitis and recommended that Paul be treated by Dr. Sobol, a Ukrainian refugee serving as the government's medical officer at Samarai.

After Paul had been somewhat ludicrously lowered to pier land by the "Bulolo"'s cargo crane, Sobol performed an emergency "appendectomy," assisted by a nurse, a trained native assistant, and Dr. Tarnekei, who acted as anesthetist. 89 Sobol was not able to find the appendix, and Paul is still uncertain what the doctor actually did. 90 Immediately following surgery, Sobol told Otmar that Paul should return to the States for additional surgery. A few days later, however, he told Berard that a tumor which he had found between the large and small intestines had now disappeared and there would be no need for additional surgery.

Once the operation had been completed, Otmar left Berard with Paul, and he and the others went up the northern coast on the "Bulolo," reaching Lae Nov. 12 and Madang Nov. 15. They were

88 Bishop Firmin visited him four years later. Duhig died in office in 1965, aged 93, having served as a bishop over 59 years.
90 Sobol later told Paul he initially had not expected him to survive.
disappointed, however, to find the Madang airfield had been so badly flooded it would take several days, if not weeks, to start lifting the cargo inland. The DC-3's needed a drier field on which to land and take off, and using smaller planes to move the friars' 15 tons of supplies would have lifted the cost of the operation sky high.

During their forced layover on the coast, the friars stayed with the Divine Word missionaries at Alexishafen, some 15 miles north of Madang. Later when they started moving one by one into the Highlands, each of them spent a day or more at Minj with Father Bernard Schilling, S.V.D., the future bishop of Goroka.

Meanwhile back on Samarai, Father Berard used his 12-day layover to visit Australian MSC, headquarters at Sideia in the company of Father John McGhee, MSC, and to discuss with the government officers who visited Samarai their personal experiences in Papua New Guinea. These men included two veterans of Southern Highlands service: Quentin Anthony, “one of the three patrol officers who went through the Tari peoples and made way for the government station in 1951,” and “Speed” Graham, who told Berard that “he had been on the first patrol to go through the Mendi area.” Anthony also said he had “compiled the first dictionary of the Tari language – about 900 words.”

Once Paul started regaining his strength, Berard made plans to rejoin the other friars. He took the “Bulolo” to Port Moresby Nov. 22 to enplane for the Southern Highlands. Paul, meanwhile, was already making friends rapidly. Back on his feet by Dec. 2, he moved around Samarai Island and even visited nearby Sideia Island. Finally Dec. 15, when the doctor released him, he flew out of Samarai intent on rejoining his confreres.

Papua's pioneer Capuchins were all together for the first time in six weeks Dec. 22. Appropriately enough, the friars’ reunion took place at Tari in the two-story bush chalet built for them by a Swiss Missionary of the Sacred Heart, which now was to become St. Francis Friary, first mother house of the Papuan Capuchins.

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92 He was also a temporary patrol officer in Ialibu in 1959.
93 2016: ADO Speed Graham’s photo is in Tom Cole’s *The Last Paradise*, Sydney, Random House, 1990. He was widely known among the kiaps as “Io” Graham.
The Church first proclaims Jesus Christ through a complex and varied activity which is sometimes called “pre-evangelization,” but is really already an evangelization, albeit in an initial and incomplete stage. To this end, an almost unlimited range of means can be used: explicit preaching, of course, but also art, the preliminary study of the culture, philosophical inquiry and the legitimate appeal to the emotions of the human heart.

Pope Blessed Paul VI, “Evangelii Nuntiandi,” 1975, n. 51

7

Berard Builds a Bridge

In Mendi in April of 1955, Father Alexis Michellod and the other Sacred Heart missionaries had been looking forward to the arrival of the American Capuchins. This important event finally happened shortly after noon Nov. 23, when Father Otmar Gallagher, leader of the new missionaries, flew into Tari from Minj and took up residence with Michellod.

During the following month, the other five Capuchins filtered single file into Tari. Father Berard Tomassetti arrived two days after Otmar, having stopped overnight at Port Moresby, Goroka, and Minj. Father Stanley Miltenberger managed to come to Tari Dec. 6 with a ton load of mission cargo on a Gibbes-Sepik Norseman airplane, but he returned to Minj Dec. 9 so as to keep the cargo moving through that important relay point once it began arriving from Madang. Brother Mark Bollinger arrived in Tari Dec. 13 on the second of five plane loads which Gibbes-Sepik brought in that day for the mission, and Henry came in Dec. 15.

Last of the first band of Capuchins to reach Tari was Father Paul Farkas; and his arrival Dec. 19 was a specially happy one, since the friars had been quite uncertain as to whether they would ever see him in the Highlands when they left him behind at Samarai.

Christmas was now rapidly approaching, and Stanley returned from Minj Dec. 22 so that all the friars could be together. With him he brought the mission’s first motor bike. That same day Otmar introduced the first schedule for Capuchin community life in the mission:
5:15 Rising
5:30 Morning prayer & meditation
6:20 Mass
7:00 Breakfast
8:00 Work or school
9:45 Tea Break
11:30 End of work or school
12:00 Lunch
1:45 Work or school
3:30 Tea break
4:45 End of work or school
5:45 Office
6:30 Dinner
8:00 Unica, rosary & night prayer
10:00 Lights out

He also informed the friars that he expected them to wear the Capuchin habit at meals, in chapel, and in the school, the understanding being that at other times they could wear civilian clothes, with grey slacks and a white shirt with a cross on it being used on more formal occasions.

These decisions Otmar made in his capacity as religious superior of the Capuchins. Michellod by this time had been appointed by Bishop André Sorin as vicar delegate or ecclesiastical superior of all the missionaries in the Highlands – with the technically incorrect title of vicar general – but Michellod urged Otmar to make decisions and insisted that he sit at the head of the table. Michellod, moreover, absolutely refused to have anything to do with the funds available to the Capuchins, appointed Otmar procurator for the mission, and wrote Fathers Alphonse Rinn and Louis Van Campenhoudt that all supplies would have to be ordered through Otmar.

The friars’ first Christmas in Papua New Guinea was marked by a close rapport between Catholic missionaries and government personnel. ADO Bill Crellin; his new MA, Ted Burchett, and wife, Iris, PO Mal Lang; and CPO Graham Hogg all came to Guluanda for a Christmas Eve dinner – or tea as they called it. Later, even though none of them were Catholics, all attended the first midnight Mass. As this preceeded the days of concelebration. Otmar celebrated the Mass, while Michellod and the other Capuchins served as a choir. Huli school boys also sang traditional hymns which Michellod had translated into their language.

The following evening, the Burchetts invited the same group of missionaries and government officials, as well as anthropologist Bob Glasse, to a traditional English roast pig and Christmas pudding.

After Christmas, the missionaries quickly dispersed into other parts of the Southern Highlands to prepare for an expected de-restriction of extensive new areas. Already on a visit to Mendi Dec. 6, Michellod and Otmar had been told by DC Bob Cole that he was expecting to be allowed immediately after Christmas to extend to five miles the current two-mile limit around the Tari
government station, and to open the whole area north of a line drawn from Ialibu west to the Lai River immediately after Christmas.

The Catholic missionaries were not anxious for this to happen so soon, since they had barely just organized main stations at Tari, Mendi, and Ialibu. Father Otmar wrote, therefore, of Cole’s intentions already Dec. 9, “…He doesn’t know that we just finished a novena of Masses in honor of the Blessed Mother and the Poor Souls that everything stays closed for a few months yet.”

The new lands actually remained closed for many months; but during the Christmas octave, the missionaries quickly redistributed themselves. Stanley left for Minj to move the remainder of the cargo to the three stations; Henry left to join Rinn at Ialibu; and Berard and Micheldod began work with Van Campenhoudt in Mendi, where Stanley would join them once the cargo had been distributed.

MISSION DIRECTORY 1-1-1956

**Tari**
Father Otmar Gallagher, OFMCap, religious superior, procurator, main station
Father Paul Farkas, OFMCap, teacher
Brother Mark Bollinger, OFMCap, builder, mechanic

**Mendi**
Father Alexis Micheldod, MSC, vicar delegate, outstation development
Father Louis Van Campenhoudt, MSC, main station
Father Stanley Miltenberger, OFMCap

**Ialibu**
Father Alphonse Rinn, MSC, main station
Father Henry Kusnerik, OFMCap, main station associate
Brother Paul Idomaka, OblSJ carpenter
Brother Felix Walaba, OblSJ carpenter

Despite the threatened lifting of restrictions in the Tari area, 1956 did not prove a year of expansion for the mission to the Huli people.

Paul settled in Guluanda and undertook the full-time direction of the school, which both Micheldod and Otmar envisioned as becoming the catechist training center for the mission. In April, however, Dr. Tarnekei in Lae and Father Victor Green in Pittsburgh concurred that Paul would have to return to the U.S. for surgery to correct deficiencies of the emergency operation at Samarai.  

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95 The school was carried on by Francis, a Mekeo teacher, assisted by a local lad Agilu (Micheldod, annual report, July 1956)
Mark became engaged in replacing various station buildings with more permanent ones. The first structure on the station not entirely of bush construction was the school which Mark finished March 19, 1956. His building campaign took something of a set back, however, during June, when he had to spend much time treating scabies among the boys. This epidemic, which began May 26, had reached such proportions by July 4 that Brother finally decided to burn all of the boys’ houses to help destroy the infection.

As religious superior and procurator, Otmar spent the same early months of 1956 providing for the missionaries at all three stations. This involved extensive correspondence with the provincial minister, the vicar apostolic at Yule Island, the apostolic delegate, and Otmar’s fellow Capuchin missionaries.

One of the most critical decisions Otmar made during this time was the one to ask for an airplane for the mission. Evident as it was that the mission would long be dependent upon air traffic to move both personnel and supplies in from the coast and between the various areas, Otmar discussed this with Stanley, Van Campenhoudt, and Michellod in a meeting that Michellod called at Mendi in early February. Then, before leaving for Madang to purchase supplies for the three main stations, Otmar wrote letters to both Father Victor and Father Cecil Nally, mission procurator in Pittsburgh, asking for a Cessna 180.

The merit of this request seems self-evident, considering from hindsight the role planes played in the mission’s activity. It was quite difficult at the time, however, without personal knowledge of the situation, for Father Cecil to appreciate why it was advantageous for a handful of missionaries to have their own airplane, and many more letters made the torturous trip around the world before Otmar actually ordered the plane May 27.

Meanwhile, the people to the east of Guluanda were meeting their first missionary. Strangely enough this passage through the country east of Tari came not from Guluanda, but from Kumin near Mendi. At 8:30 on the morning of April 23, Mark’s carpenters and Paul’s school boys suddenly suspended operations for the day, when policemen arrived with word that Father Michellod was encamped at the Tepe River, a few miles east of Tari; and the following day Michellod himself appeared.

Taking advantage of the Swiss missionary’s road building talents, Commissioner Cole had asked Michellod to accompany PO Neil J Grant on the first government patrol from Mendi to Tari so as to help them find the best route for a motor road connecting the two posts.

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96 Scabies is a contagious skin disease caused by the itchmite, marked by severe itching and red pimples.
97 Michellod to Sorin, Feb. 4, 1956.
98 Farkas chronicle, April 23, 1956.
99 Mendi Patrol #10, 1955-56. Michellod had already tried to get to part of the restricted territory from Tari. On Dec. 28, 1955, he wrote Bishop Sorin of having applied for a permit to supervise road building from Tari to a station in the direction of Margarima.
On April 27, just three days after Michellod’s appearance at Guluanda, Bishop Sorin flew in to begin his second visitation of the Southern Highlands by spending nine days at Guluanda. It was during this time that Paul left for the States. 100

A week later, the bishop and his vicar visited Mendi and Ialibu, and after another week, they wired Otmar to join them and the other priests of the area in Mendi. When the Capuchin superior returned to Guluanda May 19, he brought with him the news that Berard and he would be switching places, as Capuchin headquarters would be moving from Tari to Mendi.

Part of the reason for moving Berard back to Tari was the prospect of his making contacts in an area otherwise off limits to missionaries. Hoping to take advantage of Berard’s training as a civil engineer, government officials had invited him to assist them as architect and engineer in bridging the wide and swift Tagari (or as the Hulis say, Dagali) River to the west of Tari.

Otmar had been trying for months to get into the Koroba (Golaba in Huli) area west of the river, which its ADO Jim Sinclair was already working to bring under government control. As early as March 10, Otmar had written Victor that applications by Mark and himself to enter the area had been refused because the government had no one free to escort them out and back. They were planning to reapply, he wrote April 6,

But even if we two don’t get out there, perhaps Berard will. A road is being built out to Duna…. A suspension wire rope bridge is a necessity, but none of ….the government people know anything about designing or building such a bridge. I’m going to write to Berard to find out if he can do it. If he can….the government will give him a permit to go out to build the bridge. When he’s that close to Duna, it is a pretty good bet that he’ll get all the way out for a look around.

So when Berard arrived at Tari in June 1956, Otmar rejoiced that his helping hand to the government would give the Catholic mission contact first with the natives of the Hibuga Marsh on the east side of the river and eventually with those across the Tagari. 101 Any special advantage to be gained on the east side of the river was lost, however, to numerous delays that pushed the bridge building into 1957.

Berard arrived at Guluanda already on June 5, 1956, expecting that on June 12, he would accompany Jim Sinclair out to the Tagari so as to pick out a site for the suspension bridge; but when it was time to go, Berard had come down with fever, and the trip had to be postponed.

The delay was perhaps providential, for quite unexpectedly the people on the other side were up in arms threatening to annihilate the Koroba government station. According to Otmar, things cooled off quickly, but not before a Papuan policeman shot a local man. 102

Berard was further restrained by having to take charge of Guluanda July 1, in view of Otmar’s impending departure. True, Brother Mark was also at the station and could have taken charge; but Otmar was quite determined not to let a situation develop where Mark or any other lay brother of the future would be without Mass and Holy Communion for long periods of time.

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100 Specifically on May 1, 1956.
101 Tari chronicle, June 12, 1956.
102 In both thighs “with but one shot” (Tari chronicle, June 12, 1956).
“Not that Mark or any brother….would not be able to do the work and do it fine,” he wrote Victor, “but I think it’s the falsehood of activity at the cost of one’s own spirituality.” For the same reason Otmar cautioned his priests never to leave Mass kits behind so as to travel light, since “….omitting to celebrate Mass would deprive ourselves as well as the entire mission of many and needed graces.”

It was mid-July before the missionaries first visited the Tagari River. Roger Claridge, acting ADO while Bill Crellin was on leave, drove Berard and Mark out to the river July 11, to pick a site for the suspension bridge. But the actual construction was still a long way off.

Meanwhile every morning at Guluanda, Agilu, a young man with previous schooling at both the Methodist and Catholic missions, taught about 30 school boys, while Berard and Mark supervised a crew of native carpenters in improving the station. In the afternoons, Berard taught the whole group English, singing, and catechism. Berard also worked on the plans for the new bridge, and from time to time undertook various other projects to help his government friends, such as resurveying the local airstrip to improve its drainage and surveying the hospital grounds at Rumu for a proposed water reticulation system.

Claridge brought DC Cole and his family and District Education Officer Bernard Madden, as well as his own wife, Maggie, to Guluanda for supper Aug. 23. It is not recorded what was discussed that evening, but two days later Claridge, Sinclair, and the Koroba MA Matt Spear brought down application forms for entrance into the restricted Hibiga Marsh area. Berard and Mark both applied for permits Aug. 28, and Cole approved the applications Sept. 12. In the meantime, Berard had completed a new set of plans for the bridge, but renewed tribal fighting in the neighborhood indefinitely pushed off issuance of the permits.

It must have further dampened Berard’s ardor to receive word from Otmar Sept. 20 that Archbishop Carboni and others were planning to further divide the mission and that the Tari area would probably go to another religious community. On a more immediate level, he learned that a Landrover destined for the Tari mission had been sold at Minj since for over two months, DC-3’s, the only planes able to carry it, had been refused landing clearance at Tari.

Permits for Berard and Mark to do missionary work in the Hibiga Marsh finally arrived Nov. 2. By then, however, Mark had already gone to Mendi to finish a pilot’s house. Berard was thus kept at Guluanda until Nov. 12, when Father Paul arrived back from the States – and even then a few days naturally had to be spent catching up on news from “back home.”

Berard was obviously moved by Paul’s return and wrote in the chronicle.

There is no doubt that the courage and enthusiasm which marked Father Paul’s come-back to the mission, was communicated to the religious and lay-people back home. The future pages of the history of our mission may well reveal evidence of this in terms of vocations inspired by the seeds of Father Paul’s apostolic zeal.
Paul went back to the classroom Nov. 19, and within a week Berard was on his way out into the Hibuga Marsh. Much to his chagrin, he learned that the Unevangelized Field Mission had started a station at Walete, three miles east of the proposed site of this bridge. His disappointment was intensified by the fact that Roger Claridge had previously assured him that no rest houses could be built in the marsh nor land leased. Only now did Claridge inform him that it was now possible to apply for such leases.

On top of this, word arrived Dec. 12, from the Bishop that Berard was to leave for Ialibu to help Henry and the newly arrived Father Gary Stakem. Since Sorin was unaware of developments in the Hibuga Marsh area, Berard notified Otmar, who by then had become the bishop’s vicar delegate. After Christmas, Otmar came to Guluanda; and once he and Berard had visited the marsh on New Year’s Day, 1957, it was decided Berard would immediately begin the first outstations among the Hulis, while Otmar visited Ialibu to study the need there for Berard’s presence.

Berard and Tari porters Paro and Oomo left Jan. 4 for three weeks at the river. Setting up residence at the Tagari rest house, Berard began planning for the bridge and was soon joined by government construction workers.

Two days after Berard’s arrival, Pilu, a local leader at Yobiya (or Yobidia as the friars first called it) took him to see land that the people wanted him to have for a station; and starting Jan. 17, Berard made regular visits to Yobiya to direct the setting up of a station, consisting of a priest’s house, cook house, boys’ and mens’ houses, and a playing field.

This first stay at the river also occasioned Berard’s first visit to Hedamali, on the other side. PO Neil Grant and he walked there Jan. 22 while looking for trees for the Koroba end of the bridge. Later Paro also visited the village and returned with word that the Hedamalians wanted Berard to build a station there.

By the end of May, Berard had visited Yobiya Yobiya was Berard’s first outstation, about six miles from Pureni. He gradually moved on as other areas were opened.
and the bridge site nine more times, staying a total of 62 more days. On the shortest of these visits, he was accompanied by Father Paul, ADO Bill Crellin, and the celebrated Baroness Maria von Trapp and her chaplain Monsignor Franz Wasner. Madam von Trapp, the subject of the Academy-award-winning *Sound of Music*, and Monsignor Wasner, who was later rector of the Pontificio Instituto Teutonico in Rome, spent five days in Mendi and another five in Tari. On her visit to Yobiya March 11, the Baroness commented on the simplicity and poverty of the station and described it as a “Portiuscula” of Papua.

Berard moved his field headquarters from the Tagari rest house to Yobiya already Feb.1, and the next day he celebrated the first Mass there for the departed souls of the area.

Berard divided his months at Yobiya between studying the Huli language, advising and at times supervising the bridge construction, and establishing a school. After one of his rest periods at Guluanda, Berard took Halalu, a Tari boy, back with him to help with the teaching. “It’s not a good set up.” Paul observed, “since Halalu has only a year of schooling, but without trained teachers we have to let it up to God to help us.” By the end of May, Halalu and another school boy from Tari were teaching 25 “eager-to-learn” boys at Yobiya. Emphasis was placed mainly on a primitive Huli literacy, namely the mechanics of reading and writing syllables and simple words in that language.

Berard and the other bridgebuilders were first able to walk across it May 21; and the following day an expedition crossed it headed for the Labani Valley to film *New Guinea Patrol*, a documentary of the establishment of a government station. The film won a gold medal at the Cannes Film Festival.

The director of the film crew, Ron Maslyn Williams of the Australian film board, was a devout Catholic, and attended Mass twice at Guluanda before leaving on the patrol. He later described Paul in his *Stone Age Island* as a “round man, full of laughter and generous in his love of most men,” and Berard as one “who would have made a saintly model for El Greco.”

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105 Williams 326. See also302 and 325-27 for Berard. Brother Claude Mattingly is also mentioned on 325-327. 2016: On his way home from gathering material for his own book in 1979 – just days after reading *Stone Age Island* – Burkey providentially ran into Williams and his mother across the table at the Casa Nova in Jerusalem and spent
Except for a few planks which needed nailing down, the bridge was finished by May 30; and Berard returned to Guluanda to cover for Father Paul, who was leaving June 6 for six weeks on the coast in his capacity as the Southern Highlands new Catholic mission education officer.

When the Port Moresby radio station announced to the territory June 10 the completion of the Tagari bridge, it acknowledged the part Father Berard had played in its construction. Opening ceremonies June 16, however, demonstrated even more concretely the bilateral cooperation which existed in the early years between Catholic mission personnel and Australian government officials.

For all practical purposes, the ceremonies began at the new Catholic church formally blessed that morning at Guluanda.  

Brother Mark and his carpenter trainees had started building the bush church March 25, using plans which Bill Crellin, an Anglican, had developed during the course of many social visits to Guluanda. The new church was cruciform, 57 feet long, 18 feet across the nave, and 48 feet across the transept, capped with a nine-foot spire. In a separate tower outside had been mounted a 300-pound bell sent over by St. Michael’s parish in Butler, Pennsylvania. The Crellins, Burchetts, and nine other government personnel, none of them Catholics, attended the blessing and Mass which followed. After lunch, the same group of people went out 15 miles to the bridge for its blessing by Berard and official opening by Mrs. Burchett.

The new bridge was the first wire suspension bridge in the Southern Highlands and had a 75-foot span between its towers. Its design incorporated a semi-rigid stringer frame with sawn-timber decking suspended from two sets of twin one-inch steel cables. The 35-foot deck approaches at each end made the bridge 145 feet long.

This bridge opened the way into a whole new area, and the government expected to have a road completed before the end of the “summer” to connect the bridge with the new government post in Koroba.

Symbolically that same week another new bridge was crossed when Ted Burchett hurried to the mission to tell Berard that Hewabe, Guluanda school boy, was dying of cerebral malaria at the government hospital. Berard hurried to Hewabe’s side and baptized him, giving him the name Paul.

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106 While it was being built, services were held in the upper floor of the friary. Moved there March 19, 1957, and the old church was pulled down March 20-22, 1957 (Farkas chronicle).
Paul Hewabe, the first Huli Catholic, survived his illness, and Berard subsequently gave him thorough instructions in the faith. Thus, on Nov. 1, 1957, while making the first official visitation of the Papuan mission, Father Claude Vogel, minister of the Pennsylvania province, performed the additional ceremonies of the baptismal rite which had been omitted earlier. That same afternoon Hewabe made his first confession and received Holy Communion.

Though it failed to make both the local chronicle and Paul and Berard’s diaries, Nov. 1, 1957 was also the day when the local women, just a few at first, began coming to Mass at the Tari station.

Still later on that same historic day, Father Berard took his motorbike to the Tagari bridge, crossed it, and drove to Koroba, where he celebrated the first Mass in the new land his bridge had opened.

**TARI**

**CAVEAT:** The following chart has never been fully checked and is left here only to provide a general idea of who was covering what areas and when. On the chart, Capuchins are referred to by their first name shown in regular type, and secular clergy by their family names shown in bold face. Full names of the friars are listed in Chapter 24 (pp. 328-337) and those of secular priests in Chapter 16 (pp. 221-222)

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Footnotes Concerning Chart of Tari Missionary Priests:

(1) The one in charge of the main station was also superior of the friary and at first in charge of the outstations. On May 25, 1967 he became the Pastor.
(2) Berard was on leave from late 1960 until May 1961.
(3) Paul was on leave until Nov. 1961. Would presume Berard was acting station superior.
(4) Timon was on leave July-Dec. 1965.
(5) Paul was on leave April-October 1966. Would presume Timon was acting station superior.
(6) Myron was Assoc. at Burani August 1967 until March 68.
(7) Timon was on leave however July-Dec. 1970; who was acting st superior?
(8) Dominic went on leave in April 1972. Who covered his territory?
(9) Myron was on leave May-November 1973. Who was acting station superior?
(10) Malachy went on leave in November 1973. Who covered his territory?
(12) Lawrence was on leave June-November 1975. Who covered his area
(13) Lawrence said he had the care of all the outstations of Tari 1978. Bayaga by this time was already a parish of its own. Otmar came in October but possibly Lawrence had served between Senan departure and Otmar’s arrival.
(14) Mick Grace was acting station superior during the absence of Timon Kaple 1978-79.
(15) Lawrence went on leave June 1980 and Mike Yore in May 1980. Timon therefore probably had the care of all but Tigibi.

(16) Lawrence went on leave in May 1984. Who has the care of his area?

I need to know more precisely when Father Nies came and when he left.
I need to know more precisely when Bob became assoc. of Tari and when he returned to the States.
Having examined the friars’ first two years at Tari, *Only the Beginnings* must now back up a bit and look at the same period in first Mendi and then Ialibu. Lest the reader be unduly confused, it is necessary to first recall that Father Berard Tomassetti’s activities at Tari, which were just described, took place only after he had worked for six months in the upper Mendi Valley.

The arrival of the Capuchins in the Southern Highlands in late 1955 increased the personnel at each of the three main stations, but it was Kumin that benefited most. In the beginning, both Father Alexis Michellod, the bishop’s vicar delegate for the Southern Highlands, and Father Otmar Gallagher, the Capuchin superior, believed Tari would be the headquarters for the mission. At both Tari and Ialibu, however, missionary work was then restricted to within a mile of the airstrip, whereas most of the Mendi Valley had already been open for a year. So once he had the manpower, Michellod decided to put half of his priests in the Mendi Valley.

Father Louis Van Campenhoudt, whom Father Stanley Miltenberger described as “a grand old man, simple and humble as a lay brother,” was to continue developing the main station and looking after the needs of the others, while Michellod would initiate Berard and Stanley in the work of expansion.

Within three days of their arrival on Dec. 31, 1955, Michellod and Berard were on their first jaunt through the upper Mendi, visiting Dimipa, Komia, and Ekari. At Dimipa Jan. 3 (on ground
Van Campenhoudt had chosen earlier) and at Komia on Jan. 4, they began their first two outstations.  

In weeks that followed, Michellod and Berard returned to the upper Mendi. While Michellod remained in the Dimipa area and made arrangements for additional stations at Kombal and one other place not yet identified, Berard worked out of Komia and started Ekari and Kundaga. Berard also made a three-day walk from Komia to Ulga and Mt. Hagen, via Tambul, in an effort to obtain teachers for his new stations, to check out the possibility of driving cattle into Mendi by that route, and also the possibility of toting in a disassembled Landrover. Berard found the rain forest terrain too treacherous for driving cattle, but was able to obtain a couple of Imbongu-speaking teachers, and based on his findings, the mission and the government would soon carry in the first two Landrovers.

By the beginning of February, Michellod left Berard in charge of the upper Mendi; and on March 20-21 the latter began stations at Elabangi, Abua, Nene, and Andora. While Berard spent most of his time on the left bank, he did on a few occasions venture westward across the Mendi River to such places as Bela and Map, where he visited D’Arcy Ryan, anthropologist of the Mendi people. During this period, Berard also gained an “in” with the people of the area by caring for their most basic medical needs.

After trying for several weeks with little success to convince Gibbes-Sepik airways to move the remainder of the friars’ initial supplies from Minj into the Southern Highlands, Stanley arrived at Kumin with a load of cargo Jan. 7.

For awhile Michellod considered sending Stanley down to Erave, and Stanley even made a quick trip to Erave to look for some ground. Otmar, however, opposed the opening of additional main stations until further manpower was available; and as it became apparent at this time that the Lai Valley was about to be opened, Michellod decided to keep Stanley at Kumin and begin opening stations in that direction.  

The mission acquired ground at One, southwest of Mendi, Feb. 8, and Stanley returned solo to work at building a station there Feb. 11.

Stanley found the first few days “in the bush” quite trying. He later wrote to Father Victor,

I had no house, and I had to live with the natives for about three days. There were 12 of us in one fairly large hut. They kept a fire burning in the center of the hut, all day and most of the night. After the three days I was thoroughly saturated with smoke.  

107 Michellod to Sorin, Jan. 8, 1956; Tomassetti chronicle. At Komia, they were met by Peter, who was the brother of Father Aloysius of Bougainville.
108 Michellod called Otmar to a meeting in Mendi, at which they discussed these things. They also restricted patrols to three weeks out and one in. In reporting this to Sorin, Michellod said he considered the developing secondary stations more important than improving the main stations. (Michellod to Sorin, Feb 4, 1956).
109 Pronounced O-nay.
110 Miltenberger to Green, March 3, 1956.
Once Stanley had moved into his own house, things were still not quite the same as he had been used to in North America. He wrote to Victor,

One night I had an unexpected visitor. About 2 a.m. I was suddenly awakened by some violent movements of my bed. At first I didn't realize, but when I flashed on my flashlight I saw a big pig at the foot of my bed. The walls of my house are made of kunai grass tied to bamboo saplings. So the pig, in search of food just walked through the wall and ended up in my bedroom. When I flashed on the light, I don't know who received the bigger fright, the pig or myself.  

This incident was not unique among the pioneer missionaries. A month earlier at Guluanda, Father Paul had been awakened at the same dreadful hour by “a terrific screaming” in his room.

It was pitch dark, so I reached for my flashlight but in the excitement, I knocked it on the floor. The screaming sounded like a pig in pain or something like that. I tried to make something out in the pitch darkness, then something landed on my bed. I took one good swing and ‘something’ landed across the room. I frantically searched for my light and finally...the beam caught the rear end of a cat going under the...clearance under my door. I swung the light around the room...and all I could find was another cat hissing at me on a table about four feet from the bed. I let go with a sandal and it too vanished under the door.

Stanley remained in the completely Papuan culture at One for two or three weeks and then returned to Kumin for a week or so of association with the other missionaries, in keeping with the policy established in early February and, with rare exceptions, followed right down to the present.

While Stanley was establishing the One station, Tubi, village leader at Pinj in the Lai Valley, came over the Mendi Valley Feb. 18 to invite the missionaries to his area. The next day, using a special permit to enter a restricted area, Michellod went to Pinj, selected a station site and sent Yovo and Ebo there to start building.

Stanley accompanied Michellod on his next visit to Pinj March 8. After two days there, Michellod returned to Kumin, but Stanley remained another two weeks to firmly establish contacts with the Pinj people.

In months that followed, Michellod nabbed every possible opportunity he could to make contacts with new Southern Highlands peoples. He accompanied ADO Des Clancy to Tutam overlooking the Anga Gorge southeast of Kumin March 12 and left with him again on the 13th for Tambul across the territorial boundary to help survey the proposed road from there to Mt.Hagen. These efforts no doubt impressed the district officers with the missionary’s abilities; and as already noted in the previous chapter, in April Commissioner Cole arranged for Michellod to assist PO Grant on the historic road-charting patrol from Mendi to Tari.

The following month, Bishop Sorin made his second visitation of the Southern Highland portion of his vicariate. After visiting Guluanda (April 29-May 5), Kumin (May 5-9), and Ialibu (May 9-

111 Miltenberger to Green, March 3, 1956.
112 Farkas to D. Nally, Jan. 18, 1956, in PL 1:33.
113 See footnote 108 above.
114 Berard later surveyed the portion of the road from Mendi to Tambul, which passed through the Mendi Gap.
13), the bishop took Rinn and Henry with him to Kumin and called Otmar there from Tari for a clergy conference May 14.

Sorin told the seven priests present that, even though Michellod and Rinn were due to go on leave in July after being away from Europe for a full decade and Van Campenhoudt was expecting to return then to his foremost station, the three would remain in the Southern Highlands at least until Christmas. By this time Sorin hoped the Capuchins would have a new group of missionaries there to replace them.

Ever since the first group of Capuchins had arrived, Michellod had served as Sorin’s vicar delegate for the Highlands; and at a very early date, he in turn has delegated Otmar to handle all financial matters. Just previous to this conference, Michellod asked to be relieved of his office. Sorin responded, however, with a change without a difference, by appointing two vicars delegate for the Highlands: Michellod for the apostolate and Otmar for financial matters.

The real change to come out of the meeting was alluded to in the last chapter. Sorin decided to station both of his vicars at Mendi, seat of the district government headquarters, thereby making it also clearly the Catholic headquarters of the Southern Highlands. Moving Otmar to Mendi further necessitated sending one of the Mendi priests to Tari. Berard was chosen, and as Otmar was expected to take charge of the Kumin station, Stanley and Van Campenhoudt were assigned to take over the string of outstations Berard had started in the upper Mendi.

Father Michellod was assigned to continue pegging roads, mostly in the Mendi-Ialibu area, with the understanding that while in restricted areas he would be selecting locations for future outstations, and possibly even future main stations.

During the conference, the bishop also gave the missionaries a number of other instructions:

1. Each missionary should send him a report through Michellod every six months outlining what he had done and what he planned to do.
2. The Kunimaipa catechism should be used as the standard text for translating into the various local languages.
3. While the missionaries were to work at learning local languages, they were to teach English in the schools.
4. In places where stations could not be set up immediately, the missionaries should set up large crosses to help keep the residents of the area under Catholic mission influence.
5. Local people at each station should be encouraged to lead prayers every morning and evening.
6. As long as the local people were pagans, they should not remain for the entire Mass, unless there was a second priest there to lead them in prayer and singing, and thus keep order.

There was also a long discussion about the airplane which Otmar was about to order. Although no decision could be reached on where to base the plane, it was decided to build a house at Mendi for the pilot, with the understanding that it probably would later become a convent.

When the visitors left the following morning, Michellod, Berard and Stanley headed north. Michellod and Berard began pegging the road from Kagoba to Tambul, and Stanley went on to Tambul to help Des Clancy direct the hundreds of carriers bringing two disassembled Landrovers over the mountains to Kagoba, where they were then reassembled, one for the government and one for the Capuchin mission.

Once Berard left for Tari on May 22, Stanley began visiting the stations of the upper Mendi, as well as those in the Lai Valley. When Otmar arrived at the end of July, the 68-year-old Van Campenhoudt was also able to devote himself to the outstations. Father Otmar took him out to Dimipa or one of the other stations in the Landrover and picked him up when he was ready to come in to Kumin, but Van Campenhoudt walked from one outstation to another, even though one trail required that he plod for a couple of hours right through a swamp.

Michellod continued pegging roads until Sept. 7, when an infection had so swollen his right leg, that the Papuans with him carried him for five hours on a stretcher into Mendi, where the doctor categorically forbade him to return into the bush. Alexis Michellod had been intending to leave in early November, but the curtailment of his bush activities advanced his departure. The father of the Mendi and Tari missions left for Yule Island Oct. 15, 1956, to prepare for his home visit to Europe.

By then the friars already were well aware that the other Sacred Heart missionaries would also be leaving soon. They also knew, however, that reinforcements were on the way. Already a fortnight before Michellod’s departure, Gary Murphy, the mission’s first lay missionary,115 had arrived and been immediately put to work, teaching in the school at Kumin.

Meanwhile, two new developments back in America, were also about to affect the mission. Already in the spring of 1956, Father Victor had begun investigating the possibility of hiring Stanley’s brother, Fidelis Miltenberger, to pilot the plane the mission was talking about ordering.116 Stanley himself already had a pilot’s license and needed only some flying time with an experienced Highlands pilot, but Otmar was reluctant to commit any of his meager manpower to the regular job of flying. Aware of this, Fidelis Miltenberger and his fiancée, Miss Josephine Coleman, visited Victor in Pittsburgh March 4 and offered to go to New Guinea so that Fidelis could fly for the mission. After consulting with the men in New Guinea, Father Victor hired Fidelis sometime in June of 1956.

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115 Father Stanley had met him on the “Bulolo,” on his first trip to Papua.
116 Quite possibly Fidelis had discussed this possibility with Stanley before the latter’s departure for Papua. When the question of obtaining a plane arose in early February, Michellod wrote to Sorin of “the possibility of having Father Stanley’s brother as pilot” (Michellod to Sorin, Feb. 4, 1956).
The provincial chapter in July of that year elected Father Claude Vogel provincial minister, and Fathers Giles Staab, Lawrence Wiest, Firmin Schmidt, and Alfred Carney as his definitors. In its first meeting, the new definitory assigned to the Papuan mission Fathers Jude Senieur and Gregory Smith and Brother Claude Mattingly, and to the Puerto Rican mission Fathers Gary Stakem, Donatus Roscetti, and Joseph Schreck. For medical reasons, these appointments were altered soon thereafter, and Fathers Jude and Gary switched places. At this time also, Father Paul Farkas, who had returned to the States in May for corrective surgery, received the green light from his doctor to return to New Guinea.

Since Gary and Claude, as well as Fidelis Miltenberger and his wife, were all from SS. Peter and Paul’s parish in Cumberland, Maryland, and Father Jude had just been superior of the friary there, the departure ceremony for all the new missionaries was held in the Cumberland church Sept. 16.

Stanley worked during early October at building a bush house at Kumin for his brother and sister-in-law. Shortly after Oct. 18, he went to Sydney to meet them; and Brother Mark flew in from Tari to finish the house.

Paul, Fidelis, and Josephine flew into Australia Oct. 26; and two days later Gary, Greg, and Claude also arrived by plane. After a week in Sydney, Paul flew on to Lae and reached Tari Nov. 12, 1956.

The others came north on the “Bulolo” several weeks later and visited Yule Island, where they met Father Otmar, who accompanied them on to Mendi Dec. 5.

Otmar had gone down to the coast Nov. 20, upon learning that the “Pioneer Star” had unexpectedly docked there en route to Sydney. Knowing the new airplane was on this ship, Otmar managed to have it taken off at Port Moresby instead and sent on to Madang, where Stanley and Fidelis would help Father Henry Hoff, SVD, assemble it.

Meanwhile the new Capuchin missionaries were at Kumin being introduced to their ministry. Already Dec. 12, Otmar and Van Campenhoudt drove Gary and Gregory out to Komia for a fortnight in the outstations. By this time Claude was nearly finished building a combination workshop and toolshed, which was also meant to house the generator he had brought with him. “It is the fastest I’ve seen any building go up over here in the Highlands,” Otmar observed.

Gary finally managed to leave for Ialibu Dec. 20, and the next day Mark returned to Tari.

Father Hoff brought VH-BVG, the new Cessna 180, into Mendi for the first time on Dec. 28, 1956. Aboard were Father Stanley, Fidelis and Josephine, who had spent Christmas at Ialibu since the Mendi airstrip had been closed. Within a few weeks Fidelis began making solo flights

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117 After flying about 3,000 hours, this plane was replaced May 7, 1962 with a Cessna 185. It in turn had to be replaced when Brother Jerry Perreault groundlooped at Mt. Hagen Feb. 6, 1969. The new plane was a Cessna 206 with DSU tags. The fourth and final plane PZ-MDC was obtained in 1975 (MDN Aug. 1975).
118 Miltenberger to Green, [January, between 13-19, 1956].
from the coast into the Highlands.\textsuperscript{119} About the same time, Brother Claude hooked up the generator; and Kumin had electric lights for the first time.

With the new missionaries on location, Father Rinn left Ialibu Dec. 14 and Father Van Campenhoudt departed from Kumin Jan. 8.\textsuperscript{120} Shortly thereafter Rinn and Michellod left for home leaves in Europe.

Michellod took the occasion to visit the United States and visited the families of the missionaries and many of the friars of the Pennsylvania province, giving the friars and their seminarians a vivid picture of life in the mission which he had founded which was now totally in the hands of the American Capuchins.\textsuperscript{121}

\textbf{MENDI}

\textbf{CAVEAT:} The following chart has never been fully checked and is left here only to provide a general idea of who was covering what areas and when. On the chart, Capuchins are referred to by their first name shown in regular type, and \textbf{non-Capuchins by their family names shown in bold face}. Full names of the friars are listed in Chapter 24 (pp. 328-337) and those of secular priests in Chaptere 16 (pp. 221-222)

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\textsuperscript{119} Miltenberger to Rebel, Jan. 8, 1957, in PL 3:33.
\textsuperscript{120} Van Campenhoudt was afterwards sent to Kubuna to work at a central school for girls (Sorin to Gallagher, Feb. 15, 1957).
\textsuperscript{121} Michellod was afterwards sent to Kosipi (Sorin to Gallagher, March 3, 1958).
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“We greet the entire missionary Church and We encourage the men and women who are preaching the Gospel in the front lines, as it were. They have Our loving applause. Let them know that they are the very dearest among all who are dear to Us.”


9

**Outward from Ialibu**

Tari and Mendi, of course, were not the only areas to have Catholic stations predating the Capuchin missionaries. The Ialibu basin already had a station being built at Amburugi when Father Otmar Gallagher visited there Dec. 7, 1955, in the company of Father Alexis Michellod.

He then informed Father Victor Green,

> Ialibu is our most promising location, since we were the first mission there. The attachment of the people to Father Rinn is something you must see to believe…. The people of Ialibu are wonderful and the most friendly that I have ever met anywhere. They greeted us like they had known us for years and they didn’t want us to leave. But we told them that after Christmas we would send them another Father.”

The priest Otmar envisioned sending was Father Henry Kusnerik, and at the time there was also a strong possibility that, after a few months at Mendi, Father Berard Tomassetti would also move to Ialibu, since three completely separate languages were spoken in the area: Imbongu (often written Imbongu) to the north, Kewa to the southwest, and Witu (or Wiru) to the southeast.

Henry, who was to guide the station from late 1956 until 1966, arrived at Amburugi on New Year’s Eve of 1955, and he and Father Rinn spent their first evening together in the company of CPO Paul Conroy, the young man who had befriended Father Alexis Michellod and Brother Jean Delabarre at Mendi in September 1954.  

By the time of Henry’s arrival, application had been made for 250 acres of land, but since a much smaller area was being developed as a station, Henry later reduced the application to less than a tenth of that.

In addition to a temporary church and school, there was a house for the native brothers of the Oblates of St. Joseph, another for the priests, as well as a new priests’ house which was nearly finished. Henry also found on this land the “shanty town” of bush houses individual tribes had

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built for their tribesmen working or studying on the station. These huts, which were apparently able to house some 200 visitors in addition to those already living on the station, were slated to be torn down to make room for a “proper bush school,” a single dormitory for the school boys, and one for the workers or kagoboi as they were then called in Melanesian pidgin. By thus forcing the tribes to mix, the missionaries hoped to help break down the animosities existing between the various tribes.  

For Henry the first months were especially frustrating, as he became more and more conscious of the severe limitations they were working under. First to surface was the transport problem. Gibbes-Sepik always had a monopoly on freight shipments into the Southern Highlands; and knowing that it had the Capuchin mission’s business already assured, it devoted its attention first to moving cargo into more competitive areas.

Knowing of this problem months earlier, Henry had worked to have each of the missionaries bring a year’s supply of goods in with him. In fact he personally stayed at Madang until the supplies were on their way to Minj. That, however, was all the further much of the Ialibu supplies went, and day after day Henry worried about where they were.

Ten years later, while commenting on inadequacies in the compound at Maiwara, Henry would write, “We here in the missions have learned over the years to make do with what is available.” The lesson, however, had not been an easy one to learn.

Already Jan. 3, 1956, Henry wrote he was “anxious” because the supplies were not coming in. By the 17th, the station was so low on trade goods that it had to cut its workers back to half time, and on the 19th Henry described the waiting as maddening. “There is so much there to come to Ialibu and so much that can be ruined due to neglect of Gibbes-Sepik Airways, Ltd...who disclaimed all responsibility either for spoilage, damage or loss by theft…”

When the first load of supplies finally arrived from Minj Feb. 9, it turned out to be only a partial planeload, and furthermore it was a year’s supply of beer. This would have delighted many another pioneer, but it served only to upset Henry since in the first place he had not ordered any beer and secondly he felt sure it would go flat before it was all used.

The last straw came on Feb. 13 when a Gibbes-Sepik plane brought in a case of Mass wine from Mendi and Henry had a chance to talk to the pilot – not so much about the fact that three of the 12 bottles were broken – as about the other cargo waiting at Minj. The pilot first acted as if he

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123 Ialibu chronicle, Jan. 6 and 28, 1956.
125 Ialibu chronicle, Feb. 9, 1956.

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After directing the work of the Ialibu mission for over a decade, Henry became part of the first staff of a minor seminary on the coast.
knew nothing about it and then “denied that there was much there for us.” Henry asked him to look in the shed which had been built for the Capuchins’ cargo, and after making “excuses about being busy” the pilot finally “promised to look into the matter.”

When six more days had gone by without results, an exasperated Henry jumped on the next plane headed for Minj, and within three days had a ton of supplies headed for Ialibu and a half ton to Tari. He then went down to the coast to assemble more supplies and after numerous delays managed to get another plane load and himself back to Ialibu March 12.

The transport problem, however, was not the only one facing Henry. At the age of 43, he had to adjust to a whole new way of life.

For weeks he found it a struggle to eat what was set before him. Everything about the kitchen seemed dirty to him, including the cook and the food. “It is amazing in what filthy kettles our food was being cooked,” he wrote Jan. 11, after Rinn spent the entire day in the kitchen training two new cooks. “No wonder my stomach objected to the food. The first meal cooked on the stove tasted clean and like manna from heaven.” Two days later he wrote, “Meals improving, more variety of vegetables, appetite better,” and two days after that, “Appetite returned. Feeling much better. The food is clean and has no more smoke taste.”

Henry also found himself required to teach the three R’s at an elementary level and felt himself entirely inadequate to the task—since he has never taught before. “I’m inclined to pay more attention to work. I’m afraid I’m not cut out to be a teacher. Too impatient and expect too much of the boys”

Here are just a few of the other things Henry had to get used to during his first weeks at Amburugi:

Jan. 6: The fleas are very bad.

Jan. 7: We experienced our first earthquake.

Jan. 12: I feel more at home with the natives, but their persistence in crowding into the house at any pretext still annoys me.

Jan. 17: Rats are beginning to come into the new house. There is no way to control them except with cats.

Jan. 22: The boys came back from Mendi…with no explanation of why they didn’t bring the cats…I later learned…they couldn’t make up their mind which one to send, consequently we didn’t get any.

Jan. 25: Went to government station to send radiogram…but no radio at the station.

Jan. 28: Found out that one of the kagoboi houses burned early this morning.

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127 Ialibu chronicle, Jan. 19 until March 12, 1956.
128 Ialibu chronicle, Jan. 11 and 13, 1956.
129 Ialibu chronicle, July 6, 1956.
Feb. 7: First day for a long time that we had no rain.

These external annoyances, however, were not what Henry feared the most. “Still finding it hard to be reconciled to this life,” he wrote Feb. 9.

I wanted to be a missionary all my life, but knowing that Father Rinn is to leave before the end of the year, I am frightened for the future. It may be that the language problem frightens me more than the hardships entailed in going out among the people. Dear Jesus, give me courage to at least try to do it.

As missionary activity was restricted to within a mile of the government post, Henry and Rinn and the two Papuan brothers devoted most of the first half of 1956 to developing the Amburugi station.

By the time of Bishop Sorin’s second visitation in mid-May 1956, they had finished the new priests’ house, built a church, a workers’ house, a school building, and a carpenters’ house: had torn down the old church and school and most of the other old buildings, had dug an 18-foot well, and had improved the road in from the government station.

The first months of 1956 were also given to strengthening contacts with leaders from villages beyond the one-mile limit of the derestricted area. Many of these bos bois as they were called in pidgin, came to ask that the missionaries come to visit their villages.

The area north of Ialibu had a strong leaning towards Catholicism even before the first missionaries arrived, and possibly even before the unauthorized reconnaissance of Taphanel and Krimm. Some years before natives of the Imi-Orei area had been driven across the territorial boundary by enemy tribes. Some of them had come under the influence of the East-West Bible Society mission at Paparabruk, but the majority had allied themselves with Father Krimm of Ulga. Once peace was established and these people were able to return to their homeland, they were among the first to ask to have a Catholic station built in their area.

Banking on Commissioner Cole’s talk of opening the area north of Ialibu in early 1956, Rinn had promised the people of Nakope and Imi that he would be there shortly after Christmas of 1955. Disappointed when Rinn failed to appear, they kept after him until he finally asked the government if Brother Felix Walaba could perhaps visit the Nagope-Imi areas. According to most authorities, being natives of Papua, the two Oblates of St. Joseph needed no permission to go anywhere in Papua. Just the same, the local government authorities gave Felix the permission required.

The new Amburugi church was dedicated on Easter Sunday, April 1, and three days later, Brother left for Nakope and Imi. He stayed there until the 27th, making valuable contacts and building a priest’s house at each place.

The Bible Mission at Paparabruk, just on the other side of the territorial border, considered the Imi area its domain and quickly let it be known that it would build stations at both Nakope and Imi. Because of this threat and to maintain his contacts, Felix set out again May 25 with a group
of school boys from Amburugi who were prepared to help him teach some of the catechism, prayers, and songs in the local language. Felix planned to stay until about June 15.

On June 7, however, Father Henry heard at Amburugi that Mr. Scott of the Bible Mission had gone into Imi to try to scare Felix away by reporting that Commissioner Cole had given the area to his society. Henry also saw a telegram at the government station which seemed to indicate that someone was complaining about Felix’s visits to Imi. Whether or not these things proved to be true was never recorded, as Henry left for a visit to Madang before Felix returned. Just the same, this alleged incident was the first of a long string of such reports.

Competition between Catholic missionaries and those of other Christian churches for positions among and influence with the indigenous population frequently provided mutual sources of irritation or even confrontation during the early years. Based primarily on Catholic sources, the present study is in no position to fully scrutinize these irritations, but prima facie it would seem everyone involved in some way contributed to them.

There is no question of the fact that Catholic missionaries illegally penetrated the Ialibu basin already in 1954 when it was still restricted, while the Bible Mission had been compelled to wait at the territorial border for the restrictions to be lifted. Now in 1956, Brother Felix had entered the Nakope-Imi areas before them, and the following year he and Brother Paul would go into the Wiru area before them.

On another side of this, Protestants were frequently reported to have come to “Catholic” settlements, even those established after the territory was de-restricted, to encourage the inhabitants verbally or with gifts to throw out the Catholic missionaries. On at least one occasion, a report of this nature directly involved Brother Felix, a member of the mission staff, who was not a native of the area.

Most of the reports, however, came from the local people, many of whom, the missionaries freely admitted, were given to playing the various missions one against the other with the hope of receiving gifts from both. Probably no one knows how successful this ruse was, but occasionally both Catholics and Protestants caught on. Henry once wrote,

Had a run in with another boss boy who is trying to play a double game. Friend of all missions, trying to get as much as he can from all. He left here disgusted and went to Lutherans, where he must have gotten a cold reception. He came back hopping mad and vowed he would be faithful to his first true love – us. It will be interesting to see how long this fervor will last.130

Felix set out for his third trip to Nakope-Imi on July 13, accompanied by Kumbuie, who was to stay with him, as well as Tanda and Leme. Efforts to further secure Felix’s contacts in the Nakope and Imi areas moved into higher gear July 19, when it was announced that that sector was now open to missionary activity by Europeans. Rinn began his first trip into the two areas July 23 and returned Aug. 8. Meanwhile Brother Paul Walaba visited the nearby villages of Marale, Kero, and Kapiabugl on July 29 and then left for Nakope Aug. 4.

130 Ialibu chronicle, July 15, 1957.
When Rinn returned, he and Henry thoroughly discussed the trip, and Henry recorded in the chronicle,

The natives at both Nakope and Imi seem favorable to us, but there is intense activity by the Protestants in the area. The Protestants play on the material-mindness of the natives and overwhelm them with generous gifts, kinas, axes, and knives for land or even just to buy their loyalty. Does the answer lie in doing the same? I am against it, but may have to change my mind.

Henry’s own records, however, give no indication of his ever changing his mind in the matter.

Henry’s stand was firm from the start. He, Brother Paul, and a large entourage set out Aug. 17 to visit Marale, Kalipinya, Kero, Tugupangi, and Orei the later two names being more precise site names for the stations near Nakope and Imi. Tugupangi leaders started bickering over payment for the land on which the mission was building a station for them, and Henry told them, “Plenty of natives in plenty of places would be glad to have us.” Evidently he correctly called their bluff, for Tugupangi is still one of the main Catholic centers of the parish.

Henry’s next stop was Orei, which passed his inspection with flying colors. “I like Orei very much,” he wrote, adding the following day, “Orei appeals to me. Would like to buy property here and settle down permanently. Better than any place I’ve seen in the Ialibu basin.”

At both Tugupangi and Orei, people took Henry out to look over sites for airstrips, but he quickly dismissed both as being too dangerous. Whether he knew it or not, this idea came from the 1954 patrol of Taphanel and Krimm, who selected an airstrip site at Tugupangi.

After Henry’s first bush trip, the Imbongu-speaking districts were divided between the two native brothers. Paul remained in the Tugupangi area and Felix in the Orei area, while Rinn moved around both areas attempting to start new stations.

By Dec. 3, when Father Henry made a second trip to the northern area, mostly by motorbike, he found additional outstations built at Kero, Kapokapopilie, and Komakuli.

Rinn left Ialibu—never to return—Dec. 14, 1956. After a much deserved home leave in France, he returned to the Yule Island mission for another assignment. He died in his home town of Pfettisheim near Strasbourg July 11, 1976, seven days before his 66th birthday.

Rinn’s departure was not nearly the shock Henry had once anticipated, since he already knew that Father Gary Stakem was in Mendi, waiting only for a plane to bring him to Ialibu.

For a while Henry thought he would be spending his first Christmas at Ialibu without clerical companionship, but then on Dec. 20, Gary’s plane arrived, and two days later, Father Henry Hoff, SVD, had to drop off Father Stanley Miltenberger and his brother and sister-in-law since the Mendi airstrip was closed. So Henry ended up having a crowd for Christmas.

Father Gary made the first of his countless visits to the outstations in January. He and Felix left for Tugupangi with Paul and stayed until Feb. 8.
January of 1957 was also distinguished by the arrival of the first Simbu catechists. These remarkable young men gave the Capuchins a well-timed hand in establishing the Church in the Ialibu basin—and later elsewhere in the Southern Highlands.

It all began with Conrad, a young man from Mingende, who asked Henry Nov. 9, 1956 for work as a catechist at Amburugi. Even though help was sorely needed, Henry told Conrad he would first have to get a letter of recommendation from his pastor.

Mingende, about 70 miles northeast of Amburugi, was the oldest Catholic mission in the Highlands, and the pastor in question, German-born Father Alfons Schaefer, SVD, was one of the pioneer priests in the area. In November 1933, just months after the first government patrol had gone through Simbu-land on its way to establish the Mt. Hagen patrol post, the 29-year-old Schaefer had led the first party of SVD missionaries into the Highlands from the station at Bundi.

The following February and March, Schaefer had accompanied Father William Ross, SVD, and his party through the Simbu and on to Mt. Hagen. 131

After Ross had chosen a site for a station at Rebiambul near Mt. Hagen, Schaefer had accompanied him back to Mingende. Leaving Ross and Brother Eugene Frank, SVD, there to start building the first Catholic mission in the Highlands, Schaefer had gone back to work at Bundi.

It was also Father Schaefer who rushed to the coast later that same year to report that Father Karl Morschheuser, SVD, had been killed by Simbu arrows at Womatne on Dec. 16 in revenge for a missionary’s having killed a Simbu’s pig. Schaefer had already left, when Brother Frank from Mt. Hagen came through the Simbu Valley on his way to make a retreat at Bundi, and at Goglme near Mingende, he also was mortally wounded by eight Simbu arrows.

The missionaries, however, did not abandon Mingende, and over the years, it became a strongly Catholic area, with 8,000 of its 17,000 inhabitants baptized as Catholics. Father Schaefer, as it turned out, was now spending the last years of his life as its pastor. Later in 1957 he would attend the general chapter of his congregation in Rome, and on Aug. 19 of the following year he would die of heart failure in Germany.

As his end approached, however, Schaefer proved himself a generous helper in the opening of the Ialibu parish. He readily recommended Conrad to Henry, and by Jan. 9, 1957, the first of the Simbu catechists was helping out at Amburugi. “I want to see how much he knows and how he can take care of a school,” Henry wrote, “before I send him to Tugupangi to help Brother Paul.” By the 20th, Conrad was leading prayers at Mass at Amburugi, but plans to send him to Tugupangi were about to change. Conrad had spread word of the need for catechists: and on the 24th five young men from Goglme came with recommendations from Schaefer to offer their services as catechists: Gottfried and Ludwig, who had some experience, and Thomas, Pius, and Wilhelm, who had none. “Will give them a try.” Henry wrote.

131 Ross was in Mendi May 9, 1966 for Bishop Schmidt’s installation as Vicar Apostolic. Firmin was present at his funeral at Mt. Hagan May 24, 1973.
A few days after their arrival, Henry told the new recruits of his expectations of them.

1. They were to pray daily.
2. They were to return to Amburugi for Mass and the Sacraments at least one a month.
3. They were not to get too friendly with the local lasses.
4. There was to be no card playing.
5. They were not to beat their students.

These rules must have come from the experience of other missionaries. Simple as they seem, all Henry would have to add was “There was to be no misappropriation of mission supplies,” and they would have covered very precisely every major reason why a small percentage of catechists had to be dismissed over the years, both in Ialibu and elsewhere.

Gary and Brother Paul took the Simbu catechists to Tugupangi Jan. 29, and from there some went on to Orei to work under Brother Felix.

The first of the missionaries to move into the area southwest of Amburugi was Brother Paul. He and a few boys went to Muli March 13 and selected a place for an outstation. The people there wanted to build a house immediately, but they were told to wait.

It was probably Muli’s distance from the other outstations rather than the shortage of personnel that prompted this wait, for it was hardly more than a two weeks later that Gary decided to reopen the outstation at Kombolgal and to open another at Togomakop.

The people at Muli were not the only ones kept waiting. Henry and Gary gave the catechists new appointments on April 19.

- Orei: Ludwig and Wilhelm
- Tugupangi: Johannes, Philip and Thomas
- Kapokapopolie: Gottfried and Pius
- Amburugi: Conrad and Kittle

Within two days, Henry reported that Mange, bos boi at Kapiabugl was annoyed that they had none for his village. “We are still handicapped very much by lack of enough catechists and teachers,” Henry added.

This handicap was reduced May 5 when eight more catechists, all married men recommended by Father Schaefer, walked in from Mingende. Henry immediately reconsidered sending catechists to Muli and Kapiabugl. Two of the newcomers, Pius and Anthony, went to Muli May 8, accompanied by Moza, a carpenter, and Leme, an interpreter, and began setting up an outstation. Father Gary, first priest at Muli, arrived July 10, 1957 and said the first Mass in the area the following morning. Gary found 74 boys and 29 girls being taught by Pius and Anthony.

The other catechists were each given an interpreter and sent to one of the other outstations. Fabian sent to Togamakup with Ramaus: John to Kombolgal with Kelelo, Bonaventure to Lolopule with Kobebo, Peter to Karo with Kurumne, Leo to Kapiabugl with Koiaie, and Andrew to Orei to await further assignment.
The new-found security of having all bases covered did not last long. Fearing that they were going to be poisoned, the catechists at Muli decided June 13 to return home; and John of Komobolgal, Leo at Kapiabugl, and Kittle from Amburugi joined them. Gary wrote,

This is quite a blow. Just when things were beginning to look up—now we begin to lose them, and we just finished the station at Muli. The natives down there will be a bit mystified. There is not much we can do. Just hope and pray we get some replacements.

As there were no replacements, Henry readjusted things to assure that the Muli station was covered. He took Thomas who had probably been helping Johannes cover Komobolgal from Tugupangi and Andrew from the Orei area and sent them to Muli. This did not set entirely well, however, with the people of Kobolgal who thereby had to share a catechist with another outstation. This gave rise to the following repartee: When Henry visited Komobolgal June 17–18, he was disappointed with the poorly constructed buildings there; Komobolgal people said they had been forced to work on the roads, so the young boys had built the houses. Henry asked why then had the men come to collect the pay for building the houses. The next day the men objected to this retort, so Henry repeated it. The Komobolgals then said they would no longer cooperate with the missionaries, especially since Henry was taking the assistant catechist away from there. Henry ended the conversation by telling them if they kept up that attitude he would shame their tribes by taking the catechist away too.

******************** MISSION DIRECTORY 1-1-1957********************

Mendi
Father Otmar Gallagher, OFMCap, vicar delegate, religious superior, main station
Father Stanley Miltenberger, OFMCap, lower Mendi & Lai outstations
Father Gregory Smith, OFMCap, upper Mendi outstations
Brother Claude Mattingly, OFMCap, builder and mechanic
Lay Missionary Gary Murphy, cook, teacher, storekeeper
Fidelis Miltenberger, mission pilot
Josephine Miltenberger, pilot’s wife

Tari
Father Paul Farkas, OFMCap, main station, teacher
Father Berard Tomassetti, OFMCap, outstations
Brother Mark Bollinger, OFMCap, builder and mechanic

Ialibu
Father Henry Kusnerik, OFMCap, main station
Father Gary Stakem, OFMCap, outstations
Brother Paul Idomaka, OblSJ, outstation development
Brother Felix Walaba, OblSJ, outstation development

Neither threat was ever carried out, however, and in January of 1958, when the catechists returned from a holiday visit to Mingende they brought with them their wives and children and a new catechist named Mathias, who was sent to Komobolgal, with Aliblua as his interpreter.
By Feb. 10, the 10 catechists were instructing more than 600 children in the outstations, and it is important to note that well over 200 of these were girls. In both Tari and Mendi, it had been considered well-nigh impossible to get girls to come to school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kapiabugl</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kero</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kapokapopilie</td>
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<td>Orei</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>Muli</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amburugi</td>
<td>35</td>
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</table>

The Simbu catechists taught not only religion, they also gave the children a basic foundation in some of the secular subjects. Both they and the Mekeo teachers—Alan and Clement, who had taken over the Amburugi school already on Oct. 26, 1957 – were, however, limited in their abilities along this line, and on Jan. 28, 1958, seven boys were sent from the Ialibu basin to higher schools in other areas. Aloysius Nale, Ambrel, Henry Koiai and Uai went to Mainohana near Yule Island; and John Iai, Sure, and Cletus Kelelo went to Fatima College at Banz in the Eastern Highlands.

MISSION DIRECTORY 1-1-1958

**Mendi**
Father Otmar Gallagher, OFMCap, vicar delegate, religious superior, main station
Father Stanley Miltenberger, OFMCap, lower Mendi & Lai outstations
Father Gregory Smith, OFMCap, upper Mendi outstations
Brother Claude Mattingly, OFMCap, builder and mechanic
Fidelis Miltenberger, mission pilot
Josephine Miltenberger, pilot’s wife

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Father Paul Farkas, OFMCap, main station, teacher
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**Ialibu**
Father Henry Kusnerik, OFMCap, main station
Father Gary Stakem, OFMCap, outstations
Brother Paul Idomaka, ObISJ, outstation development
Brother Felix Walaba, ObISJ, outstation development
Gary and Brothers Felix and Paul continued to make regular visits to the various outstations. Henry also visited the outstations about twice a year, but he devoted most of his time to running the main station and keeping the outstations supplied.

In early 1958, Henry and his workers began clearing around and setting posts for the first permanent house at Amburugi.

Between January and March of 1958, he and Brother Paul, with help from Brother Mark Bollinger of Tari, also set up a saw mill at Amburugi to replace the old pit-sawing operation which had previously provided their lumber.\footnote{A process in which lumber is positioned above a pit and sawed, using a long two-handled saw, by two men, one positioned above the timber and the other below in the pit.}

And so things went until March 21, when word reached Amburugi that most of the Kagua area beyond Muli and the northwestern tip of the Wiru area were going to be de-restricted.

Actually the decree opening the area had already been approved in the government gazette the previous day, but definite word of the decision did not reach Amburugi until March 31 and the friars’ copy of the gazette only on April 2. Preparations were immediately begun by the friars for joining in the evangelization of those two new areas, which one day would develop into the parishes of Kagua and Pangia.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.jpg}
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\textit{At Simon Apia’s first Mass in the newly built Ialibu church on Dec. 12, 1977, four of his former pastors were in attendance: Victor Albert Kriley, Maris Goetz, Henry Kusnerik, and Samuel Driscoll. Brendan Malloy (second from l.) was the visiting Provincial Minister.}
CAVEAT: The following chart has never been fully checked and is left here only to provide a general idea of who was covering what areas and when. On the chart, Capuchins are referred to by their first name shown in regular type, and secular clergy by their family names shown in bold face. Full names of the friars are listed in Chapter 24 (pp. 328-337) and those of secular priests in Chapter 16 (pp. 221-222)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>AMBURUGI</th>
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<th>PANGIA</th>
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|    | Ben R. |
“A man is no true member of the Church unless he is likewise a true member of the entire body of Christian believers and is filled with an ardent desire to see her take root and flourish in every land.” Pius XII, encycl. “Fidei Donum,” 1957

10

Rush into Kagua

Father Stanley Miltenberger was the first Capuchin to open a new main station in the Catholic Mission to the Southern Highlands.

Setting out from Amburugi with two coastal teachers and 40 local carriers April 14, 1958, Stanley stayed overnight with Father Gary Stakem at Muli and the next day was the first Catholic priest to cross the Iaro River into what is now the Kagua parish.

Far from being a newly discovered area, the Kagua Valley had been contacted by government patrols already several times in the latter half of the 1930’s and again in the early 1950’s. Tribal fighting, however, had time and again postponed the opening of the valley to Christian missionaries. In 1952 there were large-scale outbreaks of tribal fighting in the eastern part of the valley, especially between the people of Kilipimi and Rakanda.

A delegation from the Kagua Valley came to see Father Henry Kusnerik at Amburugi on May 8, 1956 presumably to ask that

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133 Michellod referred to Kagua as Kawuka on Oct. 24, 1954; and Henry called it Kavuka on May 8, 1956.

134 In Press release No. 10 on March 7, 1957, A.A. Roberts, director of national affairs, said, “The Kagua area is populated by tribes which are among the most terrible in the Southern Highlands and by long custom the people have come to regard inter-tribal clashes as an inevitable part of life.”
missionaries be sent there. Soon after, however, a large number of men from Uma, near Sumi in the western end of the valley, were arrested for tribal fighting and taken by way of Ialibu to the jail at Mendi.

Father Henry had written in the Amburugi chronicle July 17, 1956, that his friend and parishioner Garry Keenan, the Ialibu patrol officer, was planning to rendezvous in the Kagua Valley with Brian Corrigan from Erave and two Mendi patrol officers so as “to round up the natives responsible for at least 10 deaths in the past three months. The post will be practically deserted for the two, three, or more weeks; the patrol officers. . .will be away.”

This expedition to Kagua happened simultaneously with the opening to missionaries of the Orei and Tugupangi areas north of Amburugi; and when Father Rinn promptly departed for those areas, Henry was left even more “by himself.” Keenan left July 20; and almost immediately Henry learned that the Ialibu area was further cut off from the outside world, as the batteries of the radio at the government station had gone dead. A few days later he also found out that tribal leaders in the area had unsuccessfully tried to persuade the local government clerk to send the remaining native police and kagoboi down to Kagua to help the patrol officers catch the murderers. “It was evidently a hoax,” Henry wrote. “They were up to some trick.”

By July 29, however, the patrol had returned with its prisoners; and the matter was quickly forgotten. In December Brian Corsego from Erave assisted by Patrol Officer D.N. Butler had begun setting up a government station at Kagua and when another 15 months had passed without further incident, the government decided to open part of the valley to missionaries.

Father Stanley entered the Kagua Valley only 26 days after it had been opened to missionaries; but from the very start, he had to play catch-up. The rush into Kagua was nearly over before many of the Catholic missionaries had even known it had started.

Derestriction took place on paper March 20, 1958. Kagua’s northern neighbor, Ialibu, heard the next day that it was in the offing, but definite word of the opening did not reach there until March 31.

In the meantime, on March 25, Father Stanley, who was still caring for the outstations in the Lai and Mendi Valleys, stated the Catholic problem rather succinctly in a letter to one of the Stateside friars: “Soon a lot more territory will be thrown open to missionaries, and it will be a race to see who gets there first, but if we don’t get a few more men we will be left out.”

That very day, 10 more Mekeo teachers arrived in Mendi – bringing the total in the Southern Highlands to 24\textsuperscript{135} – and Father Otmar promptly sent newly arrived Peter Maone and David Unre Aihi to Ialibu to await the arrival of the Europeans who would accompany them to the Kagua Valley.

When entry was finally permitted on Monday of Holy Week, March 31, Father Otmar had still not decided for sure who would lead the expedition. Knowing that Father August Rebel was

\textsuperscript{135} Miltenberger to Mark Linenberger, March 25, 1958, in PL 6:6.
already enroute to Papua and could take over some of the Mendi outstations, Otmar announced
that very day that Father Stanley would “probably be sent to Kagua.”

The Lutherans on the other hand left Ialibu the very same day; and April 2, Father Henry noted
that they had entered the Kagua in staggering numbers. “They will probably make a clean sweep
of it, and we will be lucky to pick up crumbs.” By April 8, reports were the Lutherans had gone
all the way to Mendi, and the next day that they had six ministers and 50 or more catechists in
the Kagua area. 136

Meanwhile, the Mekeo teachers were still in Ialibu waiting for a leader. Apparently Fathers
Otmar and Stanley were unaware of any urgency in the matter. In any rate, when Father Henry
informed Stanley’s brother, Fidelis, of the situation on April 12, the pilot returned in a matter of
hours with Father Stanley and his cargo, and two days later he was on his way to Kagua.

Stanley arrived in the Kagua Valley to find Henry’s reports substantially accurate. He counted
more than 30 Lutheran stations. “The idea, apparently, was to take over the valley completely,”
Stanley wrote to one of the friars in America, “and if possible, keep all other missionaries out . . .
I thought for a while it was hopeless, because everywhere I went it was the same story. ‘The
other mission came first’.” 137

In all fairness, it must be said that a mirror-image scenario would probably have been true had
the shoe been on the other foot. The Catholic missionaries would have done their best to try to
sew up the territory for their own church, and the Lutherans would have complained just as
bitterly.

It would indeed be very interesting to read Lutheran accounts of these same days; unfortunately
they are not yet available to this writer. 138 At best, therefore, this chapter gives only a Catholic
view of the way things seemed at the time.

It might take some of the edge off the rest of the chapter, however, to realize that, when this book
was being researched in 1979, the friars and Catholic sisters in Kagua made it beautifully and
abundantly evident at dinner for the Lutheran missionary and his family that they counted them
among their closest friends in the valley. Recalling the difficulties at the beginning is not an
outsider’s attempt to rekindle animosity, which the people of the Kagua Valley would just as
soon forget. Rather it strives to provide the proper setting whereby the latter-day ecumenism can
be better appreciated.

136 Rauala, who went with the Lutherans, later told Fr. Gary they had marked 35 places and at each place gave the
people “a tomahawk or two” (Stakem chronicle, April 12, 1958).
137 Shortly thereafter Fr. Gary said, “Stanley asked the bosbois [at Muli] what was going on in the Kagua. One
claims the opponents put a catechist at each place they marked. Stan has kina with him, so he might yet get places
he wants even if they have been marked” (Stakem chronicle April 14, 1958).
138 2016: Berard pointed out in 1984 that the Lutherans had published an account, but Burkey had not yet accessed
it. Berard also said at that time, “I doubt that any mission could have ‘sewed up’ the territory. Enemy tribes would
still have invited another mission to be ‘their’ mission, as opposed to the mission of the other tribe.” He also
pointed out that attempts by some government officers to establish “spheres of influence” did not work.
Father Stanley spent his first few nights in the Kagua Valley at the government patrol post. He later wrote to Father Cecil Nally,

The first night here, I got down on my knees and prayed like I never prayed before. My prayers were answered early the next morning when an old, likeable gent came to the government post and asked where I was going to build my house. When I told him I was still looking for a place, he offered me ground in his tribe. I accepted after taking a good walk around the place.

Stanley borrowed two tents from PO John Waerne and set up camp at the place called Karia, and within a week he was able to move into “a right comfortable bush house.” One room of this house would also serve as his chapel for the next four months.

“The more I see of the place,” Stanley wrote, “the more I’m convinced that Divine Providence led me to this place. It is flat, near a little stream with good water, and just a jump from a good forest of timber.”

According to Stanley, “the opposition” quickly started trying to squeeze him off the new station at Karia. “They moved in on me from all sides,” he wrote, “but within a week or so I had a few workers behind me, and they were 100% for the Catholic Mission.” Several times Lutheran catechists built on land belonging to these workers and when they refused to move on, their house “mysteriously” fell down. “I’m sure they will get run out of here,” Stanley wrote. “The natives are wise enough to see the greed in their way of securing mission sites.”

One of the things that immediately endeared Stanley to the people of the area was his willingness to care for their immediate needs. Almost the very day that he settled on Karia, a little boy named Kaki showed up with a nasty sore on his stomach. “Administering first aid to all their cuts and sores,” Stanley wrote, “is a wonderful calling card with the natives, so I immediately started to do something about this lad.” At first he applied a little ointment and a bandage, but when repetition of this remedy failed to have any effect, he gave the boy a thorough scrubbing from head to foot before applying any further remedy. The sore then cleared up, and Stanley had a firm friend.

Swiftly Peter Maune and David Aihi started the first school in the valley, and 55 boys signed up, many of them from Lutheran territories. As the Catholic Mission did not yet have a school building, Peter and David used the veranda of their own house. Each boy received a medal to identify him as belonging to the Catholic Mission. It was reported to Stanley that in one place towards Ialibu, Lutheran sympathizers “tore the medals off the boys and tried to force them to their school and church.”

One day a group of girls also showed up and asked if they could be “school boys.” Stanley immediately took them in as boarders. At first the kids learned prayers and catechism answers in English. Only later did they learn what the words meant, “I hear them kicking the ball all over the field,” Stanley wrote, “to the words of ‘Hail Mary, full of grace . . .’”

Stanley was aided in his building program by Felix Walaba, who even though he had decided not to renew his annual promises as an Oblate of St. Joseph, remained with Father Henry at Ialibu for almost two more years as a lay missionary. Felix went to Kagua April 22 and stayed there.
until July 30, save for the latter half of June, which he spent in Ialibu preparing lumber for doors in the Karia buildings and for an altar in the church there.

Stanley and his helpers had “emerged from the tent stage” by July. Until that time, all of Stanley’s supplies were carried in from Ialibu under the direction of Father Henry; and Stanley, Felix, Peter, and David had to rely mostly on local foodstuffs. Finally the airstrip was approved for small aircraft July 17; and that very day, Fidelis landed a load of supplies. Thereafter he came almost weekly.

Some of the larger supplies still had to be carried in. Stanley wrote Aug. 13 that some of the men had carried on an aluminium (aluminum that is) roof for his kitchen, and that he was thinking of having them also carry in a big water storage tank.

By that time, they had also finished building much of the road from the airstrip into Karia. Building this “first road in the Kagua Valley” with its five small bridges and one large one across the Kagua River engaged for a month 20 of Stanley’s regular workers, as well as many others from nearby settlements. Men from all the neighboring villages spent three days pulling timbers for the big bridge across the Kagua River. The government supplied the decking, but in early September before the planks were nailed down, a flash flood washed the entire bridge down stream. “The natives told me I had planned the bridge a little too low,” Stanley confessed, “but I never imagined the water reaching such heights as it did. The next time I’ll believe . . .”

Other urgent work delayed the immediate restoration of the bridge, but the week before Christmas it was finally completed. The road and bridge enabled mission personnel and others to avoid walking regularly through swampy bush land to bring things in from the plane.

While the road was being built, Stanley was also putting finishing touches on the first church at Karia; and Father Henry flew in from Ialibu Aug. 14 for the next day’s blessing. Henry preached in English and pidgin, and Stanley gave a short talk in the local Kewa. Father August Rebel was also there from Mendi, as well as Stanley’s brother and sister-in-law, Fidel and Josie; all of the expatriate government personnel (two men and a woman); and about 200 local people.

The new church and mission was dedicated to St. Mary, Queen of the Franciscan Order. Constructed with native materials, it had a pit-sawn sanctuary floor and three altars, as well as a small sacristy behind the main altar and a confessional in the rear of the church. From that time onward the Blessed Sacrament was reserved there.

Once the church was completed, Stanley began several other buildings: a second three-room teachers’ house, so David and Peter could bring their wives and children up from the coast; a two-room school house, with space for 75 to 80 pupils; two workers’ dormitories to accommodate the 18 workers; two school boys’ dormitories; a cook house with dining room; and a three-room addition to the rectory, built with the hope that another priest would come.

Obtaining another priest was a special priority for Stanley, both to expand the Church’s influence and so that he might have some Capuchin companionship. Stanley was the only friar stationed in the Kagua Valley for 14 months, and at times this aloneness was trying. Realizing how isolated
he was, other friars made a concerted effort to see to it that every month either one of them went to visit him or he visited one of the other stations.

At Christmas Stanley had an opportunity to go to Mendi after celebrating Mass, but he refused to ask his brother or anyone to fly on Christmas Day. Later he wrote,

> So I stayed here and now I’m glad I did, because I really had a good time. On the government station the only one home was a patrol officer, and he came down and spent the whole day here.

> I told the boys they could have a little singsing after the Masses in the morning, and they spread the news. By ten o’clock things were getting pretty warmed up, and by noon the place here was absolutely overrun by natives. All the neighboring villages turned up ‘en masse’. I’m sure there were a good thousand jumping up and down (dancing) and almost as many looking on.

> In the midst of the whole affair, the teacher stopped all the dancing and then put on a little show with the school boys I have here. They did a few drills, sang a song or two and then they very ceremoniously presented me with beautiful “King of Saxony” bird of paradise. One little boy, about three feet high, recited a little poem (in English) about “Butterfly, butterfly, pretty things.” He really stole the show.

On Christmas Eve, Stanley had spent hours in the church putting up a crib set that Otmar had sent him earlier in the week. Of this he wrote,

> I didn’t let the boys see it until right before Midnight Mass. You should have seen their faces when they saw the crib. They are pretty well trained not to talk in church, but when they saw the crib, they just forgot about their training. Such ‘oohs and ahs’ you never heard in your life. They especially like the ox and ass. They didn’t know what to think of the camels, and the black King was one of their boys.

Until Christmas time, Stanley’s efforts in the Kagua Valley had been confined to Karia, but now he was able to start reaching out to the rest of the valley. Earlier the patrol officer had told him of Kuare, several hours walk down the valley, with plenty of natives and a very good spot. Stanley sent two workers shortly before Christmas to start building a house. The day after they started, a Lutheran minister walked in looking for a place to setup a station. “The natives were very emphatic,” Stanley wrote Dec. 28, “in telling him that they didn’t want him around and practically ran him out of the area.”

The day after Christmas, Tulapi, a leader from Sumi in the restricted area up the valley came

> … asking when I could come out there to start a mission. I can’t go there until my permission comes through from Port Moresby. I told him I couldn’t come for awhile yet, because there is no house there. But he immediately told me that the natives were already collecting the timbers for the house, and if I told them, they could put up the house in a day.

Stanley promised to visit them early in the new year, and asked them not to accept the other mission in their area. Tulapi responded by saying that if they tried to come in, he would start a fight. “If permission doesn’t come soon,” Stanley added, “I might take the chance and walk up there with only verbal permission from the local patrol officer.”
MISSION DIRECTORY 1-1-1959

Mendi
Father Otmar Gallagher, OFMCap, vicar delegate, religious superior
Father Gregory Smith, OFMCap, upper & lower Mendi & Lai outstations
Father August Rebel, OFMCap, Karint outstations
Brother Claude Mattingly, OFMCap, builder & mechanic
Fidelis Miltenberger, mission pilot
Josephine Miltenberger, pilot’s wife

Tari
Father Paul Farkas, OFMCap, main station, teacher
Father Berard Tomassetti, OFMCap, outstations
Brother Mark Bollinger, OFMCap, builder & mechanic

Ialibu
Father Henry Kusnerik, OFMCap, main station
Father Gary Stakem, OFMCap, outstations
Felix Walaba, builder

Kagua
Father Stanley Miltenberger, OFMCap, main & outstations

In February 1959, Stanley had a slight set-back when the school and one of his teacher’s houses burned down. He was able, however, to move both the teacher and the school into other buildings on the station. Stanley noted that he was always

…afraid of fires in these grass houses. Once they catch on fire, you have about five minutes to get anything out. After that they are just like a furnace. I purposely put my house at the far side of the station and against the wind, so that if another house catches, it won’t touch mine; but sometimes the winds shifts, so I’m constantly on guard.

By early March, Stanley had two outstations started to the east of Karia – Kuare and Kupienda – and he was in need of more teachers. “We have almost 200 kids in the school,” he wrote, “and only two teachers.” Stanley realized this was a bit too much for the teachers, but he reasoned that as long as they could keep a station going, it would be worth it, since it would keep the people loyal to the Catholic Mission until more help was available.

By this time, Father Senan Glass had already been appointed to the Capuchin Mission to the Southern Highlands, and during the Easter meeting at Mendi, Otmar and his consultors – Henry and Berard – decided to assign the new missionary to the outstations that August Rebel was caring for along the upper Mendi River, and to reassign the latter to the Kagua Valley.

Unaware of this decision, Stanley wrote April 27,

Last July when we were expecting someone, Father Otmar told me that I would get a companion down here as soon as the new men arrive; so maybe someone will be coming now.
There is a big district near here that will be derestricted very shortly, and I want to jump into the area as soon as possible. I have already greased up a few of the chiefs, and they have invited me to their places; but I can’t get through to them what a restricted area is. They just don’t savvy why I can’t roam around everywhere, the same as they do.

The day that Father Senan arrived in Mendi, May 12, Otmar announced the transfer to August and instructed him to acquaint Senan with bush work before leaving for Kagua.

Writing to friends May 15, August said,

The population of Kagua, like that in most valleys of the Southern Highlands, is close to fabulous. The climate is slightly warmer and drier than in the Mendi area; the mountain ranges are not quite as high. Because of this latter fact, Father Stanley and I hope to take two horses there from Mendi. The trails in this valley have proved to be too rugged for them. In Kagua there are no roads or bike trails as yet, and the horses will be a valuable means of transportation. The only difficulty will be in getting them there.

August arrived in Kagua shortly after June 16, and within the next fortnight, he and Stanley had already made a short bush trip to start a new station. “Father August is really a fine missionary,” Stanley wrote, “and he is ready, willing, and able to do most anything. He walked approximately five hours that day and he didn’t mention one word of complaint.” August left July 1 to visit Kuare, which had not seen a priest since its beginning in December. Unable to leave Karia alone, Stanley had stationed two teachers at Kuare and these came in to Karia each fortnight; but personal contact with the Kuare people had been lacking.

When August returned from Kuare, he stayed at Karia, while Stanley finally got around to starting the Sumi station. August wanted to go there himself, but the government would not permit him to enter restricted territory due to his limited experience. So Stanley made the first contact, started the station, and sent teachers to man it until it would be derestricted.

In mid-August, Stanley finally got around to bringing in the horses from Mendi. His original intention was to bring them directly from Mendi to Kagua, which considering the mountains and rivers to be crossed in the process, would surely have been no mean feat. But the government was not about to let him bring the horses through that way. Though he had just spent two weeks in the Sumi, the west end of the Kagua Valley and the area west of Ialibu were still restricted. Thus to get the horses into Kagua, Stanley had to go all the way around Mt. Giluwe and down through Amburugi, thereby more than tripling the distance.

Afterwards Stanley wrote,

When I got back, I tallied up the riding hours, and it came to about 34 1/2 hours in the saddle. Of course I stopped for the nights and spent the weekend in Ialibu . . . The whole trip was a little more than 100 miles and some tough spots to go through. The horse I was riding went through

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139 Bishop Ignatius Doggett, OFM, of Aitape had offered Fr. Otmar horses in May 1957 (Gallagher to Vogel, May 29, 1957). However the horses Fathers Stanley and August brought to Kagua in 1959 were probably those which Stanley had earlier obtained from the East-West Bible Mission near Kiripia in the Western Highlands (Berard to Burkey, comment on text, 1984).
two bridges. On the first one, I had to drop the horse through – about 15 feet – but on the second, I managed to get her out from the top. She suffered a few bad cuts, but didn’t seem to mind too much, so I continued the journey. Crossing one river was quite a problem; but with the help of about 50 screaming natives, we made it without any mishap. For most of the natives in this section, it was the first time they had seen a horse. You can imagine the excitement it caused. One remark I overheard when I arrived in Kagua was, ‘Now we have some real pigs. We will have a good sing-sing at Christmas time’ . . . Practically any time of the day you can see a group of natives down by the paddock admiring the ‘big pigs’.

The tamer one of the horses died soon after its arrival in the valley, and eventually the other was turned over to the government agricultural station. August tried twice to take it out to Kuare. The first time he got as far as the airstrip and the horse returned to Karia without him. The second time, he got a bit further, but the horse kept going in circles; and when Father let him have a free rein, the horse calmly returned to Karia. August decided to walk after that, and there was no further mention of the horses.

In January of 1960, the mission obtained a tractor and trailer; and by August of that year, a motorbike – even though there were still hardly any roads to ride them on.

In the meantime, not only had the horses disappeared but Stanley himself was also gone. In April 1959, his classmate, Father Firmin Schmidt, was named the first ecclesiastical superior of the Capuchin Mission to the Southern Highlands, and as one of his first acts asked the Capuchin superiors in Pittsburgh to consider shortening from 10 years to five years the term that friars would spend in the mission before returning to the States for a period of rest. In 1960, therefore, all of the original band of missionaries – except Father Paul – returned to the States for home leaves. For personal reasons, Stanley decided to remain there and has served since then in California, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maryland. Due to expansion into other areas, the Capuchins were unable for eight months to send a second man into the Kagua Valley, and Father August was left on his own.

By the time of Stanley’s departure, August had been caring for nine outstations in the valley. The addition of the main station to his responsibilities slowed further expansion to one new outstation in the succeeding eight months. On March 1, 1961, however, Father David Dressman came to care for the main station; and in January 1963, Father Roy Schuster was sent to assist August in the outstations. By that time, August had established and was caring for a string of 38 outstations.

Father Stanley had indeed been a little late getting into the Kagua Valley, and at that time it seemed that all was lost as far as the Catholic Church was concerned. Tulapi, the “headman” at Sumi who pleaded with Stanley to come to his village, is still not baptized – but his children and his first wife are. And in fact, by mid-1979, almost 10,000 people had been baptized as Catholics in the Kagua Valley. Surprisingly the only one of these that Stanley himself baptized was an outsider, David and Margaret Aihi’s son, Herbert. Even Father August, who labored for seven years in the valley baptized only 290 of them. How true the Apostle’s words: “I did the planting, Apollos did the watering, but God make things grow.”
**CAVEAT:** The following chart has never been fully checked and is left here only to provide a general idea of who was covering what areas and when. On the chart, Capuchins are referred to by their first name shown in regular type, and **secular clergy by their family names shown in bold face.** Full names of the friars are listed in Chapter 24 (pp. 328-337) and those of secular priests in Chapter 16 (pp. 221-222)

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A Chief of Our Own

While the 1958 “rush” into Kagua and the concurrent push beyond the Tagali were slowly but steadily extending the reach of the Catholic Mission into new areas of the Southern Highlands, steady streams of correspondence scampered back and forth around the world, between Mendi, Pittsburgh, Yule Island, Rome, and Sydney, in a complex, yet totally unsuccessful attempt to increase sources of missionary manpower for the Highlands.

The effort was not without effect, however, since by year’s end the letters had led to the autonomy of the Capuchin Mission to the Southern Highlands.

At the time when the Capuchins accepted the mission in Papua in 1955, it had been indicated that as soon as about 10 priests were on site, the Holy See would give them a territory of their own, with their own ecclesiastical superior.

From the start, however, it had been unclear just what this territory would be. When the first contingent of Capuchins went through Sydney in 1955, it learned that the apostolic delegate, Archbishop Romolo Carboni, was searching for a religious community to establish another mission to the west of the Capuchins, presumably west of Tari, and on to the Dutch New Guinea (now Irian Jaya) border.
Sometime afterward, the Propaganda Congregation notified Carboni that it was prepared to approach the Jesuits and Maryknoll missionaries to open new missions in the Pacific, especially in New Guinea. Notifying Bishop André Sorin of this, Carboni asked him to study the possibility of dividing the Highlands. Understanding that two new groups were being recruited to work west of the Capuchins, Sorin filed a report July 9, 1956, which suggested that a line be drawn between Tari and Mendi, thus leaving the Huli area tacked onto the western end of his vicariate, which could be turned into two or more missions, as soon as someone else agreed to take them over.

For this reason, once Fathers Alexis Michellod and Otmar Gallagher had moved their headquarters to Mendi, the latter was for a while reluctant to contribute much to the development of stations in the Tari area, much the same as Bishop Sorin had earlier made it clear that he could not contribute to the building up of the stations in what would be the Capuchins’ area.

Otmar wrote Father Claude Vogel Aug. 8, 1956, that if Bishop Sorin’s plan were followed,

> Our mission would still be large enough. We would have plenty of mission work, and in time we could make this a very thriving mission. We would have a chance to make our mission thoroughly Catholic which, in my mind, is preferable to having a large mission area with just pockets of virile Catholicism. I would very much like to see the division made as recommended. I do not think we should do anything to hinder it.

Otmar preferred the Purari watershed, because the friars already had two stations in that area, and also because it appeared the most economical area to operate. “We are going to have to depend on air freight for our cargo, and the closer you are to the source of the supplies, the less expensive transport is going to be.”

Without making any final commitments, which he rightly referred to the general curia, Claude informed Sorin that he personally felt that concern for the people themselves should come first. “We should not retard the Christianization of these many pagans… If another community can accelerate this apostolic work, it should be employed.”

“There is nothing more for me to add,” Claude wrote Carboni, “save to reiterate our determination to work up the mission with men and means to the best of our ability, relying always on the guidance of Divine Providence.”

Archbishop Carboni, however, did not agree with Sorin’s plan. He did not want to do anything to disturb the status quo of the Capuchins, and furthermore favored having only one mission west of the Capuchins, since the population there was so sparse.

Referring to this western area, Otmar wrote Claude on Aug. 30,

> The terrain is even more rugged that ours here, and getting around is a real problem there. But no matter what the reason may be for the Archbishop so thinking, we should not accept a mission that includes the Fly River area. No one ever says anything good about that area. I think we should

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140 Otmar himself had lived in Tari from the friars’ arrival in 1955 until 1956, when Sorin moved him to Mendi to be closer to the government’s district headquarters. 2016: Ironically he returned to the Huli area in 1978 and served as chaplain of Tari High School and pastoral worker in the area until returning to the States in 1992.
take the area that includes Mendi and Ialibu when the division is made, no matter where the dividing lines finally are.

Otmar seems to have taken it for granted that Sorin’s line would be followed, since he spoke of moving Father Berard to Ialibu as soon as the division had taken place.

Though the idea of cutting off the Tari area was clearly Bishop Sorin’s, somehow some of the friars ascribed the idea to Carboni. Father Henry asked Father Berard in a letter in late September if he had his bridge built yet. “You better hurry, because if the Apostolic Delegate has his way, either the Maryknollers or the Jesuits will be pushing you out.”

By Nov. 11, 1956, Otmar was still expecting “to be losing Tari from our mission area within the next few months.” As there had been tribal fighting in the Huli area and much of Ialibu was in the process of opening up, he asked the Bishop to transfer Berard to Ialibu.

In the meantime, since he did not see eye to eye with the Delegate, Sorin left Oct. 18 for Sydney to speak with him personally. Upon his return, Sorin wrote Otmar Nov. 12 that he could not understand why Carboni asked him to write the report in the first place. “He does not seem to have much hope to have another congregation in view. Even the congregation which appeared to be willing to take the Western Division seems now to withdraw from the scheme. Practically we must consider that Tari is part of your mission, as well as the rest.” Sorin used this occasion, however, to appoint Otmar as his vicar delegate for both spiritual and material matters, since Father Michellod had by then left the area.

After visiting Sorin at Yule Island on Nov. 24, 1956, Otmar wrote Claude, “The division of the mission area is a dead issue at present. In fact, I got the impression that was never really a serious issue at all. What was behind all the talk is more than I can say, but I certainly do wish it had gone through.”

One thing which prompted Otmar to look forward to the day when the Capuchins would have their own ecclesiastical and regular superiors on the spot was the desire to cut down on the endless red tape in which he found himself ensnarled.

Frequently relatively simple decisions took months to be implemented, because of the complicated network of ecclesiastical and religious superiors involved and the distances between them that literally circled the globe.

By way of example, in December 1956, Otmar mentioned to Claude that he would like him to appoint some discreet (counselors) whom he could consult before making decisions.

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141 Kusnerik to Tomassetti, Sept. 26, 1956.
142 This did not happen however. While Otmar was ready to let loose of the Huli area in light of the possibility of others later taking it over, Berard was more interested in dealing with the present. In a note added about 1984 to Burkey’s manuscript, Berard said he had asked Otmar that he “not be saddled with a main station – as Stanley had” – so that he would be “free to roam as wide as I could and make initial contacts (establish footholds) thus making things easier for those who would come later to the Huli and Duna areas.”
143 Gallagher to Vogel, Dec. 7, 196.
144 Gallagher to Vogel, Dec. 7, 1956.
answered that he was surprised discreets had not been appointed a year earlier and asked that the missionaries send consultative ballots to Pittsburgh.\footnote{Vogel to Gallagher, Dec. 17, 1956.}

Ballots were counted at the February definitory meeting in Pittsburgh, each definitor’s own choices noted, and the entire matter sent to the international Capuchin headquarters in Rome. Officials there in turn wrote in March to Bishop Sorin, saying that before they would allow the appointment of Otmar’s discreets, Sorin would first have to certify that the Southern Highlands had been entrusted to the Capuchins for evangelization under the Bishop’s care.

Sorin had Otmar write such a letter and sent it to Rome, so that eventually on June 13, word arrived in Pittsburgh that the general curia was agreeable to having Father Claude appoint Fathers Henry Kusnerik and Berard Tomassetti as counselors to Otmar, who in turn was to be considered a delegate of the Provincial.

Claude then sent word to Mendi, where Otmar was at first hampered by an injury of the mission’s pilot and later by an inability to contact Henry because the Ialibu radio was out of order.\footnote{Word arrived in Ialibu July 3 (Ialibu chronicle, July 3, 1957).} Finally on Aug. 22, 1957—almost nine months after Otmar had first brought up the subject—he was able to have the first meeting with his counselors.\footnote{Ialibu chronicle, Aug. 22, 1957.}

In the meantime, it became evident how pinched the mission was for manpower. When Father Rudolph Blockinger wrote from Leichhardt, Australia, in January 1957 that he wanted to join the Papuan mission, Otmar assured Claude he would be agreeable to having the 70-year-old former China missionary come to Mendi, where he could look after the main stations whenever Otmar had to be away, thus allowing Fathers Stanley Miltenberger and Gregory Smith to continue their activities in the outstations. Claude approved this request, but evidently Rudolph changed his mind. Soon afterwards he moved to Wynnum near Brisbane, where he spent the last 12 years of his life as an assistant pastor.

Otmar learned from government officials June 10, 1957, that large areas at Tari and Ialibu were expected to be derestricted in the near future, as were two brand new areas, Koroba and Kagua. He immediately wrote Claude,

Both have tremendous populations and we absolutely must put missionaries in there the day they are opened. Ialibu should have another man and our Mission Statutes strongly recommend that each main station have at least two friars. I realize full well, Father that our province is suffering a terrific manpower shortage but then, too, I feel that I would be neglecting my duty if I did not inform you that the ideal minimum of new missionaries for the Southern Highlands this year is five.

Claude had not even received this letter, when he wrote Otmar some bad news:

I regret to tell you that I see little or no prospect to send any priests this year. I asked in Rome for a dispensation from adding the fifth year in our theology course, and was told that no dispensation can be obtained. It simply must go through. Well, you know the position that we are in, having lost by death four active men (Fathers Hilary Liehr, Cyrus Chvala, Julian Patterson, and Victor Vogel to Gallagher, Dec. 17, 1956.}

\footnote{Vogel to Gallagher, Dec. 17, 1956.}
\footnote{Word arrived in Ialibu July 3 (Ialibu chronicle, July 3, 1957).}
\footnote{Ialibu chronicle, Aug. 22, 1957.}
Green) and having three or four more on the sick list. I also made an effort to give up one of our small places, but was told by the Bishop that he simply could not accept it this year, because he is having no priests ordained this year.

Four days later Claude also had to send word that Fathers Cornelius Heim and Brice Schratz had been killed in a tragic explosion in Munjor, Kansas.

These events prompted Otmar to write, “Probably it is a foolish question but do you think that you could obtain a bit of help from some other Capuchin Province?” As another possibility, he recalled having heard that the Australian Franciscans had more men interested in the missions than they were able to support as missionaries.

Claude wondered whether the general minister would approve of such arrangements, but encouraged Otmar to do whatever he thought best in the matter, so long as any contract made was only for a few years, “so that in case a mistake was made, it would not take too long for it to correct itself.”

By a strange coincidence, a similar suggestion had already been made to the general minister. Following a visit to Claude in Pittsburgh in April of 1957, which probably revealed the tight manpower situation within the Pennsylvania Province, Archbishop Carboni had approached the Capuchin general minister, Father Benignus Re Cecconi, in Rome about the possibility of having members of the Parma province take over a section of the Papuan Highlands mission.

The Delegate approached the general minister again on the subject by a letter of Aug. 23; and Benignus wrote Oct. 12, “We are anxious to assist you by allowing the friars of the Parma Province to undertake the missionary activity in this territory, if the Province be in a position to do so.” However, before he would make any decision, Benignus wanted some tidying up of the situation.

He suggested that, before consulting the Order on the division of the territory in which the Pennsylvania Capuchins were already working, the Holy See ought first to assign the area to the Order; then the Order could in turn assign friars from two different provinces to work together there under an ecclesiastical superior from the Pennsylvania Province, until the time when the friars from the second province would have sufficient numbers and experience to have their own territory. Then consideration could be given to dividing the mission.  

Benignus’ letter certainly left the matter doubly hypothetical—IF the territory were committed to the Order and IF the Parma Province was in a position to take on a mission. Carboni, however, wrote Bishop Sorin Oct. 27 speaking of the two provinces working together as something of a certainty, and Sorin wrote back speaking of the coming of the friars from Parma. From then on — outside of Rome — it was considered a question not of whether they were coming, but when.

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149 Carboni to Sorin, Oct. 27, 1957.
In the fall of 1957, Claude, accompanied by his secretary, Father Cajetan (later Edward) Pikus, had already made the first provincial visitation of the New Guinea Mission. On the way back through Australia, Claude stopped to see Sorin, whom he had first met on the way up to the Highlands. “Showed me letters from Arch. Carboni & our General,” Claude jotted in his journal for the trip. “News a little startling. Maybe not so bad as first impression.”

Claude then met with Father Anastase Paoletti at Sydney on Nov. 19; and after they had spent the evening with Carboni, Claude noted in his journal that they “Discussed the division of the mission territory and assignment of the Parma Caps to work under us and eventually separate. We are to have the prefect or vicar apostolic. In 1958 if possible, then the Parma Caps to have the same in their territory when they are able to have it.”

News that the Parma Capuchins might be coming was not received with complete enthusiasm at Mendi, but this is not totally surprising. After all, Anastase had tried to get the Parma friars involved in the Papuan mission three years earlier with the hope of also involving them in his Australian mission under the guise of preparing them for going to English-speaking New Guinea.

Even after the “Pennsylvanians” had the mission, Anastase had managed to hang on. Somehow Carboni still considered him tied to the Papuan mission; and when an extraordinary subsidy for the new mission arrived from Propaganda officials in December 1955, Carboni turned it over to Anastase, who by February 1957 had still not forwarded the 5,000 Australian pounds to Otmar. Anastase also tried his best to get Father Henry back, at first arguing the mission should have an Australian procurator, but later quite openly admitting he wanted him back to run the parish at Leichhardt.

Otmar, therefore, wrote Claude on Nov. 21,

> I’ve been wondering if Father Anastase is behind the friars of the Parma Province coming to this mission with the intention of our teaching them English and then have them move on to the Custody in Australia. That would not be good at all because breaking in new missionaries is not an easy job at any time, as it tends to slow the progress of the older and experienced missionaries. Teaching them English is something that we’ll gladly do if they are to be permanent missionaries in Papua, but not if they are to move on to Australia. In fact, if the friars from the Parma Province do come over here, they should have at least a start in English.

Another letter of Dec. 20 detailed a meeting Otmar had with his councilors concerning conditions under which the Pennsylvania and Parma Capuchins might best work together in the mission:

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151 Vogel, chronicle, Nov. 1, 1957.
154 Gallagher to Vogel, Nov. 21, 1957.
We…would rather see the men come directly from the Parma Province in Italy to this mission. We would much prefer that to having some of the Parma friars now working in Australia come up here.

We think it is safe to presume that the Parma Province has in mind having its own mission territory over here, just like we did when our Province accepted this mission. If that is the case, there should not be much difficulty since we should be able to live together peacefully for a couple years or so, by which time each Province should be able to be independent of each other.  

As a matter of fact, Otmar was presuming too much. So were several other people. It is indeed surprising that so much was made of this possibility for so long, when not a single letter, nor a mention of one, from the Parma Capuchins themselves can be found in Mendi, Pittsburgh, or Bereina. Everything points to this having been a hope on the part of Carboni and Anastase, more than a desire of the friars in Parma.

Answering Otmar’s concerns, Claude said he had learned that Father Benignus had “inquired among the Italian Provinces and found that the Parma Province has no real mission and that it really wants one.” This information however probably came from Sydney, rather than from Rome. Father Benignus’ letter of Oct. 12 clearly gives the impression—even though Carboni, Sorin, and Claude failed to pick it up—that even then the General was not sure that the Parma Province wanted a foreign mission, since he writes: “…if that Province be in a position to do so.” In a letter of Dec. 11, 1957, Father Benignus employed a similar expression, saying that after the mission had been formally committed to the Order, he and his definitory “will then invite another Province—say Parma—to send missionaries…”

Still for almost a year, Otmar, Bishop Sorin, and Father Claude were left under the impression that the Parma friars would be coming, and letter after letter talked of that possibility. Only on Nov. 25, 1958, two days after the establishment of the mission as an independent circumscription, did Father Claude finally burst this bubble. “As to outside missionaries joining you,” Claude wrote, “I think we must give up hope. I consulted the Provincial of Parma at the General Chapter in Rome, 156 and he said simply we have no men to send. Neither did he seem to be interested, which gave me the impression that the whole project was more or less forced on him from the beginning.” 157

“I also tried to get the Dutch Capuchins to join you,” Claude added, “since at least some of them were driven out of their own mission, but the provincial said these have all received new assignments and, that if I want any Dutch missionaries, I could get them only on an exchange basis.”

“Naturally, I’m not too pleased,” Otmar replied, “that we can expect no help from another Capuchin Province, but at least it is better to know that we cannot, than to continue hoping that we’ll get help…”

156 Which was in June of 1958.
157 Vogel to Gallagher, Nov. 25, 1958.
Perhaps this mistaken hope did have some benefit, however, in that it probably encouraged Carboni to speed up the process of having the area erected as an independent mission. Father Benignus had made it clear he would not proceed until that step had been taken.\textsuperscript{158}

Ten days after Father Benignus sent his second letter to this effect, Carboni wrote Sorin that, in the light of that letter, the Bishop ought to formally request the division.\textsuperscript{159} Sorin wrote to Otmar, “This year 1958 may be a very important year in the history of the Southern Highlands Mission, as his Excellency is now pushing hard to have it erected into a prefecture apostolic. He has just forwarded to me the Roman Instructions requesting that all particulars concerning the boundaries, etc., etc., be specified.” Almost in the same breath, Sorin added, “It is now agreed between your Minister General and the Propaganda that the Capuchin Fathers of Parma will come and work with you until the day they can have their own separate territory within the S. Highlands.”\textsuperscript{160}

Bishop Sorin had finally requested the division of his vicariate on March 12, 1958.\textsuperscript{161} The boundaries for the new circumscription to be carved from his area started at the Alele mouth of the Purari River and proceeded directly across the top of the mountain between the Purari and Vailala Rivers to the boundary between Papua and New Guinea, which it followed westward until it reached the Strickland River, whence it proceeded along the ridges of the Muller and Carius ranges to Mt. Sisa, across the western slopes of Mt. Bosavi to Lake Campbell, then by straight line to Bell Point, whence straight across the Gulf of Papua to the starting point.

Sorin had further suggested that Mendi be the center of the new district, and that the area be named either the Prefecture of the Papuan Highlands or the Prefecture of the Southern Highlands in Papua.

Otmar had told Sorin March 21 that he would write Carboni that he agreed entirely with Sorin’s report “and that it would please all the friars if your recommendations were followed.”

From then until August, Otmar had frequently spoken of the division in his correspondence, usually in terms of it enabling Benignus to then send friars from Parma. Benignus had written Otmar May 26, “The erection of your Mission into an independent Prefecture Apostolic does seem imminent. The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide recently approached us on the matter and it would seem that an announcement should be made shortly. We shall just have to wait until they think it opportune.”

The week after he wrote this, Benignus’ term as general minister came to an end. On June 3, 1958, during the Chapter already alluded to, Father Clement Neubauer of Milwaukee had been elected in his place. One of the general councilors elected to assist the new general was Father Bonaventure Pavullo from the Province of Parma, and most likely it was this development which finally ended talk of the Parmesans coming to Papua.

\textsuperscript{158} Gallagher to Sorin, May 4, 1958.
\textsuperscript{159} Carboni to Sorin, Dec. 28, 1957.
\textsuperscript{160} This is probably the last mention ever made of Parma.
\textsuperscript{161} Word of this arrived in Ialibu March 25, 1958 (Ialibu chronicle).
Totally unaware that things were finally moving on the question of the prefecture, Otmar wrote Sorin Aug. 26, “I haven’t had any letters from our Father General in Rome of late. So I have nothing new to add about the coming of the Capuchins from Parma.”

Already on Aug. 1, however, in a private audience with Propaganda prefect Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, Pope Pius XII had authorized establishment of the Apostolic Prefecture of Kikori. This was communicated to the Capuchin General Curia, and in turn on Sept. 11, Clement notified Claude.

Otmar wrote Sorin on Sept. 20 of rumors that Rome was about to establish vicariates at Mt. Hagen and Goroka, and added, “I’ve had no news about the coming of Capuchins from Italy nor about the cutting off of the Highlands from your Vicariate. Have you?”

Word arrived in Mendi that the Prefecture of Kikori had been established on or shortly before Sept. 27. That day Sorin wrote that Father Edmond Lauzier of the Canadian-American Montfort Fathers was on his way to undertake a new mission at Daru and Kiunga in the Western District.

The first reaction of the friars in the Southern Highlands to the announcement of the prefecture was a rather unanimous questioning of why Kikori. After talking the matter over with several others, Otmar wrote Carboni on Nov. 24, asking if it could be changed to Mendi, since the mission had no present connection with Kikori and no one expected that place to ever amount to much, even the civil government had just moved its headquarters from Kikori to Kerema.

Earlier the Propaganda Congregation had let it be known that a papal bull formally attesting to the establishment of Kikori prefecture would not be issued until after the first prefect had been chosen, which was not expected to happen until after Christmas.

Meanwhile things worked out differently. Pope Pius XII died Oct. 9, before the document had been issued, and the whole question of erecting the prefecture had to be resubmitted to his successor, Pope Saint John XXIII, who was elected Oct. 28 and crowned Nov. 4.

For some mysterious reason, even before Father Otmar had written to ask that the name be changed, it was a fait accompli. As one of the first official acts of his reign, Saint John erected the Prefecture of Mendi on Nov. 13, 1958. The bull “Eius Successores,” which made the Prefecture of Mendi the Pope’s first new mission territory, was issued some time in January.

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162 Otmar announced it upon his arrival at Ialibu on that date (Stakem chronicle Sept. 27, 1958).
163 Which eventually developed into the Diocese of Daru.
164 Fr. Henry told Fr. Don Nally, “Kikori has not increased or changed since it was founded in 1890. It is on the coast approached only by boat to the nearest airstrip. No possibility of building an airstrip in this swampy land (Kusnerik to D. Nally, Nov. 13, 1958).
165 One of St. John XXIII’s last acts also affected the Mendi mission. On June 5, 1963, the day after the Pope’s death, Firmin received the invitation the Pope had sent to all apostolic prefects to attend the Second Vatican Council with deliberative vote (Schmidt chronicle, June 5, 1963).
MAP OF THE
APOSTOLIC PREFECTURE
OF
MENDI, PAPUA-NEW GUINEA,

First mission territory created by
Papa John in 1851.

Scale: 1:48,000

Legend:

- Village
- Mission Station
- Other Structure
- River
- Mountain
- Road

- Gulf of Papua

[Map details and legends not transcribed due to nature of content]
Noting that the Pope was acting so that “the life-giving light of Christian truth may illumine all peoples, and that the priceless pearl of the faith may become the common possession of all nations,” the document went on to erect the prefecture, specifying its boundaries much the same as those suggested by Bishop Sorin, with one exception. It specified the boundary would go directly from the intersection of the Strictland River with the territorial boundary to Lake Campbell.

Even before Pope Pius XII had died, work had already begun in the naming of a prefect. Each of the missionaries had been asked to suggest in order of preference, three priests of the Province suitable for the job, regardless of where they were stationed.

This obviously was done with very little, if any consultation, but with great seriousness. The eight missionaries who voted suggested 11 different friars, and everyone mentioned either had been or would be either a major superior of the Order or a consultor to one. New Guinea, Puerto Rico and the States were all represented on the list, which Clement forwarded to Pittsburgh on Nov. 3. The provincial definitory then indicated its own terna (three choices)—all from the list—and returned them to Rome on Dec. 7. Father Firmin Schmidt, who had headed the missionaries’ list was also at the top of this one; and in forwarding the results, Claude noted that, although “Firmin, as definitor, took part in the definitorial discussions of the terna, he consistently remained passive to any reference to his own possible promotion, remarking only that he would be in accord with whatever choice the authorities would make.”

It may have been a shock, then, but surely was not a total surprise to Firmin, when at 8:30 a.m., on Saturday, April 25, 1959, while he was at his desk at Capuchin College, in Washington, D.C., working on a sermon on “the infallibility of the Church,” a cablegram arrived from Archbishop Carboni which began, “I have the privilege to inform you that His Holiness Pope John XXIII has deigned to appoint you Prefect Apostolic of Mendi…”

It was a total surprise, however, to the 9:20 Saturday morning Franciscan asceticism class, when Father Myles Schmitt came in and read the cablegram. Sitting there among the stunned students were eight young men who would soon join their dogma teacher in faroff New Guinea: Timon Kaple, Benjamin Madden, Samuel Driscoll, Roy Schuster, Dunstan Jones, Colman Studeny, Brian Newman, and Matthew Gross.

News of Firmin’s appointment reached Mendi either the afternoon of April 27 or the following morning and helped
somewhat to dispel the sorrow the missionaries were experiencing over the sudden death nine days earlier of Bishop Sorin.\textsuperscript{170}

A victim of frequent heart attacks, the bishop had been working at his desk at Yule Island the evening of April 18, moved to an armchair to have a cigarette, and was hit by the fatal attack and found dead the following morning, his body partially cremated.\textsuperscript{171} Father Guichet, his pro-vice, then took charge of the vicariate, including the Capuchin Mission in the Highlands.

The sorrow with which various Capuchins received word of this is perhaps best captured in a letter a friar wrote one year and a day before the bishop’s death.

I am not happy about the thought of our being made independent of your Lordship’s direction…. We have been very fortunate in having you for our ecclesiastical superior and I, for one, have had a deep respect for your words. I am grateful for your kindness to me, and for the wise direction, advice and encouragement. As for the question of who will supply for all that your Lordship has been to me—that I must trust to Providence.\textsuperscript{172}

One must quickly add, that Providence was now sending this missioner his first choice for a replacement: Father Firmin Schmidt.

When Firmin was called by the Holy See to the work of the Church in Papua, he was the rector of Capuchin College in Washington, where he had been teaching dogmatic theology for 11 years. During his academic career, Firmin had earned a doctorate in sacred theology at the nearby Catholic University of America in 1951, writing a dissertation on “The Resurrection of the Body according to Tertullian,” and had been invited to address the 1954 International Marian Congress in Rome on the Queenship of Mary.

Firmin had also served as provincial definitor of the Province of Pennsylvania since 1956, and as such was well-informed on the friar’s work in Papua. For two years he investigated various linguistic programs available in the U.S. with the hope of having prospective missionaries acquire skills along this line before going to New Guinea. Still there is no indication that Firmin ever volunteered to go to the mission himself, and there was little to suggest that he ever suspected that he might end up spending most of the rest of his life in this far-off place.

\textsuperscript{170} Gallagher to Vogel, April 29, 1959.
\textsuperscript{171} Kusnerik, chronicle, April 19, 1959.
\textsuperscript{172} Tomassetti to Sorin, Tari, April 17, 1958.
This is not meant to suggest that he was not ready for it. Already in his junior college days at St. Joseph’s Military Academy in Hays, Kansas, he had shown his leadership ability by winning the school’s highest award, the Good Citizenship medal, and subsequently being commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Infantry Reserve and appointed brigade commander of the cadet corps. On the football field, young Martin Schmidt, as he was known before becoming a Capuchin, stood out as star quarterback, personally scoring 107 points his senior year. By 1959, he was 40 years old, but he was in such robust health that those half his age found it difficult to keep up with him.

Those around him in 1959, however, were simply unaware of an uncannily accurate prophecy which had appeared in Firmin’s high school newspaper in 1938, as part of a humorous narrative entitled “Senior Class Prophecy”:

“Well I got to be going; Martin’s going to let me work on his plane,” remarked Cyril preparing to leave.

“Do you mean Martin Schmidt,” I asked. “Does he have a plane?”

“Sure,” said Cyril, “he’s a sky pilot. He teaches school five days a week and then flies to his foreign mission on Saturdays. The same old dash.”

Firmin was known from then until his ordination as a bishop in 1965 as Monsignor Firmin and had all the powers of a diocesan bishop, except for those derived from the sacramental power of holy orders.

He left the States in mid-September in the company of another new missionary, 54-year-old Father David Dressman, and on Sept. 28 presented the bull “Eius Successoris” to Archbishop Carboni in Sydney. The Archbishop, who the previous day had been named nuncio to Peru, executed the document, making it official; and Firmin then took the various oaths required of him, and documents to that effect were sent to the Holy See.

Firmin arrived in Mendi Oct. 20, and he and DC Desmond Clifton-Bassett promptly exchanged courtesy visits. The following day the bush chapel at Mendi was filled as Firmin formally took possession of the prefecture, preached on the significance of the ceremony, consecrated the prefecture to the Sacred Heart, and dedicated it to “our patroness, Mary, Mother of the Good Shepherd.” In attendance was Bishop Adolph Noser of Alexishafen.
Since Monsignor Schmidt’s arrival in Mendi, the canonical status of the prefecture has changed several times. On July 6, 1965, an apostolic constitution of Pope Paul VI, “Regnum Christi,” issued at the request of Cardinal Gregory Peter Agagianian, prefect of the Propagation Congregation, elevated the prefecture to the Apostolic Vicariate of Mendi, making it a mission territory ruled by a bishop, who was not yet acting in his own name as bishop of the area, but rather as the pope’s personal vicar in the area:

The Kingdom of Christ which is the Church has a peculiar and special feature compared with other earthly kingdoms and governments, inasmuch as it was established not only to gather all nations together and keep them close to her bosom (cf. Mt. 13, 31), but also to renew these same nations in grace, truth, and virtue in such a way that, out of a human society subject to sin and reduced to slavery, she might make a most holy city of God for the salvation of all nations.

Just as this has truly always been the case, so also it goes on every day. Because Christian action in the territory of Mendi in Papua-New Guinea has progressed favorably through the work of the Capuchin Friars Minor and the most benign grace of God, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Christian Name deemed that it should be taken as fair and opportune if the Prefecture of the same name were to be raised to the rank of Apostolic Vicariate: as fair indeed because to Our beloved sons working there it would offer a definite sign of Our wish for them; opportune because the self-same church seems with good hope to be about to enjoy new advances in virtue and charity….

Later in the constitution, after recommitting the territory to the Capuchin Order, the Pope paternally exhorted the friars “to spare no effort for the sake of spreading the Christian religion.” The very same day, a separate letter from the Propagation Congregation announced that His
Holiness had approved the nomination of Monsignor Firmin as Bishop of the Titular See of Conana (which is near Myra in Turkey) and Apostolic Vicar of Mendi.¹⁷³

Practically all the congratulations received by the provincial office and by the missionaries themselves commented on how rapid the progress had been for the mission to win recognition so early.

This time around each priest in the mission had been asked to submit names of three candidates for the office of apostolic vicar, months before the vicariate was established. The provincial definitory sent its list of six friars Jan. 14, 1965, with Monsignor Firmin as the first choice.

The next change in status came in 1966, when Pope Blessed Paul VI decided to establish the hierarchy of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea and the Protectorate of the Solomon Islands, thus authorizing the bishops there to rule in their own right as residential bishops. By the apostolic constitution, “Laeta Incrementa,” issued Nov. 15, 1966, the Pope raised the Vicariate of Mendi to the Diocese of Mendi and transferred Bishop Firmin from the titular see of Conana to the residential see of Mendi. The same letter confirmed Mary, Mother of the Divine Shepherd, as patroness of the cathedral and assigned the Diocese of Mendi, along with those of Bereina, Sideia, and Daru to the Ecclesiastical Province of Port Moresby:

This constitution was in turn executed by Archbishop Dominico Enrici, the Apostolic Delegate, at North Sydney, on Jan. 3, 1967.

Another adjustment of the Diocese of Mendi came on Jan. 16, 1971, when Pope Blessed Paul VI, by the apostolic constitution “Quod sit stadium Nostrum;” created the Diocese of Kerema from parts of the dioceses of Mendi and Bereina. All that part of the Diocese of Mendi which lay in the civil district known as the Gulf District was transferred at that time to the new Diocese of Kerema.¹⁷⁴

The most recent major change in Mendi’s status in the Papua New Guinea church has been the removal of all five Highland provinces from the archdioceses of Port Moresby and Madang and the establishment of the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen, with the suffragan sees of Mendi, Wabag, Kundiawa, and Goroka. This was effected by Pope Saint John Paul II on March 18, 1982, by his apostolic constitution “Qui Divino Consilio,”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Word of this reached Mendi July 10, 1965.
¹⁷⁴ This area had previously been visited only twice by the Capuchins, one in April and May of 1959 by Father Otmar, again in May of 1960 by Monsignor Firmin. By the time Father Benjamin Madden made his six-day walk from Lake Kutubu to Kikori in June or July of 1973, most of the area he covered was no longer part of the Diocese of Mendi, but it possibly was still under the care of Bishop Schmidt, as Virgil Patrick Copas MSC, the first bishop of Kerema, was not named till May 24, 1976 (MDN Aug. 1975).
¹⁷⁵ AAS 77 (1982) 762-763. There were other changes in the boundaries that have not yet been mentioned here, e.g., the addition of Lake Kopiago to Mendi from Wabag; the transfer of the southern half of Kandep parish from Mendi to Wabag; and the straightening of other boundaries between Daru and Mendi. Documents effecting these changes are thought to be in the curia at Mendi.
Propaganda is happy to know that the Erave Centre of Spirituality, founded in 1974, is going well, and it may really be considered as exemplary in the Country. The same may be said of the ‘Catechist Training Centre’ where men are being trained from the different dioceses of the Highlands and where there are also facilities for their families.

Agnelo Cardinal Rossi, 1982

12

Highland Powerhouse

Erave, or as it is locally known, Kasuiogoremi, differs in many ways from the other main stations set up by the Capuchins. To begin with, it lies at a much lower altitude than the others – 3,700 feet to be exact – and therefore is generally warmer than the others. Also it is not in the center of a large population concentration, so that whenever a second friar was stationed there for reasons of fraternity, he sometimes was given the care also of part of what is now the Kagua parish.

This explains no doubt why Erave was one of the last areas entered by the Capuchins even though it was one of the first areas talked about and was indeed open to missionary settlement at a very early date.

Actually the Erave area was the first part of the Southern Highlands contacted by outsiders, Staniford Smith having somewhat stumbled into the Samberigi Valley way back in 1910. Leo Flint and H.M. Saunders were back in the area in 1922, as were B.W. Faithorn and Claude Champion in 1929 and Jack Hides and Jim O’Malley in 1935.

When Australian territorial officers returned to the Southern Highlands after World War II, Erave was one of the first areas to be visited from base headquarters at Lake Kutubu. Sid Smith, who reopened the Kutubu patrol post in 1949, came through Erave on his way to Mt. Hagen in 1950.

177 ACPSA 20:2 (August 1965) 55. In the opening lines of the Erave chronicle, Fr. Gregory spoke of Kore and Pole as being the local names for Erave (Erave chronicle, p. 2). Pole is actually the name of the local dialect of Kewa.
Another patrol came in from Kutubu in 1952, led by the District Commissioner from Mendi, accompanied by Dean and Brand, and it was decided to establish a post there to stop raids and fighting by the Samberigi people, who Flint and Saunders had described already in 1922 as wearing dried human hands on their bark belts and dried fingers around their necks.

Brand and Battesby began the Erave station May 12, 1953, and immediately began work on an airstrip, which saw its first landing Oct. 13, 1954.\(^{178}\)

Father Alexis Michellod, who was in the Highlands already by that time had planned to fly into Erave on his way back to Yule Island. Orders arrived for him to stay, however, and he had started building up the Kumin station. Michellod still hoped to get to Erave as soon as possible, since it had the second highest population\(^{179}\) in the Southern Highlands and was the only station there which had an airstrip and no Protestant mission. Learning, however, on Oct. 27 that Lutheran missionaries had already been there, and finding himself short of trade goods, he decided to stay at Mendi and wait for supplies and reinforcements.

As it turned out, the Lutherans chose not to settle at Erave, and it was actually only a couple of months later that two married couples, representing the Unevangelized Field Mission (now known as the Australasian-Pacific Christian Missions) established Erave’s first mission station on May 27, 1957.\(^{180}\)

After Father Anastase Paoletti’s December 1954 visit and Father Henry Kusnerik’s April 1955 visit, both mentioned in reports the current thinking that Erave would be one of the first five main stations.

Indeed while the friars were in Australia enroute to Papua, Michellod wrote Bishop André Sorin of his plans to have one of the Capuchins stationed in Erave. “I’m asking for a permit for myself also, so I can accompany the new Father and begin this foundation with him.”\(^{181}\)

Once the Capuchins had arrived, however, and Michellod and Father Otmar Gallagher had had a chance to find out what plans were for the area, Michellod wrote Sorin that Father Stanley Miltenberger, even though marked for Erave, would be staying in Mendi, but settling down in stations to the south of Mendi, so that he might eventually go to Erave.\(^{182}\)

Shortly after moving to Kumin, Michellod met Brian Corrigan, newly appointed ADO at Erave, who had arrived Jan. 6, 1956, and plans changed again. Michellod quickly wrote Sorin,


\(^{179}\) This would seem to contradict what was said earlier in the chapter about Erave’s population. At the time, however, the Kagua patrol post had not yet been established, and the Erave figure of 24,000 contained the vast Kagua population. Today things are the other way around, and the government considers Erave part of the Kagua district. The 1980 census showed the Kagua district to have 34,466 residents, only 6,091 of whom, (2,231 in Kirapi census district, 2,012 in Tsimberigi, and 1,848 in Samberigi) lived south of the Erave River (1980 National Census: Southern Highlands Province, Preliminary Field Count, p. 1.01).

\(^{180}\) Erave chronicle, p. 2; Michellod to Sorin, Dec. 10, 1955.


Mr. Corrigan – a Catholic – advised me to send a priest there without delay. A permit for Father Stanley to go to Erave has been requested and I think you will not consider it inappropriate if Father leaves for this new foundation. From Erave there is air service joining Erave to Port Romilly. Father Stanley could go down to Port Romilly to begin the station in view of a future base for cargo.\textsuperscript{183}

Father Stanley actually paid Erave a quick visit sometime between Jan. 9 and Jan. 23, 1956,\textsuperscript{184} and was thus probably the first priest in that part of the Highlands.

After that, Michellod planned to have Stanley open a station at Erave. Father Otmar Gallagher in Tari, however, was opposed to opening another station because of his general “opposition to starting too many stations,” which would thus force the friars to be involved in one-man operations. It would seem that he not only informed Father Victor Green of this, but also visited Michellod in Mendi and the two of them discussed a number of things including his reluctance to having Stanley stationed by himself at Erave.

Michellod wrote Sorin of his meeting with Otmar, saying that it had been decided to have Father Stanley open a station at Kuvivi “near the junction of the Lai, Nembi, and Mendi” Rivers,\textsuperscript{185} from which the Lai, Nembi, and Wage Valleys could be developed. Michellod also announced, “I have postponed the foundation of Erave. Kuvivi is more important.”\textsuperscript{186}

Michellod himself went to Erave and reported to Sorin in July 1956 that “on a recent trip to Erave some 15 of the native government employees asked me for a priest or at least for Mass on Sundays.”

Indirectly Stanley did have an early effect on the area in the person of Gary Murphy, whom he had attracted as Mendi’s first expatriate lay missionary. Murphy left the mission to enter the government’s service as a teacher, and when the government began its school at Erave on May 27, 1957, he was in charge.\textsuperscript{187}

Michellod left in October 1956, but Otmar still had the Erave situation on his hands. In February 1957, he told Sorin of his own plans to open a station there.

If we could get an exceptional Catholic native, perhaps we could do something about getting started in Erave.\textsuperscript{188} He could build up a station down there and one of us could visit there on Sundays…It would not be much flying and we would be back early in the afternoon. If it isn’t too expensive, a priest would go there every Sunday for a couple of hours or so.

\textsuperscript{182} Michellod to Sorin, Jan. 8, 1955.
\textsuperscript{183} Tomassetti to [Mission Office, Pittsburgh], Jan. 9, 1956 in PL 1: 29-30; Gallagher to Green Jan. 23, 1956.
\textsuperscript{184} At the time, the territorial government was planning to move its Mendi station to Kuvivi (Tomassetti to K. Quinn, Feb. 28, 1956, in PL 1:44; Berard’s chronicle, Feb. 5,1956).
\textsuperscript{185} Michellod to Sorin, Feb. 4, 1956. Otmar was probably referring to Kuvivi and Erave, when he told a friar in Puerto Rico, “We may open two more stations before the year is out. This is a real scoop. Even Fr. Provincial doesn’t know it yet” (Gallagher to Joe Schreck, Jan. 17 1957).
\textsuperscript{186} Murphy was still teaching in the government school, when Fr. Gary visited there in April 1961. According to Fr. Matthew, in 1984, Murphy later operated a store in Erave and had a stroke or a heart attack.
\textsuperscript{187} Sorin replied that he thought that Ferdinand Maino, a veteran teacher in the Mendi area, “if he decided to go back” would make an excellent choice for starting the Erave station (Sorin to Gallagher, Feb. 15, 1957).
Otmar went on to suggest that on Sundays when he was the only priest at Mendi, he could celebrate a second Mass at Erave “for the benefit of ADO Corrigan and his family and whatever Catholic personnel there may be among the government native employees.”

Fidelis Miltenberger’s first flight into Erave was on Sunday, Aug. 4, 1957. Just which priest went along has not yet been discovered. The only other Sunday flight that year was on Nov. 10, when Father Otmar Gallagher and Gregory Smith took Provincial Minister Father Claude Vogel there. At that time Corrigan took them on an aerial tour of both the Erave and Kagua areas.

Though there was not a single Sunday Erave excursion listed in Fidelis’ log for 1958, there were a number of midweek trips which perhaps enabled someone to go there and celebrate Mass. Fidelis and his wife spent a few weeks’ vacation at Erave, Feb. 1-23, 1959, and Stanley went Feb. 23 to say Mass for them and the other Catholics there. He later told Father Don Nally:

> The place itself is not very big, but to my way of thinking, it is an ideal spot for our central school and a farm and perhaps a plantation of some sort. I intend to bring up the idea at the big get-together in Mendi when all the Capuchins are there for Brother Claude’s jubilee. It is high time, I think that we get something like a farm started so that we can have a few fresh vegetables. I’m tired of living out of tins; it would actually be easy to get a garden started somewhere. I’m sure the prefect will see the wisdom of things.

Just how Stanley actually raised the question is not known, but the subject certainly did come up. The councilors met at Mendi on March 30, two days before Brother Claude Mattingly’s jubilee, and Otmar notified Father Claude Vogel, that they had recently decided to begin a main station, a central school, and a plantation at Erave.

> I admit that opening a new station now is stretching ourselves just about to the limit. But it is important that we have a good location for our central school and I feel that we have seen enough of the Southern Highlands to know now that Erave is the best location available. I think we should take it before it is too late.

> The climate of Erave, as well as the fertility of its soil, make Erave the best location for our central school. The valley is not very large so we have decided to apply for a lease of a large piece of land as soon as possible.

> “The Erave Valley is not very large,” Otmar explained, “and I have a feeling that planters will soon be moving in.” Elsewhere in the letter, he noted that the Erave government officer, whom he described as “a very good Catholic” was willing to help find a good block of land for the friars. The officer thus referred to was not Corrigan, but Ron Neville, who had been on the 1951

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189. Gallagher to Sorin, Feb. 5, 1957. Actually he asked Sorin if he could binate, i.e. celebrate two Masses a day, and Sorin replied that as vicar delegate he was already empowered by canon 806 to grant such permission himself.
190. F. Miltenberger’s pilots log.
191. Ibid.
193. Miltenberger to D. Nally March 5, 1959.
patrol of the Tari Basin. No longer in government employ, Corrigan was one of the planters referred to. He and his family were developing a coffee block in Erave.

Once such an application was filed, Otmar noted, the Capuchins would have to station someone at Erave, and Father Gregory had been tentatively chosen. He would go there in a few months, so that things would be ready to open the central school in February 1960. “The buildings would, of course, be of bush construction,” he added, “but there is a great deal of forest in that valley and it should be rather easy to obtain good timber for permanent houses….”

Otmar went on to say that they intended to apply for three leases, totaling about 200 acres: a mission lease of five acres, a special lease of about 50 acres for the school (buildings, play areas, and gardens) and the rest an agricultural lease for a plantation.

Shortly after the announcement of the opening of the Erave station, Monsignor Firmin Schmidt was appointed prefect apostolic. Otmar noted in his letter of June 2, 1959, therefore, that while he would examine land at Erave as soon as Neville had located some, neither Gregory nor anyone else would be stationed at Erave prior to Firmin’s arrival.

Several times that year, Otmar and others visited Erave to say Mass and bring the Sacraments to the Nevilles and Corrigans and other European and native Catholics stationed there in government service.

Otmar wrote Claude again in July,

If weather permits, I am going down to Erave this weekend to check on the blocks of land that Ron Neville…has located…I hope that we are able to obtain a large block. I intend to make various applications as soon as I possibly can so that by the time Monsignor Firmin arrives, someone can take up residence there and get things ready for the opening of our central school next February. We have to get things started by the beginning of October, if we hope to be able to open the school there early next year.

Firmin did not arrive in Mendi until Oct. 21, 1959, but he and Otmar were in Erave already Nov. 8 looking over the proposed site of the mission, special, and agricultural leases. Firmin also had Mass at Ron Neville’s home for the Catholics in Erave. Gregory then visited there at Christmas.

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196 When Neville moved from Erave to Lae in September 1961, Fr. Gregory wrote: “The whole station—natives as well—will miss him” (Erave chronicle, Sept. 15, 1961). After leaving government service, Neville moved to Mendi and served as a member of the House of Assembly. A naturalized citizen of PNG, he operates several businesses in the Southern Highlands, including a coffee block in Erave. He and Colleen are close friends of many of the friars.

197 When Gary visited Erave April 4, 1961, he visited the Corrigans, and noted, “They have a budding coffee plantation. Beautiful grounds. Shows what can be done at Erave in a couple of years.”

198 Berard said he was one of those who visited Erave during this period. He went there to survey the lots with Ron Neville. He said the traverse details of the blocks are in the field books kept in Mendi (Tomassetti, comments on this text, 1984).

199 Gallagher to Vogel, July 8, 1959.

200 Schmidt chronicle, Nov. 8, 1959.

Not long after that, on Feb. 29, 1960, Firmin and Brother Claude went to Erave, and Neville took the prefect on a bike “along the proposed boundaries of our lease.” That evening Claude showed the first movie in the history of Erave, which Firmin described as “a real thrill for the natives.” The next day Monsignor offered Mass in Neville’s home for about 25 people and in the afternoon enjoyed a game of tennis.  

With Neville’s help, the Catholic Church eventually managed to obtain leases of 305 acres of land from the local residents, and the time had come to start work on the new main station, the central school, and the plantation.

Father Gregory Smith, who had worked for four years in the outstations of the Upper and Lower Mendi and Lower Lai Valleys, spent a week in Erave in September 1960, no doubt making plans for his move there.

THE MAIN STATION

Gregory flew the 43 air-miles from Mendi to Erave on Oct. 20, 1960, accompanied by Longa, his cook, took up residence with the Nevilles, and began work on a house for himself and Lou Ciancio, secular Franciscan lay missionary from Pittsburgh, who had recently arrived in Mendi.

When Firmin arrived in Erave at mid-month, he found “Just about the entire mission lease (five acres) was already cleared of trees and bush, and the friar’s house was well along in construction.”

By Christmas Gregory and Lou had most of their house finished save for the roof. Work then came to a standstill until Jan. 10 when a DC-3 charter aircraft finally flew the roofing material in from Madang.

With much help from Neville and the local government carpenter, the house was finished.

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202 Schmidt chronicle, March 1, 1960.
205 Schmidt to Staab, Dec. 9, 1984.
Mendi
Monsignor. Firmin Schmidt, OFMCap, prefect apostolic
Father Otmar Gallagher, OFMCap, prefect delegate pro-prefect, superior
Father Senan Glass, OFMCap, upper outstations
Father Benjamin Madden, OFMCap, lower outstations
Brother Claude Mattingly, OFMCap, builder & mechanic
Sister Noreen McLaughlin, OSF, primary headteacher
Sister Martine Mayborg, OSF, primary teacher
Sister Annata Holohan, OSF, primary teacher
Sister Claver Ehren, OSF, primary teacher
Fidelis Miltenberger, pilot
Josephine Miltenberger, pilot’s wife

Tari
Father Paul Farkas, OFMCap, main station, mission education officer
Father Berard Tomassetti, OFMCap, outstations
Father Timon Kaple, OFMCap, outstations
Brother Mark Bollinger, OFMCap, builder & mechanic

Ialibu
Father Henry Kusnerik, OFMCap, main station, first councilor
Father David Dressman, OFMCap, main station associate, second councilor
Father Gary Stakem, OFMCap, outstations
Felix Walaba, builder

Kagua
Father August Rebel, OFMCap, main station, outstations

Erave
Father Gregory Smith, OFMCap, main station, primary headteacher
Lay Missionary Lou Ciancio, primary teacher, infirmary

Though the flooring was not yet nailed down, Gregory and Lou moved from Nevilles’ into their own new home on Feb. 3.

On April 4, 1961, Gary visited Greg at Erave and wrote that

Greg’s house is not finished yet, though he and Lou are living in it. Government carpenters are working for him in their spare time. Right now they are lining the living room – upper part plywood – lower half local pine. It will look first-rate. No inside plumbing or running water yet. Nor big tanks. But it is all very livable.

The present “church” is merely an extension of the school and the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved. A lot has been done in four months. The place was a heavy forest. The work is slow but shows great promise.

By November the lay missionary’s house made of bush materials was finished, but some furniture and shelving still had to be made before anyone could live there.
On Nov. 13 they started putting up posts for the combination laundry house. “Have yet to get up a bush-material church. That is next and a very important thing, for as yet we do not reserve the Blessed Sacrament. I’m not at all pleased about this.”

The new church was started on Dec. 7, 1961.


April 19, 1962 – New bush church blessed by Father Roy. Father Senan said first Mass same day.

Meanwhile Firmin recalled the fact that Gregory was the only friar at Erave, and on July 3, 1961, already he had assured the provincial that

Since October 1960 we have tried to get a priest to visit Father Gregory on an average of once a month. I myself visited Erave on four different occasions. Naturally the desirable solution under the circumstances is to have another priest stationed there with Father Gregory.

Gregory left for retreat in Mendi on Nov. 19, which was to be followed by his home leave; and Father Roy Schuster arrived on Nov 24 to cover while Greg was away.

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From January 1962 until January 1963, Father Roy worked at developing outstations of Erave and caring for far-eastern outstations of Kagua.

The first Erave outstation Roy began was Mararogo. In the second half of 1962, he started Tiapoli (then known as Tsimberigi), Kirapi and Woru on the Erave side of the river and six others in what is now the southeast part of Kagua parish: Karanda, Kalawira, Poruberi, Epapini, Kabaro, and Koya. Most of these latter stations were first contacted by Father August Rebel on his way to meet Roy, and the two of them then worked their way back through the same stations.

By the end of the year, Chimbu catechists were stationed at Tiapoli, Mararogo, Kirapi, Karanda, Epapini and Poruberi.

Roy also spoke of visiting Rambatane, Yakor, Sokunapi, Iapea, Yowalea, Agu, Menakari, Yamarupi, Labuko, Waruanda and Roba,

June 11, 1962 – 75 kids in school at Mararogo with Andrew Maino teaching.

Father Brian Newman was assigned to Erave Aug. 3, 1963, and was to go there in another week or two. He actually arrived Aug. 28.

Brian went on his maiden trip today to Tsimberigi (Tiapoli) Sept. 4, 1963.

First group baptized on Oct. 27, 1963 – seven natives baptized.

March 29, 1964: Andrew Maino arrived back at the mission.

According to Brian, Roy had already started work at Koiali when he got there. Brian, however, started mission work at the main station itself and started Erave outstations at Bongaraiwa, and probably Kopere <he speaks of one south of Erave> and Kagua outstations at Wanore.

As late as April 1968, Firmin wrote of Erave, “Unfortunately the population there is very small and hence there isn’t really much mission activity possible. In time I’m sure the population will increase.”

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207 Fr. Greg listed it first among Erave’s 10 outstations and said that all the others had been started “since the 1st of July this year” (G. Smith, report 62.2).
209 Erave chronicle, p. 21.
210 Erave chronicle, p. 23.
211 Schmidt to Mrs. E. Bamford, April 15, 1968. Firmin gave no reason why he expected the population there to grow.
Despite the smallness of the population, by Sept. 23, 1978, there had been 1,061 baptism in Erave.

THE CENTRAL SCHOOL

It was Father Michellod who introduced the idea of having a central school for the Southern Highlands. While the first friars were enroute to Tari, Michellod wrote to Sorin of making Kuluanda at Tari the central school for teachers in the Highlands, and Otmar wrote Father Joseph Schreck that Michellod was “building a school in Tari where we’ll be able to train catechists for the entire mission.”

Father Berard Tomassetti alluded to this the following month, saying, “Until Christmas…I’ll be teaching catechism, English and reading, writing and arithmetic to our future co-workers in evangelizing the people.”

After his somewhat unexpected arrival at Tari, Father Paul Farkas was appointed to run the school and wrote on Jan. 26, 1956, “Though all our missions will have schools, this one here will specialize in training teachers. We will be getting boys from Mendi and Ialibu in the near future.”

When in May of that year Paul had to return to the States for corrective surgery, Bishop Sorin decided to move the central school to Mendi where Father Louis Van Campenhoudt could care for it. Otmar objected, saying that it would be too costly; and the Bishop, after pointing out that leaving it at Tari would probably require Van Campenhoudt’s being moved to Tari, left the decision in Michellod’s hands.

Michellod suggested that the Bishop accept his resignation as vicar general and let Otmar make such decisions.

It seems that during this period, the more advanced boys were actually brought from Tari to Mendi and in April 1956 Van Campenhoudt who had had 35-five years’ teaching experience, started a school for them as well as children from the government station and local adults.

Once Paul returned to the Mission and Van Campenhoudt left it in late 1956, talk of a central school evaporated until 1959.

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213 Tomassetti to McGann, Nov. 29, 1955.
214 Farkas to McGann, Jan. 1956.
215 Miltenberger to Green, May 13, 1956, in PL 2:27; Gallagher to Sorin, May 22, 1956; Sorin to Gallagher, June 14, 1956.
216 Michellod to Sorin, une 14, 1956.
217 Miltenberger to Green, May 13, 1956, in PL 2:27; Tomassetti chronicle, April 4, 1956.
In early 1957, realizing that teachers were needed immediately in every direction; Otmar asked Sorin to try to obtain some more teachers for him as he had done for Michellod already back in 1954.

Actually two of the earlier teachers, Ferdinand Maino Kap and Louis Vanguia, had still been in the Southern Highlands until that time, but they now decided to enter the DeLaSalle Brother’s school to prepare for certificate as grade B teachers. Sorin replied that Otmar’s best bet would be to come to the coast himself and personally present his plea to the priests of the Mekeo and Roro districts. This Otmar did in May, and shortly thereafter 16 Mekeo teachers arrived from the coast for a two-year stint in the Highlands.

Two of these were sent to Tari and the rest placed in the Mendi outstations. Otmar wrote that the Catholic missions should have close to 350 boys in school soon. It would seem that this figure ignored those in the schools of the Ialibu Basin who were being rendered similar services by the first Simbu catechists there. In any event, the new mission education officer, Father Paul Farkas was able to report by September, “We have 22 schools in operation with nearly 1,000 children under instruction.”

Ten more Mekeo teachers arrived March 25, 1958. The terms teacher and school, of course, were used rather lightly. None of the Simbus and only one of the first group of Mekeo “teachers” was a certified teacher, and even Alexis Maino’s education was on the Standard 7 level. Asking for more teachers in 1959, Otmar said, “We could use many, many more teachers…Any boy who is a good Catholic and can speak, write, and read a bit of English can do the job we need done.”

Even with the Mekeo and Chimbu helpers already in the Capuchin missions, Otmar wrote Aug. 11, 1959, that there was need for 20 more Mekeos in the Tari area and 10 in each the Kagua and Mendi areas, and Ialibu could use many more since the Simbus all spoke pidgin rather than English.

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218 Sorin to Gallagher, April 10, 1957.
220 Gallagher to Sorin, April 15, 1957. Whether he actually visited the Roro area is uncertain, since those who came seem to all be referred to as Mekeos.
221 Namely Alexis Maino, Paul Ofu, Henry Aiai Aufe, Cajetan Ake, Leonard Fakepo, Joseph Aisa Ofoi, Charles Vagu’u, George Aisa’au Efo, Joseph Vitori Maino, as well as five others identified simply as Alan, Nicholas, Clement, Opu Auo, Stanislaus Opau Oivi. (Gallagher to Sorin, June 13, 1957; Gallagher to P. Guichet, Aug. 11, 1959).
222 Gallagher to Vogel June 10, 1957.
223 Just why he became MEO only in 1957 is not clear. Already in February 1956, Michellod said Fr. Paul had been appointed mission education officer with Fr. Guichet as direct superior for the moment. (Michellod to Sorin, Feb. 4, 1956). In 1957, however, Otmar asked Sorin if he could appoint Paul mission education officer, since “Fr. Paul is devoting practically all his time to the classroom” (Gallagher to Farkas, Feb. 27, 1957.)
226 Maino was the first certified teacher in the Catholic schools of the Southern Highlands. Even Fr. Paul did not take exams for his certificate until November 1957. (Farkas to Friends, December 1957, in PL 5: 14.
227 Gallagher to Guichet, Aug. 11, 1959.
228 Gallagher to Guichet, Aug. 11, 1959.
Meanwhile, it took only a short time then until there were a number of young men who had reached the limits of most of these Simbu and Mekeo “teachers,” and it was decided to send two groups of the better Mendi mission students out to schools in other missions so that they might eventually be trained as teachers. Father Otmar said that the friars hoped to give them “a full course so that in about six or seven years they are qualified teachers.”

Three of these – Iai, Sure, and Kelelo, all from Ialibu – were sent to Fatima College at Banz in the Western Highland. Fifteen others were sent to Bishop Sorin’s school at Mainohana on the south coast. Seven came from Tari: Pandako, Hololo, Honolo, Makobe, Ango, Tungalia, and Pokajo. Ialibu sent four: Nale, Ambrel, Koiaie and Uia. Kili and Tere from Mendi were also in the group. Names of the other two have not come to light. The boys were flown to Port Moresby and on Feb. 5, 1958, Father Berard accompanied them to Mainohana.

Otmar said there was great reluctance on the part of the parents to have their children go to the coast. He said Kili wanted to go, but his father said “a big crocodile would eat him or else he’d get lost. When he told me that, big tears rolled down his cheeks.”

Not all of the 15 were superior students. The friars also sent eight older youth “too old to be in school” whom it was hoped could pick up enough conversational English to be able to act as interpreters and to perhaps help with teaching “even if they don’t have much education.” This did not work out too well, however, and seven of the older students were brought home in late April.

The remaining students did well at Mainohana, but afterwards various ones asked to transfer to one of the high schools in the Highlands. Renewed talk of starting a central school in the Southern Highlands probably stemmed from problems these lads experienced on the coast, as well as difficulties in getting large numbers of them into the already crowded central schools of the other Highland districts and from other possible difficulties. The first actual mention found so far was Stanley’s suggestion that the school be put at Erave, but he seemed to take it for granted that the Capuchins were already planning to have a central school somewhere in the Southern Highlands.

About the same time, Father Henry Kusnerik put the importance of starting such a school into a new perspective, when he wrote Father Giles Staab,

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233 One was possibly Emil Erip from Pinj in the upper Mendi Valley. Erip later attended the Madang Teachers College and helped start6ed the Burani parish school.
The government is pressing strongly for universal education in English…. One of our pressing needs is…to set up a school or schools for teacher training… Unless we do this soon, the government and the Protestant Missions will gain the initiative and we will be left far behind. Other Catholic Vicariates here have set up such schools and already have teacher graduates (all native) but they are <too> hard-pressed to fill their own needs to supply us with teachers.  

By the time land was acquired at Erave, it was already too late to organize a central school there before the 1960 school year. Firmin and his council decided Dec. 11, 1959, “to run a temporary central school (Standard 3) at Tari.” Thus, on Feb. 6, 1960, “school boys of Standard 3 from Ialibu and Kagua” were brought to Mendi to go to Tari with the Mendi boys for school beginning the following week.  

Work on the central school at Erave began soon after Gregory’s arrival in late October, 1960, perhaps even earlier since Gregory had gone there for a week in September. By the time of his mid-November visit, Firmin was able to note that the school building, like the priest’s house, was finished except for the roof. Gregory had 34 boys working on clearing gardens, and quite an area had already been cleared. By early December, Firmin said, there were over 50 workers on the project.  

Since we will have around 60 boys in Erave as boarders beginning with February, we will need a lot of kaukau. According to our estimates, each lad eats about eight pounds a day. That is a lot of food, even if it is potatoes. We would be satisfied to buy it at a half cent per pound. But unfortunately there aren’t enough native gardens at Erave to supply our native boys all year round. That’s the reason we’re putting in large gardens of our own.  

During the first week of January 1961, VH-BVG, the mission plane, worked constantly at bringing some 62 lads in from all over the prefecture and also two native teachers from Rabaul. School officially began Feb. 13 in the midst of one of Monsignor Firmin’s visits to the new station. As the school buildings were not yet complete, the first classes were held in the two dormitories.  

A little over a week later, while Father Paul Farkas, the mission education officer, was visiting, Abua, one of the boys from Tari, suffered a severe head injury, and Lou was called upon to use his special training in first aid by performing minor surgery. As the whole case appeared hopeless, the boy was baptized and given the last Sacraments during the medical treatment. Later Gregory wrote in the chronicle, “God has been good to us, and the lad Peter Abua is doing fine.”  

On Easter Monday, a field day was held at the government headquarters with all the schools participating: the government school, the UFM mission, and the Capuchins’ central school. “Our boys walked off with all the awards,” Gregory wrote; adding, “The field day will be an annual affair and to Louis Ciancio goes all the credit for initiating and organizing the thing.”  

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237 Kusnerik to Staab, Aug. 9, 1959.  
238 Schmidt chronicles.  
239 Schmidt to Staab Dec. 9, 1960.
Andrew, one of the boys from Ialibu, died suddenly on the afternoon of July 4. “His death shook the boys a good bit.” But Father Gregory and Ron Neville were able to calm them down. Ciancio and McQuillan made a coffin and after a Requiem Mass the next morning, the mission plane took the body to Ialibu.\(^{240}\)

Father Otmar came to Erave on Aug. 17 for his first visit since the establishment of the station.

On Nov. 19, Ben Madden walked the school boys out to Kagua and Mendi for their summer recess. They stopped at one of Ben’s outstations along the way. Two and a half days of walking.

All the boys arrived for the new school year on Feb. 1, 1962. Father Benjamin walked them halfway to Kagua and met Father August. Together they arrived at Kagua where they met Father Sam and the Ialibu boys. They walked the boys halfway to Erave.

Feb. 2: School opened, with Gary Murphy supervising.

Feb. 7: Father Paul arrived to establish a school schedule. Arranged a prep class with Lou and Father Roy teaching and talked Gary Murphy into teaching Standard 5.

Feb. 15: Leo Litau – new teacher from Rabaul arrived. He had a B certificate and five years’ experience with Standards 1-2.

In March of 1962: Bishop Firmin visited Erave and inspected all classes. There were 87 boys in three Standards.  3, taught by Leo Litau from Rabaul; 4, Alphonse Kanga Alsef from Rabaul; 5, Gary Murphy; Father Roy and Lou Ciancio handled prep with about 18 boys.\(^{241}\)

May 10: Roused last of old bush barracks. All boys were in new boys’ houses now, but not the teachers.

June 22, 1962: Frank Davidson arrived for examination of our school. Gary said that Frank thought our school equal to any government school.


January 4, 1963: Father Roy was reassigned to Kagua.

While Father Greg was in the E Course\(^{242}\) at Rabaul, Father Matt was sent to Erave April 8, 1963, and he was in charge until Nov. 28. Father Greg wrote at that time, “It is obvious that Matthew will do well anywhere. He has done a superb job in handling Erave during my absence.”\(^{243}\)

\(^{240}\) Erave chronicles; Schmidt chronicle.
\(^{241}\) Schmidt chronicle, March 8, 1962.
\(^{242}\) Teacher training course.
\(^{243}\) Erave chronicle, pp. 20 & 24, April 8 and Nov. 28, 1963.
Lou Ciancio left for good July 12, 1963.

Greg finished the E-Course Nov. 1, 1963.

March 25, 1964: Gavan Spillane, newest lay missionary, arrived. Had been with the mission for six months, but had been taking the Teacher’s Training Course at Madang.

At the beginning of the 1965 school year, four Standard 6 graduates at Erave went to Mainohana: Raymond Walo and John Nono of Mendi, Thomas Tai of Tari, and Alexis Konombu of Ialibu.

Things began to fall apart of the central school in 1966. When Firmin visited in Erave July 13, 1966, he noted, “It seems Father Greg easily gets on people’s nerves by harping on minor points and correcting teachers in public.”

According to Leo Supuri, later a teacher at Nipa and other places, Father Gregory left at the end of the school year in 1967. He assembled the whole school and said he wanted to start a high school, but that the bishop wouldn’t agree and so he decided to leave the mission.

The bishop and his consulsors met, therefore, on Dec. 1, 1967, and decided that:

……The Central School at Erave would be discontinued, and the schools on the main stations would be strengthened with more teachers to handle most of the children without their having to leave their own area, and Standard 6 would move to Mendi.

……Bill McQuillan and lay missionaries would finish a large permanent lay missionary house, hoping it would eventually house Christian Brothers running a secondary school for boys.

……A new catechist training center, directed by Father Dunstan, would be placed at Erave rather than Pangia, because of garden area available there.

……Father David would move to Erave as superior and pastor.

……Father Roy would replace David as pastor of Kagua parish, which now would include the southeast outstations previously cared for by Erave.


As for taking Standard 6 away from Erave this year, this was necessary due to the fact that there was no one at Erave, after Father Greg left, who had a certificate which would qualify him to teach that Standard. While at least one of our men coming has taught for several years, he does not have the certificate necessary for Standard 6. Another teacher, who has the proper qualifications, has not made a definite commitment as of yet. We could not afford to wait with this decision.

By the beginning of the 1968 school year, the Standard 6 boys of the Southern Highlands Catholic missions were transferred to Mendi, which now had 13 girls and 25 boys in Standard 6. Erave was thus closed as a central school for boys.

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244 Schmidt chronicle, July 13, 1956.
245 Supiri, interview by Burkey, July 13, 1979.
246 Tomassetti, comments on this chapter, 1984.
247 Bamford and Jerry Yates, teachers at Erave, both left mission service in January of 1968 to start a store business in the Poroma area.
Within a few years, a high school was added to Mendi Diocese’s school system and not long after that the Highland dioceses joined together to open a Catholic teachers college at Mt. Hagen.

The Erave central school, however, had already made a profound effect on the rise of the local youth. Among the alumni of the school, to name but a few, were:

Raphael Aareta of Erave (brother of Father Colman Renali) who died in 1984 after serving his country in its diplomatic corps, both in its embassy at Washington, D.C., and its mission to the United Nations in New York.²⁴⁸

Simon Apea Soge of Ialibu, who was the Mendi diocese’s first local priest.

Senan Koa of Mendi, district manager in Koroba

Colman Marone of Det, Mendi diocesan priest

Pius Neia of Mendi, community school teacher

Don Bosco Kamanongo of Mendi, high school teacher in Ialibu and Mendi

Colman Renali of Erave, Mendi diocesan priest

Leo Supuri from Pinj. After Erave he went to Mendi H.S. and Moresby Teachers College. He has taught at Hiwanda government school near Burani (1975-76), Marorogo south of Erave (headteacher 1977), Muli government school (1978), St. Fidelis School at Nipa (1979).

Robert Temo of Pinj, in 1979 a teacher in the Kagua government school.

Firmin Walipa of Mendi, secretary to the Provincial Works Department in Enga

Luke Wambol from Pinj, Mendi, who in 1979 was the full time Diocesan Education Secretary for all Catholic schools in the Mendi Diocese.

²⁴⁸ MDN wrote that Raphael “has been given an eight-month assignment in Washington. He hopes to see Fr. Greg, his former teacher.”
THE PLANTATION

The idea of starting a coffee plantation at Erave did not come out of the blue with Stanley’s proposal for a vegetable garden. Talk of a plantation to help support the mission to the Southern Highlands had been going back and forth across the ocean for the previous 15 months.

During Father Claude’s 1957 visitation, Otmar and Claude discussed the possibility of the mission’s acquiring a plantation. About a year later, Otmar resurrected this idea in several letters to Claude, who answered that, while he subscribed to the idea, he was not yet ready to pursue it. His hesitancy revolved about the finances involved, which at one point Otmar suggested might be as little as 12,000 Australian pounds (about $27,000) for a down payment, with mortgage payments being made from the plantation’s profits.249

He also mentioned the idea to Father General Benignus Re Ceccone in Rome, who promptly informed him that, since friars could not own a plantation, he would have to wait until the mission was an ecclesiastical entity.250

There was no reference to what kind of plantation Otmar had in mind, nor even to where it might be located, until Stanley tacked the idea of a plantation onto his proposal for a vegetable garden.

There was no mention of a vegetable garden in Otmar’s April 21, 1959, announcement, but much about a plantation.

The Erave Valley is fantastic so far as coffee growing is concerned. From the planting of the coffee bean to bearing of coffee on the tree takes only about 22 months and in most other areas it would take about twice that long… We figure that with a few work boys and some work from the school boys, it would be possible to start a plantation and improve the lease according to the conditions laid down by the government without a large outlay of cash. The conditions are very reasonable and could be met without too much difficulty.251

Thus presented with a plan without an enormous price tag, Claude wrote back, “I think your efforts to secure desirable land for central school and plantation at Erave are quite proper.”252

Neville drove Monsignor Firmin around the boundaries of the proposed plantation and other blocks when the latter visited Feb. 29, 1960, and he offered to work for the plantation. On his next visit, April 2, Firmin seems to have offered Neville a contract, but the duration of the agreement and security offered were insufficient.253

“We have applied for a lease for over 300 acres at Erave. A good part of that is in timber. A fellow like Mr. [John] Gregor could possibly manage a sawmill there.”254

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250 Gallagher to Vogel Nov. 5, 1958.
251 Gallagher to Vogel, April 21, 1959.
252 Vogel to Gallagher, May 23, 1959.
253 Schmidt chronicle, April 2, 1960. Schmidt to Staab Nov. 15, 1960, however, says “his contract was unacceptable, so he remained with the government.”
254 Schmidt to Staab, Nov. 15, 1960
On June 12, 1961, Bishop Firmin sent Bill McQuillan, newly arrived lay missionary from Brisbane, to Erave to act as farm manager.255

A month later, Firmin wrote, “Bill McQuillan is at Erave and is doing an excellent job as a general handy man. He will start farm work soon.”256

A Massey Ferguson 65 tractor arrived at Erave Dec. 6, 1961, as a gift from the Christian Mothers in Cumberland, Maryland.257

A Meadows sawmill from the States arrived for Erave in August of 1962, and Father Tim and Brother Mark went to Erave to set it up.258

The following year, Bishop Firmin had a meeting with the Department of Lands in Port Moresby to answer questions re application for special lease at Erave. A favorable verdict brought the diocesan lease to about 313 acres.259

When Bill McQuilan took Firmin on a tour of the property in 1965, the bishop noted, “Improvements have been tremendous in the last few years.”260

When Firmin visited Erave July 13, 1966, he “discussed with Bill McQuillan the possibility of taking over the tea plantation in Mendi.261 He likes Erave but is willing to develop a tea plantation.”262

On Aug. 14, 1968, Brother Claude, Father David, and Bishop Firmin went to Erave to look over the sawmill project, the building program, etc. Firmin decided that some milling for Det and Pangia would be done at Erave. Unfortunately, Paul Huebler claimed he didn't know how to run the mill. Firmin assured him Father Timon would come to teach him.263

Re the tea plantation, see Chapter 21 below.

THE CATECHETICAL SCHOOL

At a Mission Meeting on Nov. 24, 1961, a proposed catechetical school was discussed, and Father Paul Farkas was appointed to study the matter.264

255 Schmidt chronicle, June 8, 1961.
256 Schmidt to Staab, July 11, 1961.
258 Schmidt chronicle, Aug. 6 and 28, 1962.
259 Schmidt chronicle, Aug. 8, 1963.
260 Schmidt chronicle, Aug. 5, 1965
261 Roger suggested he should have written “the taking over the starting of a tea plantation in Mendi” (White, comment on present text, 1984.
262 Schmidt chronicle, July 13, 1966
At that meeting, “an alternate plan was proposed, just in case the catechetical school will not become a reality – namely that each Father in charge of bush stations will train his own catechists. He would have the boys with him constantly. They would help Father in carrying his gear, building up stations, etc. Father August is actually doing this at the present time.” 265 This alternate plan became the actual course of action for the next six years.

Father Paul went to Kondiu in February, 1962, to study the advisibility of starting a catechist’s school, and came back advising that the school should be conducted in pidgin unless we have boys who have completed Standard 5. In view of this, Firmin decided to delay the school for at least another year. 266

A year later Firmin was still thinking of a catechetical school. He wrote in November,

> We expect volunteers for Erave as catechists. Before they are sent out, giving them a brief course (few weeks) of material - show them how they should run a station. We are not organizing a school for catechists this year. As an alternate, I would suggest you train your own catechists as Father August and Senan are doing. They keep their candidates with them constantly. They have class every day. 267

Father Dunstan wrote Dec. 30, 1965, that Father Gary and he were kept busy all day in the publishing of a letter from an SVD priest on training catechists.

On Aug. 10, 1966, Dunstan noted in his Pangia chronicle, “The Bishop, Father Sam, and I stayed up quite late discussing many important matters such as the possibility for a future catechetical school, the new seminary, and so forth.”

The mission meeting of 1967 also discussed catechists and improving the quality and status of catechists; 268 and when the central school was closed in December, 1967, it was finally announced that Erave would become a center for training catechists, with Father Dunstan Jones as its director.

On August 14, 1968, Brother Claude, Father David, and Bishop Firmin visited Erave and agreed to the site of the catechists school. 269

In 1969, the dream actually became a reality. Firmin wrote,

> At Erave we have a primary school and in another month we will open a catechetical school. Some of our students at the catechetical school will be married and their wives and children will also be at Erave. According to the missionaries there now, we will have a lot of work for you looking after our own personnel and the neighboring people. 270

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265 Schmidt chronicle, Nov. 24, 1961
266 Schmidt chronicle, March 1, 1962.
269 Schmidt chronicle, August 14, 1968.
270 Schmidt chronicle, August 14, 1968)
The Katekis Trenin Senta was set up in August, and school began Sept. 22, 1969. It was first planned to be a two year program, but later it switched to two one-and-a-half year segments. Bishop Firmin went to Erave for the formal opening of the catechetical school and the blessing of school and dormitories on Oct. 14. On Aug. 17, 1970, Firmin went there and on Aug. 19 blessed the chapel.

At its first graduation on June 10, 1972, 22 graduated of the 36 who had started.

After several years in the buildings of the old central school, the KTS moved onto the agricultural lease which had never been developed and gradually built a whole new compound.

On Nov. 27, 1972, Anne Averillo wrote Father Berard, “As the Marist Sisters will be here before Feb. 7, 1973, I have decided to make my own plans for returning home.”

Averillo was a member of the KTS staff in its early years. Others were Father Dunstan, Brother Ray Ronan, Sylvia Louth, Bill Ludwig, Cornelius Koya, Alphonse Lynch, and Juanita Ferguson.

On Dec. 5, 1973, they had the second graduation at our Catechetical Training Center.

Firmin wrote Feb. 21, 1974, that the Vanimo plane arrived with catechists and families for the catechetical center. The KTS had a limited number of openings for catechists from several other dioceses: Vanimo, Mt. Hagen, Madang, Daru and Wabag.

In 1974, there were 55 catechists in training at Erave, 35 in the junior class, and 20 in the senior class. Also living at the school were 37 wives and about 50 children.

In June of 1974, a catechist from Wabag died at Erave from a relapse of hepatitis.

This school had its third graduation June 2, 1975, and Firmin Wakira, Alphonse Wi, and Evan Epei from Pangia parish were among the graduates.

On Nov. 17, 1975, the haus pilai of the KTS was blessed at Erave.
By June of 1975, the curriculum at the KTS included courses not only in Scripture, Christian Doctrine, Church History, Liturgy, Pastoral Problems, Homiletics, Teaching Methods, and Drama, but also Literacy, Mathematics, Social Studies, Political Education, Science, Cultural Anthropology, Art, and Sewing.

At many places the Erave catechists receive better pay and increased responsibilities, e.g., six of them were named eucharistic ministers by Firmin at Pangia May 15, 1974.

Father Lester Knoll replaced Father Dunstan as director in 1977; and during Lester’s absence in 1978 (and possibly part of 1977), Father Roger White was acting director.

The parish councils usually chose who should be sent to Erave from among the catechists available.

Thus, now the more advanced of the catechists of the Southern Highlands and various other areas have received much of their spiritual background at Erave.

Due to the fact that so many of the top catechists are connected with Erave, the Senta has also been a catalyst for much of the liturgical growth of the diocese.

Already in 1971, Father Dunstan observed,

> The enthusiasm with which the Holy Week Liturgy developed at KTS was received not only in our diocese, but on the national scene shows that we are moving in the right direction.

> One of the richest contributions the Catechist Center can make to the pastoral work of the diocese is to continue its research into the customs, culture & mind of the people so as to make the Liturgy, Sacramental and Spiritual Life actually touch deeply the mental and daily life of the native population everywhere.

**SPIRITUAL YEAR**

In 1973, the bishops of PNG planned to begin a special spiritual year for their diocesan seminarians before they would begin theological studies at Bomana.

Firmin visited Kamiliki near Goroka in early June 1973, and found it “terribly inadequate for the spiritual year.” About the same time, Firmin also visited De Boismenu Mission, 50 miles from the seminary and “found it inadequate for spiritual year.”

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280 Schmidt chronicle, Nov. 17, 1975.
282 Where in the book should or could I work in Det Kat School and other such efforts? When did the Det school start?
283 KTS report, April 1971.
At Bishops’ Conference at Rabaul June 17-26, 1973, the bishops accepted Bishop Schmidt’s offer to use the buildings of the old central school at Erave, which had been augmented in the meantime, for the spiritual year, and they appointed Father Kevin Twomey, MSC, as its director. Twomey and Schmidt visited Erave July 31, 1973, and “Father Twomey was very favorably impressed with the potential of the place.”

“During the week of Feb. 11, 1974, the students for the first spiritual year arrived, 22 of them. The director Father Kevin Twomey, arrived sick from Brisbane. He was joined on the faculty by Father Nick De Groot, SVD 284

The spiritual year’s first year saw the greatest turnover in personnel the program has ever had. It had already been planned that Father De Groot would be there for only the first part of the year. Long before he had left, however, Father Twomey became ill and departed at the end of April. From then until the new director, Father Gerald Walsh, OFM, arrived in late July, Father Dunstan Jones covered Twomey’s classes. Father John Bovenmars, MSC, came also in late July to replace De Groot. 285

“Father Twomey,” wrote Firmin, “gave the seminarians a good foundation in spirituality of a priest. What he gave to the students will benefit them for life.”

Thus, all candidates for the secular priesthood received much of their spiritual background at Erave.

At the end of their first year back in Bomana, Firmin wrote, “Spirit was probably the best in many years. The Spiritual Year evidently made a difference.” 286

In November of 1976, 13 seminarians finished the spiritual year and received their soutanes. 287

On Feb. 14, 1977, Firmin wrote there would be 35 in spiritual year in its fourth year at Erave.

The spiritual year was actually a part of the course at the Diocesan Seminary in Bomana, and many bishops visited Erave. In one week in 1977 there were eight of them there: Desmond Moore and Gregory Singkai on April 27; Gerard DeChamp, Paschal Sweeney, Eusebius Crawford, William Rowell, and Alfred Stemper on April 28; and Leo LeMay on May 3.

286 Schmidt chronicle, Nov. 10, 1975.
287 Erave chronicle, Nov. 4, 1976.
CAVEAT: The following chart has never been fully checked and is left here only to provide a general idea of who was covering what areas and when. On the chart, Capuchins are referred to by their first name shown in regular type, and secular clergy by their family names shown in bold face. Full names of the friars are listed in Chapter 24 (pp. 328-337) and those of secular priests in Chapter 16 (pp. 221-222)

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SUMBURA AREA
Jesus came from Heaven, a long time ago, to people of a far away place. He was God’s Son. Jesus was sent by His Father, God, to bring His talk to us, to teach people how to live right, to make pay for the sins of sinners by dying on the cross. Jesus returned to heaven after finishing His Father’s work. Thence He sent the Holy Spirit to go inside Pope, Bishops and priests, to do the same work that Jesus did – everywhere, including Pureni. So know from this talk why the Father is here, and who sends him here. Hear the talk of the Father well, for it is the talk of God.


13

Beyond the Tagali

The very week that Father Stanley Miltenberger first entered the Kagua Valley on the east end of the Southern Highlands, Father Berard Tomassetti also expanded into a vast new land on its western end: the Duna Sub-District beyond the Tagali River.288

For almost a year after he had helped span the Tagali, Berard had been concentrating his efforts on helping Brother Mark Bollinger build a more permanent friary at Gubari-Guluanda and on moving out into the rest of the Tari Basin. “I am wearing out the shoe leather,” he had written Father Patrick McGann, “making my way to new places and trying to win the friendship and good will of new faces…, a campaign to know and become known.”289

Just as Berard’s bridge building reached its final stages in mid-1957, Father Paul Farkas had been named mission education officer for the Southern Highlands and was called to the coast for two months of visiting the Sacred Heart missionaries’ schools so as to prepare himself to coordinate growing Capuchin educational activities, which already had 1,000 students in 22 schools.

Berard took charge of the main station until Paul returned and then obtained two special permits to enter restricted areas. The first, obtained Sept. 2, 1957, gave Berard and Mark the freedom of the entire Tari Basin, an area still restricted to other missionaries. Catholic Church authorities had hoped all along that Berard and Mark’s cooperation in spanning the Tagali might bring them some such advantage.

In early October 1957, Berard had made several trips into the foothills of the Doma Peaks on a motorbike, intent on finding and negotiating a site for a new main station in the Tari Basin. Yet even though he had found two good sites, he had not been able to obtain the local residents’ approval.

However, after numerous preliminary excursions in all directions, accompanied at times by Brother Mark, Berard had started picking out sites for outstations in the Tari Basin. Half of the outstations still active in the basin began at this time: Haro, Hambuali, Yagilianda (now known as Tauri), Pi (Pinagia), Hagabo, Pipianda, and Pai. Various degrees of beginning had also been made at Tabaya, Hadani, Timani, Holabe, and Yumu.
Berard had been severely limited at first in what he could do with these outstations, since he had neither teachers nor trained catechists to keep things alive on a day-to-day basis. He had depended, therefore, on teaching as much of the catechism as he could each time he visited one of the places, and he had spent much time doing just that. By Easter of 1958, three of the new outstations – Halibi, Hagabo, and Hambuali – had been built up, and work was about to begin at Haro and Pi. School programs were also underway at Yobiya and Hambuali, run by two school boys from Tari: Hengene and Undiabe.

The second permit, issued Sept. 19, 1957, allowed Berard to minister to the government people at Goloba (or Koroba as the Australian officers called it). This permit had been quite restricted, however, and required Berard to travel by motor vehicle directly to and from Goloba, without setting off the road, stopping along the road, or staying overnight at Goloba, and further required that he be accompanied by another permit holder. The catch was that he was the only one with a permit, so in effect his activities already limited to the Goloba government station were further confined to times when the government officers were ready to escort him from the Tagali bridge.

Earlier, as part of his work on this bridge, Berard had managed to get to Hedamali, about four miles up the western side of the Tagali. Ever since then, the Hedamalians had been asking that he start a station there. Believing it “a better center for activities in the Duna Sub-District than Goloba,” Berard applied for and obtained still another permit, but not without a great deal of misunderstanding.

The Wednesday after Easter of 1958, Father Otmar wrote Father Paul that District Commissioner Harry West had agreed to grant Berard an interim permit to enter the Hedamali area and promised to notify Tari ADO Crellin by radio – presumably the following day. On the strength of this, Otmar directed Berard and two recently-arrived coastal teachers – Peter Miria Ikupu and Peter Arupa from Waima on the Papuan coast – to go out as quickly as possible and start at Hedamali what would be considered “a main station,” even though it would be well nigh impossible for a friar to reside there regularly until additional manpower became available.

Though the interim permit did not arrive the next day, Berard went into action. He spent the day repairing his motorbike, and on Friday he drove out to Yobiya. Ikupu and Arupa joined him there on foot and took up residence awaiting the opening of the Hedamali station.

From this time on, Father Paul started taking a more active role in the development of the Tari Basin outstations. He took Tangelia out to Halibi April 17 to begin teaching there, and Andaya to Hungabo the following day. He also blessed three outstations during the following weeks, erected large crosses, and assigned patrons to the outstations at Hambuali (St. Conrad of Parzham), Halibi (Bl. Giles of Assisi), and Hungabo (Bl. Mark of Aviano).

Meanwhile out at the Tagali, Berard made a walk-about up the left bank of the Tagali on April 14, ostensibly to visit the parents of one of his schoolboys. Before returning, however, he took a raft across the Tagali to Hedamali and began making plans for the building of a station with the leaders Kundu, Tayabe, and Pidue. The very same day, on the other end of the Capuchin Mission, Father Stanley left Ialibu en route to the Kagua Valley.
Berard took a walk in the other direction, down the left bank, April 18, and talked with men at Tumbiali, a place surrounded by large population groups, where he hoped to eventually develop another main station. “This place would bear looking into,” Berard wrote Bishop Sorin, “before other interested parties take it up. It is known that the government considers the development of hydro-electric power from Tagali Falls.”

After 11 days of waiting for the permit, Berard visited Gubari to discuss things with Paul and learned that DC Harry West had been there the previous day and told the friars it was all right for Berard to proceed to Hedamali.

Berard returned to Iobidia, therefore, and the following day, April 23, he and his carrier Paro went to Hedamali to discuss ground for a mission station with Kiwie, Tayabe, and Kundu. It was finally agreed to start clearing ground north of the government station on the east side of the road.

When Harry West and his wife stopped at Iobidia on April 24, Berard and they discussed his work at Hedamali and Goloba over a cup of tea.

Evidently, however, either West’s verbal permission had never reached Jim Sinclair, ADO of the Goloba Sub-District, or else the latter felt he should have had more to say about it. In any event, when Berard visited Goloba on Sunday, April 27, West, Sinclair, and Berard had an after-lunch talk about Hedamali, and the exchange between the ADO and the priest was variously described as “quite a to-do,” “a disagreement,” and “quite an argument.” Berard subsequently got the permit, but it was made quite clear that he would have to be accompanied by another permit holder: Paul, Mark, or one of the government officers.

Berard immediately notified Mark; and May 1, after going as far as they could by motorbike, they walked the rest of the way into Hedamali. CPO Bob Hoad met them there and heard claimants of the land promised to the mission. Onge and Kobi were now opposed to providing land, but Tayabe was still prepared to give his, so they settled for the acre he was willing to give. Nothing more could be done then until Sinclair had heard Hoad’s report and authorized their building, so Berard and Mark returned to Gubari to start packing cargo for the new station.

Sinclair’s permission arrived at Yobiya May 3; and two days later, the missioners started commuting daily to Hedamali to clear ground and begin building the St. Conrad of Parzham Station. Arupu and Ukupu went along May 14 to fix up the interior of their houses; and the following day, they took with them the local students who had been studying at Gubari.

Berard and Mark moved their own gear from Yobiya to the new station May 23 and temporarily set themselves up in one of the teachers’ houses. Having made an oratory out of one of the rooms in this house, Berard celebrated the first Mass at Hedamali May 24, 1958; and school began the 26th with 26 boys.

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Paro, later baptized Francis, was killed years later near Tinditugu, west of Hedamali, by enemy tribesmen. This was during a tribal fight in which, as a Christian, Paro refused to participate. His two young sons witnessed it as they lay hidden in nearby bushes (Tomassetti, comment on OTB, 1984).
Even though both Halibi and Hedamali were planned as main stations, there is no indication Berard ever treated them as such. He and Mark stayed at Hedamali until June 6; but once the station was well underway Berard put Ikupu in charge of the station and continued visiting many of the other outstations in the Tari Basin, saying the first Masses at Halibi June 17, Hugabo June 24, and Hambuali July 11. Arupu, after serving a month at Hedamali, returned to Gubari-Kuluanda to assist Father Paul at the main station. Tangelia then moved from Halibi to replace him – and to continue his own preparation for Baptism.

Aug. 15, 1958, was certainly a red-letter day in the history of the mission to the Huli-speakers, as Father Paul baptized Joseph Francis Tangelia and four other Huli boys. Michael Francis Agilu had gone with Berard and Michellod to Mendi in 1956, had been Paul’s chief assistant at Tari ever since, and would now become a catechist there. Peter Francis Halalu had been the first teacher at Yobiya. Michael Mark Magobe would later be a catechist at Pipianda, and John Peter Pogave at Hedamali. Some 250 people were on hand for the baptisms; and at the Mass following the ceremonies, the young men received their First Communion.

This group of young men and the second Huli group baptized exactly one year later included a great many of the friars’ first local collaborators in the work of the Church. The second group consisted of Henry Hengene, teacher at Iobidia; Andrew Andaya, apostle of the Margarima parish and later premier of the Southern Highlands Province; Mark Homogo, who had led Father Michellod to Guluanda; and also Gabriel Talain, Matthew Mabidia, Michael Pelago, and Paul Egara. It is noteworthy that even before their own baptisms, while serving as catechists, Hengene and Andaya had each baptized three persons in danger of death – including Andaya’s own father whom Andrew baptized July 27, 1959.

While this second group was preparing for Baptism, Berard renewed his search for main stations and decided on Halabi as a replacement for Gubari-Guluanda in the Tari Basin and Tambiali, south of Yobiya, for the area near the Tagali River.

By Nov. 12, 1958, Berard had finished a full report on the Halibi site and recommended to Otmar that he immediately apply for a 90-acre lease which would include room for a mission airstrip. Berard had not yet had time to prepare a similar study on Tambiali, but suggested that Otmar quickly obtain five acres there so as to declare their intentions before the Unevangelized Field Mission would settle there.

Berard continued paying visits to Tambiali off and on through 1958 and the first half of 1959, referring to it all the while as “the site we have in mind for a new main station.”

After much discussion of this with Father Paul, Bill Crellin, and others, Berard finally went to the area on April 8, 1959, to talk to Togori, Yoi, and other men of Tambiali, who agreed to give land for a station and to talk to the Telabo line about ground for an airstrip. When Berard arrived there again, however, April 13, prepared to start building, some of the men objected to the previous agreement, thus prompting Berard to cross the river and accept Kangagua and Munugu’s invitation to build at a place known as Bebo in the Pureni area.

In the meantime, Neil Desailly had replaced Jim Sinclair as ADO of Goloba; and he and Berard quickly became good friends. A note from Desailly and PO Neil Grant reached Berard at Yobiya July 14, asking him to come to Bebo. Berard left early the next morning, crossed the Hibuga swamp and arrived before noon.

During the course of the next few hours, an agreement was reached that Berard would be allowed to build his station there, and in turn he would help the government throw another span across the Tagali. Berard camped with Neil Grant at Tabava to the north of Hedamali on July 26, and the following day the two men left for Bebo by way of Yobiya and Tumbiali. Berard said the first Mass at Bebo July 27 and directed improvements on the house there.

He was gone then from Bebo for more than two months. Father Paul Taphanel made a return visit to the Southern Highlands, and Berard showed him around the Tari area and then accompanied him on a visit to the Ialibu area, where five years earlier Taphanel had done his unauthorized reconnoitering. After hurried visits to the Tari outstations, Berard then returned to Bebo on Oct. 5, and started a school for the boys of the area.

Patrol Officers Neil Grant and Gordon Smith took Berard to the Tagali rapids Oct. 9, and the three of them then walked upstream looking for a bridge site. It was not until Berard’s seventh visit to the area, April 8-13, 1960, however, that work finally began on the second Tagali suspension bridge.

At this time Berard also walked westward with Grant along the new road to Goloba and found what he considered a much better site for a new main station. Berard first saw Bebegó on April 11, was immediately impressed, and began discussing the possibility with the local leaders: Warago, Ango, and Tigi. During two other April trips to Bebego, Berard arranged to have ground cleared for the main station now known as Pureni. On one of these visits, he arrived just in time to find a UFM missionary trying unsuccessfully to persuade the people to accept him instead of the priest.

Berard started commuting May 3 to Bebegó from Bebo to supervise the building of the new Pureni station. Some 300 people were there waiting for him. Ten days later he was able to move in, and on the 11th day, May 13, 1960, said the first Mass at Pureni.

The next day Berard gave his first talk to the local people, which went along these lines:

> Jesus came from Heaven, a long time ago, to people of a far away place. He was God’s Son. Jesus was sent by His Father, God, to bring His talk to us, to teach people how to live right, to make pay for the sins of sinners by dying on the cross. Jesus returned to heaven after finishing His Father’s work. Thence He sent the Holy Spirit to go inside Pope, Bishops and priests, to do the same work that Jesus did – everywhere, including Pureni. So know from this talk why the Father is here, and who sends him here. Hear the talk of the Father well, for it is the talk of God.\(^{292}\)

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\(^{292}\) Tomassetti chronicle, May 14, 1960.
During July work on the proposed bridge began in earnest, so on the 25th, Berard made arrangements to move the Bebo station to the bridge-site, which took on the new name Tagalitogo, Huli for “the Tagali bridge.”

During the next two years, Berard, as the only civil engineer in the Southern Highlands at the time, not only offered advice on the lower Tagali bridge, but also lent his expertise to the building of another bridge across the Anga Gorge along the Mendi-Ialibu road, as well as various other engineering activities of both the government and the Catholic missions throughout the New Guinea Highlands.

Most of the time, however, he spent “bringing God’s talk” to the various stations he had started among the Huli, both in the Tari Basin and along the Tagali, and during this time Tari remained his center of operations.

The late Father Timon Kaple joined the mission to the Huli already in September 1960, but successive home leaves by Berard and Paul kept the Tagali area united with Tari. But once Paul returned in November 1961, Timon and he were able to cover the Tari area, and Berard made Pureni his headquarters for expansion into the Trans-Tagali.

MISSION DIRECTORY 1-1-1962

**Mendi**
Msgr. Firmin Schmidt, OFMCap, prefect apostolic
Father Otmar Gallagher, OFMCap, prefect delegate, pro-prefect, superior regular, main station
Father Senan Glass, OFMCap, upper outstations
Father Benjamin Madden, OFMCap, lower outstations
Brother Claude Mattingly, OFMCap, builder and mechanic
Sister Noreen McLaughlin, OSF, primary headteacher
Sister Martine Mayborg, OSF, primary teacher
Sister Claver Ehren, OSF, primary teacher
Sister Mel Hoffman, OSF, primary teacher
Lay Missionary Mary Rame, primary teacher
Lay Missionary Bill Fallon, pilot
Ken Olma, pilot

**Tari**
Father Paul Farkas, OFMCap, main station, mission education officer
Father Berard Tomassetti, OFMCap, outstations
Father Timon Kaple, OFMCap, outstations
Brother Mark Bollinger, OFMCap, builder and mechanic

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293 “the lower Tagali bridge was built under the supervision of Fred Riley, an employee of the Works Department of the Southern Highlands” (Berard, comment on OTB, 1984).
294 Berard said the first Mass at Pureni on June 19, 1958 (Tomassetti to McGann, June 19, 1958, in PL 6:22). Already on Oct. 7, 1960, ADO Crellin of Tari took Msgr. Firmin to Pureni. The latter wrote in his journal “Was favorably impressed with the possibility of a mission there – possibly a main station. Berard evidently had not yet moved there by Jan. 31, 1961, as Firmin visited there with him at that time and wrote: “Here, as also at all stations, they wondered why the priest could not settle down with them. Burani is a young but promising station. We have a private airstrip at the Mission which could be gotten ready for use in a month’s time.”
Sister Naomi (Thomas Ann) Frey, OSF, primary headteacher
Sister Annata Holohan, OSF, primary teacher
Sister Lorraine Geis, OSF, primary teacher

Ialibu
Father Henry Kusnerik, OFMCap, main station, first councilor
Father Gary Stakem, OFMCap, outstations
Father Samuel Driscoll, OFMCap, outstations

Kagua
Father David Dressman, OFMCap, main station, second councilor
Father August Rebel, OFMCap, outstations
Lay Missionary John Gregor, builder

Erave
Father Gregory Smith, OFMCap (on leave), main station, primary headteacher
Father Roy Schuster, OFMCap, main station (pro tem
Lay Missionary Lou Ciancio, primary teacher, infirmarian
Lay Missionary Bill McClellan, farmer, builder

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Berard had already begun work on a mission airstrip in front of the Pureni station and he had also added new stations at Tinditugu and Wagala and he had even made a trip into the Mananda area to the south to install Fabian as a catechist at the Gumu (or Komo) patrol post.

Berard ran the Pureni station by himself until the arrival of Father Matthew Gross; then together the two of them developed a large group of outstations which were eventually formed into the three parishes of Pureni (May 25, 1967), Komo (ca 1974), and Koroba (ca. 1969).

295 The T-form church of St. Conrad and the 1,800’ x 200’ airstrip was blessed Nov. 1, 1962, but the strip had not yet been approved by the DCA.
296 When it had its own priest, Father Patrick Ruane. Actually Father Timon Kaple was the first to go to Gumu and said the first Mass there on March 4, 1961.
297 When it had its own priest, Father Gabriel Lomas.
Meanwhile at Tari, Father Timon and others extended their work both north and south.

Father Myron Flax was reportedly the first white man to enter the area known as the Gambe. Together with the area around Bayaga, this northern end was cut off from Tari and established as a parish of its own on Jan. 19, 1975, with Father Malachy McBride as its first pastor. Towards the south many other outstations were established in an area called Benaria. Over the years, however, lack of available manpower has often caused this area to be abandoned to others.

Fr. Myron Flax was the apostle of the Gambe.

**PURENI**

*CAVEAT:* The following chart has never been fully checked and is left here only to provide a general idea of who was covering what areas and when. On the chart, Capuchins are referred to by their first name shown in regular type, and secular clergy by their family names shown in bold face. Full names of the friars are listed in Chapter 24 (pp. 328-337) and those of secular priests in Chapter 16 (pp. 221-222)

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PURENI FOOTNOTES:

(2) First there Nov. 1, 1957;
(3) First there Jan. 22, 1957, but there to start stat. April 14, 1958;
(4) First there April 13, 1959;
(5) Berard was on leave from 1960 until May 1961;
(6) Made main station after Nov. 1961;
(7) Berard on leave Nov. 1964-May 1965;
(8) Made parish May 25, 1967;
(9) Myron filled in while Matthew was on leave, Aug 1967 –March 1968;
(10) Owen was there from January until March 1971;
(11) Flanagan filled in for Gabriel when he went on leave in Oct. 1971;
(12) Matthew was on leave July 1972 until Jan. 1973;
(13) Made parish in 1973;
(14) Flanagan was at Koroba from April 1974 until Dominic’s arrival;
(15) Made parish in 1974;
(16) Dominic went on leave March 1978;
(17) Dominic went on leave sometime in 1982.
People well-acquainted with the history of the Mendi diocese date the entrance of the Church among the Witu-speaking people of the populous Poru Plateau with Father Gary Stakem’s dash into the Pangia area in November 1960.

The Catholic Church, however, and even Gary himself, had already started to influence the people of this savannah-covered “Land of the Toni,” now known as Pangia parish, considerably before that.

Catholic Leahy brothers, Mick and Dan, had in 1934 been the first Europeans to enter the Poru Plateau, and like them Fathers Taphanel and Krimm had in 1954 circled the base of Mount Ialibu, marking future Catholic stations at Apena, Pondi, Kouya, and Mondanda. As it turned out, these two priests made more of an impression than they have generally been given credit.

\[\text{Footnotes:}\]

298 A quillbacked anteater found in the area
299 Which Taphanel labelled Kande on his map

Fr. Gary Stakem was the Apostle of the Poru.
Another Catholic, Garry Keenan, led the first government patrol through the district in April 1957. Within two months, Father Otmar Gallagher wrote Bishop André Sorin that Father Gary and Father Henry Kusnerik were unhappy with the location of the Amburugi station and that DC Robert Cole and ADO Desmond Clancy had both suggested moving the station onto the Poru Plateau. Otmar spoke of trying to get a permit for one or two of the friars to visit that area.

Brother Paul Idomaka from Ialibu actually walked into the area July 11, 1957, re-marked three places previously selected by Taphanel and Krimm, and re-promised several bosboi that Catholic priests would soon be opening outstations there. He had been back in Ialibu scarcely a week when his fellow Josephite Oblate, Brother Felix Walaba, enroute from Ialibu to Orei, circled around the back of Mount Ialibu so as to visit the Witu sites.

So far as is known, permits were neither asked nor needed for these visits by Paul and Felix, both natives of Papua. It does seem odd, however, to read in Gary’s chronicle for Sept. 17 that their Lutheran counterparts had been through the “Wiru Taru,” as he first called the Witu area, choosing sites for mission stations “despite the fact that the area is still restricted.” He then added a note which was to be the theme for much that followed. “They certainly have got a jump on us there. Only time will tell.”

The very next day, Gary complained to Keenan that Turi, government tanintok, was “threatening and advising” many Wiru-Taru bosboi to visit and stay at the Lutheran Mission rather than the Catholic one. About a week later, two Witu leaders came to Amburugi “despite Turi’s threats,” saying they had driven Turi’s line out once before, so why should they be afraid of him now. They also said that, on their visits to Krimm’s parish at Ulga in the New Guinea territory, local people had advised them to accept the Fathers rather than the other missions. The following week another leader from “far south in Wiru-Taru” came in “to invite us to come to his people.”

Early the following year, the bilingual (Kewa-Witu) western end of the Poru Plateau and part of the Kagua Valley were opened to mission activity. Word of this reached Ialibu at the beginning of Holy Week, and on Holy Saturday, Brother Felix fetched various items from Orei so he could move either southwest with Father Stanley to Kagua or southeast with Gary to the edge of the Witu. Buka, bosboi from Iogere, came in Easter afternoon to say that Lutherans had tried to get a place from him to build a station, but that his line had absolutely refused. “…It seems we have only one place there that is certain,” Henry wrote.

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300 Ialibu chronicle. April 3, 1957; despite an information department sheet which says the first patrol to Pangia was made in 1958.
301 Local leaders. Fr. Gary interjected many Melanesian pidgin terms into his writings. As the terms often promote precision and as the custom is still quite prevalent in English conversations of PNG missionaries, a number of these have been stirred into the present chapter for flavor’s sake. Sounding them aloud often helps one understand them in context.
302 Noel Fowler told Gary Oct. 3, 1960 that “natives can go anywhere. But if you send one into restricted area and there is trouble you will have to stand good for it. So legally no objection if one of our catechists toured the Wiru.”
303 Later a member of the National House of Assembly.
304 Interpreter.
Along with Buka, Brother Felix, his Orei *tanimtok* Toropo, Ialibu *bosboi* Ambrel and Mange, a Ialibu school boy from logere named Koiomu and 10 carriers, Gary left Ialibu at 8:35 a.m., Easter Monday, April 7, 1958. Shortly thereafter they entered a heavy forest from which they emerged two and a half hours later.

The first place visited was Mondanda, one of the Taphanel-Krimm sites. Lutherans, however, had already been there and claimed the site as their own. The local leaders were not there so Gary moved on to the *kiap’s* rest house at logere, where he arrived at 1 p.m. After settling in, he met with a group of men and “tried to explain a little of our purpose there… First impression is that the natives are friendly enough.”

After a private Mass the next morning, the first Mass celebrated in Pangia Parish, Gary heard from Felix that some of the lesser leaders were not sold on him, as the Lutherans had given them something. Five minutes or so out the road, they came to Tindua, “a nice spot that the Lutherans marked last week.” The younger *bosboi* who accepted the gift said he tried to return it when he heard that the old *bosboi* wanted the priest, but that they would not take it. “Any rate,” Gary wrote, “the place is being given to us.” Felix appointed 12 *kagoboi* and started clearing a place for a priest’s house, cook’s house, and small house.

As Gary passed Mondanda and his way back to Ialibu the next day, the *bosboi* called out and said he would rather have the Catholics but when the others were there they were strong, so he had accepted an ax. “He said he would willingly return it and mark a place for us.” But later he sent word the ground was not his and that he was moving to Ialibu.

On Gary’s second visit to Tindua in May, he wrote that “45 boys and 22 girls sat in the road and listened to me talk for almost an hour.” Later in the day he gave another talk to about 30 *manmari* setting around. “They are most attentive, and the *meris* punctuate the talk with exclamations.”

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305 The first person solemnly baptized at Orei, on June 5, 1960, Thomas Toropo had been interpretor at Orei since 1956. He also served as assistant teacher.
306 Ambrel was probably one of the young men sent to the south coast for schooling in 1956. By the time Gary arrived in Ialibu in 1958, Ambrel was the station *bosboi* at Ialibu. Later, when baptized, he took the name Fabian. Still later he was a business man and a strong church committee man in Ialibu. According to Peter Meis, he was very involved in the ordination ceremony of Simon Apea and other activities. Sadly he took a second wife and this caused his son Francis to turn his back on his Dad and the Catholic Church. Francis was a university student. He eventually married an expatriot girl, daughter of a Bible missionary, and they started a ‘local church’ near the river at Ialibu High School” (Meis to Burkey, Sept. 13, 2016).
307 Mange was the father of Monica Mange Paipul, who is mentioned at the end of this chapter.
308 Koiomu was sent to Standard 3 of the central school, when it opened at Tari in Feb. 1960.
309 Government patrol officer.
310 General laborers.
311 Outhouse.
312 Stakem chronicle April 18, 1958
313 Men and women.
314 Women.
During the next 30 months, Gary established a primitive school at Tindua and managed to visit there 11 times\(^\text{316}\) between his visits to his many other outstations throughout the present Ialibu parish. Gary took Simbu Catechist Bonaventure to Tindua in September 1958; and by October, this first catechist of the Poru Plateau had 85 boys and 40 girls under instruction. When Gary visited in January 1959, Bonaventure held night prayers and over 50 boys and girls showed up. When Bonaventure did not return after Christmas 1959, Gary sent Simbu Catechist Joseph Teine\(^\text{317}\) and Orei-born Jacobus Youevi to Tindua. On Gary’s March 1960 visit, he wrote of Teine,

> About 95 boys and 45 girls. This is far more than we had been getting and much of the credit goes to Joseph. He knows how to get the kids to come and they are doing well in school. A number of the kids know the first 76 questions by heart. Jacobus was only a tokples catechist before. Joseph is training him in the pidgin manner. If only we had more like Joseph.

Gary had the first public Mass at Tindua on May 31, 1959. All of the school boys and about 80 old men and a 100 women attended. The first recorded Catholic baptism in the area was that of Francis Moru, who had fallen from a tree and was thought to be in danger of death. After Youevi baptized him March 16, 1960, Moru went to the main station at Ialibu to receive further instructions in the faith.

From Tindua, which was at the edge of the Kewa-speaking area, Gary continued his efforts to build friendships with the people just to the east in the still-restricted Witu-language area. The evening of his very first day at Tindua, Gary noticed “a gang of kanakas\(^\text{318}\) standing around, some of them “from an area still restricted… I told them we hoped to come to their place later,” he wrote, “but don’t think they were too impressed.”

Besides Gary’s visits to Tindua, there was contact with these people also through various native personnel. Precisely how many and how often is not known, but while Gary was at Tindua in September 1958, he noted that his old friend Ambrel “and his troop pull in on their way back from the Wiru-Tari at 3:30.” Simbu Catechists Ludwig and William came through the Wiru-Taru in late May 1959 on their way from Orei to Ialibu, staying overnight at Moro and Mele; and Teine made a tour of the area from Tindua Oct. 4-7, 1960. After marking 10 places, he led a number of bosboi into Ialibu, where Gary gave each an ax, red handkerchief, smokes, and the promise of kina shells later.\(^\text{319}\)

In the intervening period the government took regular patrols into the Witu in its effort to make sure the people were sufficiently peaceful to allow the missionaries to enter. Little was said about these, but Gary did note in his chronicle two medical cases which Fidelis Miltenberger flew out

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\(^{316}\) In 1958: Sept. 1-3; In 1959: Jan. 19-21., April 8-10; May 28-June 1, June 27-30, Sept. 7-10, Dec. 1-2; In 1960: March 16-17 (with Fr. David), May 3-5, July 19-21, Sept. 27-30

\(^{317}\) Reportedly later a member of Parliament.

\(^{318}\) Fellows.

\(^{319}\) Stakem chronicle, Oct. 11, 1960. Possibly the basis for Bustin’s complaint to PO Noel Fowler Oct. 2, 1960 that two priests were going into the Wiru to pass out kinas. [Stakem chronicle, Oct. 3, 1960] These mother-of-pearl shells came from islands off northern Australian and weighed about two to 10 pounds. Fr. Otmar planned to order a ton of them in 1957 and expected to pay about 90¢ U.S. a pound. (Gallagher to Vogel, Aug. 11, 1957, Gallagher to Sorin, June 13, 1957).
after one of these patrols: one man hit in the face and arm with an ax, the other had a bad bullet wound in his foot. Both men were carried in yesterday on the patrol that went into Wiru-Taru to investigate a recent fight.\(^2\)\(^0\)

During this period, the Lutherans and the East & West Indies Bible Mission, were also quietly yet keenly preparing for the day when the vast majority of the Witu area, with its estimated 10,600, would be thrown open to missionary work.\(^2\)\(^1\)

Through Turi’s efforts, Rev. Willie Hertle\(^3\)\(^2\) of the Lutheran Mission at Ialibu got to know many Witu people, who in turn told him they would be happy to receive him when he came into their own country. By January 1959, according to Gary, the Lutherans had schools at Mondando, Tindua, and another place between, and at each more than enough evangelists. They are undoubtedly waiting for the opening of Wiru-Taru. Rev. Mr. Weber, was there already in March 1960, and Hertle was planning on settling in the Witu.\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^5\)

Gerald T. Bustin, founder of the Bahama Bible Mission\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^6\) also established a station at Pabarabuk on the Wiru frontier east of Tindua and similarly contacted those visiting from many areas to the east. Gary wrote of a long talk with him May 4, 1960,

> Bustin says they have had contact with the Wiru people for 10 years. Also they have strong connections with 50 tribes. He says he thinks the Lutherans have 10 lines, and the Catholics eight. From what he says I gather the Wiru is to be their main field in the Southern Highlands.\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^7\)

For some time then the expatriate personnel of all three churches stood chomping at the bit, much like Oklahoma pioneers awaiting the 1893 opening of the Cherokee Strip.

Also sitting impatiently on the Witu frontier were Harland and Marie Kerr of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, a part of the Wycliffe Global Alliance, a non-denominational Christian group of skilled linguists who specialized in studying previously unwritten languages, especially for the purpose of Bible translation. The Kerrs, their Kewa-counterparts Karl and Joyce Franklin,

\(^{320}\) Stakem chronicle, Feb. 28, 1959.
\(^{322}\) At Tindua on Sept. 7, 1959, Gary met Turi, who was enroute to Kouya.
\(^{323}\) According to Stakem chronicle, Dec. 9, 1958, Hertle had just arrived at Ialibu. He had been born in New Guinea and lived there for all but 12 years spent as a student in Germany. “They seem to be a typically pleasant German couple.”
\(^{324}\) Stakem chronicle, Jan. 19, 1959.
\(^{325}\) Stakem chronicle, March 17, 1960
\(^{326}\) Also known as the East and West Bible Mission and later the Evangelical Bible Mission and still later the Papua New Guinea Bible Church (Gerald T. Bustin II, “The Papua New Guinea Bible Church” [accessed July 12, 2016]. See also [accessed Aug. 1, 2016].
\(^{327}\) Fr. Michellod had written already in July 1956, “La Bible M. a demande l’autorisation pour le Poru ausssitot cette belle et populous vallee sera ouverte ils penetresont. Un minister est designe pour cette vallees (Michellod, annual report, July 1956).
and their families first arrived in Ialibu about August 1958 and settled in at Iogere and Muli in October of that year.

Iogere, however, had mostly Kewa-speakers, so in July 1960 the Kerrs sought a special permit to settle within the restricted Witu area. Territorial authorities were inclined to allow this, but the Ialibu *kiap* Noel Fowler, fearing complaints, suggested that a representative of each local mission should also be given permission.

After another government patrol of the area, however, the government kept the plan limited to the Kerrs; and in early August, it escorted them into the area. They chose a spot at Bolora, which then was about a two-and-a-half-hour trek from the proposed airstrip site at Kouya; and in late August, Harland and a helper started building a house.

Gary learned Oct. 30, that his own long-awaited entrance of the Witu was imminent, but again had misgivings of his readiness for the days ahead.

David [Dressman] stopped at Fowler’s. He learned that the permits for the Wiru have been approved. I gather that they came in Saturday. The one for the Lutherans and Bible must be in the office. At least he said ours weren’t. That they were at the mission in Mendi. So it looks like the trip to the Wiru very soon, and I’m so unprepared. I fear for our stake in the area. I’m afraid the opposition, both of them, will get the better of us. 328

Apparently the Lutherans and Bible Mission did not get their permits until Tuesday, Nov. 1. Meanwhile Monsignor Firmin Schmidt received Gary’s at Mendi and on Oct. 31 flew into Ialibu, enabling Gary to leave at 9:00 the next morning.

With him went Simbu catechist Petrus Tai, interpreter Ambrel, and 15 carriers. The group reached Tindua by noon, and Gary would have gone on to Kouya had he been able to get new carriers. The Tindua men, however, were out doing road work; and as it was a holy day, even the school boys were unavailable.

Learning later in the day that Hertle had arrived at a Lutheran station up the road, Gary wished he had gone on through, but that was but the first of a long string of disappointments.

Before reaching the plateau, Gary noticed a cross that Teine had erected at Pole. The previous week Pole people had asked Gary for a catechist; and unable for the time being to supply one, Gary had asked Teine to erect a cross there. As Gary and he were eating supper at Tindua, however, Youevi told them Hertle had given a Pole leaders three kina shells to get rid of Teine’s cross. Gary wrote in his chronicle:

I suddenly felt sick on my stomach and was able to eat very little. I’m afraid that the days ahead will bring me many more sick stomachs. Went to bed at night but couldn’t sleep well. At 11:30 I got up and wrote a note to Father David asking for more kinas—at least 20. 329

329 Pangia chronicle, Nov. 1, 1960.
Still at Ialibu, when this letter arrived, Firmin wrote in his journal, “Father Gary sent word back of the opposition he is meeting from the Lutherans and East-West Bible. The Lutherans throw kinas around freely.”

Gary arose at 3:00 and prepared to depart. Having celebrated the traditional three Masses for All Soul’s Day, he was on the road by 5:40. Along the way, he learned that Bustin had already reached Kouya the previous day; and shortly after reaching there himself, he saw Hertle was there and had spent the night in the kiap’s rest house. Through his interpreter, Gary further learned that all the Kouya lines had accepted kina shells from Hertle. Figuring he might as well move on, he sent Ambrel to look for carriers, and then went in to talk with Hertle.

He learned he was not the only one upset. Hertle wondered why the kiap had given the Catholics their permit a day ahead of the other two missions. Gary said Firmin had brought his permit from Mendi, and he had no idea why Neal Fowler had not released the other permits the same day.

Hertle denied having paid anyone to remove the Teine’s cross, but said the people there did “belong” to the Lutherans, since he had already promised them nearly a year ago he would send them an evangelist. Hertle added it was not his policy to try luring people away; and if they already belonged to someone else, he would not bother them. He then pointed out that Lutheran contacts were long and strong at both Kouyu and to the south, but that he had heard that the people to the north considered themselves allied with the Catholics.

About that time a commotion arose outside, and Gary learned that while four lines had accepted Hertle’s gifts, one had not; and that line was now willing to receive the Catholic Mission. Following a lot more talk, the local hanuapolisman rose and said the Lutherans could have a place to the south at Tiripini and the Catholics one to the north at Ange. Hertle reluctantly acquiesced; but Gary was delighted, since he had already “given up hope for anything” there. Gary considered the land offered at Ange, however, “far from ideal” and even then doubted that it would be a permanent site.

Shortly thereafter another hanuapolisman from Aria came through and told Gary he had better hurry to Apenda as the Bible Mission envisioned an airstrip there. Thus early on the morning of Nov. 3, 1960, after offering the first Mass at Kouya “for the intention of the spread of Christ’s kingdom in this section,” Gary set out for Apenda, or as he called it Alenda, stopping at several other places along the way.

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332 Motu for “village policeman,” that is a local person appointed by the government to keep peace among his people.
333 Gary frequently called this place Kouya and from February until July of 1962 also referred to it as Pangia. Once he had moved to Yareporoi, however, he began calling that place Pangia. That, however, is the name of the government station.
334 Kouya was the name of the original government rest post; Ange was a ground a bit north, where the first priest’s house was located. Yareporoi was the name of the ground where the permanent station was built. All of these were in an area now known as Pangia.
Near Ange he passed out kina shells to the leaders: Paire of Paieme line, Bi of Kabiri, Ombi of Kaenu, and Karibe of Tamo. He then went on to Pondi, a place like Kouya earlier marked by Fathers Taphanel and Krimm, but Bustin’s people had already taken it over. At Kumiane, the Bible Mission had a house, but various local leaders already in contact with the Catholic Mission had remained faithful. Gary, therefore, distributed kina shells to Tambua of Kambibigi line, Piku of Yoa, and Dug of Wigi, and promised “old Epei” of Konge he would give him a bigger one if he would come to Ialibu for it.

At the government station near Mele, Gary passed Messrs Bustin and Chamberlain\(^{335}\) of the Bible Mission, who told him they had already found a spot for their airstrip.\(^{336}\) On the way down to Apenda, Gary passed another Bible Mission house at a place which Ambrel said Krimm had marked as an airstrip.\(^{337}\)

At Apenda, Gary also saw the place where the local people “had built a house for Krimm” six years earlier. “There are two lines here,” he wrote, “and they want us.” Moreover the people had already cleared a nearby section of ground for a Catholic Mission.

> It’s close to the spot that Father Krimm marked before. The place is not ideal but it is, they say, centrally located for the various lines. We decided on this spot and they said they’ll build a house right away.

Gary distributed kina shells to Wero and Lembongo of the Ongoberi line, Waba of Lal line, and Wairia the hanuapolisman: and then talked to the people of his purpose in coming. “A very attentive audience. I guess close to 300 present. Then I put the radio outside for them to listen. This was a big thrill.”

Gary had intended to go on to Kera, then known as Taikopene; but learning that it was beyond the extent of his permit, he decided to stay a few days at Apenda and make side trips to Moria (on the other side of the Ibei or north fork of the Poru River) and Karabe.

Learning at Moria that the people were already committed to the Bible Mission, Gary returned to Apenda. While he was eating supper, however, Teine pointed out to him that two boys from the Bible Mission were outside trying to get people to come up to their place.

> They said the Master had sent them. They weren’t trying to pull anyone they said, only letting them know they would be welcome. That sure took a lot of gall. They were after the kids, for the men said they wanted the Father. But some of the kids had been greased\(^ {338}\) before and were willing to go on, too. I told the boss boy he must forbid his kids to go—their line should not be broken. Finally I told the Bible boys they should go.\(^ {339}\)

\(^{335}\) Victor and Claudine Chamberlain were based at Tambul, between Mendi and Mt. Hagen.

\(^{336}\) No airstrip was ever built here, as it was not a suitable site (Stakem, comment on manuscript, 1984).

\(^{337}\) It would seem Gary was totally unaware that Krimm had come with Taphanel. When Taphanel revisited Ialibu Aug. 13, 1959, Gary mentioned he had been there earlier, but said nothing of his connection with Krimm. Ambrel, however, surely knew they had been together. Gary wrote, “Ambrel recognized the priest at once.” A circumstance which surely led to Taphanel’s being forgotten, whether by Gary or by the local people, was the fact that Krimm was very much still around, while Taphanel had been in the area for only a fortnight six years earlier.

\(^{338}\) Bribed.

\(^{339}\) Gary also suggested some of the type of items used in this “greasing”: blankets, cups, spoons, plates, lap-laps.
Surmising that Bustin and Chamberlain would be after the kids all the time, Gary talked it over with Teine and decided that he would send him there as a catechist the following week.  

Joseph is strong and if anyone is able to keep these kids in line he is. But he won’t have all the material gifts to offer. It doesn’t look good for Mother Church in the Wiru area. It seems the Bible is concentrating north of the Poru and the Lutherans south of that river. We are struggling to get set in both areas.

The following day, Gary celebrated the first Mass at Apenda, and 118 men and boys and 100 women and girls showed up. Some of the boys, however, despite parental opposition, had gone to the Bible Mission. After Mass, Gary spoke for about 25 minutes, promising to send Teine by the end of the week. He then let the people listen to the radio until noon time, when he turned it off and tried to explain how it and other man-made things were all gifts of God. “A number of the people stayed all afternoon.” The men from Karabe were there also, and said there was no need to start a station at their place since they would bring their children to school at Apenda.

Returning to Kouya, Gary then headed south Nov. 8 for Kalane where he had been told he would be received. Upon arrival there, however, he learned Hertle had already been received there. Gary’s contact, when questioned, claimed a kina had been pushed on him after the other leaders had accepted theirs. Gary found out, however, that there actually were two lines who wanted the Catholic Mission and went with them to examine land at a place known as Mainredio. It was “all up and down and hardly a place to locate a station,” but Gary marked it and the Kalaneans said that soon after a big pig-kill being planned in the area they would build a house on the ground.

While returning to Kalane proper, he ran into Hertle, who inquired whether Gary was looking for him. During a long discussion which ensued, it emerged that Gary’s contact had been lying to both missionaries. Earlier he had received a steel ax from Gary, but then told Hertle he was giving it back and for a long time thereafter accepted gifts from the Lutherans.

Disappointed at the split among the Kalane people, Hertle reminded the leaders that they had all asked for him. Gary’s two lines, however, said they were not present when the others had opted for the Lutherans. “Hertle said he didn’t like broken lines,” Gary later recorded. “However I was willing to take the crumbs. It seems that is all we are going to get in the Wiru area.”

Back at Tindua, Gary learned from Youeve that another Lutheran minister had come in his absence and accused the Catholics of taking his people. “Some of the men we gave kina to,” Gary later admitted, “belong to the Lutherans. One fellow…brought back his kina. He belongs to the Namora line. A number of his line come to our school….”

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340 Gary sent Teine to Apenda, but recalled him already on Nov. 27, 1960, when Noel Fowler informed him that Joseph’s presence there was “contrary to no. 5 of the special conditions of the permit.” Just when he returned there is not yet known, but he was there for a long time thereafter.
341 Obviously referring to the south fork of the Poru.
342 Which Gary continued to call Kalane and today is known as Mainyateke.
Gary made the first of many visits to the Kerrs at Bolora on Nov. 11 and then returned to his many other outstations in the upper Ialibu basin.

Soon afterwards old Epei from Kumiane came to Ialibu for his kina, and men from Poleo arrived to say that they wanted the priest to build at their place. The Lutherans were already there, but three lines wanted the Catholics. Epei returned on Jan. 26, 1961 “to say that he wants a catechist now. Bible Master has been harassing him for the kids. Spreading his stories too…” The following day, Gary added in his chronicle, “Reported that the Lutherans have placed a number of evangelists. Our people are asking for catechists. Nogot.”

Father David Dressman, senior member of the Capuchin Mission, was with Gary when he returned to the plateau on Jan. 28, and a pleasant surprise awaited them at Pondi on Feb. 1st. An old patriarch named Wagi lined up 14 boys and 15 girls and told the priests that, even though the Bible Mission and the Lutherans were already there, he wanted his kids to belong to the Catholic Mission since Father Krimm had marked the place years ago. The hanuapolisman and the councillor urged Wagi to send his kids to the Lutheran Mission, which had given them kinas, but Wagi said he wanted the Fathers; so Gary got out a pad and wrote down the name of each kid and told them to go to the Catholic school at Ange the next day.

Not all was pleasant however. The priests moved on to Kumiane the same day, where Mr. Bustin’s son told Gary that all Catholics were going to hell. “He put it this way: “the teachings of the Church do not agree with the Bible and hence they are in error, and those who hold them can not get to heaven.” This did nothing, of course, to allay Gary’s suspicions that the Bible Mission at Mele hated both him and everything Catholic. Two days later at Apenda, however, the basis for such fears took on a new dimension, when a bosboi informed Gary the Bible Master had “told his people that at the Father’s Mission, they cut off the breasts of the big girls, cook them, and eat them.”

Probably the major event of this trip was the first visit to Yareporoi, southeast of the site where the government was building an airstrip and had already established the patrol post it would call Pangia. The same leaders who had invited Gary to Kumiane owned much of the ground at Yareporoi as well as land on which the government was building. Driven from the area by the Kouya people in earlier fighting, these people had managed over the years to buy back their ancestral lands and were now in the process of rebuilding there. Epei and Piku took Gary and David to Yareporoi Feb. 5 and asked them to settle there with them. Gary wrote,

We are thinking of the place in terms of a mainstation for the Wiru. We selected a piece of ground next to the bush as a site for the first house. (Don’t know when we will put anyone there. Not many people about yet.) …. The place is a half hour walk from the lower end of the airstrip and according to present dreams the expansion would move farther back.

On this second Witu patrol, initial visits were made to Loluapu and Polio, and at the latter place Gary said the first Mass on Feb. 11.

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343 We don’t have any.  
Gary spent much of the following month at Orei in the upper Ialibu Basin, preparing a group for baptism. The 13 people—five men and eight women—that he eventually baptized there on Easter Sunday, April 2, 1961, were the first group of adults baptized in a Catholic outstation anywhere in the Southern Highlands.

This event had a pleasant side-effect for the Witu, since shortly after being baptized, four of the Orei men offered to train as catechists. Richard Peandi was assigned to work with Teine at Apenda, and the other three were asked to train under catechists in the Imbongu outstations, allowing Gary to relieve Catechist Arnold for service at Tindua and to assign two newly arrived Simbu catechists to the Poru Plateau.

Gary brought these men with him when he returned to the Witu in the latter half of April. At that time, he also added people at Maia, between Pondi and Kumiane, to his growing number of followers.

While at Kumiane on April 20, Gary heard that the Bible Master was saying that the Witu would soon have to pay taxes. Since no such taxes were in the offing, Gary interpreted such talk of taxes as an effective ploy to upset the “Catholic” people of the area. The Bible Mission bought a great deal of food from its followers and paid in cash. Having so few workers stationed in the area, the Catholic Mission had little reason to buy food, and it only seems natural that its followers would be worried about their inability to pay taxes.  

Following his patrol, leaders from Apenda, Kouya, Pondi, Kumiani, Yareporoi and Mainredio straggled into Amburugi for several days asking for kinas, and 40 of them were distributed.

Before his next patrol of the Poru, Gary received word that Catechist Daniel had baptized two Witus in danger of death: an infant who died and a young man who did not. These two nameless persons would seem to be the first Catholic Witus.

Gary was accompanied by newly arrived Father Samuel Driscoll when he returned during the first half of July. This time at Kumiane on July 13 the men told Gary the Bible Master had said Jesus would be coming soon, and those who belonged to the Bible would go to heaven, while those belonging “to the Father’s line” would go to hell.

While this fourth trip was still underway, Firmin wrote Father Giles Staab that while the other missions had been able to settle among the Witu, Gary’s many stations in the other end of the Ialibu Basin kept him from staying indefinitely.

Upon his return to the Wiru, Gary found that the “loyalty” of the natives at the prospective mission sites was in the meanwhile won by the opposition. The third visit was even more discouraging. Hence there was need of a priest to be stationed there permanently.  

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347 Stakem chronicle, April 28-29, May 1, 1961.
348 Stakem chronicle, June 29, 1961.
Shortly after Gary’s fourth journey through the northwest Witu, he returned to the States for several months, and during his absence Samuel and veteran missionary Father Berard Tomassetti from Pureni made a hurried visit to all the Witu outstations from Nov. 27 until Dec. 5.  

Gary returned to the island in February 1962 and within 10 days was patrolling on the Poru Plateau. Besides the flourishing station at Tindua, he found catechists operating primitive schools at Ange, Kumiane and Apenda, with a total of a 102 boys and 66 girls under instruction, and he made plans to open others at Polio and Yareporoi.

The Ange people were rather unhappy when they learned it was still up in the air whether Ange or Yareporoi would become the main station. Gary wrote of their reaction,

Has to be here or they won’t stick with us they say. Then they begin to speak of bushes and timber…they have for sale. Better get them before the government or Lutherans snap them up, they say. What they are really interested in are more kina.

A totally unexpected development on this patrol was the movement “to bury the tamburan houses” which Gary ran into at Apenda, Kumiane, Pondi, and Ande. From various things told him, he surmised the idea had come from the Bible Mission, but he was agreeable to going along with it, since the tamburan house was considered tied to the worship of evil spirits. At Apenda the people said they wanted him to bless some houses they were going to build and told him they were going to get rid of the tamburan house and bury all the skulls of their ancestors. At Kumiane a man told him he was going to bury his tamburan house now and wanted Gary to “bless” it.

This fellow’s place was along the way, so we stopped on the trip back to Pangia. The man dug a pit about three feet deep and about the same in circumference. Into the pit were thrown three small shiny stones wrapped in native cloth that he took from his house. From the tall tamburan house the few pig bones present… Then from the low house he brought out a fair number of bones, some mounted, and these <were> also tossed into the pit. When all had been gathered, he asked me to “bless.” I talked a little on the significance of getting rid of the tamburan and consequently of turning one’s back on the devil. But as you throw off the tamburan, you must fill its place with God. In the absence of exorcism and holy water, I composed a short prayer. When finished the man covered the hole with dirt. Some young lads meanwhile stripped the kunai off the low tamburan house.

Bi of Ange and Wagi of Pondi asked Gary to do the same to their tamburan houses, but he told them to wait until the next time, when he would have his ritual and holy water. In the meantime he wanted them to make sure that others in their line had no objections. After writing about the whole matter in his chronicle, Gary added, “Seems to be [be]coming a fad. Hope they are sincere about it all. I wonder if they know what it’s all about. I wonder if I know what it’s all about!”

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350 Samuel may have paid a visit also in September 1961, for on July 27, 1962, Gary wrote of checking into the status of Myles Kelo, “the baby Sam baptized last September.” Another possibility, of course, is that Gary was referring imprecisely to Samuel’s Nov.-Dec. visit.
351 From Ange 41 boys, 25 girls; Kumiane 19 boys, 21 girls; Apenda 42 boys, 20 girls.
352 This custom was not completely new to Gary. He had witnessed much the same thing at Muli on Feb. 20, 1959.
Gary returned to Ialibu in early March and, except for a very brief visit to Tindua March 30 to April 1, did not return to the Poru until early May. Reaching Apenda on May 23, he learned that the Bible Mission now had four European couples in the area, and that Bustin had announced he was “going to baniṣ” the Father with stations all around.”

Two nights later, Gary had his own first baptism in the heart of the Wiru. Quite by accident the Apenda rite was also both the first recorded adaptation of the Catholic liturgy in the Southern Highlands and the first recorded Catholic health work on the plateau.

Few minutes after midnight awakened by Joseph, reporting a boy is dying. Kid appeared to have pneumonia. Natives giving <forth> with the death chant. Could not communicate with them. Baptized him conditionally “si velis…” Urban. Boy reacted sharply as liquid poured over his face. Noticed a strange odor. Checked. It was mentholated spirits! I poured it out and filled the bottle with water and repeated the ceremony. Boy a bit more conscious but still unawares. Before leaving Apenda talked with the lad, now perked up and seemingly out of danger of death. He had no recollection of our midnight visit.

After visiting Apenda, Gary went on east and made his first visit to Pundiapu May 27. Two days later Firmin made his first visit to the Witu. He arrived on the very last flight for the Catholic Mission of VH-BVG. A few boys who had attended school at Mendi met him at the airstrip. He then walked to Ange, which he described as a 25 minute walk “through a bit of mud” to the northwest. There various bosboi requested a resident priest.

The following day Firmin visited Tindua, where Karia, “a paramount lulluai,” and a large crowd awaited him. Firmin found close to 200 attending school there, despite the morning’s bad weather and was “amazed at the large crowd that gathered for night prayer.”

Gary accompanied Firmin to Ialibu, but returned to the plateau in early June and arranged for a new outstation at Lembo south of Tindua on June 9. The southeast end of the Poru Plateau—an area which Gary called “the lower Wiru” and which today roughly corresponds to the Wiliame sector of Pangia Parish—was derestricted June 11, and the next day Gary wrote in his chronicle, “Please God, we shall meet some success.”

Between the 13th and the 16th, Gary visited many places in the lower Witu, quite a few of which eventually had Catholic outstations. Among places visited at that time were Kera (then called Taikopini), Undiapu, Timbari, Wiliame, Pugi (or Paiama), Tunda, Takaru, and probably Laiapu and Maubin. On the 14th Gary said the first Mass at Kera and the 16th the first at Tunda.

A particularly poignant moment for Gary on this trip was at Undiapu on the 15th, when he was inquiring about the possibility of some of the children coming to the school at Yareporoi.

Taligai, age 10, said what about him. He took hold of my arm and with smile and display of affection walked along. His father was at the head of the procession. When we came to a few

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353 Fence in.
354 “If you wish [to be baptized]”
355 Schmidt chronicle, May 29, 1962. Seems to be first flight into Pangia mentioned.
356 A lulluai was a government-recognized bosboi. Karia was elected first president of Pangia’s local government council on Oct. 17, 1965.
houses we caught up with the others. Taligai’s father said nothing. The tears flowed. He held me tighter and said he would go with me. The father said he cannot spare him with the pig kill coming up and a lot of other work. Joseph and I pitched out to the father the advantage of early schooling, but to no avail. Finally Taligai let go of my arm but was angry with his dad. Picked up a stone and sticks and hit him but his heart was not in that. As we moved up the road, Taligai’s cries could be heard a long while.

Shortly after this Gary visited a former kagoboi named Pondea at a place called Iagriaba (probably Iagriapu near Undiapu). The Mendi hospital had sent Pondea home to die from a liver ailment which had greatly swollen his abdomen. “He knows his condition right well. Pondea was very pleased when I baptized him. He told me he could die easy now, for he would go straight to heaven.”

Gary wanted to start concentrating more on working with the Witu, but circumstances prevented that from happening until October. From July until early October, Henry was gone for medical attention. Gary thus had to spend more time in Ialibu, covering the main station while Samuel was visiting his outstations.

Samuel came in on July 18, however, and Gary was at Tindua and Lembo the next day. At the Pangia patrol post on the 20th, he learned from Brian O’Neil that the Lutheran and Bible missions were now feuding among themselves over the new section, and that there was even a schism among the Bible ministers. This did not mean, however, that Gary’s own problems were over. He wrote in his chronicle,

Rumors have it that most of the places in the new section that took us have since accepted kina from the Lutherans. Also they are supposed to have a lot of evangelists working there. Next week Joseph and Petrus will take a trip through there to see what the score is.

Gary had by this time decided to establish the main station at Yareporoi, and on July 24, 1962, he moved into the newly completed house there. The next morning he said the first Mass at Yareporoi.

That same day Joseph Teine and Petrus Tai returned from their patrol of the lower Wiru and reported that only Laiapu and Wiliame had “remained strong.” At Kera and Timbari the Catholic mark had been removed and Lutheran kinas accepted. Leaders at Undiapu said they were building for the Lutherans, but would later build for Gary at Iagriapu. At Maubin the spot he had marked was being cleared for the Lutherans. Probably with a smile, Gary wrote, “One boss boy—just out of jail for murder—says he’ll take us on!” The Bible Mission had places at Wenge and Tagaru, and Bustin had moved his wife and cattle from Wambi to Tagaru. “All indications put us well behind the Lutherans and Bible in regard to followers,” Gary wrote. “It looks like Pangia will be a weak sister in our mission.”

On the 29th, Gary had the first Sunday Mass at Yareporoi, and catechists at Ange, Kumiane, and Mainredio started bringing their people to Sunday Mass there. Gary “tried to point out that the Catholic Mission, the number one, is here at last and all should rally around.”
Gary returned to the Lower Witu in mid-September, and stationed Catechist William Bagl at Wiliame and Catechist Stephen Boran at Laiapu. Lea and others later came to say that they also wanted the Catholic Church in Ambu.

Henry arrived back at Ialibu on Oct. 8th; and by the 16th, Gary had returned to Yareporoi, finished a chapel attached to his house, and begun reserving the Blessed Sacrament.

Pangia’s first experienced teacher, Alex Maino from the coastal Mekeo district, arrived Oct. 24, thereby upgrading the level of instruction.\(^{357}\)

Yareporoi’s main station status probably dates from Oct. 16, 1962; and elevation thereto had surely taken place by Dec. 15, when the last load of Gary’s things arrived from Ialibu. By Christmas, the first Yareporoi church was finished and the main station site surveyed and moved slightly closer to the airstrip. After Christmas, Gary took a holiday trip with Father Gregory Smith of Erave to Berard’s new main station at Pureni. During the following month, he again patrolled the Witu and made initial visits to Wire (Jan. 23, 1963), Koia (Jan. 24) and Weriko (Jan. 25). Reminiscent of earlier post-patrol periods, Andia from Kalua arrived March 1 to ask the Church to come there.

MISSION DIRECTORY 1-1-1963

**Mendi**
Monsignor Firmin Schmidt, OFMCap, prefect apostolic
Father Otmar Gallagher, OFMCap, prefect delegate, pro-prefect, superior regular, main station
Father Senan Glass, OFMCap, upper outstations
Father Benjamin Madden, OFMCap, lower outstations
Father Dunstan Jones, OFMCap, student, pastoral studies
Father Matthew Gross, OFMCap, student, pastoral studies
Brother Claude Mattingly, OFMCap, builder & mechanic
Sister Noreen McLaughlin, OSF, primary headteacher
Sister Claver Ehren, OSF, primary teacher
Sister Martine Mayborg, OSF, primary teacher
Sister Mel Hoffman, OSF, primary teacher
Lay Missionary Bill Fallon, pilot
Ken Olma, pilot

**Tari**
Father Paul Farkas, OFMCap, main station, mission education officer
Father Timon Kaple, OFMCap, outstations
Brother Mark Bollinger, OFMCap, builder & mechanic
Sister Naomi (Thomas Ann) Frey, OSF, primary headteacher
Sister Annata Holohan, OSF, primary teacher
Sister Lorraine Geis, OSF, primary teacher

\(^{357}\) Maino was a certified teacher, the only one in a group of 16 who arrived in Mendi in 1957. Otmar said at the time, Alex Maino is a real gem” (Gallagher to Sorin, Aug. 18, 1957). Sorin answered, saying Maino wished to become either a brother or a priest. (Sorin to Gallagher, Jan. 15, 1956). He remained at Pangia at least until the end of the 1964 school year. When the 1965 school year began no word had been received from him. Gary thought there was a native teacher working with Margaret O’Neil and Juanita Ferguson, the first lay missionary teachers there in 1965. But he wasn’t sure whether or not it was Maino. (Stakem, 1984 comments on manuscript).
On March 8, Gary saw a glimpse of hope in the struggle to divorce his missionary work from the constant grasping for kinas and axes. He suggested to the Tinduans that they should follow the example of the Imbongu-speakers at Orei in not asking to be paid for building a church. Old Karia said that that would be a good custom to follow; and Buko agreed, but wondered if the people were ready for it yet. Gary was pleased and hopeful it would all work out well. The very next day, however, the cruel reality of the present asserted itself over the hope for the future. Gary wrote,

Some day! We appear in danger of losing a few places… The Lutheran Master does his work well and seems to have scared the natives. …Koge of Tunda came (accompanied by a Lutheran mission boy) to return the money he and Tebone received from me. We talked a bit, and he said the natives were cross with him and Tebone and told them to return the pay. I asked if it weren’t someone else who insisted, and he smiled sheepishly. We talked on and I tried to get across the idea that I respected the freedom of choice of the natives and it wasn’t my fashion to be cross… The Lutheran Mission boy was standing outside the door and now and then shouted in instructions to Koge. Just before he gave me the money, he said quietly to put it aside; they would take us later. He also handed me a note from <Catechist> William in which he said the Master was cross, but Tebone wanted to build, so I should send spades, knives, and nails.

Within an hour after he left, a young man from Wiryo <probably Wire> came from Togri. I said I would accept it back only from Togri. This fellow too said to keep it aside until later. But I wouldn’t take it.

Still later a man from Kalue came and said the Lutheran Master was there kicking up a fuss. He claims the Lutheran Master hit him. He left before the session was over, so he didn’t know how things ended with Andia, the bosboi who called us in. Others said Lutheran Master passed Borona <that is Bolora> and Pondea and breathed fire there also.
I’ve decided to take a trip on Monday to visit Kalue and then on to Wiliam. Will go to Tundu and Wiryo to see how things stand now with the various one who came in with reports.

I kept stressing that we wouldn’t treat the native like that. Perhaps the Lutheran Master has the right approach—put fear into the primitive. If so, I cannot imitate him, for that is not my nature. I’ll have to keep plugging away at the idea of respecting their freedom and perhaps some will come to us in that way. We’ll see.

On his next patrol of the Lower Witu, Gary heard a lot more of the same. At one place the people said Hertle had been there and was cross with them for giving the Catholics a place. At that point a Lutheran evangelist came along and unwittingly demonstrated what they were talking about. Gary told him that such a decision should be the people’s own. At Kalue a letter from Hertle arrived which said that Andia form Kalue had confessed to him that he asked for the Catholics only for the money and that he would stick with the Lutherans. Togri from Wire met Gary at Maubin and said that some of his people wanted a Catholic missionary and some did not and “that maybe a new village would be started.”

A few days later Hertle caught up with Gary and they talked for nearly three hours. Tunda was the main bone of contention, though Wiryo and Kalane and few other spots were thrown in. He said he was under the impression we were trying to grease the natives, for example at Tundu. Joseph and/or I approached them five times before they weakened and gave in. Togri said I sought him out and gave him money, even though he said he wanted the Lutherans. At Kalue they showed him a tin of money I supposedly gave. I pointed out that I had not given as much as a penny to Andia or anyone from Kalue. I do not think Rev. Hertle believed me. We went on and on and each of us had different stories from the natives. We both deplored the fact that some natives play one mission against the other to get boss boys pay. Hertle suggested that we face the Tunda together and publicly to expose them for lying. Though I don’t like lying, I don’t particularly like melodramatic confrontation. However I agreed. I’m supposed to let him know a date and then we’ll try to agree on it. I told Hertle that I didn’t go around bribing people from him or the Bible, but if a group comes to me I look into it and if the people want me I’ll build. He agreed that that was okay if the people are sincere, but not if just after money. (The way he seemed to think is that when they approached him they are sincere; when they come to us it is for money). He also said he thought these people are too primitive to understand differences and we should not act as competition. He thinks the area is too near for people to be switching. Rev. Hertle claims he never approached those who said they wanted us: Wiliam and Loiyobo <Laiapu>. Also says he could have had Tame of Taikopene, but refused him a kina since he knew a bosboi from Loiyobo approached him for an evangelist. As things went, there’s no question but that we are in a minority position. The Lutherans have it all over us for stations, but don’t want to lose anything they have. Difficulties ahead.

Gary visited Father Henry in Ialibu for advice about Hertle’s suggested confrontation,

He thought it might not be a bad idea to go along with it. We are not supposed to be fighting the other missions (though it often seems that way); we must respect them even if we disagree. Also it doesn’t help us to have natives coming around trying to induce us to come just for a fee. If others come to us for this purpose, ours can go to the opposition for the same reason. Henry pointed out an article in Christ to the World. which pointed out we should try to get along better with the opposition. I agreed to go along, though my heart isn’t in it. I just hope we don’t lose our position in Tundu over it (though I don’t think so) or compromise myself for future work in any way.
Gary returned to Pangia accompanied by Father Matthew Gross, who had arrived on the island the previous October. Gary, who was used to the motorbikes and roads by then, wrote: “Road not too bad, but Matt had to get off a few times.” After a visit to Apenda a few days later, Gary, wrote, “Track right good, though Matt thought it was awful.” During his few days at Pangia, Matt suggested a better site for a church at Yareporoi and on March 28, the two of them laid off land for the more permanent church which men from Maia had contracted to build.  

Among those who had been regularly attending Sunday Mass at Yareporoi was Angura from Porogo near Bolora. On March 24 he informed Gary that he had been bringing some people to Mass, but that the Lutheran evangelist had threatened them with kalabus and they had run away. “I told him,” Gary wrote, “to take them to school at Mainredio tomorrow and if the evangelist threatened them to report it to the kiap.”  

Soon afterwards, Gary and Hertle agreed on a date for the showdown at Tunda; and after Mass on April 4, Gary hit the trail. He arrived there in a little less than four hours’ walk; and Hertle was waiting. The man whom they were planning on confronting, however, was out in his garden; and Gary and Hertle chatted for two hours, while the people “sang out” for him.  

Finally he arrived and the session started. He gave his story; but when each of us would point out what happened and what was said, he would readily agree. So there was no question but that he was having both of us on.  

From the beginning it seemed Rev. Hertle accepted our presence, our station, as an accomplished fact. I had thought perhaps the natives would be asked to take one or the other and in that case I figured I would lose, since they couldn’t very well give back the pay taken from the Lutherans—too much and too scattered to gather. After about 45 minutes, the rain came; so we moved inside…the councillor’s house. We kept talking in circles—same thing over and over….  

Rev. Hertle was quite pleasant. He said little or nothing I could take exception to. As he was leaving he thanked me for coming down (in fact said he was sorry for dragging me down there). He said he felt that it was necessary to let the men know we knew who was lying.  

(The natives claimed during the session that they caught the evangelist in a lie. One used the example of the Catholics and Lutherans in Hagen. Quickly Tebame said, “You told us the Father wasn’t in Hagen, only in Ialibu, that the Father’s mission was very small.” They denied it.)…  

The locals wanted a catechist immediately, but I said they’ll have to settle for William on a part-time basis for the present. Well, we are there, but I don’t think the station will be the best. In fact far from it. Probably lots of headaches. House not much and ground outside very wet from rain, so I decided we would get an early start and I would have Mass in Pangia.  

A little over a fortnight later, the leaders from Tunda came to Yareporoi asking for the money they had earlier returned to Gary. “They wanted more,” he added, “but I was adamant for a change.”

358 Over several months, wood was sawn at various places on the plateau and taken to Ialibu to be planed. Bro. Claude arrived April 27, 1964, to begin work on the church. First Mass in the church, May 10, 1964; Blessed Sacrament transferred there Dec. 19th  

359 Jail.
Gary was also a great deal more reflective when Hertle complained on March 27 about his plans to open a station at Porogo, where Hertle already had one. Angura had kept pressing Gary to open a station there and after frequently urging that the people there could go to nearby Mainredio, Gary had finally given in. But now he had second thoughts. Prayerfully he wrote in his chronicle May 28,

> What to do? What will best serve the interests of God and His Holy Church? If I call it off, will that make us lose face? Will it deprive these people, though relatively few, of a chance for the true faith? Or by going ahead, will it just backfire for us—a station with no people? (We have no catechists!) Will it provoke the Lutheran Mission to go build near our few places (we have so few) and then cause us more harm?

> It is hard to delay. Action must be taken now one way or the other. We are so small here in the Wiru, thanks to me. What would really best serve our purpose—to go ahead and risk trouble or back off and risk losing another opportunity. I don’t know what to do, but a decision must be made by morning. Lead kindly light. May the Holy Spirit show me the way tonight!

The next morning Gary departed for Porogo, and found so few people there interested that he told them he would not build at present. If they wanted to, he pointed out they were free to build their own prayer house. He then wrote Hertle, “In view of the present circumstances I told the men not to proceed with the building of the station.”

Soon after the Porogo problem, Gary went to the annual Catholic Mission conference at Mendi. When he returned to Pangia, June 8, 1963, he brought with him Father Dunstan Jones, who had just spent most of his first eight months in the Southern Highlands studying the Witu language with the help of Joseph Neri.

Gary then paid greater attention to building up Yareporoi, and Dunstan regularly trekked all over the Poru Plateau. He even crossed the Iaro River into what is now the eastern end of Kagua Parish, and for about a year cared for three Witu-speaking outstations—Mapenda, Kaparoi and Kalawira—which Father Roy Schuster had developed from Erave.

MISSION DIRECTORY 1-1-1964

**2016: THIS AND OTHERS WERE IN THE ORIGINAL PLAN, BUT DIDN’T MATERIALIZE**

Dunstan made initial visits to a number of places, including Ambu (Dec. 6, 1963), Tangupani (Feb. 1, 1964), Kundu (Sept. 18, 1964), Meleke (June 23, 1965), Laue (Nov. 18, 1965), and Lende (Feb. 17, 1966).

Ever growing in his ability to speak tokples, Dunstan was able to cut through much of the confusion caused by the previous need to communicate through a third language. He also

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360 Though Dunstan was the first priest to visit Tangupani far out into dense rain-forests east of the Poru Plateau, it was actually Catechist Stephen who made the Church’s initial contact with the Southern Highlands’ easternmost Catholic outstation. People from the area came to visit Gary at Pangia Aug. 5, 1963.
translated many prayers into the language, and on Sept. 24, 1965, began celebrating Mass in Witu.

Realizing the shortage of catechists in the area, especially ones who could speak the local languages, Dunstan followed a practice begun at Kagua by Father August Rebel and, after rounding up a group of lads from the Poru Plateau and Ialibu Basin who were willing to train as catechists, he used them as carriers on his patrols and regularly instructed them, whether at Yareporoi itself or in various other villages along the trail.

The first group of these *kesbois*,\(^{362}\) were also among the very first group baptized on the Poru Plateau. This took place at Tindua on Nov. 30, 1963, and delegations from Maia, Ange, Kumiane and other places were there, and according to Gary “began saying that we must have baptism soon” at their places.

When the first four *kesbois* made promises\(^{363}\) as catechists April 11, 1964, Gary promptly dubbed Alphonse Wi, Don Bosco Poromo, Samuel Tamua, and Simeon Tange “our first home-grown catechists” and described the ceremony as quiet but significant, since “it is our first step towards making the locals take a greater part in the work of the Church.”

Between then and mid-1966, 11 more *kesbois* graduated and were sent out to assist in the evangelization of their fellow Southern Highlanders.\(^{364}\) By September of that year, Pangia’s Simbu catechists were all able to move elsewhere.

The general education of the young people was also greatly improved during this period by the further upgrading of the school at Yareporoi. Two Australian lay missionaries arrived in early 1965; and when school reopened Feb. 3, Juanita Ferguson was headteacher in charge of Standard 2, Margaret O’Neil and Mekeo teacher Adrian were teaching Standard 1 classes, and Alan had the prep class.

Another turning point in the history of Pangia parish was Aug. 5, 1964, when people from Bolora came complaining about what they had received for ground and threatened to return everything they had received and let the catechist go. Calling their bluff, Gary “replied it was okay. Return everything and we would send the catechist to another school.”

This was taken a step further Sept. 30. People at Tagure refused what they were offered, and when they changed their mind and returned on Oct. 11, Gary and Dunstan decided to give them nothing. “If they want us, they take us for nothing,” Dunstan noted.

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\(^{361}\) The local language, in this case Witu

\(^{362}\) Literally “case boys.”

\(^{363}\) Father Maris Goetz said he thought there were three basic promises: to obey the bishop and priests, to teach the people, and to live an upright life. (Goetz, interview by Burkey June 28, 1979).

By late 1965 when Dunstan visited Timbari and Wiliame, he was delighted to have people offer him food without asking for something in return. And when he made his first visit to Laue on Nov. 18, he told the village councillor that “if he expected anything from me in the form of a present he was sadly mistaken and would only get God’s true talk from me and to expect nothing more.”

Still another significant event took place at Kouya in 1965. There on July 8, according to Gary, “The Catholics and Lutherans had a joint burying of heads…of ancestors that had previously been kept in little shrines.”

Gary had the first group baptism among the Witu at Yareporoi on April 18, 1965, when he baptized 21 school children. The following year on May 28, 1966 he and Dunstan baptized the first group of Witu adults—56 people mostly from Maia—on the front lawn at Yareporoi.

Within two months Gary was gone from the Poru. He first went on home leave and then took up residence at Mendi as religious superior of all the Capuchins on the island. Dunstan described Gary’s departure from Yareporoi on July 25, 1966, in his own chronicle,

I drove Father Gary to the plane and there were people crying all along the way. At the airstrip, Brian O’Neill was waiting in a landrover to bid Father Gary farewell. The school children were weeping and Abraham Yagi, our cook, cried very loudly. I tried not to show my tears, but I don’t think Father Gary missed them. We got all of Father Gary’s things in the plane and he departed from Pangia about noon, on the fourth anniversary of his coming to Pangia to live. On the way home I found it difficult to keep from crying, for I felt Father Gary’s loss perhaps more than all.

At Gary’s departure in 1966, less than 500 Catholics had been baptized on the Poru Plateau, most of them at Tindua. Despite Gary’s earlier self-recriminations about the smallness of the Church among the Witu, however, Pangia was hardly to remain “a weak sister” to the other areas of the diocese. Seeds of faith had been well sown, and by the time Gary revisited the Poru Plateau in 1979, more than 4,800 Witu people had been received into the Church.

**An Ecumenical Epilogue**

Many times during the telling of Gary’s years among the Witu, the urge was strong to pause to mollify statements being made about the “the opposition” and to interject other points of view. There were those, too, who urged that this somewhat sordid side of missionary life be glossed over altogether in the interest of ecumenism.

These matters, however, pervaded practically every page of documentation studied, and one might just as easily try to write about 16th century while pretending that the Reformation never happened or that the Catholic Church was never in need of reformation.

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365 He replaced Fr. Otmar who had held the position 1955-1966. After seven years at Mendi, Gary was forced to return to the States by his 1974 election as provincial definitor.
In the long run, neither simulation nor dissimulation ever serves the cause of ecumenism, and with the documentation available there was no fair way of telling the history of Pangia, without first trying to appreciate things as they seemed to Father Gary under the many pressures and limitations of the moment, and only then trying to present other points of view.

No question, much of the documentation available has come from a single viewpoint, which someday hopefully will be better balanced by more extensive Lutheran documentation. Then one might expect to be able to take a more objective and hopefully more ecumenical view of things. Such records, however, are not totally unavailable even at present. A file of 15 letters between the Hertles and the Catholic priests of the Southern Highlands still exists. 366 Covering a three-year period, these letters discussed various alleged practices they found unacceptable in one another. Reading these dispassionately from the distance of a quarter century, free from the general paranoia then current, it becomes clear that every letter revolved around at least one misunderstanding, and practically every misunderstanding had at its root a monetary concern on the part of the local people.

It was not at all uncommon for local leaders to accept gifts from two or more missions and then to make each mission think that the other was somehow unfairly forcing people to take them.

That the custom ever developed there and in other parts of the Southern Highlands of missionaries’ distributing to local leaders gifts such as steel axes and kina shells was certainly unfortunate. The custom was little known in areas where missionaries simply let the people know, that if they wanted missionaries, they would have to provide land for houses, churches, schools, and the like.

Who was responsible for bringing this custom into the eastern Southern Highlands remains to be seen. It is true the earliest known occasion of it on the Poru Plateau and Ialibu Basin was the visit of Fathers Taphanel and Krimm. 367 But, without further investigation, one cannot be sure they brought the custom to the Poru. They were the first European missionaries actually there, but other churches may have had earlier contact through Witu crossing the territorial boundary or native evangelists going the other direction. It would seem the practice was not Krimm’s usual style, 369 and Mr. Bustin himself claimed to Father Gary on May 4, 1960, that the Bible Mission had been in contact with the Witu since 1950. 370

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367 After marking various places in both areas, they took the local leaders to Ulga and gave them steel axes, in conjunction with which the leaders put their “X”s to a declaration that “we want Catholic missionaries in our tribes of Wiri (Witu) and Awa (Kewa); we promise to keep for them the land they marked for our school and church.”

368 The Witu themselves mentioned such visits to Gary, already in late September 1957.

369 On a visit to Ulga on June 27, 1961, Gary wrote, “Fr. Krimm’s area is different... For his stations he didn’t pay for them to be built. Told people, if they wanted the Catholics, to build a station. Seems Lutheran and Bible were greasing the people the way they are now...”

370 Maps of the Taphanel—Krimm Expedition show a Bible Mission sitting right on the frontier at Paparabruk.
Whoever started the custom, one thing is clear: all of the Christian missionaries on the Poru Plateau followed it; and without question it seriously hampered the work of all, by causing innumerable misunderstandings among the missionaries and confusion among the people they had all come to serve.

It was inherent to every missionary’s calling that he wanted to reach and influence as many people as possible. Everyone of them was thus unconsciously disposed towards believing the local people whenever what they said was favorable towards his own mission, as well as whenever it was unfavorable towards the other missions.\(^{371}\)

The missionaries seemed to interpret their gifts primarily as payment for ground on which to build, but unfortunately they also saw the acceptance of the gifts as a sign that the people were somehow committed to the mission of the one making the gift.

The local people had an entirely different perspective on these initial contacts. A Kumiane man said later that, at the time, the Witu people identified the European missionaries more with the kiaps\(^{372}\) who were concerned with law and order and dispensing medicine than with the concept of “God’s workers.” Only after they had had an opportunity to hear the missionaries preach for a while were they even able to make that distinction. And it was still later yet before they had any true appreciation of differences among the various missions.\(^{373}\)

True, the majority of the people eventually became very loyal to one or the other of the various missions; but in the very beginning, with little understanding of what they were being asked to be loyal to, they viewed the matter mostly from an economic viewpoint. No wonder then that various bosboi accepted gifts from multiple missions while leaving each thinking that they were only one. One must also suspect that the many villages, where various lines seemed to disagree with one another by accepting different missions, were actually shrewdly increasing their economic opportunities.

Communication in these circumstances were difficult enough even among the missionaries, all of whom spoke English; but until the missionaries gain command of the local languages, most conversations with the natives had to undergo the flings and misfortunes of a polyglot struggle from English to pidgin to Witu to pidgin to English.

Gary and Hertle never did become really good friends, but it is to the credit of both that they were willing to talk to one another, to exchange letters, and even to jointly investigate conflicting

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\(^{371}\) Matt Gross in 1984 disagreed with this, saying, “most of the friars would be aware of the people’s ‘. . . The proof would be not in ‘sweet talk,’ but in free-giving, actions of the people.” Gary countered, however, “Even though we were aware of “sweet talk” and knew the truth was not always spoken, we still often chose to follow what they said.” (1984 comments on manuscript).

\(^{372}\) Though it could hardly be avoided, individual missionaries unwittingly contributed to such a view, in a variety of ways, e.g. by using government rest houses, by assisting in road and bridge planning, by inviting government personnel and being invited by them to special meals and other celebrations, by frequently borrowing from or loaning to the government, as well as by threats of korts and kalubus. But as Fr. Gary observed, missionaries and kiaps were the only Europeans around. One could hardly avoid contact. In fact we needed their interchange to survive.” (Stakem, comments on manuscript, 1984).

\(^{373}\) Thomas Lawa, interview by Burke, June 29, 1979.
stories. This did much to avoid further confrontations and indeed paved the way for more cordial relations among their successors.

The very last letter Gary received from Hertle, was one, not complaining about some Catholic practice, but warning him that another group, the Seventh Day Adventists, were on the way.

A dozen years later a Catholic Sister wrote in the Pangia convent chronicle, “We were sad to see Dr. Ingrid Lutschewitz and her husband Rev. Herman Lutschewitz leave our area recently. Herman was the Lutheran minister in the Pangia area.”

A few years later, the same chronicle recorded, “We felt honored to have the Lutheran Bishop of Papua New Guinea visit us while he was staying at their Mission for the ordination of one of their pastors—the first in this area.”

Once the intense competition for new areas was over, the relationship with the Bible Mission started improving, too. A great symbol of this gradual thaw was the freezer belonging to the Rev. Bernard Bennett of the Evangelical Bible Church which sat in a corner of the Pangia friary dining room in mid-1979, with a note from Bennett attached indicating the freezer was being taken care of in his absence “by the brothers.”

It remains to be seen when the Mendi diocese set up its ecumenical commission, but this much is known, the commission had a meeting at Pangia from April 8-10, 1975.

Though not directly connected with Pangia, an ecumenical symbol for the general area might be found in a Christian couple from Ialibu, Peter Ipu Paipul and Monica Bepi Mange. Peter was evangelized by the Bible Mission near Orei, and Monica, a daughter of Mange and Maria Pagename of Kendal, was baptized by Father Henry Kusnerik at Amburugi (Ialibu) on May 29, 1964 (Ialibu Baptism Book 1, No. 581).

On July 1, 1982, , accompanied by Monica, Peter was formally received at the Vatican by Pope Saint John Paul II as Papua New Guinea’s first ambassador plenipotentiary to the Holy See. As he presented his letters of credence, Ambassador Paipul said,

I trust that the objective of this moment I am being accorded today out of your busy schedule will but only strengthen and enhance our happy association.

Your Holiness, Papua New Guinea is a democratic society based on humanitarian values and Christian principles…. We are a Christian society of which your own Catholic Church makes up a large part.

My country is also a developing country. In that regard, I can only acknowledge the significant contributions the various churches and especially the Catholic Church have been and are making in the fields of education, religion and other social services. The work of the Church organizations

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375 As noted by Burkey.
376 MDN April 1975.
has indeed played an important role in both the development of the individual and my country as a whole. This information I wanted to share with you, my Holy Father. 377

PANGIA

CAVEAT: The following chart has never been fully checked and is left here only to provide a general idea of who was covering what areas and when. On the chart, Capuchins are referred to by their first name shown in regular type, and secular clergy by their family names shown in bold face. Full names of the friars are listed in Chapter 24 (pp. 328-337) and those of secular priests in Chapter 16 (pp. 221-222)

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‘Please Send Priests’

The last major sector of the Southern Highlands evangelized by the Capuchins and their co-workers was the heavily populated area between Tari and Mendi, an area once known as the Land of the Muruk (the Cassowary), and now (1984) known as the Nipa District. Trisected lengthwise by the Wage and Nembi Rivers, these 2,305 square miles (6,080 square kilometers) with their 42,815 people are today served by four Catholic parishes—Margarima, Nipa, Det, and Pomberel—and a special mission at Lake Kutubu.

Though the Nipa District was the most recent part of the Southern Highlands to be cultivated by the Catholic Church, it was by no means the last to hear of Christ and his message. On the contrary, it had actually been the first to receive other Christian missionaries. Cecil Abel of the Kwato Bible Mission had visited Lake Kutubu already in 1936, and the Unevangelized Fields Missions (now known as Australasian Pacific Christian Missions) had established stations at Inu and Orokana in the same area in 1950.

The first Catholic missionary to penetrate the district was Brother Jean Delabarre, MSC, who in October of 1954 tagged along with a government patrol which walked from Tari to Moro near the west end of Lake Kutubu. Delabarre selected five acres of land near the Moro airstrip for a Catholic station, and during an 18-day layover—while awaiting air passage to Yule Island—built a two-room house as a stop-over and storehouse for the missionaries that he envisioned entering the Southern Highlands via Kutubu. As the traffic never came that way, however, for years nothing seemed to come of this initiative.

In 1956 Delabarre’s fellow Sacred Heart missionary, Father Alexis Michellod, managed to go through the restricted northern half of the district by getting himself invited along as a road surveyor on the first government patrol from Mendi to Tari. Leaving Mendi on April 10, this patrol explored the Lai, Nembi, and Wage Valleys and visited many places which would later
appear on both government and ecclesiastical maps – such as Det, Nipa, and Margarima. Then April 21 it climbed over the Tari gap and went down into Tari proper.

Patrol Officer Neil J. Grant, kiap in charge,383 wrote in his report that, as his own road building and surveying experiences were meager, “Father Michellod’s knowledge and advice were both necessary and helpful.”384

For Michellod, however, the trip was a different type of success. His interest in road building had been fanned by his belief that roads would aid in evangelizing the area. He also knew the trip would uncover the area’s population centers as well as give the people their first sight of a missionary. Early every morning of the patrol, with Grant, a Catholic, serving as acolyte, Michellod offered the first Mass in another new area, each time having as his intention eternal rest for the deceased of the area.

Margarima

One would suspect that this joint government-missionary patrol had little, if any, permanent effect on the people themselves, especially when one realizes that the area remained sealed off to missionary activity for close to four years. Still, it is worth noting that long before the Church was finally allowed in, about two dozen Huli-speaking residents of the Margarima area visited far-off Gupari (near Tari) to ask Father Paul Farkas to open a station among them and then went on to Tari to make a similar request of the government. This was in early July of 1959.

Civil authorities were able to act almost immediately, and, before the month ended, a Tari-based patrol was at Margarima establishing a sub-station. Since the area was still restricted to missionary activity, however, the already over-taxed Catholic missionary personnel at Tari had no other choice but to let their invitation ride and hope they would be in better position to act once derestriction would come.

When an airstrip at Margarima was completed, Bill Crellin, ADO at Tari, and his successor Bob Blakie flew there Aug. 31, 1960, taking with them Methodist missionaries from Tari. Catholic missionaries at Tari applied for permits to go to Margarima, but were kept waiting. Probably they did not push the matter, however, since they were already over-extended, and far-off Margarima could be reached on foot only by climbing over the grueling gap between the Doma peaks and Mt. Ne.

383 2016: Kiap is a pidgin term extracted from the German word Kapitan (captain) and used to refer to any of the young men from Australia who served as local administrators for the territorial governments before PNG independence in 1975. For a short film “Kiap—Stories Behind the Medal,” see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8C52NlcXD61 (accessed April 25, 2016).

384 Mendi Patrol #10, 1955/56.
Margarima was considerably closer to Nipa than Tari and much more accessible from there, yet at the same time it was quite isolated by ethnic and language barriers. People of Nipa had such little contact with these “strange people who wore women’s skirts” that they could not even tell Father Senan Glass where Margarima was. The solution to this dilemma eventually involved personnel from both directions.

Senan and Tagu Yagip walked into the Margarima area by way of the Lai valley in July 1961. Senan stayed for four days at the Margarima government rest house and said the first Mass there July 17, 1961. By then, even though Methodists had been in the area for nearly a year, Lena, Homari, and others were building a house for a Catholic priest on government property near the airstrip. Senan learned that on a visit to Gupari, these men had received axes from the friars, who had urged them to build a house for the priests who would eventually come. Senan planted a cross near the house, blessed it, exorcised the areas, and encouraged the men to keep building.

Senan visited the Margarima area every few months and established a series of secondary outstations at Tango (first Mass Sept. 1, 1963), Tawanda (first Mass Feb. 21, 1963), Pawaja, Petanda, Obiaka, Homaria (first Mass Feb. 20, 1963), Ariaka, and Marudia. He was greatly handicapped, however, since the people were all Huli-speakers, and he was already struggling to master two other completely distinct languages in the upper Mendi.

Father Timon Kaple from Tari flew into Margarima with two Huli catechists Oct. 30, 1962. One of these, Andrew Andaya, who later served as first premier of the Southern Highlands Province, was placed at Tawanda; and the other at Marudia. These first catechists and several other Tari youths who arrived soon afterwards were able to maintain and develop a large number of outstations which are still the backbone of the Margarima parish. Among those who came to help their Huli brothers were Peter Agilu, Peter Abu, and Roy Takiwa, who had been baptized in the Tari area, and Aloysius Haluya, Peter Tangelia, Andrew Tayabe, and John Hegele, who surprisingly enough were still catechumens.

These young men were mostly illiterate young teenagers who had learned and now taught the catechism by rote; but their fellow Hulis welcomed them as well as the Good News which the only available Catholic missionary had been unable to communicate in their language. Father Senan continued to visit and guide them but periodically these Huli youths made the long trek back to Tari to be further instructed, encouraged, and aided by their own Huli-speaking missionaries.

It is already legendary how an SVD missionary from neighboring Mariant parish once heard of the Huli catechists and of the “Catholic” people of the area and decided to pay them a visit while

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385 Tari was 30 air miles WNW of Margarima, and Nipa 13 air miles SE of Margarima. These distances were made substantially longer on foot by mountain ranges, rivers, and other obstacles.

386 Monsignor Schmidt said Timon was to meet Senan at Margarima on Nov. 5 (Schmidt chronicle Oct. 30, 1962). Timon visited Margarima again in May of 1963. He walked into Mendi from Nipa and Margarima on May 27, 1963 (Schmidt chronicle, May 27, 1963).
in the area, only to have Andrew Andaye refuse to acknowledge him until he had first demonstrated his ability to recite several prayers including the Our Father in Latin.  

Margarima was formally separated from Nipa in 1969; and on Nov. 12 or 13, 1973, it became St. Joseph’s parish.

Nipa

About the same time that the government started its Margarima station, it also opened one at Nipa, and at both places it started airstrip construction. As the one at Nipa was nearing completion on Nov. 30, 1959, Clifford Keightley of the Methodist Overseas Mission in Mendi managed to set out for Nipa. In early December he began building a small temporary mission station on the west side of the Nipa airstrip, which was a little more than 14 air miles west of Mendi.

Catholic missionaries already had permits and could have headed for Nipa at the same time as Keightley—indeed Father Gary Stakem was in Mendi waiting to go already on Dec. 3, but there seemed to be no big rush. Catholic missionary authorities decided that, since missionary activity at Nipa was restricted to within a half-mile of airstrip, the trip could wait until Gary had participated with the other friars in the Capuchin mission’s very first fraternal retreat being held in Mendi.

Once this retreat ended Dec. 11, inspectors for the department of civil aviation were already on their way to Nipa, and it was thought best to wait and fly into Nipa. The airstrip was not approved at that time, however, and the trip was again postponed until after Christmas. By Jan. 6, the airstrip was still officially closed, but civil aviation officials authorized Catholic mission pilot Fidelis Miltenberger’s landing there, probably with the understanding that he in turn would bring in several loads of government supplies and airstrip workers.

Thus, on separate flights early on the afternoon of Jan. 6, 1960, Fidelis landed Father Gary and Father Senan Glass, the latter of whom had arrived from the States eight months earlier, to begin work on the district’s first permanent Catholic station. On these flights, Fidelis also brought in Thomas More Maia, cook and interpreter from Mendi; Kurum, labor foreman from Kumin; two loads of cargo; and several airstrip workers. Meanwhile, four other helpers – Tumia from the Mendi area and three young men from Pinj in the Lai Valley – found their way in on foot.

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387 Senan Glass, interview by Burkey, July 19, 1984.
389 Pronounced Kētlē.
392 2016: Much of what follows was discussed with Fr. Senan on Dec. 23, 1982 and July 17, 1984.
393 Benjamin Tumia from Pinj later served as station boss for two or three years and supervised the leveling of the hilltop at Tomdok-Soi. His son Emil Erep and nephew Leo Sapiri were teachers at Nipa in 1979 (Interviews with both of them in 1979).
Upon the friars’ arrival, John “Shorty” Jordan, the Nipa kiap, loaned the friars a building on the government station, where the following morning Gary and Senan – in that order – said the first two Masses at Nipa. They had to do so quite early since their room housed the government’s radio transmitter and the official weather report had to go out promptly at 7 a.m.

Daily weather reports were especially critical to Fidelis and other pilots since excessive amounts of rain often automatically shut the early-day airstrips for several days at a time. In fact on this very occasion, a series of downpours forced the two Capuchins to remain in Nipa a week after they had finished their work on the new station.

Their second day there, “Shorty” Jordan pointed out several possible sites for a temporary station; and between then and Jan. 23, the friars, their helpers, and some local workers built a 20-foot by 28-foot bush hut and a smaller one for the cook house. The main building, which was compartmentalized into a chapel, two bedrooms, a community room, and storeroom, stood toward the north end of the east side of the strip. Gary had exorcised the entire station already on Jan. 23 and blessed both the house and a large mission cross.

On this first visit to Nipa, the friars made contacts with many of the surrounding lines, including Egenda to the east, Pulim (sometimes called Nemnda) to the south, Kuare to the west, and Komia to the north.

In the light of the sectarian rivalry which on several other occasions marred the arrival of the Catholic missionaries, the friars’ reception at Nipa by Clifford Keightley deserves special mention. The Second Vatican Council had been announced the previous January, but its opening was still 33 months away, and ecumenism was still far from being a household word, even farther from being a practical reality. The Reverend Keightley, however, was the first to greet each of the Catholic missionaries on their arrival in Nipa. After that he visited the Catholic building site almost daily, frequently offered advice, and when the building was finished he even loaned the friars some trade goods to pay off their debts among the people. This paved the way for the generally fine relationship which has endured over the years between the Catholics and Methodists (now the United Church) at Nipa.

Once the Catholic station had been set up, Gary returned to his work in the Ialibu and Pangia areas, and since missionaries were not yet allowed more than a half mile beyond the Nipa airstrip, Senan concentrated on his many stations in the upper Mendi area. Monsignor Firmin wanted to assign someone fulltime to Nipa, already at this early date, but lack of manpower prevented him.\textsuperscript{394}

Senan visited Nipa about four times a year, however, and as more territory opened up, he extended his influence by roaming through them. He first walked from Nipa to Mendi through Mapkebol in January 1961. In May he came in by way of Pinj and Shumbi and left via Shumbi for Tulum; and in July he came down from Margarima through Girip and then walked back to Tulum. On this latter occasion he took two Egenda boys, Shemondi and Aleo, back with him to the Kumin school.

\textsuperscript{394} Schmidt to Staab, July 2, 1960.
As Monsignor Firmin wrote about this same time, these walks allowed the Catholic mission “to maintain some contact, but there is no headway made among the natives. In the meantime, the Methodists have a resident missionary and a school. This obviously gives them the inside track to the loyalty of the natives in that valley – numbered at well over 5,000.”

When Fathers Cyril Repko and Malachy McBride finished their year of pastoral theology studies at Mendi in 1964, a new era opened for the Nipa district. Malachy took over the care of Senan’s stations in the upper Mendi and upper Lai, which in turn enabled Senan and Cyril to begin fulltime work in the Nipa district. Nipa was formally established as a main station in July 1964, and work began on erecting a main station at Tomdok on ground belonging to the Soi group north and adjacent to the grounds of the Nipa government station. Senan had planned from 1961 until 1963 to put the station at Ipi about two miles further north, but negotiations for the ground fell through and a rising young leader of the Soi line named Tegi Ebeal arranged with his people to make 50 acres available.  

Bishop Firmin formally opened the main station at Nipa on July 2, 1964. Senan then began working at building up Nipa and its immediate vicinity and his assistant Cyril tramped for many years through the vast 77 kilometer area between Tawanda and Toiwara. Nipa was one of the first eight parishes established in the local church of Mendi on May 25, 1967.

Father Severin Sinchak took over Cyril’s work during the latter’s 1968-69 home leave; and upon Cyril’s return, he was assigned full time to the Margarima area. Father Peter Meis was in Nipa from March 1971 till January 1972. After that Father Samuel Driscoll came to Nipa and eventually took over the Upper Lai stations which Malachy had left about the same time.

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395 Senan Glass, interview by Burkey, July 17, 1984. Tegi later received the name Francis at his baptism by Father Senan at Nipa on Dec. 7, 1966, and succeeded Andrew Andaya in 1980 as premier of the Southern Highlands. He died quite a few years ago, but his wife still lives in Nipa (Peter Meis to Burkey, May 16, 2016).
396 Schmidt chronicle, July 2, 1964.
397 The others were Mendi, Tari, Ialibu, Kagua, Pureni (which some of the missionaries called Burani), Pangia, and Erave.
398 Meis to Burkey, Sept. 2, 2016. When he arrived, Ruth Taylor and Peggy McNeil were teaching in the primary school at Si. Brother Felix Shinsky was also there until about when he moved to Det. Lay missionary Terry Kelly was also there during Peter’s time.
The people of Margarima were not the only ones to repeatedly invite the Capuchins into their area. Shortly after Father Benjamin Madden took over the lower Mendi from Father Gregory Smith in late 1960, people from Wepinam in the restricted area towards Det came to him at Meki, begging him to visit them.

Not understanding the restrictions that one group of white men had put on another, the people of Wepinam remained insistent that Ben come to their area, so eventually he sent Catechist Alphonse Taine to build up a station, with the promise that he would come personally as soon as the government would permit it. Alphonse was the first representative of the Catholic Church in residence in the Nipa District.

Once the east side of the lower Nembi was finally opened to Europeans in 1961, Father Ben immediately headed for Wepinam and from there visited Det (or Del as it was first called). He had a long talk with the Det people, who told him he could not set up a station there since as they put it, “Where the mission goes, the government also goes, and we don’t want the government in here.” This distrust of the Australians – so unlike what had been the case at Margarima – quite possibly reached all the way back to the fateful Hides expedition of 1935, which had left quite a number of their neighbors dead. The years had apparently tempered their fear, however, for when Ben countered by telling them he would go elsewhere, they quickly gave in and allowed him to start building a station up on the hill above the present site of Det. Much like Senan, Benjamin visited Det and other outstations in the area only on an occasional basis, and devoted most of his attention to more than 20 outstations in the lower Mendi and lower Lai Valleys.

In 1964, the station at Det was moved off the hill and the decision made to begin building a private airstrip there. Work started on the strip, but was suspended after the Methodists protested. In 1966, the mission was considering resuming work on the airstrip, but the government was urging them to move the Det main station southwest a little more than three miles to Poroma where the government was building its own airstrip. DC David Marsh took Bishop Schmidt and Ben by helicopter to Det and Poroma on July 4, 1966. At Det they examined proposed private strip and then went on to Poroma. Ben was taken back to Mendi, but Firmin stayed with Roy, a catechist, and talked with the local people. Firmin decided to continue with the Det station and wrote,

The purpose of my trip there was to inspect the future potential possibility of a main station. Poroma looks very promising, but at present our best contact is at Det. The airstrip there will

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399 Det is a little less than 14 air miles southeast of Nipa.
never be a big one, but it seems more reasonable for us to put it into operation soon. The
government favored forgetting about the Det airstrip and concentrating on Poroma, which
certainly could have a big strip without any difficulty. Subsequent discussion convinced Mr.Marsh
that we would do best to develop Det first. If a big strip will be put in at Poroma by the
government and if the Det circuit area would conflict with Poroma, we agreed to abandon it in
favor of Poroma, on the condition of having reasonable roads.400

On one visit to Det, accompanied by Brother Claude Mattingly, Firmin “was impressed with
what I saw… Tentatively marked sites for a sister’s convent, friary, church and school.”401

The bishop’s chronicle for May 30, 1967, speaks of a decision of the new diocesan consultors to
having Benjamin enter the Det and Poroma area and to turning Ben’s stations at Yepi, Tutam,
and Oiyarep over to Otmar Gallagher.

Det became a parish sometime between then and the appearance of the 1968 Mid-American
personnel directory.

Work continued on a church at Det, and on July 13, 1967, the bishop blessed SS. Peter and
Paul’s Church. About 900 participated, and afterwards, Firmin “had a meeting with leaders of
the area” who “would like to complete the airstrip.”402

Work resumed and the airstrip was inspected on July 17-18 by Mr. Mitchell, who “was
impressed by the strip and recommended that it be licensed immediately.” The first landing there
was on Aug. 7, 1968.403

“Det is progressing well. The school has made excellent progress, as has the medical work by
Rosemary Kombukol and Clare Ann Teo.”404

When Brother Felix Shinsky moved to Det in mid-1971, he was living with Fathers Ben Madden
and Steve Reichert, and Steve was caring for the Det outstations and Pomberel.405

400 Schmidt chronicle, July 4, 1966.
401 Unable to locate the source of this statement.
404 Schmidt chronicle, July 18, 1968. Rosemary and Clare, who had completed a few standard grades in the Mendi
primary school, were sent by Father Ben Madden to Hohola in Port Moreby to train as nurses aides with the nurses
who staffed the clinic there. They then came to Det to begin very basic health services in preparation for a larger
health service. Lay missionary Elizabeth McGettigan worked with Rosemary & Clare for two years as a home care
aide. Clare later married Francis Kili, an education officer (Meis to Burkey, Sept. 14, 2016). Teo (along with Mary
Ann Masomi) was one of the first two girls to work with the Oldenburg Susters. She was present for the blessing of
the Mendi convent April 15, 1961; was the second girl baptized as an adult in the Mendi area; and was one of the
first two girls confirmed at Mendi. She became a capable and efficient nurse, and Masomi became a high school
teacher (Sister Ruth Ann Grieve, Chronicle Account of the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg, Indiana, Serving in
Pomberel

With Father August Rebel, Ben received special permission in September 1962 to explore restricted territory across the lower Nembi. He joined August at Kagua Sept. 10, and three days later they started out through the western end of the Kagua parish, crossed the river near Ulira (Urida), trekked up the Nembi to about Kesu (near Farita), and then climbed up onto the Nembi plateau. After visiting such places as Kasu, Kusa, and Kum, all the while marking sites for Catholic missions, they went back down into the Nembi Valley to Utjabia and Kar. They then went back up to make an extensive exploration of the Nembi plateau, including visits to Uba and Pomberel. After spending most of Sept. 16-17 on the plateau, they set out for Nipa where they met and shared their experiences with Father Senan, thence to Mendi by way of Pinj in the Lai Valley. August flew back into Kagua Sept. 24.

Senan immediately added this new area to his growing list of outstations which he was still visiting on a quarterly basis.

Benjamin continued to visit the stations on the east side of the lower Nembi from his headquarters at Mendi.

Following the 1969 appointment of Father Peter Meis as an assistant to Father Benjamin, the Nembi plateau began to be cared for from Det. With the arrival of Father Steven Reichert in late 1970, the plateau became his charge, and Peter moved up the valley to Nipa. The area was separated from Det in 1971 and raised to the status of St. Martin de Porres parish with its central site at Pomberel on Nov. 12, 1973.

Lake Kutubu

Still another area remains to be discussed, however, and it is the most unusual of all the mission areas of the Mendi diocese, since it was developed and is still operated mostly through the ministry of its own people. Technically, Lake Kutubu and its outstations are (in 1984) a part of the Pomberel parish, but it operates separately from that parish and is often cared for by priests from other parishes.

While Brother Delabarre had been at Kutubu as early as 1954, and Father Gregory Smith had managed a flying trip from Erave, during which he celebrated the first Mass ever said at Lake Kutubu – on Mission Sunday, Oct. 23, 1960 – it unwittingly remained for Gregory’s cook to actually evangelize the area. Gregory undoubtedly visited the area, but as the local people have no recollection of it, he probably went there either to minister to the Catholic government personnel or simply on a sightseeing visit.

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406 Pomberel is over 11 air miles SSE of Nipa and over six miles WSW of Det.
408 Kutubu is 14.5 air miles SW of Pomberel. 2016: Lake Kutubu is no longer part of the Pomberel parish, which is now cared for from Det. Since 2010, Father Peter Seo of the Korean Mission Society has served as resident pastor at Lake Kutubu (Capuchins of Mid-America provincial directories 2010-2016).
Francis Yarogi from Lake Kutubu went to Erave already in 1953, when the government first established a post there. He went along as the kiap’s cook. He was still at Erave when Delabarre came through Kutubu in 1954.

Francis eventually returned to Kutubu and was working as a government interpreter there when Ron Neville, Catholic kiap at Erave, sent for him and asked him to cook for the Catholic mission. Yarogi himself said in a letter which he dictated in pidgin to Catechist Steven R. Gebe,

> I started working for Father Gregory. At this time, Father Gregory himself said, “I’m Father Gregory and I am from the Catholic mission, so get to understand it well.” So I went to catechumens school and afterwards received baptism. That was in 1962. At this time I was also married at a place close to the mission station. Its name was Koiali where I got married.

Francis’ people at Kutubu elected him to the local government council at Kutubu in 1964, and upon his return home, he began telling others the Good News he had heard at Erave. According to him, members of earlier Christian missions in the Kutubu area were angry with him, “but I did not worry about that, and I was not afraid.”

Before long Francis had a group of believers who wished to become Catholic. “I repeatedly sang out for missionaries to come,” Yarogi had Gebe write. “Sometimes I sent letters and sometimes I walked to ask personally. First of all, I asked the Bishop in Mendi and sometimes I would go and ask Father Ben… I went many times to Mendi, Pomberel, and Det to see the priests.”

Nipa records indicate he went there June 9, 1967, enroute to see the Bishop in Mendi, and that two Nipa catechists were ready right then and there to go with him, but Senan told them to write to the Bishop. Yarogi also walked to Tari for the same purpose.

Father Roger White made the first missionary journey into the area in June 1968. He stayed with Francis and said Mass for the people at Tugiri and Yo’obo. He also visited Yekepo, Hedina, Ai’ui, Mano, and Hebuai’iu; translated the catechism and several prayers into the Foe language (which Father Dustan Jones then ran off at Erave); and drew up a detailed report of what he found in the Kutubu area.

Ludwig Roka, a catechist from Kagua who accompanied Roger, remained behind as a catechist; and later Roger sent a second catechist from Kagua to work with Yarogi.

From then on, various priests of the Central deanery, especially Fathers Benjamin, Steve, Samuel, and

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409 Son of Wi and Terago.
410 Yarogi, born about 1937, actually received baptism and his first Communion, and was married all on the same day, April 13, 1964, at St. Mary of the Angels Church in Erave (Koiali), with Fr. Brian Newman as the minister. He married Margaret Wapinyu from Erave. Witnesses were Andrew Maino, a Mekeo catechist, and Katherine Arnol from Karkar. (Erave Baptism Book 1, No. 39; Marriage Book 1, No. 2, First Communion Book 1, No. 16).
411 Benjamin said Yarogi did not go to Pomberel, but Yarogi did not say he actually met a priest there.
Cyril began making trimestral visits to Kutubu, in the course of which they baptized many people Francis and others had prepared for that Sacrament.

The *Mendi Diocese News* for Oct. 4, 1977, reported Bishop Firmin’s confirming 27 people at Tugiri three days earlier and reported that “largely through the tenacity of Francis Yarogi, there is now a solid nucleus of Catholics at Lake Kutubu.”

In 1984 there was still no resident priest in the area, but Francis and five other catechists whom he had trained were ministering to their own people in the Lake Kutubu area in five different villages, and one of the catechists teaches during released time at the local government school. In the course of time, Francis returned to Erave and became a graduate of the Katekis Trenin Senta.

Francis Yarogi, Catholic Apostle of the Foe-speakers around the beautiful Lake Kutubu, speaks of his own work as an evangelizer much after the manner of St. Paul. After answering many questions about his activity at Kutubu, he ended a letter with the following caution:

> This work I described Jesus himself brought to Kutubu, and he started the Church. Jesus himself gave me strength, and many men and women and children received Baptism. And so I am very happy now…So now there are many Christian people here. But this has not come about by my hard work. It is the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

**CENTRAL DEANERY**

**CAVEAT:** The following chart has never been fully checked and is left here only to provide a general idea of who was covering what areas and when. On the chart, Capuchins are referred to by their first name shown in regular type, and secular clergy by their family names shown in bold face. Full names of the friars are listed in Chapter 24 (pp. 328-337) and those of secular priests in Chapter 16 (pp. 221-222)

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412 Should find out what has become of Yarogi.
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By reason of their religious consecration they enjoy the utmost freedom and are able without hindrance to abandon everything and go to the ends of the earth in order to preach the Gospel. They are enterprising and their apostolate is often marked by an originality and initiative which others can only admire. They are generous and often to be found in the most remote mission stations where at times they run risks to health and even to their very lives.

Pope Blessed Paul VI, “Evangelii Nuntiandi,” 1975, n. 69

16

‘You Never Asked’

In the first seven months of the Capuchin mission to Papua, probably no single subject so regularly found its way into official correspondence between the mission and the province as the question of how a group of Sisters could be located to help the friars in the work of bringing the Good News to the women of the Southern Highlands. Some 27 of the 37 extent letters between Fathers Otmar Gallagher and Victor Green spoke of this subject.

As Father Henry Kusnerik described the problem on his preliminary survey of the mission, “The men do not trust another one of their own tribe with their women, and much less a white man, even though a missionary…. Without a community of Sisters to assist the Fathers through the schools and personal contact, we will reach individuals of families, but not the whole family. We might contact the men, but the women will be hard to contact except through white women.”

Otmar reached the same conclusion soon after his arrival in Tari and started encouraging Victor on Dec. 1, 1955, to find a community of Sisters to collaborate with the Capuchins. Hardly more than a week later, he asked Victor if he had “had any luck.” Government personnel were “overjoyed,” he added, that the friars were looking for Sisters. “All of them deeply respect the Sisters,” he wrote, “and have assured us that we are crippled without them.”

413 The problem was slightly more acute in the Southern Highlands than elsewhere on the island, as it was the only province where women outnumbered the men, 120,413 to 115,234 (1980 National Census: SHP: Preliminary Field Count: p. 1.01).
Commissioner Coles added that it would be even better if they could find Sisters with medical degrees, since the women “will not permit a male doctor to treat them.”

Viewed by hindsight, the problem was really not as severe as the friars were thus led to believe. Long before there were any Sisters or laywomen working in the mission, girls were attending school in the Ialibu basin and at Kagua; and at Ialibu the women eventually came in greater numbers than the men to religious instruction. Even among the more reserved Huli on the other end of the Southern Highlands, Father Paul Farkas was able to report four little girls had shown up along with the 18 boys for the first day of school in 1958. The girls dropped out due to the lack of accommodations and the distance of their homes, but Paul was optimistic things were improving and wrote, “The girls are becoming more friendly toward us, realizing, I suppose, that we mean them no harm.

Unquestionably, the eventual presence of Sisters and lay missionary women sped up this process and allowed the mission to work much more intimately with the women. An even greater value in obtaining them, however, lay in the witness that they alone could give the Papuan men, as well as their wives, of the inherent dignity of women.

A woman’s lot in Papua New Guinea down through the centuries had been a rather servile one. Love was seldom a major consideration in the arrangement of marriages and, as a matter of fact, seemed to have little place within the marriages themselves. Women were valued mainly for their ability to raise gardens, tend pigs, and rear children.

It is fortunate, therefore, that Otmar and others kept up their search for Sisters. In numerous letters to other friars, he urged that they pray for this intention. “We don’t want an all-male Church in the Southern Highlands,” he told seminarians at Herman, Pennsylvania. “Without the Sisters it is liable to be just that.”

From what has been said thus far, one might conclude that the thought of lay missionary women never occurred to anyone as a way of reaching the distaff side of the population. Such a supposition is quite far from accurate, but it is still safe to say that talk of obtaining lay missionaries was always less optimistic than that of finding Sisters. Such talk was both less frequent and more hypothetical, couched in terms of “if we can get some lay missionaries.” On the contrary, Otmar had friars in Papua and elsewhere praying daily that Victor would find Sisters. “I’m so confident that you will, he wrote Jan. 23, 1956, “that I never say ‘if the Sisters come’ but ‘when’.”

Victor was equally optimistic and month after month told of his personal contacts with general superiors of various communities of women, mostly those who were in some way already working with the friars on the U.S. mainland or in Puerto Rico. On one occasion he seemed so optimistic that the missionaries started planning to build a convent.

By the end of his term as provincial minister in July 1956, Victor had contacted at least 10 communities, and considered three of them still “hopefuls.” Even five months out of office, Victor wrote Otmar he still had hoped for two communities’ joining the friars.
It was over a year then before the subject came up again in official correspondence, but apparently both Otmar and the new provincial, Father Claude Vogel, looked for Sisters in the meantime.

Otmar wrote Father Peter Hohman, the novice master, May 13, 1957, asking him to have the novices pray for Sisters. “They are our biggest need right now,” he added. “We just can’t get local girls without them. God has been trying our patience in this score, but I am sure that He’ll eventually send us some Sisters… Lots of prayers will make it soon, I’m sure.” He wrote in very similar terms the following month to authorities of the Propaganda Congregation.

“If we could only get some Sisters to send you,” Claude lamented Aug. 27, “but no matter where you turn, it is the same story of not having enough for their own places, etc.”

And so it went year after year. Claude addressed a meeting of 30 mothers provincial in Washington in September, and he visited general motherhouses in Rome both in December 1957 and June 1958. But no Sisters for Papua. “I am still contacting Sisterhoods…,” he wrote at one point, “but it seems it will require a miracle. I am asking all the houses at the close of visitation to pray for the intention… Surely, in God’s good time, something will happen.”

Claude had “almost given up” by July 1958, and Otmar asked what he thought about asking the Apostolic Delegate in Australia for help. Apparently nothing came of that either; as late as Nov. 18, 1959, the newly arrived prefect apostolic wrote to still another provincial, Father Giles Staab, “After Christmas I’m going to start writing again to various communities. If I can’t get any help by next summer, I’m going to approach the Apostolic Delegate in Sydney and have him use his influence.” Monsignor Schmidt himself had visited several motherhouses before leaving the States.

The problem was still there, however, in the spring of 1960, when Otmar and Brother Mark Bollinger went on their first five-year home leave. Determined to solve the problem, they spent much of the leave visiting motherhouses—almost 60 of them, scattered all over the eastern part of the nation.

Meanwhile on March 2, after the two had left Papua, Firmin told each missionary to add to every Mass celebrated in the prefecture an oratio gravi imperata pro re gravi (a mandatory prayer for the gravest of reasons) for the specific intention that Sisters and lay missionaries might be obtained.

**Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg**

It was with this help that Otmar and Mark arrived about two weeks later at the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana, asking to see the superior general, Mother Mary Cephas Keller (d. 1982). These sisters were also in the midst of a campaign of prayer, a novena to St. Joseph, praying for an increase of vocations to their community.

How curiously reminiscent of the problem back in Papua, that the good woman who answered the door was at first reluctant to admit to the convent these strange men with their long beards.

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Founded by Mother Theresa Hackenmeier and Father Francis Joseph Rudolf in 1851, the Oldenburg Franciscans had worked with Friars Minor of the Cincinnati Province in the Diocese of Wuchang, China, from 1939 until their expulsion by the Communists in 1945. In 1960 a movement was underway in America, led by Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston, to provide U.S. help for the church in Latin America, and the Oldenburg Sisters were seriously considering joining the movement.

Thus, even though Otmar and Mark had already unsuccessfully visited about 25 motherhouses, they were not any too early in arriving at Oldenburg in mid-March. The very next week, on March 25, 1960, Pope Saint John XXIII lent his encouragement to the movement towards Latin America in an address to a gathering of religious superiors in Rome; and the following year, his representative, the present papal secretary of state, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, was to challenge the religious in the United States to send 10 percent of their number to Latin America. The Oldenburg Franciscans, however, were already by then at work elsewhere.

Otmar and Mark were invited to return later on to meet with Mother Cephas’s general council. In the meantime, and throughout the rest of his home leave, Otmar visited another 30 or so motherhouses. The big day, however, came on April 2, when he spent the entire day explaining to Mother Cephas’s council the need for Sisters in Papua, the lifestyle of the people, possible dangers involved, and information pertinent to the community’s acceptance. Mother Cephas later wrote that “during this time, unknown to us, Masses were being offered by every available Capuchin friar, that, God willing, we would accept.”

Immediately after Otmar’s visit, the General Council unanimously decided that if the congregation agreed and there were volunteers available, they would accept. Bishop Firmin received the happy cable on April 4 from Otmar which read: “Trip successful. Four Franciscans to be appointed next summer… Happy Easter. Ott.”

Once the Sisters had accepted the mission to Papua, one of the friars of the Cincinnati Province, with whom the congregation has always been closely united, casually asked Mother Cephas why the community had not volunteered to go to his province’s new mission in the Philippines. Viewed in the light of the Capuchins’ persistent asking all over the world for almost five years, the uncanny appropriateness of Mother’s answer is precious. Very simply she replied, “You never asked.”

The first four Sisters appointed were Annata Holohan, Noreen McLaughlin, Martine Mayborg, and Claver Ehren. Their departure ceremony was held at Oldenburg on Sept. 27, 1960, the 100th anniversary of their foundress’s death.
When the Sisters arrived at Mendi Oct. 11, girls from all over the valley came to meet them. The Sisters began teaching in school Oct. 24, and 15 girls showed up. The next day there were 20, despite objections of fathers and brothers. “Four of the girls refused to go home,” Monsignor wrote in his journal, “until I told them their fathers and brothers would have to reckon with me, if they harmed the girls.” He noted with satisfaction the next day that 25 girls reported for class and that so many showed up during the following month they had to construct another school.\footnote{414}{Schmidt chronicle, Oct. 24-26, 1960.}

The men in this area still are opposed to the girls coming to school. They think a girl or woman is meant to take care of the gardens and tend to the pigs, and not “waste” time in the classroom. With the help of the Sisters we hope to change this view… Some of the girls who reported for school are a bit big… The Sisters are teaching these to sew and other useful things.\footnote{415}{Schmidt to Staab, Nov. 15, 1960.}

Another milestone was passed Dec. 12, when Monsignor recorded that Kapipi, “a big chief of the Mendi Valley,” had come to the Sisters for treatment of a foot sore.\footnote{416}{Schmidt chronicle, Dec. 12, 1960.}

The sisters occupied the friary until April 5, 1961, when Brother Claude Mattingly finished their convent. The friars in turn took up residence in Claude’s cargo shed. Thus when Archbishop Maximilien de Furstenberg arrived in Mendi for the first visit of an apostolic delegate, he got to bunk down with Firmin and the other friars in the cargo shed.

By the middle of the first year, a number of girls started sleeping at Kumin, 12 on June 13, and another seven on the 14th. Further independence among the women was noted on the 16th, when the woman who had been placed in charge of the dormitory was disowned by her husband, who already had two other wives. The woman’s brother came to take her home, hoping to “sell her again for the bride price,” but she refused to go.\footnote{417}{Schmidt chronicle, June 13, 14 and 16, 1961.}

Some 45 of the girls started wearing dresses on July 9, but only on Sundays. “During the week these girls still wear grass skirts and blouses,” Firmin noted, “until they learn to keep clean.”

In early September, several girls were brought to Mendi from Kagua and Tari. The ones from Kagua had already been in school for several years; but, according to Firmin, “we thought it would be desirable to bring them under the Sisters’ influence.” One of the Mendi girls, upon seeing the new arrivals, remarked, “They are the same as we.”

Mother Cephas arrived in Mendi Oct. 17, 1961, accompanied by two new volunteers, Sisters Naomi Frey (then known as Thomas Ann) and Lorraine Geis, and her secretary, Sister Hortense...
Fougerousse. Mother was in Mendi on Oct. 29, for the baptism of Mary Ann Masami, the first Mendi girl to be baptized. Two days later Firmin took Mother and Sisters Noreen and Hortense to visit Erave and Kagua. They returned Nov. 2, and four days later, Sisters Annata, Naomi, and Lorraine departed for Tari to begin the community’s second Papuan foundation, in a convent built for them by Brother Mark. A week after the convent’s dedication by Firmin on Nov. 9, Mother and Sister Hortense left for the States.

The school in Mendi progressed so well that towards the end of its second year, Bishop Firmin wrote that Mr. Blue, a government inspector, “seems very favorably impressed. Among other things, he mentioned that the prep children here speak better English than any Standard 1 children of the schools he has inspected. He mentioned also that this is the best mission school he has ever seen, and he has been working in more advanced areas of the Territory.”

The Oldenburg Franciscans made their third foundation in the Southern Highlands at Kagua in 1966, with Sisters Martine, Annata and Mel Hoffman in the first group. From Kagua, Sisters Martine and Naomi also started another school at Sumi in 1970, living at Sumi during the week and returning to Kagua for the weekends.

The appearance of Sisters in modern streamlined habits on Jan. 11, 1969, unwittingly signaled a new era of profound change for the community and its work in the Mendi diocese. Between then and 1975, the community’s flourishing primary schools were completely turned over to the national teachers, and all of the Sisters took up other apostolates.

Some formed a nucleus for the faculty of St. Joseph’s High School at Tari which started in 1971 with Sisters Mel and Charlyn Wolff heading the faculty as headmistress and deputy. Others began teaching in high schools at Mendi and Kagua. Since 1973, there have also generally been two members of the community on the faculty of the interdiocesan Catholic teachers college at Mt. Hagen. In 1980, Sister Doris Holohan was deputy of the college and Sister Marilyn Chall dean of women.

Sister Annata served as diocesan education secretary from 1970 until 1974; and when Sister Martine took over the job for another four years, Annata was elected by all the religious women of the diocese to direct the formation of national sisters of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary. Annata also broke new ground by joining Fathers Roy Schuster and Pete Meis in giving the annual Sisters’ retreat at Mendi in December 1975. A member of another community wrote at the time, “Sister gave a couple of talks and a homily at Mass. We were very proud of her as she gave very good talks.”

Sister Brendan Boyle was curriculum specialist for the government from 1972 until 1975, and most of the other Sisters are now involved in training catechists and in helping in pastoral work in the Diocese.

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418 Schmidt chronicle, Sept. 27, 1962.


4. Sister MARY PADUA (CECILIA) HOLOHAN – Primary teacher 1969-75; parish ministry (women’s clubs, local bakery, adult education, deanery religious education coordinator) 1976-ca.81; Mt Hagen 84-PRESENT. (Tari 1969-72, Kagua 1972-ca. 81, Mt. Hagen 84-PRESENT). Was in the States ca.1981-84. Formerly known as Sister Marie Padua; a sister to Annata and Doris.


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421 2016: Sister also taught at Tari High School and St. Fidelis Seminary (Meis to Burkey, Sept. 16, 2016).
Handmaids of our Lord, Nazareth

The second group of religious women to take up work in the Mendi Mission were the Handmaids of Our Lord (Ancillae Domini) from Nazareth near Port Moresby, who began work at Pureni in 1966.

Mother Genevieve, French-born superior of the predominantly Melanesian community, visited the first band of Capuchins in Sydney, while they were still enroute to Papua, and asked them to take along on the “Bulolo” some boxes of goods for her sisters.

In Sydney to recuperate from a broken leg, Mother Genevieve was using the opportunity to raise funds to build a convent at Nazareth to replace the old motherhouse at Kubuna near Yule Island, where Bishop Alain de Boismenu had founded the Handmaids in 1918, and where Sister Marie Therese Noblet had guided them from 1921 until 1930. The very same day that Mother visited them, Oct. 14, 1955, Father Berard Tomassetti mailed appeals for assistance in the building of this convent to his friends in the States, telling them they would “be helping our mission indirectly, since we hope to get some of these native sisters up in the Highlands to help with our work.”

Father Otmar and the second band of Capuchin missionaries visited Mother Genevieve at Kubuna shortly before the 1956 move to Nazareth; and after that, numerous other friars visited the new motherhouse on their way through Port Moresby. Monsignor Firmin, for example, visited there on his way to Mendi in 1959 and practically every time he passed through Port Moresby in subsequent years.

The first Handmaids to come to Mendi arrived in January 1963 for a three-week visit. Sisters Mary Garnier (novice mistress), Mary Dominic Ido, and Caroline Ike, according to Firmin’s chronicle, made “a big hit with our…people.” On Jan. 21, they visited Pureni, and Berard optimistically wrote in the chronicle, “The Little Sisters are on a tour of the Highlands missions and are especially interested in coming to our Prefecture –someday. Pureni is considered as a likely place for them to come to work.

When in late August 1965, while enroute to the fourth session of the Second Vatican Council, Firmin visited Mother Genevieve again at Nazareth, she revealed her decision to send her Little
Sisters to Pureni in February 1966. The bishop sent word back from Rome, and Brother Mark and his crew went to Pureni Nov. 11 to begin building a convent.

The first four Sisters were assigned Jan. 31 to teach and do social work in the parish. Sisters Marie Solange Dendillo (superior), Daria Munamuna, Rose Mary Utau, and Mary Casimir Iropo arrived Feb. 26. They were accompanied by two other sisters who soon afterwards returned to mission elsewhere.

Already in July 1966, Mary Solange was elected Mother Vicar General of the congregation and had to return to Port Moresby. Sister Elizabeth Dickens, a nurse, was then sent to replace her as superior.

The congregation began its second foundation in the Mendi Diocese in 1968 at Nipa, where they again took charge of a school. The first sisters there were Sisters Daria Munamuna (superior), Maria Goretti Julimi, and Theresa Gertrude Otesi.

One of the most monumental undertakings in Handmaid history pulled all of the Sisters from the Diocese in late 1970, so that the entire congregation might engage in an extraordinary three-year educational and religious updating.

Sister Mary Monica Zaot Touai was the first Handmaid to return to the diocese. She finished her nurse’s training at the health center at Det from June until November 1973 and then joined another nurse, Sister Joan Tologi, in taking over the health center that lay missionary nurses had started at Pureni in the Handmaids’ absence. Sister Zaverine Emolo Vau arrived a few months later to begin various social welfare projects.

In late October 1974, Mother Genevieve paid her first visit to the Mendi diocese, and for a few years after that (1975-78) the Handmaids helped in the operation of Tari High School. Since 1976, there has also been a Handmaid on the faculty of Pureni’s parish grade school.

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27. Sister MARIA PIA – Primary headteacher 1969  (Nipa).


32. Sister ROSE MARY UTAU -- Domestic 1966 feb.-jul. (Pureni). Has left the community.


37. Sister THERESA AIHI -- Primary headteacher 1980-ca.82. (Pureni). Presently a member of general council.


The Secular Clergy

The next ecclesiastical group to join the Capuchins in missionary ministry in the Diocese of Mendi was the secular clergy.

Actually, a member of their ranks from France, Father Paul-Joseph Taphanel, had been there before the Capuchins and in fact had been the very first priest to enter the territory now known as the Diocese of Mendi.
The first secular priest to take up residence, however, was in 1968. Between then and 1983, seven Australian secular priests volunteered for temporary pastoral service in the Diocese of Mendi. These men came as individual through agreements made between themselves, their own bishops in Australia, and Bishop Schmidt.

The first was Father David Nies of the Archdiocese of Sydney who arrived in April 1968. From then until 1983, there was always one, and sometimes as high as four, Australian priests working in the diocese. They came from five different Australian dioceses, and seven of the 15 parishes in the Mendi diocese had one or the other of these priests working with them. One of these, Father Joseph Taylor, returned in 1984 to help staff the Spiritual Year at Erave.

Besides the Australians, four national secular priests have also been working in the diocese: three from the diocese itself (Fathers Simon Apea Soge, Colman Marone, and Colman Renali) and the Diocese of Goroka’s Father Louis Ambane, who arrived in 1980.

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1 Father LOUIS AMBANE (Diocese of Goroka – Ordained 1973 dec. 17. Associate director, Spiritual Year, Erave, 1980-83.


4. Father KEVIN FLANAGAN (Diocese of Wagga Wagga) -- Associate pastor, Upper Mendi 1971; associate pastor, Pureni (Koroba) 1971-72, 1974, (Hedamali) 1972-74. He had come for a visit in 1969.


7. Father COLMAN MARONE (Diocese of Mendi) -- Ordained deacon 1982 jan.6, Mendi; priest 1982 dec. 15, Det. Associate pastor, Nipa 1982-84; associate pastor, Kagua (Kware) 1984-PRESENT.422

422 2016: Father died while in active ministry at Mendi on Feb. 15, 2015.


10. Father PATRICK RUANE (Diocese of Bathurst) -- Associate pastor, Pureni (Hedamali) 1969-70; associate pastor, Pureni (Komo) 1971-74; first canonical pastor, Komo 1974-75. Dean of Western deanery 1972-75. Was to have returned to the diocese after studies in Ireland in 1975, but suffered a severe heart attack in Spain and returned to Australia.

11. Father PAUL-JOSEPH TAPHANEL (Diocese of Bourges) -- Was the first priest to enter the territory of the Diocese of Mendi in 1954. See chapter 2.

12. Father JOSEPH TAYLOR (Diocese of Sandhurst) -- Associate pastor, Mendi (Karint) 1980-81; pastor, Margarima 1981-83; assistant director, Spiritual Year, Erave 1984-PRESENT. Member, renewal team, diocesan pastoral plan implementation 1981-83.

Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, Perth

Next to take their place among the missionaries of the Southern Highlands were the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (Religieuses de Notre-Dame des Missions or R.N.D.M.), a group founded in Lyons, France, in 1861 by the Servant of God Euphrasia Barbier (Mother Marie du Coeur de Jesus, 1829-1893). Based at the time in Hastings, England, this international congregation has as its primary purpose educational work in the mission fields of Oceania.

Scouts for these sisters arrived on the island Nov. 25, 1968, with tickets to Goroka in the Eastern Highlands, where they planned to check out a possible site for their first foundation in Papua New Guinea.

They had intended to visit the Mendi diocese later, however, and Father Samuel Driscoll had the Ialibu people praying that the Sisters would pick that station as their mission.

Bishop Firmin Schmidt helped these prayers along more than a little. He was in Port Moresby when the Australian provincial, Mother Mary Ignatius, and her companion, Sister Mary Helen Scamell, arrived from Perth in Western Australia; and after meeting them at the airport, he suggested they accompany him to the Southern Highlands first, promising that he would see to it that they got to Goroka later on the Mendi diocese’s own plane.

The two sisters reached Mendi Nov. 28 and according to Firmin were “very favorably impressed with everything they saw” and “immediately felt at home…” The bishop took them to visit Long, Kambeyekipu, and Tulum, as well as the primary school at Mendi. They then visited

423 Father later earned a licentiate in canon law in Rome and taught at Holy Spirit Seminary and the University of PNG. Later left the priesthood and married. He died of a heart attack in Port Moresby.
Ialibu and Orei, as well as Pangia, which Firmin wrote he was “hoping the Sisters will staff after they get settled in at Ialibu.” He added Dec. 4, “They told me that there was no need to go to Goroka, or any other diocese. They were definitely coming to the Southern Highlands.”

“Our prayers have been answered.” Sam wrote in the chronicle. “The Sisters like the place—but who wouldn’t, as far as that goes—and have accepted Ialibu for their mission. In fact, Mother Ignatius has given the names of the four sisters who will join us at the end of January.” These were Sisters Mary Bernadette McLeod (superior), Marie (then known as Mary Veronica) Lawlor, Mary Majella Hogan, and Margaret (Mary James) Dorizzi.

These Sisters arrived in Mendi Feb. 2, 1969, and after several weeks of orientation at Mendi, Kagua, and Port Moresby, went to Ialibu April 9 and took over the operation of the primary school developed there by lay missionaries.

On her way back from a general chapter at Hastings later that year, Mother Ignatius met her vicar, Mother Ethnea, at Port Moresby; and the two visited Ialibu, as well as Pangia, where a convent was already being built! “The Sisters would like to send more Sisters for the beginning of next school year, if at all possible,” Sam wrote. “We will all have to wait and pray and see.”

It took another year, however. Then on Dec. 10, 1970, while two general councilors, Sisters Margaretta and Roberta were visiting from Rome, it was announced that Sisters Majella Hogan (superior), Margaret Dorizzi, and Lois (Mary Aquinas) Hannon would start the Pangia foundation. Lois arrived at Ialibu Jan. 25, 1971, and the following day the three left for Pangia to take over operation of the school there.

By that time, however, the primary schools of the diocese were starting to be turned over to national teachers, and when the Mother General of the community arrived for a visit in late May 1971, the new pastor of Ialibu, Father Colman Studeny, asked if a sister could be released for catechetical work, particularly for the training of catechists. During the Mother Provincial’s visit in November, she agreed to let Sisters Marie Lawlor and Margaret Dorizzi undertake such work in Ialibu and Pangia.

Since then all of the sisters of the community have undertaken other forms of education. Instead of primary teachers they became parish religious instruction coordinators, catechist instructresses, girls’ vocational school teachers, and high school teachers; and even more recently, many of them have entered other areas of pastoral assistance.

The sisters began a third foundation in the diocese at Wiliame in 1978.

Members of three different provinces (Australia, North New Zealand, and South New Zealand) have worked together in the eastern deanery of the Mendi diocese.

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The arrival date is from the Pangia convent chronicle.


19. Sister ________________________________ – Novice, pastoral experience ( )

20 Sister ________________________________ – Novice pastoral experience ( )

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

As already related in chapters 3, 7-9, French Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had been in the Mendi mission a year already when Capuchins arrived in 1955, and they stayed on with the first friars for yet another year.

Members of the Australian province of the same congregation renewed the community’s presence twice since then. For several months in 1969 and 1970, Father Peter Flynn lived and worked in Ialibu and Kagua while convalescing from a liver ailment. Then in 1974, when the spiritual year program of Holy Spirit Seminary, Bomana, was established at Erave, Father Kevin Twomey was named as its first director. Since then most of the staffing of that branch of the seminary have been by Sacred Heart missionaries. 425


2. Father JOHN BOVENMARS (Australian Prov.) – Assistant director, spiritual year 1974 (2nd half). (Erave).

3. Father STEVE DIVES (Australian Prov.) – Director, spiritual year 1983-PRESENT. (Erave).

425 Check to see if I have the correct provincial designations.


He had 35 years teaching experience.


Sisters of Divine Providence of the Order of St. Francis, Baldegg, Switzerland

Even before the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions had come to check out the Southern Highlands, the Franciscan Sisters of Providence from Baldegg, Switzerland (Schwestern Vonder Gottlichen Vorsehung in Baldegg or FSDP) had been there and made arrangements to provide Sisters for the Central Deanery.

The community, founded in the Diocese of Basel in 1830, had long been working with Swiss Capuchins in Tanzania; and indeed several Sisters who came to Papua New Guinea had earlier worked as missionaries in that African country.

While Bishop Schmidt was in Rome for the last session of the Council in 1965, Father Francis Solanus Schappi of Zurich, Swiss definitor general, aware Firmin was actively looking for Sisters, asked if he would like to meet the Baldegg Franciscans. This naturally led Firmin to Baldegg, where he met the general superior, Mother Hedwig, and her assistant and predecessor as general superior (for a quarter century), Mother Sixta Popp. Firmin and Sixta did most of the talking in German.

The first contact had no immediately apparent result, but the seed sown was nurtured through additional contacts, and finally in early 1968, Sixta and Sister Astrid Dietsche, a Tanzanian missionary, visited Papua New Guinea. According to the Det chronicle, word they would be visiting came over the radio sked already on Feb. 9; and the sisters themselves were in Det April 2-7. Father Benjamin Madden who was later to work closely with the Sisters wrote in the
chronicle, “The Lord knows that the two of them are wonderful, and if all their Sisters measure up to their standard, our Diocese (and more selfishly myself at Det) will really be blessed.”

About 1,000 people showed up for Mass at Det on April 3, and afterwards Firmin and the Sisters met with the local leaders who expressed their desire to have the Sisters come so as to start a hospital and to care for the school.

The first missionaries arrived in Papua New Guinea Oct. 9, 1969, and began two months of orientation. The group was led by 64-year-old Mother Sixta herself and consisted also of Sisters Gaudentia Meier, Kiliana Fries, Lukas Süess, and Sibille Meyer. They settled in Det Dec. 16, and assumed charge of both the parish primary school and the health center which two lay missionaries had been operating there with the help of a national teacher and two national nurse’s aides.

The congregation had nine sisters at Det by 1971 and was ready to start new foundations. The first was in the Pomberel parish. Sibille and Sister Damascene Schuermann started teaching at Kum Feb. 15, 1972, and Kiliana and Sister Verona Hutter, both nurses, joined them at Pomberel in March and began caring for the people’s health needs.

Misunderstandings between the mission and the public health department led to the abandonment of plans for a clinic in the Pomberel area, but resulting discussions led to the sending of Sisters into the Margarima area Nov. 7. Verona went there to take charge of the government health center in Margarima, and Lukas to begin catechist training and adult education projects.

Nipa, the oldest station in the Central Deanery where Handmaids had worked 1968-1970—was the last to receive the Swiss Sisters. Sibille and Sister Danielle Dietsche went to Nipa Dec. 20, 1976, – the former as a religious education coordinator, the latter as a social-pastoral worker.

As with the other communities, many of the sisters have taken on new apostolates while in the Mendi diocese. The latest undertaking is the advanced unit of the Diocesan Christian Development Center for girls which the community opened at Nipa in 1979, staffed by Sisters Paulus Maria Marfurt, Mildred Menezes, and Valentine Flury. In addition to her work at the Det health center, Gaudentia has served since 1973 as diocesan health secretary.

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1 Sister DAMASCENE SCHÜRMANN – Adult education 1971-72; social worker 1972-75; community welfare worker 1976-____; parish religious education coordinator 197____-____; pastoral assistant 19____-PRESENT. (Det 1971-72, Pomberel 1972-____, Margarima 19____-PRESENT). Member, socio-economic team for implementation of diocesan pastoral plan 1980-____. Former Tanzanian missionary; sister to Sister Josefata.426

426 Was she also at Nipa? When did she leave Pomberel? When go to Margarima?


6. Sister JOSEFATA SCHÜRMANN – Nurse 1978-83. (Margarima 1978-ca.82, Det ca. 82-83). Tanzania missionary both before and after her Papua New Guinea service; sister of Sister Damascene.


10. Sister MILDRED MENEZES – D.C.D.C. staff, pastoral work 1979-PRESENT. (Nipa) Native of India; sister of Father Gregory Menezes, OFMCap


**Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, Bendigo**

The Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary (Soeurs de la Charité de Jésus et de Marie or S.C.J.M.) from Bendigo, Victoria, Australia, arrived in the Mendi diocese’s westernmost station, Koroba, Jan. 9, 1972.\(^{427}\)

While on home leave in Australia Jan. 28, 1970, Lay Missionary Nancy Waller arranged with Bishop Firmin Schmidt to have the Sisters’ Australian provincial, Mother Barbara __________ visit the mission. Mother arrived in Mendi with Nancy on March 24, and by the time of her departure a fortnight later, according to Firmin, “she practically agreed to send Sisters to our mission.”

Arrangements were subsequently made through general headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, for four sisters to come to Koroba by July 1971. The general council’s desire to see that the individual missionaries were adequately prepared for the work, however, postponed their arrival until the following year.

The first group, consisting of Sisters Mechtilde Winhoven (superior), AnnuNciata McElligot, Filumena Light, and Rita Din, arrived in 1972 in the company of Koroba’s resident priest, Father Gabriel Lomas, who was on his way back from home leave in England.

Brother Alfred Vincent had been building a convent at Koroba; but as it was not completed, the Sisters lived for awhile in the friary, and Gabriel and Alfred lived in a store house.

The Charity sisters came to Koroba intending to offer medical care to the community, and for a few years two of them worked in the local government health center, while another ran general clinics in the outstations. Frustrations with the indifference of local authorities and tension with other Christian missions eventually proved more than the sisters could bear, and they withdrew from this apostolate.

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\(^{427}\) How were they contacted in the first place?
Meanwhile one of the sisters taught for a while in the local government school, and another engaged in training older girls. At first they ran a vocational school for girls in the Koroba area; since 1978, however, they have staffed the first level of the Diocesan Christian Development Center for girls and engaged in various social work in the Koroba parish.

The congregation, founded in Ghent, Belgium, in 1803, by Canon Pierre Joseph Triest (1760-1836), was the one referred to in Kathryn Hulme’s 1956-best-seller, *The Nun’s Story*. The superior general, Mother André _____________ visited Koroba for ten days in February 1973.


2. Sister ANSELM VITHANAGE (Sri Loatha) – Pediatric nurse, Koroba health center, 1973-77. Also known as Sister Stalina. Has since left community.


7. Sister ERAVA_______________(Belgium) – D.C.D.C. staff, pastoral assistant 83-PRESENT.

8. Sister REGIS _______________(India) – Assignment pending 1984-PRESENT. Probably will go with Sister Filumena to Kopiago.

**Marist Missionary Sisters**

The Marist Missionary Sisters (Soeurs Missionaries de la Societé de Marie or S.M.S.M.), founded in France in 1845 by the Servant of God Jean Claude Colin, S.M. (1790-1875), came to the Diocese of Mendi in 1973 to help staff the diocesan Katekis Trenin Senta at Erave.
In its first two years, the KTS had been well served by a number of lay missionaries, but the uncertainty of their being regularly replaced led Father Dunstan Jones, the Senta’s first director, to approach Bishop Firmin Schmidt in late 1970 about the possibility of finding a group of Sisters to help staff the Senta on a consistent basis.

Providentially, when Firmin visited Australia shortly thereafter for a joint meeting of the Australian and PNG bishops and the visit of Pope Saint Paul VI, the S.M.S.M. provincial superior, Sister Mary Maher (then known as Mother Madonna), informed him of the desire of her community to broaden its base in Oceania by starting a foundation somewhere in a remote area of Papua New Guinea.

Encouraged by the bishop, Mary and Sister Theresa Devaux made an exploratory visit to Erave Nov. 9, 1971. Dunstan prepared a tape explaining the situation, which Mary later used in her presentation to the community’s regional chapter.

Word reached Erave April 5, 1972, that the congregation had agreed to work in the KTS and in the parish there. The first group which arrived Feb. 6, 1973, consisted of two Australian teachers, Sisters Aileen Lanigan and Mary MacDonald, and an American nurse, Sister Joyce Ann Edelmann.

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7. Sister MARY CECILIA COX – Teacher, KTS, Erave 1974-75. Came as a novice and made profession on Feb. 10, 1975, the first religious to do so in the Southern Highlands.


11. Sister RITA EDGE – Teacher, KTS, Erave, 1977-ca.82. Formerly a missionary in North Solomon Islands, and now back there.

12. Sister VERONICA ________________ -- Teacher, KTS, Erave 1973? Though at Erave with the Marist Missionary Sisters, she was actually a member of a community of national sisters on Bougainville (C.S.N.) and is now superior general of that congregation.

**Christian Brothers**

The earliest reference located thus far to a secondary school in the Diocese of Mendi (FN) also speaks of the Christian Brothers (*Congregatio Fratrum Christianorum* or C.F.C.), a group founded at Waterford, Ireland, by Blessed Brother Edmund Rice (1762-1844).

Brother Barry Louissan, the Brothers’ provincial superior, visited Mendi ______________ 1967, And Firmin wrote afterwards. “He gave me hope that their province may agree to staff our secondary school.”

St. Joseph’s High School, also known as Tari High, was already in its third year, however, before anything came of this initial contact.

Brothers Barry Louissan, Mark ________________, and Dominic ________________ visited Tari High School, May 11-13, 1973, to study the possibility of their confreres joining the staff there. This was followed Sept. 5 by a visit of their new provincial, Brother __________ McGlade, who promised to send three brothers in 1974 for a one-year trial period.

The following year, Brother William Finnegan was assigned as deputy headmaster and Brothers William Addicoat and Richard Pop as faculty members. The first two arrived January 16, 1974, and Richard on the 22nd.

From then until 1983 there were always three or four of the brothers at Tari High, with one of them serving as deputy headmaster. At that time, however, they pulled out of the school altogether.

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1. Brother ANDREW KIAPLAI – Teacher, Tari High School, 1979-____,


5. Brother IAN CARROLL – Deputy headmaster, Tari High School, 1980-____.


10. Brother RICHARD POP – Teacher, Tari High School, 1974-75. Has left the community.


**Order of Friars Minor, Aitape**

While many of the friars from the Observant Franciscan’s mission in the Aitape diocese have visited the Mendi diocese over the years, several of them as retreat masters for the Capuchins, the only one to work long-term in the diocese has been Father Gerald Walsh, OFM, former rector of Holy Spirit Seminary, Bomana. During the second half of 1974, Father directed the seminary’s spiritual year program at Erave.

**Society of the Divine Word**

Divine Word missionaries from the dioceses of Mt. Hagen, Wabag, Kundiawa, Goroka, Madang, and Wewak have had a close relationship with the Capuchins as long as the latter have been in Papua New Guinea. Somewhat symbolic of this friendship is the fact that their founder Saint Arnold Janssen was a blood brother of Capuchin Brother Juniper Janssen of the Rhine-Westphalian Province.

As related already in chapter 2, the second priest to enter what is now the Diocese of Mendi was a Divine Word missionary. Even before the Sacred Heart missionaries reached Mendi, Father Joseph Krimm, SVD, had explored the Pangia and Ialibu areas in the company of Father Paul-Joseph Taphanel.
During the subsequent three decades the vast majority of traffic into the Southern Highlands has passed through the midst of the SVD’s, so quite understandably the friars have frequently relied on them for lodging, supplies, transportation, catechists, and advice.

Alteration by the government of the boundaries of the Southern Highlands several years ago resulted in part of the Mendi diocese being transferred from the Southern Highlands Province to Enga Province, and vice versa. Though this did not change the ecclesiastical boundary, Bishop Firmin Schmidt and Bishop George Bernarding of the Mt. Hagen diocese mutually agreed in about 1972 or 1973 to have the area previously cared for by Father Malachy McBride tacked on the Mt. Hagen’s diocese’s Mariant-Kandep parish. Thus Divine Word Missionaries at Mariant-Kandep, such as Fathers Jerry (Gerald) Theis, Herman Reich (later bishop of Enga), and Casimir Niezgoda have in a real way also been on the Mendi team. And Fathers Willibald Blank and Gerald Theis had the Winja parish in the Western Highlands and its outstations before Father Malachy.

A similar situation at the western end of the Mendi diocese saw the Lake Kopiago parish becoming part of the Southern Highlands. Earlier SVD priests had developed the area, and Father Joseph Knoebel, SVD, had built a beautiful house and permanent school there. When he left the area, Bishop Bernarding asked if the Capuchins could look after the area, and for about two years in the early 1970’s Father Gabriel Lomas went there every couple months or so from his parish at Koroba, about seven hours to the south, and he sent regular reports to Bishop Bernarding.

Besides this interdiocese cooperation, during the first half of 1974, the Divine Word Missionaries were represented in the Diocese by Father Nick De Groot, assistant director of the seminary spiritual year program at Erave, and Father William Burrows, who had the same job the following year.

**Discalced Carmelites, Bomana**

When the friars were searching for sisters for the Southern Highlands in the 1950’s, they enlisted the nuns of the Carmel at Yule Island in praying for that intention; and in a letter of Dec. 20, 1957, three cloistered religious expressed the hope that the friars would soon “coax along some of those ‘Catholic nuns’ we are praying for.”

Ironically the same letter revealed that one of the nuns wanted very much “to take a foundation of Carmelites to the Highlands.” The nuns, however, were not prepared to make such a foundation and observed that such a move “wouldn’t exactly help you out with your immediate problems in the field of education.”

Evidently the desire survived somehow, for Nov. 17, 1977, Sister Judith-of-God Dowd of the Carmel at Bomana (successor to the one at Yule Island) arrived in Mendi to make preparations
for the founding of a hermitage at Erave, where she would engage herself fulltime in praying for the Diocese of Mendi. 428

American-born Sister Judith had been a civilian pilot during World War II and had flown new bombers across the Atlantic Ocean for the U.S. Army.

Sister took up permanent residence at Erave on Aug. 22, 1978. Her presence there, however, is on an experimental basis and not as a foundation of her community, and it remains to be seen as to whether she will be able to continue as both a Carmelite nun and a hermit. 429

Franciscan Sisters of Mary

The beginnings of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary are told more properly in Chapter 22. For completeness’ sake, however, they are also listed here.

Marist Missionaries

The parish at Lake Kopiago, mentioned under the Society of the Divine Word, was canonically separated from the Diocese Wabag and attached to the Diocese of Mendi. Boston-born Father Carlton Grennier (born about 1936) of the Marist community (Societas Mariae or S.M.) formerly of Bougainville in the Solomon Islands arrived in June 1983 to care for the parish. He is being assisted by the Charity Sisters from Koroba.

Oblates of Saint Joseph, Yule Island

One other religious community should be called in this chapter for the sake of completeness. Two members of the Oblates of St. Joseph of Yule Island, Brothers Felix Walaba and Paul Idomaka, arrived at Ialibu Aug. 13, 1955, several months before the Capuchins and worked alongside them during their early years there. They are mentioned in chapters 9, 10 and 13. This group of national brothers, founded in 1920 by Bishop Alain de Bosimenu, is no longer in existence.

1 Brother FELIX WALABA – Builder, teacher, and evangelizer 1955-Feb. 58. Had entered the community about 1933 was a member of the community 1933-1958. After leaving the community he remained at Ialibu as a lay missionary. He did work in Orei in 1962 and in Pangia in August 1964.

428 She was not the first contemplative interested in Erave. Two Poor Clares, Mother Cecilia and Sister Theresa, a nurse, came from Madang June 26-27, 1970, “to look over an Erave site for a possible convent.”
429 2016: Judith left the Carmelites and took up life in Erave as a hermitess. She later turned to the States and was last known to be living as a hermitess somewhere in Florida (Meis to Burkey, Aug. 28, 2016).
2 Brother PAUL IDOMAKA – Builder, teacher, and evangelizer 1955-April 24, 1958. He returned to the coast and later left the community and married a young woman from Orei. He is presently living with his wife and children in his home village on the coast.
It is a great joy for the Church to see the number growing daily of lay people who offer their personal service to the apostolate, whether within their own country or in the international field, and especially in the Catholic communities of the missions and of the young Churches. Vatican II, decree on Apostolate of Lay People, 1965, n. 22.

Gifted Hands & Generous Hearts

The idea of lay missionaries is as old as the Church itself. Apollo, Aquila, Priscilla, and Philemon worked side-by-side with Paul and his clerical co-workers, and later in North America, Saints Rene Goupil and Jean Lalande laid down their lives in the company of five Jesuit priests.

Sad to say, however, when the Capuchin friars left for Papua in 1955, not only was the Church’s foreign mission personnel predominantly clerical and religious; but also the general consensus among superiors of American missionary congregations of religious, according to Father Frederick McGuire, C.M., executive secretary of the U.S. bishops’ mission secretariat, “was that lay apostles were not needed and not desired.”

From hindsight it is easy to see how the missions were decidedly the poorer for this shallowness of lay involvement. Not so much because lay men and women could have made life easier for priests, brothers, and sisters, but rather because they could have freed them for their own proper tasks and, what is more, only they could have given public witness to the fact that all men, not only priests and religious, are called to sanctity and mission witness. Also only dedicated Catholic lay people could effectively counteract the scandal that some of their fellow Catholics were giving through greed, bigotry, religious indifference, and the like. Working without salary, kneeling at daily Mass, living among the people in simple homes, lay missionaries could not fail to impress both the neophyte and the careless Catholic.

Thus it was most appropriate that the Lay Mission Helpers of Los Angeles, who were being founded in 1955 by Monsignor Anthony J. Brouwers (d. 1964), even as the first Pennsylvania

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Capuchins were preparing to leave for Papua, had the motto inscribed on their rings “For we are God’s Helpers,” noting well thereby that they were not the other missionaries’ helpers, but rather their co-workers.

We are talking of the pre-Vatican II era, however, and the friars were generally not conscious of the necessity of lay involvement for the wholeness of their own missionary efforts. Had they been so, they probably would have been more energetic in obtaining lay co-workers.

This is somewhat ironic since, as Father Berard Tomassetti noted in July 1957, the friars “have done little more than what could have been accomplished by lay help. Our attention aside from that given to building has been given to teaching young boys—the future lay helpers of the missionaries and perhaps the real apostles of the future.”

To their credit, however, the friars never suggested that they had no need nor desire to have lay missionaries with them. On the contrary they frequently expressed the hope that lay missionaries would somehow materialize.

Already on April 6, 1956, Father Otmar Gallagher asked Father Victor Green what he thought of the idea of getting lay missionaries from the States, and noted that the son of a friend had expressed an interest. Though Victor answered the rest of this letter, he entirely ignored the question about lay missionaries.

Two months later in reverse déjà vu Victor asked Otmar what he thought about lay missionaries, indicating that a young man had approached him about volunteering as a lay missionary. “If you say that lay help is welcome and are willing to take a chance on what we may be able to screen out for you,” Victor wrote, “I’ll go to work on this angle and make recommendations to the new Definitorium.”

“All of us are very much interested in lay missionaries,” Otmar answered. “They could help us immensely.” He added that at a May 14 meeting of Bishop André Sorin with the priests of the Southern Highlands, the question of lay missionaries had been discussed.

We Caps, naturally, didn’t have much to say since we have no experience in that matter at all. Bishop Sorin had quite a number of lay missionaries in the Vicariate and is quite happy with them in general. If the lay missionary is from Australia he signs a contract for a three year term, while those from France sign up for 10 years. Bishop Sorin pays their passage to and from the Vicariate, supports them and gives them £1.0.0 a month spending money. He does not accept married people and it is understood that they are not to marry while working as lay missionaries.

Otmar went on to say that he did not think anyone should be asked to serve more than five years. He also thought lay missionaries ought to have their own houses, but that they should take their meals with the friars. Besides paying for their upkeep, he felt the mission should also give the lay people about £10 a month – about US$22.50 – for incidentals.

“All single men would be preferred,” he said, “although a married couple would be alright too. I would even accept young single women, provided, of course, that there were two or more.”
Father Victor acknowledged receiving this letter and said that he, Father Paul Farkas, home then for medical care, and Father Cecil Nally, the mission procurator, would try to work something out on this matter “if we find the right people.”

It was seven months later, however, until the subject resurrected. By then there was a new provincial minister, and discussions returned to square one. It began again with Otmar’s informing Father Claude Vogel in January 1957 that the Baroness Maria Augusta Von Trapp of Sound of Music fame was planning to visit the mission to gather information on the possibilities for lay missionaries in the area. This was being done at the request of Archbishop Romolo Carboni, the apostolic delegate. Three of the Von Trapps were already working as lay missionaries on Fergusson Island in the Sideia mission, and the family was planning to start an organization at their home in Stowe, Vermont, to train additional lay missionaries to work in Melanesia.

Claude’s reaction was not exactly exuberant. “I think it is alright for you to have the Trapp family visit the mission,” he wrote. “Perhaps some unforeseen good will result.”

Otmar was a little more optimistic, and following Madam Von Trapp’s departure, he wrote he had hopes “that once they have their organization in operation, we may profit from it.”

The subject was dropped then until June, when almost as though it had never been discussed, Claude asked Otmar’s views on lay missionaries, since “one or two young women have inquired…” Claude said he wanted to be sure that the friars could not get such volunteers from Australia or from nearer places. “If you cannot get them easier from nearby, then we shall have to try to get them here.”

Claude pointed out the necessity of giving such candidates preliminary training, and said that while an institute had just been started “in New York” for training men, he knew of none that would prepare women as lay missionaries.431

Otmar said he knew of no way of getting lay missionaries from Australia, but that he had already heard from the “New York” group and had asked them for teachers, carpenters, etc.

It was another year then until the subject reappeared in official correspondence. Meanwhile Claude had learned of the Lay Mission-Helpers of Los Angeles and had written Cardinal James Francis McIntyre asking for assistance. In July 1958, Claude wrote Otmar that Monsignor Brouwers had replied for the Cardinal, saying that the Capuchins might expect four lay mission-helpers within about a year. Otmar promptly sent information as to the types of workers needed.

In February 1959, Otmar received an inquiry for a husband and wife team of doctors (a medical doctor and a Ph.D. in nursing and nutrition education), who were interested in setting up a hospital in the Southern Highlands. They had heard of the mission through Brouwers, and quite possibly were among the first members of the Mission Doctors Association, which the Monsignor started that same year. Otmar wrote Claude, who in turn wrote to Brouwers for more information. Three months later, Claude still had not received an answer.

431 Probably Gerard Mische’s Association for International Development in Paterson, N.J.
That he had not in the meantime picked up the phone and called Brouwers may indeed be a monument to Capuchin thrift, but as a result of such dillydallying nothing was ever heard of the doctors, and it was another eight years before the first Lay Mission-Helpers arrived from Los Angeles.

Before the story gets too far ahead of itself, however, it should be duly noted that the first expatriot Catholic lay missionary in the Southern Highlands actually sailed to Papua with the first band of Capuchin missionaries. Gary Murphy was an Australian cabin steward on the Bulolo, where he made the acquaintance of Father Stanley Miltenberger. In January 1956, after a brief correspondence with Stanley, Murphy said he wanted to work with the friars in the Highlands. Stanley discussed this with Father Alexis Michellod, the vicar delegate, and he in turn accepted Murphy for the mission.

Murphy arrived in Mendi in early September 1956, and cooked for the missionaries, ran the station’s store, and helped Father Louis Campenhoudt operate its school. By May 27, 1959, he had left the mission and was running the government school at Erave. On later occasions, Murphy was employed as a teacher in Catholic schools at Kagua and Erave.

While Murphy was still working at Mendi, Father Stanley’s brother Fidelis arrived with his recent bride, Josephine Miltenberger née Coleman. Fidelis piloted VH-BVG, the mission’s Cessna 180 from late 1956 until late 1961. During this time, his first two children, Ann and Michael, were born. Since Miltenberger was employed by the mission, it is usually said that he was not a lay missionary, that term being reserved for those lay men and women who volunteered their services to the mission and received from it a small allowance to cover their living needs. The distinction is rather tenuous, however, considering that Miltenberger did the same work, took the same risks, endured the same hardships, and gave the same type of witness as the lay missionary pilots who came after him; and his importance to the success of the mission was incalculable, whether he was paid or not. Furthermore, Father Victor, who as provincial minister arranged for Miltenberger’s services, wrote that he had made it clear right from the start that he “did not care to deal on a purely commercial basis and that their coming to New Guinea was presumably with the intention of helping us in the mission work.”

Despite Fidelis’ reasonable claim to the title, Louis Ciancio from Pittsburgh has generally been referred to as the first American Catholic lay missionary in the Southern Highlands; and without a doubt his 1960 arrival signaled the beginning of a new era. Lay missionary presence then became quite visible.

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432 Ann at the government hospital at Goroka on June 15, 1957, and Michael at the Lutheran Hospital at Jaguan near Madang on Oct. 11, 1958. They were baptized at Mendi by their uncle, Fr. Stanley, on July 7, 1957, and Nov. 2, 1958 respectively.
434 Green to Gallagher, JUNE 30, 1956.
This movement received great encouragement from Pope John XXIII’s fourth encyclical “Princeps Pastorum,” which strongly pleaded for increased lay involvement in the missions. Shortly after the letter was issued Nov. 28, 1958, three American Capuchins in the right place at the right time finally got the ball rolling.

Lou Ciancio, long active in the St. Augustine’s Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, was boldly challenged by his spiritual director, Father Angelus Shaughnessy, to consider devoting part of his life to the evangelization of the Southern Highlands. Accepting the challenge, Ciancio approached Father Giles Staab Dec. 4 and offered his services.

Though only in his fifth month as provincial minister, Giles immediately began processing Ciancio’s application, developing as he went along methods for dealing with further applicants. “I am afraid that if we don’t take opportunities as they come along,” Giles wrote the next day, “we may never have lay missionaries in our mission field.”

The man he wrote this to had been his closest collaborator for the previous decade, Monsignor Firmin Schmidt, who himself had arrived in Papua only a month earlier. As ecclesiastical superior of the mission, Firmin was now able to take a more direct and aggressive approach to the recruitment of lay personnel than had previously been possible.

As was already noted in the previous chapter, Monsignor ordered on March 2, 1960, that in all Masses celebrated in the prefecture an extra prayer was to be added “for the primary purpose of obtaining Sisters and lay missionaries.” It was rather appropriate, then, that Ciancio should arrive in Mendi in Oct. 14, 1960, on the very same plane that brought the first Sisters—a plane piloted by the way by Fidelis Miltenberger.

Ciancio had been 42 when he first approached Giles and had previously served in the Pacific with the U.S. Marines. At the time he had 23 years’ experience in air traffic control, as a teacher and flight controller, was the vice president of the American Graphological Society, and held a commercial second-class telegraph operator’s license.

After his acceptance as a lay missionary, Ciancio took a three-month course in practical nursing and medicine with the Alexian Brothers and, upon his arrival in the Southern Highlands, was immediately assigned as a teacher and infirmarian at the Central School at Erave.

During the following year, four more lay missionaries joined the team, two from Australia, two from the U.S. Firmin contacted the Australians through Monsignor Albert Thomas (later Bishop of Bathurst) of the Australian office of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith. Bill McQuillan came in May 1961, as a farmer and builder and began clearing land and erecting buildings for the school at Erave. Pilot Bill Fallon (d. 1969) arrived the following month and began training to take over from Fidelis Miltenberger. Fallon found mountain flying more demanding than he anticipated and spent most of his term flying for the SVD mission on the coast. Firmin, therefore, hired Canadian Ken Olma to pilot VH-BVG.

Lou was an expert in handwriting analysis, and on occasion assisted law enforcement agencies with this skill. He was also an accomplished guitarist which made him loved and appreciated in all the circles in which he moved.
The two Americans, Mary Elizabeth Rame and John Gregor, came to the mission through the agency of Capuchins in Pittsburgh. Mary, the first Catholic woman to serve as a Southern Highlands lay missionary, was a 1952 graduate of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and had taught at various U.S. Catholic colleges. After her arrival in September 1961, she stayed at Mendi awaiting the arrival of another lay missionary woman.

John Gregor came in October to run a saw mill at Erave. Early in 1962, the first laywoman from Australia arrived in the mission. Clair Toohey was the first of many members of the Paulian Association for Lay Missionary Service who came to Mendi. Upon her arrival, she and Rame left for Ialibu to put the primitive school there on a professional basis.

The Paulian Association, known more simply as PALMS, had been founded in Sydney in 1956 by Roy Boylan, who was personally involved in placing the missionaries in the Mendi diocese for many years. A survivor of a Bavarian prisoner of war camp in World War II, Boylan was instrumental in inspiring many young people and preparing them for this special work in Church. He died of cancer in about 1980.

Boylan sent three more missionaries to the Southern Highlands in 1963. In January, Mary Carmel Fisher, a teacher, joined the other women at Ialibu, and in June Gavan Spillane came to Erave, hoping to do carpentry work, and Terry Payne, to teach in Kagua. Due to the departure of Louis Ciancio, however, Spillane was asked to take education courses at Rabaul. After earning his teacher’s certificate, he taught at Erave for two years.

Three more teachers came from PALMS in 1964. Graham Bamford went to Erave, Juanita Ferguson to Ialibu, and Leonie McDonnell joined Fisher and Toohey in raising the school at Kagua to government standards.

That same year Charles and Mary Graf came from the U.S., he as the new pilot, and she as a teacher in Mendi. Also Patricia Bayer, a secular Franciscan nurse from Pittsburgh, who like Ciancio had been asked by Father Angelus to go to Papua, began teaching in the school at Ialibu. By then there had been 15 Catholic lay missionaries in the Southern Highlands.

This number continued to grow each year, with new recruits coming from a variety of sources. Richard Hullerman, a farmer, and David Morman, a pilot, were the first to come from the Lay Mission-Helpers in Los Angeles. Two years after their 1966 arrival, Tony Travis became the first of many volunteer service workers to come from Britain, and later other countries. These skilled people came as volunteer humanitarian workers in the service of their home countries, rather than as representatives of the Church. Most of them either helped to build or taught at Tari High School during their stay with the missionaries.

Jim Keogh who arrived through PALMs in 1969 did a huge amount of building in the Mendi diocese.

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For example, friaries in Wiliame and Pangia in 1970 and 1971, the convent in Pangia in 1971 or 1972, a classroom building there in 1972, and the new cathedral.
Dan Doyle, a builder, who arrived in 1970, was the first lay missionary to come through New Zealand’s Catholic Overseas Volunteer Service. 

Through the agency of the Baldegg Franciscans at Det, a Swiss lay missionary society called Interteam sent its first members to the Southern Highlands in 1972. They were Theo Bucher, a farmer, Hans Shurtenberger, a carpenter; and Elizabeth Ehrsam and Röslie Zahner, nurses.

The year that they arrived, there were almost 50 lay persons working in the Diocese of Mendi, 21 PALMS members, 12 volunteer service workers, four Interteam members, three Lay Mission-Helpers, three from the Melbourne Mission Office, three from C.O.V.S., two other non-affiliated lay missionaries, and a contract pilot.

The number remained at about the same level the following year, but since then there has been a sharp decrease in their numbers especially as teaching positions began to be turned over to national teachers. In recent years there have generally been about a dozen lay missionaries in the diocese, and many roles once held by expatriate lay missionaries are now filled by Catholic lay men and women from Papua New Guinea itself. Indeed the government requires that expatriate lay man and women be engaged solely in work which can not be done by nationals, and it is expected by both the government and the Church that lay missionaries and other volunteers will make a serious effort to train local people in the functions in which they are involved.

Lay missionaries from 16 different nations have pioneered many fields of activity in the Diocese of Mendi. They are responsible for beginning the Church’s involvement in education, social welfare, medical health care, and economic development.

Sylvia Louth, a PALMS missionary who came to Mendi as a teacher, showed many other talents before she left. She became a catechist instructress at Pangia and Wiliame and in that capacity drew a large set of biblical posters adapted to Papua New Guinean culture which have been published and widely distributed throughout Melanesia. Her Job’s-tear mosaics and acrylic paintings of the Last Supper and various other Christian scenes grace the walls of many major Catholic churches of the eastern deanery.

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437 After his return to New Zealand, Doyle entered the seminary and was ordained a priest in 1981.
438 Helen Considine and Valerie Green, for example, began general clinic and motherhood-child welfare clinic welfare work in February 1972 at Wiliame in a building built by Jim Keogh.
439 Two Job’s-tear mosaics were hung in the Wiliame church in April 1973, and one of the Last Supper in the Ialibu church in September 1974. After returning to Australia, Sylvia later spent several years with the Poor Clares and then the Sisters of St. Joseph (Mother McKillop’s group) and was last known to be designing greeting cards.
This long-overdue book would probably never have been finished had the author not curbed his inclination to tell the full story of every one of Mendi’s generous lay missionaries.\(^\text{440}\) Time and space clearly permitted but the telling of a few. What follows now, however, is a full list of the names, dates, and services of all whose gifted hands and generous hearts, from 16 different nations, have so enriched the Church of Mendi.

**Expatriate Lay Missionaries of Mendi Diocese**
(volunteer lay workers who have come to service the people in the name of the Church.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME/NATIONALITY</th>
<th>SPONSOR</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>TERM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEPLI, Pierre</td>
<td>Interteam</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>1977-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ALLEN, Kristen</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1977-79</td>
</tr>
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<td>Australian</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERILLO, Ann</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>1969-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAMFORD, Graham</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1964-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So.African/Australian</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAUTOVICH, Isobel</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1968-71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAYER, Patricia</td>
<td>Capuchins</td>
<td>Teacher/Nurse</td>
<td>1964-70</td>
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<td>SFO</td>
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<td>BETAR, Frances</td>
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<td>1968-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIALE, Robert</td>
<td>LMHLA</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>1981-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOOG, Aninka (Anika)</td>
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<td>BORGETZE, Fred</td>
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<td>Electrician/Mechanic</td>
<td>1980-ca.82</td>
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<td>Liechtensteiner</td>
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<tr>
<td>BROADWAY, Bob</td>
<td>LMHLA</td>
<td>Handyman</td>
<td>1982-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>(husband of Joella)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BROADWAY, Joella</td>
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<td>Teacher/Registrar</td>
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<td>American</td>
<td>(wife of Bob)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUCHER, Theo</td>
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<td>Farmer</td>
<td>1972-75</td>
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<td>Swiss</td>
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<tr>
<td>BURGESS, Jeannine</td>
<td>COVS</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
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<td>New Zealander</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUTTERFIELD, Barb</td>
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<td>1970-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAREY, Geoffrey</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
<td>Saw miller</td>
<td>1968-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>(later married Mary Carolyn Dowling)</td>
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<td>CIANCIO, Louis</td>
<td>Capuchins</td>
<td>Teacher/Infirmarian</td>
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<td>SFO</td>
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<td>CLANCY, Margaret</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>1970-73</td>
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<td>Australian</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLARK, Algra</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1968-78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{440}\text{2016: Obviously it was some other reason which was able to scuddle the finishing of this book.}\)
Australian
CLEARY, Pamela
Australian
MO Teacher 1968-69

Australian
COLLINS, Mary Frances
PALMS Teacher 1973-74

Australian
CONSEDINE, Helen
COVS Nurse 1971-72

New Zealander
CREIGHTON, Jean
…… Teacher 1972-73

Canadian
D’ARCY, Mary F.
PALMS Nurse 1978-80

Australian
DOWLING, Mary Carolyn
PALMS Nurse 1971-72
(later married Geoffrey Carey)

Australian
DOYLE, Dan
COVS Builder 1970-71
(Ord. Priest Oct. 31, 1981, Christ Church;
later served as a priest in the Mendi diocese)

Swiss
EHRSAM, Elizabeth
Interteam Nurse 1972-75

English
EHN, Mary
PALMS Nurse 1975-78

Swiss
ENGLER, Christoph
Interteam Teacher 1976-79
(husband of Maria Engler)

Swiss
ENGLER, Maria
Interteam Teacher 1976-79
(wife of Christoph Engler)

Australian
ETCHELL, Peter
PALMS Carpenter/Farmer 1973-75

New Zealander
EWART, Sally
COVS Nurse 1971-73

Australian
FALLON, William
Independent Pilot #2 1961-63

American
FARRELL, Jim
LMHLA Farmer 1969-72

Swiss
FELLMAN, Felix
Interteam Farmer 1978-ca.80

Australian
FERGUSON, Juanita SFO
PALMS Teacher 1964-69, 1971-73

Australian
FISHER, Mary Carmel
PALMS Teacher 1963-68

Australian
FLEW, Michael
PALMS Mechanic 1979-81
(later married Kerry Seagrott)

American
FLORES, Dionisio
LMHLA First Aide 1972-73

American
FORD, Pamela
PALMS Teacher 1967-69

Swiss
FUCHS, Josef “Seppi”
Interteam Carpenter 1977-79

Australian
FULLER, Rosemary
PALMS Teacher 1972-73

Australian
GÄRTNER, Leo
Interteam Mechanic 1977-79
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>Graf, Charles</td>
<td>Capuchins</td>
<td>Pilot #4</td>
<td>1964-66</td>
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<td>Graf, Mary</td>
<td>Capuchins</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1964-67</td>
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<td>Green, Valerie</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>1972-73</td>
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</table>
| Graf, Charles Capuchins Pilot #4 1964-66
| Graf, Mary Capuchins Teacher 1964-67
| Green, Valerie PALMS Nurse 1972-73
| G Gregor, John Capuchins Builder 1961-66
| Grierson, Joan MMO Bookkeeper/Stenographer 1980-83
| Griffiths, John Fred PALMS Farmer 1973-74
| Haegfle, Steven LMHLA Mechanic 1974-77
| Hall, Dan PALMS Carpenter 1978-79
| Harrington, Moira Capuchins Teacher 1979-82
| (niece of Fathers Cecil and Don Bosco Nally)
| (taught in Kavieng Diocese 1983)
| Hill, Josephine PALMS Teacher 1967-70
| Hottes, John PALMS Saw miller/Youth worker 1970-72
| Painter
| Huebler, Paul SFO Capuchins Handyman 1966-70
| Hullerman, Richard LMHLA Farmer 1968-69
| (nephew of Bishop Frederick Freking of Salina & Winona)
| Imholz, Max Interteam Carpenter/Farmer 1977-78
| Irwin, Deborah Kay PALMS Secretary 1978-80
| Kaiser, Willie Interteam Electrician 1979-ca.83
| (coordinator Interteam, Madang, since ca. 83-84)
| Kaufmann, Hans Interteam Mechanic 1975-76
| Kendal, Frances PALMS Teacher 1966-68
| Kendell, Guy PALMS Teacher 1969-70
| (married Kathy of LMHLA)
| Langley, Frances Mary PALMS Nurse 1972-73
| Australian
| Leahy, Margaret Catherine PALMS Nurse 1973-75
| K Kelly, Terry PALMS Youth worker 1970-71
| Kendal, Frances PALMS Teacher 1966-68
| Kendell, Guy PALMS Teacher 1969-70
| (married Kathy of LMHLA) 441
| Keogh, James PALMS Builder 1969-75
| Irish
| King, Michele PALMS Teacher 1969-70
| Australian
| Langley, Frances Mary PALMS Nurse 1972-73
| Australian
| Leahy, Margaret Catherine PALMS Nurse 1973-75
<p>| 441 Need to get her name. Was she with working for LMHLA in the Mendi diocese? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ledergaber, Elizabeth</td>
<td>Interteam Nurse</td>
<td>1975-78</td>
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<td>Lindeeman, Jan Marie</td>
<td>PALMS Nurse</td>
<td>1973</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louth, Sylvia SFO</td>
<td>PALMS Teacher/Artist/Catechist</td>
<td>1966-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludwig, William</td>
<td>PALMS Catechist/Teacher</td>
<td>1969-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynch, Alphonse</td>
<td>PALMS Artist</td>
<td>1971-74</td>
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<td>Lynch, Andrew</td>
<td>Lmhlala Pilot #9</td>
<td>1973-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>McAllister, Patrick</td>
<td>PALMS Mechanic/Farmer</td>
<td>1980-81</td>
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<tr>
<td>McCabe, Brendan</td>
<td>PALMS Professional Carpenter</td>
<td>1983</td>
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<td>McCarthy, Margaret</td>
<td>PALMS Teacher</td>
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<td>McCormick, Antonia</td>
<td>PALMS Teacher</td>
<td>1968</td>
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<td>McDonnell, Leonie SFO</td>
<td>PALMS Teacher</td>
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<td>McGettigan, Elizabeth</td>
<td>PALMS Nurse</td>
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<td>McNamara, Brian</td>
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<td>McNeil, Margaret (Peggy)</td>
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<td>McNillis, Janine</td>
<td>Independent Nurse</td>
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<td>McQuilllan, William</td>
<td>Independent Farmer/Builder</td>
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<td>Martin, Nyron</td>
<td>Independent Pilot #7</td>
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<td>May, Philomena</td>
<td>PALMS Teacher</td>
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<td>Menchetti, Yolanda</td>
<td>Independent Teacher</td>
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<td>Merrer, Terry</td>
<td>Mmo Handyman</td>
<td>1965</td>
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<td>Merrick, Jennifer</td>
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<td>1970-74</td>
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<td>Meyer, Susi</td>
<td>Interteam Nurse</td>
<td>1975-76</td>
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<td>Morman, David</td>
<td>Lmhlala Pilot #5</td>
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<td>Muller, Bernadette</td>
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<td>NANDY, Louis</td>
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<td>NORMOYLE, Ellen</td>
<td>Teacher/Inspector</td>
<td>1967-70</td>
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<td>O’BRIEN, Frank</td>
<td>Saw miller/Handyman</td>
<td>1971-74</td>
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<td>O’BRIEN, John</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1966-67</td>
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<tr>
<td>OFNER, Karl</td>
<td>Cabinet Maker</td>
<td>1975-77</td>
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<td>O’NEILL, Margaret</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>O’REAGAN, Anne</td>
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<td>1972-74</td>
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<td>OWEN, Elizabeth</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>1974-75</td>
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<td>PAGE, Janyce</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1970-72</td>
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<td>PAYNE, Terry Marita</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1963-66</td>
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<td>PEACOCK, David</td>
<td>Handyman</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>PERCY, Anne Marie</td>
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<td>1975-79</td>
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<td>PERRAULT, Jerry</td>
<td>Pilot #6</td>
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<td>PERUZZO, Jacqueline</td>
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<td>POPPLE, Michael John</td>
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<td>1971-74</td>
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<td>PURCHASE, Suzanne</td>
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<td>RAME, Mary Elizabeth</td>
<td>Teacher/Musician</td>
<td>1961-67</td>
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<td>RESTOVIC, Ivo</td>
<td>Mechanic/Electrician</td>
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<td>REYNOLDS, Pamela</td>
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<td>1972-74</td>
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<td>RICE, Julian</td>
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<td>1980</td>
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<td>RICHARDS, Michael</td>
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<td>1973-74</td>
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<td>1969</td>
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<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>SANDS, Lorraine</td>
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<td>COVS</td>
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<td>New Zealander</td>
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<td>(later married Michael Popple)</td>
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<td>SCANLON, Mary</td>
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<td>MMO</td>
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<td>SCHURTENBERGER, Hans</td>
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<td>Interteam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAGROTT, Kerry Anne</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(married Michael Flew)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEEHOLZER, Madeleine</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Interteam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGLER, Bernard M. “Bud”</td>
<td>Dispatcher/Cook</td>
<td>LMHLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPICHER, Markus</td>
<td>Farmer/Handyman</td>
<td>Interteam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swiss</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPILLANE, Cath. ‘Kay’ Ward</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealander</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(married Gavan Spillane)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPILLANE, Gavan</td>
<td>Teacher/Builder/Sawmill</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealander</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(he married Catherine ‘Kay’</td>
<td>Ward after 2nd term; in Rabaul now)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SULLIVAN, Edward ‘Ted’</td>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealander</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(assigned to SFS Kap 1975)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAN, Suzanne</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese from Malaysia</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TANNER, Patricia</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
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<td>TAYLOR, Ruth</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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<td>SFO</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUSTRALIAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>TELFER, Margaret</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
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<td>TOOHEY, Clair Agnes</td>
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<td>Australian</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOWLER, Tony</td>
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<td>Australian</td>
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<td>VOLLMER, Charles</td>
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<td>Capuchin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
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<tr>
<td>WALLER, Anna Cath. ‘Nancy’</td>
<td>Teacher/Social Worker</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WARD, Catherine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See SPILLANE, Catherine Ward</td>
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<tr>
<td>WELLS, Patricia</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>PALMS</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>WINKLER, John</td>
<td>Pilot #10</td>
<td>LMHLA</td>
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<td>YATES, Gerard</td>
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<td>Australian</td>
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<td>Interteam</td>
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<td>Swiss</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZIMMERLI, Maria</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Interteam</td>
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<td>Swiss</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GET MORE INFORMATION AND THEN ADD ABOVE:
Volunteer Service Workers in Mendi Diocese
(Volunteer lay workers, who even though serving in humanitarian projects sponsored by the mission, were not acting in the name of the Church and in many cases not even affiliated with the Church)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME/NATIONALITY</th>
<th>SPONSOR</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>TERM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAMPBELL, Robin</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Horticulturist</td>
<td>1969-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAROLAN, Stephen</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Builder</td>
<td>1969-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORRY, Fionnoual</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREIGHTON, Andrew</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>1971-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELI, Geoffrey</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>1968-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GILLHAM, Peter</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Builder</td>
<td>1969-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAWKES, Christopher</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>1971-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGRAM, David</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>JACOBESEN, Kevin Peter</td>
<td>AVA</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHNSON, Roger</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>1970-72</td>
</tr>
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<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KING, Janet</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1971-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>(wife of Richard King)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KING, Richard</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1971-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>(husband of Janet King)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KROEG, Gunnter</td>
<td>CUSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1972-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KROEG, Marilyn</td>
<td>CUSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1972-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td>(husband of Marilyn Kroeg)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McBLANE, Patricia May</td>
<td>CUSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td>(wife of Rorri McBlane)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McBLANE, Rorri</td>
<td>CUSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td>(husband of Patricia McBlane)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McWILLIAMS, Mary</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1975-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MAGUINNESS, Patrick</td>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Builder</td>
<td>1971-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILLEN, Bruce</td>
<td>CUSO</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
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NUNN, Clive  
   English  
   VSO Builder  1972-74

PIGOTT, Sue  
   Canadian  
   (wife of Tony Pigott)  
   CUSO Teacher  1975

PIGOTT, Tony  
   Canadian  
   (husband of Sue Pigott)  
   CUSO Teacher  1975

SATTLECKER, Margot  
   Austrian  
   OED Nurse  1977-79

SEARLE, Joyce  
   English  
   VSO Teacher  1970-72
   (assigned to HTTC Mt. Hagen)

TRAVIS, Anthony  
   English  
   VSO Mechanic  1968-69

WOODE, Peter  
   English  
   VSO Farmer  1971-73

WRIGHT, Terrance  
   English  
   VSO Mechanic  1972-73

Expatriate Employees of the Diocese of Mendi  
(lay workers paid for their services by the Mission)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>NATIONALITY</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>TERM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BARHAM, Allan</td>
<td>New Zealander</td>
<td>Pilot #8</td>
<td>1972-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILTENBERGER, Fidelis</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Pilot # 1</td>
<td>1956-61</td>
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<tr>
<td>OLMA, Ken</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Pilot # 3</td>
<td>1961-64</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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442 **2016:** Peter wrote a 199-page account of his two years in the Mission. He sent a copy of the type entitled *Pigs in My Gardens* to the Mid-America Capuchins’ archives in 2007 from Gotland, Sweden. It is not known in Denver whether it was ever published. The archives also has an earlier draft of the typescript with the same name, from 2004, 56 pp.
Willing help and material contributions readily and copiously offered by their brethren will encourage the members of newly established Christian communities to live in the service of their religion, and will bring them the warmth of supernatural affection, which grace nourishes in the human heart.

Pope Saint John XXIII, "Princeps Pastorum," 1959, V.

18

All in the Family

Try to imagine yourself a stone-age warrior of the Southern Highlands when the first white men arrived there.

You have never been outside your own valley, so you are quite unaware anything or anybody else is out there. Aside from your own line, the only other people you have ever met are the neighboring tribes with whom you perpetually find yourself at war.

Anything mysterious to you has always been explained in terms of malice on the part of your neighbors or mischief by deceased ancestors still hovering about.

These white men that have suddenly appeared are indeed strange looking, but they eat, sleep, laugh, and cry pretty much the same as you do. Who are they, and where do they
come from? They all claim to be friends, but come from places and distances that mean nothing. Some of them moreover carry such powerful weapons that it is not safe to act too unfriendly toward them.

Greater surprises are still ahead however. You have never seen an automobile, not even a horse-drawn cart, nor for that matter a horse or a wheel. You have always walked wherever you wanted to go and never had anything that you could not carry or drag wherever you wanted it.

White men now arrive in the bellies of huge metal birds, which keep returning with all sorts of new things you have never seen before. You have no idea how they were made, where they came from, or even what they are for.

No wonder the idea pervades many parts of Melanesia that ancestors are somehow responsible for the abundance which flows from ships and planes. No wonder apocalyptic religious phenomena called “cargo cults” have sprung up viewing the white men as foreign thieves intercepting gifts from the ancestors. No wonder that at times large quantities of natural resources are stockpiled – wasted the white man would say – as “payment” for a vast special cargo which the ancestors would someday send.

Such cults have been unknown in the Southern Highlands, probably because at an early date various local people were taken to the coast, some even to Australia, and thus were able to inform their kinsmen where the tons and tons of goods were coming from. Still the question must have remained: Who was really responsible for sending this seemingly endless stream of goods?

Had the Southern Highlanders ever gotten the idea the goods came from their ancestors, they really would not have been too far off the mark, at least in the case of what arrived for the missionaries. In a very real sense, the cargo actually did come from their family. Not from dead ancestors, of course, but rather from brothers and sisters scattered worldwide, who pooled their resources to send the missionaries whatever was needed.

Over the first quarter century, close to 400 on-site Catholic missionaries were to personally proclaim that a single God is a common Father to us all. From at least 23 different countries they came, leaving blood relatives to serve adopted sisters and brothers in the Southern Highlands.

Their numbers, however, were tiny compared to the missionaries who accompanied them in spirit. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Catholic men and women from all over the world joined in making possible the unencumbered labors of those who had come in person, realizing that some give by going and others go by giving; but without both there is neither.

Supporting Catholic missionary work in the Southern Highlands has required immense amounts of money, especially because of the dependency on air transport for moving materiel to and throughout the Southern Highlands. During the Capuchins’ first 25 years in
Papua New Guinea, their superiors regular in Mendi spent $1,335,849.90 just on the needs of the friars themselves. Bishop Firmin probably spent between five and ten times that much on the needs of the apostolate in the Southern Highlands. There were also additional hidden expenses involved in the many things purchased and paid for in the United States and sent directly to the mission.

A whopping 43% of the Capuchins' budget has gone into food and another 26% into travel and other transportation. The remainder of the friars’ expenses have been for buildings (8%), formation (8%), and various other smaller items (15%).

For the Diocese of Mendi, only scattered data is presently available to this writer, but during the first 10 years the breakdown was much different than that of the Capuchin budget. The largest item was buildings (32%), followed by schools (23%), support of missionaries (20%), movable goods (13%), travel (6%), liturgy (3%), and miscellaneous (3%).

Both of these budgets have been covered primarily through the Capuchins of the Pennsylvania Province of St. Augustine and the Mid-American Province of St. Conrad, and more recently also the British Province of St. Lawrence. Over three-quarters of the regular superiors’ funds have been raised by the homebound friars, and for the early years, for which reports are available, two-thirds of the diocesan budget also came from there.

The two American provinces, which until 1977 operated as one province – the old Province of Pennsylvania – have channeled and still channel most of their missionary support efforts through the Pittsburgh office of the Seraphic Mass Association (SMA), directed by Father Cecil Nally and his brother, Father Don Bosco Nally.

Cecil has spent the more than 50 years of his priesthood promoting the Capuchin mission activity. Following completion of his theological studies in 1929, he was assigned as assistant pastor of St. Augustine’s Church, Pittsburgh, and local delegate of the SMA.

He was thus present at departure ceremonies for the first band of American Capuchin missionaries to Puerto Rico held in St. Augustine’s in January 1930 and was also there for the farewell for the first Papuan missionaries in August 1955.

Father’s efforts in the parish to raise funds for the

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443 Diocesan expenses for 1958-59, 1960-61, 1962-63 & 1964 & 1964-65 were listed as $897,420.33. 2016: This represented the first eight years, if the fiscal year was Jan.1 to Jan. 1. Otherwise it could be for only four years. I did not get around to checking which was the case.

444 The “German Sisters” who used to cook at St. Augustine’s Friary, Pittsburgh, have sent thousands of packages over the years to the Papuan missionaries.
missions were so successful that in 1933, he was assigned as full-time provincial procurator for the missions and provincial delegate of the SMA. Since then he has built up a group of 120,000 donors who regularly write to him and contribute to the missions, as well as another 15,000 religious men and women who maintain what he calls his Prayer Department for the missions.

At first Father worked from an office in St. Augustine’s Friary and enlisted the help of the parish’s school children. The work grew so, however, that he eventually had to put up a three-story building to house the operation. Today a staff of about 40 employees, some of them with him for more than 35 years, work each day at SMA headquarters helping him and Father Don, a former Puerto Rican missionary, answer their mail.

This correspondence is itself a missionary work in that it is geared towards bringing the consolation of the Gospel into the often troubled lives of the recipients through personal messages.

The Nally brothers have also earned the thanks of missionaries all over the world – Capuchins and otherwise. Walls of SMA headquarters are an international museum of native handiwork sent as tokens of gratitude for innumerable projects funded by them.

The two Capuchins were decorated by Pope John Paul II in 1979 for their extraordinary efforts. Father Cecil received the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Cross and Father Don the *Benemerenti* Medal.

In 1984, Father Cecil provided a year-by-year account of funds his office had sent to Papua New Guinea since 1955. Separate figures were given for the seminary at Kap from 1966 onwards, but no distinction was made between the Mendi mission and the diocese of Mendi in other funds sent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mendi</th>
<th>Kap</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mendi</th>
<th>Kap</th>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>$34,686.03</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>$304,584.06</td>
<td>$45,405.62</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>$33,063.32</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>$422,027.19</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>$94,896.50</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>$340,539.26</td>
<td>$25,330.51</td>
<td>1962</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>$125,807.13</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>$458,632.92</td>
<td>$25,330.51</td>
<td>1964</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>$161,167.18</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>$458,840.83</td>
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<td>1967</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>$418,949.50</td>
<td>$12,000.00</td>
<td>$3,095.23</td>
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<td>1968</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>$415,832.44</td>
<td>$16,000.00</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>$321,187.45</td>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>$7,757,144.31</td>
<td>$342,905.97</td>
<td>$33,942.64</td>
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</table>
It would be wrong to think that the Nally brothers were the only friars interested and involved in mission support work in the two provinces. Many friars served as local promoters of the Seraphic Mass Association. Many others, frequently missionaries on home leave, preached in various parishes throughout the country as part of diocesan missionary cooperation programs.

There is also the example of Father Roland Raible who for over 50 years has spent most of his free-time collecting, sorting, and selling used stamps to help support the missions. Only the Lord Himself could recall all of those involved in these efforts.\textsuperscript{445}

Another Capuchin, however, who deserves special mention is Father Vincent Ryan of the Australian Province of the Assumption. Father has long been a permanent part of the New Guinea missionary effort by the interest he has shown in the friars and their work during the past three decades. He has personally met hundreds of air flights, as well as a few ships, and constantly cared for the friars during their innumerable trips to and through Australia. His mother, the late Mrs. Vera Ryan was also an extraordinary friend of the friars in the Highlands and never missed an opportunity to make their life more agreeable.\textsuperscript{446}

Vincent is also the Australian delegate of the Seraphic Mass Association and thus has joined Capuchins from throughout the world who have funneled further funds to the New Guinea Mission through SMA general headquarters in Rome.

The Seraphic Mass Association was founded in Lucerne, Switzerland, in 1899, by Miss Frieda Folger, a secular Franciscan, the main idea being that people could enroll both themselves and others, including the deceased, in the association by making an offering to the Capuchin missions, and the friars in turn would offer numerous Masses and countless other prayers for the members of the association.

This association immediately obtained the approval of Father Bernard Christen of Andermatt, the great minister general who revitalized both the Order and its missions. It operated, however, at the beginning solely in Bernard’s home province of Switzerland and was under the sole direction of the Swiss Provincial. In 1921, however, the SMA was extended to the entire Order and put under the direction of the Minister General, so that provinces without missions under their care could be encouraged to help those that did.

The Capuchins, however, are not the only ones who have solicited funds for the Catholic Missions in the Southern Highlands. International headquarters in Rome of the Association

\textsuperscript{445} During the 1950’s, many Capuchin seminarians in the old Pennsylvania Province spent much of their free time on various projects aimed at raising funds for the missions.

\textsuperscript{446} Another person in Australia who did much in the early years to assist the Mission was Bruce Bacon, who acted as its purchasing agent in Sydney.
for the Propagation of the Faith have channeled into the Mendi diocese many thousands of dollars raised by dioceses throughout the Catholic world. Also on a more limited scale, national societies such as Germany’s Misereor and Australia’s Catholic Relief Funds have underwritten numerous self-help projects among the people of the Southern Highlands.

Besides these organizations which have helped support the Diocese of Mendi, there are also a number of other organizations which have contributed to the work of the Mission through the Capuchins’ co-workers mentioned in the previous two chapters.

Most, if not all, of the various religious communities and lay missionary groups represented in the Southern Highlands have had large groups of people in their homelands who regularly contributed to the upkeep of their missionaries. The Oldenburg Franciscans, for example, have called their benefactors the Little Portion Club and have kept them informed through a newsletter called Comtoc (short for Come to Christ). The Lay Mission-Helpers of Los Angeles have had two groups of benefactors, the Mission Men and the Mission Ladies, who have had Pass Books mailed to them monthly as reminders to mail in their monthly dues. Ten years ago there were 2,500 members of the two societies. And, as said before, practically all of the other communities have similar auxiliaries.

Despite the generosity of these groups, it is probably not going too far out on a limb to claim that people of developed nations are generally quite unappreciative of sermons dealing with contributions. There is a certain paradox then in the fact that these benefactors of the church of the Southern Highlands are generally unaware their own generosity is itself such a powerful sermon to their overseas brothers and sisters.

People of the Southern Highlands really need no sermon on generosity as such. In keeping with their ancient ceremonial exchange system, known as mok-ink, their very wealth lies in abundant giving, and the wealthiest among them are those who have been able to give away the most. In the measure of their generosity, even the pagans could well instruct the rest of the Christian world.447

People of the Southern Highlands, however, especially those who have not fully captured the Christian spirit, do not give their treasures away without strings attached. Nothing is ever given away and no favor ever done without the expectation of its someday being repaid in kind. For example, when Father Benjamin Madden was cut in the freak airplane accident described in Chapter 25, one of the kagoboi expressed his sorrows. “In return for the sorrow,” Firmin noted in his chronicle, “he expected a kina [shell]. Of course Father Ben did not give him any.”

The wealthiest among some of these people are easily recognized by a pendant of reed sections strung together and hanging on their chests (see image at beginning of this chapter) indicating thereby the number of people who owe them things. Generosity is also limited to one’s own wantoks – that is to those who speak the same language and belong to allied lines.

The Christian message, of course, is something else. Christ enters the picture announcing that His followers should not let the right hand know what the left hand is doing, lest they already have their reward. “Your almsgiving,” Jesus tells his followers, “must be in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” Moreover your good deeds must not just be directed toward your own line. “Even the pagans do as much, do they not,” Jesus observes.

The Christian message that the worldwide sea of faceless benefactors brings to the Southern Highlands then is that generosity can be without earthly ties and without limits of race, nationality, or tribalism, and indeed without any personal acquaintance. They store up their treasures not on earth, but in heaven, by sharing with their unknown sisters and brothers without any expectation of being “paid back” save by the Great Ancestor of all, “who art in heaven.”

The Capuchins have also taught the Highlanders to share with others for the common good. Already in early May of 1968, mission authorities decided that each station would open a community account by way of local collections. Thus years later when Bishop Schmidt blessed the new church in Pureni on Aug. 15, 1974, the president of the parish council gave him $2,000 to cover half the cost of the building; and when he blessed the church at Pangia two years later, the building was paid for completely by the parishioners.

As early as 1963, the friars also started teaching the people to be concerned for the church in other countries by beginning the Mission Sunday collection. The first one in Pangia that year yielded £1-11. The following year it brought in £10-17-6. At Pangia in 1975, “Sister Maureen made a large poster showing pictures of underprivileged peoples. It was very difficult trying to find pictures of people looking worse off than the ones we serve. The people responded generously. A total amount of 42 kinas was given.”
Evangelization loses much of its power and effectiveness if it does not take into account those to whom it is directed by using their language, symbols, and images… Paul VI, “Evangelii Nuntiandi,” 1975, n. 63.

19

‘A Message, ...But No Words’

Soon after creation and the fall of mankind, the Old Testament tells of the proud tower that started humanity babbling down the splintered path of diverse new languages. Paralleling this, the New Testament follows its account of Christ’s new creation and redemption of mankind by telling of the Spirit that enabled the Apostles “to speak in foreign tongues” as they went forth to reunite the human family.

In Papua New Guinea, these two testaments were an additional 18 centuries in meeting; but when they finally came together, missionaries soon realized that they had come upon the world’s modern Babel. Especially in coastal areas they found hundreds of strange tongues, many spoken by fewer than a thousand people.

Worldwide disagreement among linguists on the distinction between “language” and “dialect” make precisely numbering the distinct language well-nigh impossible, but some of these experts say there are well over 700 different languages in mainland Papua New Guinea alone — to say nothing of the hundreds of additional ones in the offshore islands and in Irian Jaya, the western half of the main island. By way of comparison, the world total of different languages is generally guesstimated somewhere in the range of 3,000 to 8,000.

448 2016: Daily newspapers in PNG in 2015 published a list of 837 PNG languages (Meis to Burkey, Sept. 15, 2016).
To make matters worse for the first missionaries to enter each new part of the island of New Guinea, none of these exotic languages had ever been committed to writing. The first missionaries, therefore, often became also the first linguists.

Fortunately for those who entered the Southern Highlands, most languages there were spoken by relatively large groups of people. Even at that, counting all the different dialects, Capuchins and other Southern Highlands missionaries had to cope with as many as 17 different tongues. Hardly any of these had been committed to writing when the first Catholic missionaries went into the area, and what materials did exist were generally unavailable to Catholic missionaries.

Protestant missions in the area gave language studies a high priority and quickly brought in trained linguists such as Beth Daniels and Murray and Joan Rule. The result of their work, however, was often jealously guarded and obtained by the Catholics only through third parties. The Summer Institute of Linguistics in Norman, Oklahoma, however, sent in Harland Kerr, Karl Franklin, and Robert Head, who over the years proved most cooperative in providing help to Catholic missionaries. Another person involved in language study in the area was F.E. Williams, a government anthropologist.

Unschooled in linguistic techniques, the first Catholic missionaries came handicapped, but generally made the most of the situation. Happily, Father Michellod had inborn talents along this line and had already been through the process during seven years among the Kunimaipa and the Kukukukus. Thus, in less than two months at Mendi, he had assembled a vocabulary of 5,000 words and was attempting to speak the language. Later on he had similar success at Tari with Huli.

Michellod possibly derived some assistance from Divine Word Father Louis Lutzbetak’s materials in the Enga language which Father Bernard Fisher, SVD., sent him from Wabag, but most of his information came from his continual questioning the young men who travelled about the area with him.

Once the Capuchins had arrived and it had been evident that Michellod and two friars would move from Tari to Mendi, he had a young Kumin lad named Yoyo flown to Tari to serve as a Mendi-language informant. Yoyo later joined Father Berard Tomassetti in outstations north of Mendi; and Agilu, a Huli youth, came to Mendi to help Michellod learn and record more about the Huli language.

During Michellod’s stay in the Highlands, he managed to prepare Karint, Huli, and Lower Mendi translations of a small life of Christ, the first part of the catechism, and various prayers and hymns.

Father Alphonse Rinn, MSC, performed similar services in the Imbongu dialect, aided apparently by Divine Word Father William Ross’ work in the Hagen dialect of Melpa and local informants such as Tanda and Ambrel. Rinn started a grammar and translated the beginning of the catechism and various hymns and prayers.

Had more of the first Capuchins followed the lead of their Sacred Heart mentors, they probably would have picked up the local languages more rapidly and with greater fluency. According to Berard, the French missionaries placed great emphasis on the learning of local languages. Though most of them were of French origin, they further believed that English, official language of the territory, should be taught in their schools, not Melanesian pidgin, which consisted largely of English words set into common local

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450 2016: The 2015 mentioned above listed 21 languages for the Southern Highlands and the new Hela provinces.
451 In about 1970, Karl Franklin SIL and a man named Dobler from the Baptist mission in Goroka gave a language seminar to Catholic missionaries in Mendi.
452 Ialibu chronicle, Sept. 22, 1956; Kusnerik-Rinn, report to Sorin.
In the far western end of the Southern Highlands, along the eastern headwaters of the Strickland River, live the Yuna-speakers (or Duna-speakers), and to the north of them those who speak Hewa. Coming eastward, along the various tributaries of the Tagari and along the headwaters of the Wage River are the Huli-speakers, the largest single group in the Southern Highlands. Though there are some 60,000 of them, spread out from Koroba to Komo to Margarima, with many mountains in between, there is a surprising absence of dialects among the Huli.

To the south of the Huli and southwest of the Tagali-Hegigio River, six small groups of people each have their own language: Kora, Etoro, Onabasulu, Lululi, Kasua, and Kware. Between the Hegigio and Mubi Rivers live those who speak Fasu and Foe (Foi).

Throughout most of the Erave watershed, a single, apparently-unnamed language is spoken, which has such a variety of dialectic changes from one valley to the next that it is almost a different language when the dialects are compared at its extremities: Wabag on the north side of Enga Province and Samberigi near Mt. Murray in the Southern Highlands.

Along the upper Lai River, an area once part of the Southern Highlands, but now part of the Enga Province, the dialect is known as Kandep.

On the central Wage, upper Nembi, and central Lai Rivers, the Nipa and Karint dialects are called Angal Heneng (literally “the true language”). Along the lower reaches of the Wage, Nembi, Lai, and Mendi Rivers, the Pomberel, Det, and Lower Mendi dialects are called Anga Enen, Anga Nene, and Anga Neng (all of which also mean “the true language”). These “true language” dialects are collectively referred to by some linguists as “the Mendi language.”

Along the Erave itself and the centra Yaro River are another five dialects of the aforementioned Erave-watershed language collectively referred to as “the Kewa language.” These five are West Kewa (Sumi), Central Kewa (Karia-Muli), East Kawa (Kuare), South Kewa (Subura) and Pole (Erave).

To the south and east of Kewa are two other quite distinct dialects known as Sau (Samberigi) and Kerabi.

Finally to the northeast of this Erave-watershed language are two other completely different ones. In the upper reaches of the Mendi and Yaro Rivers, people speak dialects of the Melpa language called Antikal and Imbongu (Imbongu); and along the lower Yaro in the eastern end of the Southern Highlands dwells a relatively small group which speaks Witu (Wiru).
speech patterns. In fact, at a 1956 meeting at Mendi, Bishop André Sorin, MSC, urged priests of the Southern Highlands to work at teaching the local people English and teaching themselves the local languages, rather than becoming dependent on the pidgin.

This was really easier said than done. It is true that every friar had already had experience in learning foreign languages, but this experience had involved Indo-European languages related to their native English, languages which moreover had already been analyzed as to grammar, spelling, pronunciation, and the like. Refined grammars and dictionaries were not available to the Papuan languages, and none of the missionaries had had any training in recognizing, recording, or analyzing the sounds they were now hearing. Lacking the guidance of basic rules, they had to resort to trial and error methods.

The Capuchins, moreover, found themselves actively involved – largely at Bishop Sorin’s own urging – in making the first contact with as many people as possible, confident that help would eventually arrive to allow closer attention to them. Also in every new area, immense amounts of additional time were consumed providing housing and supplies for the missionaries themselves and the growing army of those who quickly became dependent upon them. Rather than slow down and learn the language, at the risk of losing out on additional new areas, the friars generally chose to let language studies wait until more time was available.

They were encouraged in this by the existence of Melanasian pidgin, which was relatively easy to learn for the evangelizers and for those to be evangelized. From the start, the friars had been closely associated with the neighboring Divine Word missionaries, many of them fellow Americans. From the latter’s experiences, they learned the possibility of using pidgin to more quickly evangelize areas without waiting to learn the local tongue or tok ples. Local interpreters or taim tok were able to turn the pidgin into tok ples, which could then if desired be committed to writing.

Another circumstance which further committed some of the friars to the use of pidgin was the providential appearance of pidgin-speaking catechists from the Chimbu area at a time when outside helpers were so vitally important. These SVD-trained catechists, as well as the English-speaking Mekeo teachers trained by the Sacred Heart missionaries, labored side by side with the Capuchins for many years.

Fathers Paul Farkas and Berard Tomassetti seem to have been the only ones among the first Capuchins who spent much time studying local languages. Father Stanley Miltenberger reported that he spent very little time doing so, and Father Henry Kusnerik’s detailed chronicles and Father Otmar Gallagher’s extensive correspondence seldom speak of any personal involvement in language study.

Stanley did manage to pick up a bit of Kewa at Kagua simply by daily contact with the people. After a year there, he wrote that he was able to understand a good bit of what they were saying, “or at least get the sense of it,” but could not speak the language very well. Through interpreters he was teaching basic Catholic doctrine in the local tongue, and the people seemed to understand, but when it came to translating prayers, he found that the interpreters themselves had great difficulty in understanding what he was trying to say.

Henry also did most of his communicating through interpreters. He would speak pidgin to one of the school boys, who translated the message into one of the three local languages, which was further turned into the other two by people in the crowd. In 1956 he wrote,

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453 Another lingua franca which was brought from New Guinea’s southeast coast to the Southern Highlands around Erave was Police Motu.
When we first came to Ialibu, very, very few boys knew any pidgin, and we knew no native language. Today the picture is reversed; very, very few boys lack a knowledge of pidgin, and we know a little of the native language. When we first came to Ialibu, the native language was just a jumble of sounds, but now we are able to pick out words and phrases so that, if we find difficulty in making ourselves understood in pidgin, we use native words and phrases that we know.\footnote{Kusnerik to relatives, Dec. 10, 1956, in PL 3:27.}

Henry, of course, was quite aware of the limitations of this method. “The language problem frightens me more than the hardships,” he wrote in February 1956. A year later, he noted that during one of his instructions, he had discovered “that the interpreter was missing too much in the translation.”\footnote{Ialibu chronicle, Feb.3, 1957.} Still later in the year he wrote, “There is no doubt we must learn the native language and instruct in it, if we wish to attract the people…”\footnote{Op. cit. Nov. 24, 1957.}

Paul, however, actually dug into language study. Pages of his chronicle, from his arrival at Tari in December 1955 until his premature first home leave May 1, 1956, are generously peppered with references to his work at building up a Huli vocabulary. In these four months, he expanded Michellod’s list of 50 Huli words to 1,300. During this time he also taught class 25 hours a week “stumbling through the Huli words” he had picked up “and mixing in a large concoction of English.” After class each day, from 4 until 6, he called two boys into his room for language studies.

I would point to pictures and things about the room. The boys would give me the Huli word for it. The next day I would go over the same…with two different boys. If there was a difference…I would call in a third couple the following day.

By March 12 Paul could also write that he had worked out a little primer for use in school and was working on improving Michellod’s primitive grammar.\footnote{Farkas to priests at Pittsburgh, March 12, 1956, in PL 2: 5-6.}

During Paul’s subsequent hospitalization in the States, he spent much of his time arranging his 1,300 words dictionary-fashion, first English to Huli, then Huli to English. These were then typed and mimeographed and taken back to Tari.

Curiously enough, after Paul’s return to Tari, there is rarely any mention of formal language study in his writings. In fact, over a year later, he estimated his written Huli vocabulary had increased by only 200 words and his total spoken vocabulary consisted of only a 100. “Due to my insistence that the boys learn English as soon as possible,” he explained, “I speak English around the station most of the time.”

Paul conversed in Huli with hundreds of people that came to the station each week, but mostly in words and phrases rather than sentences. Five years later, he wrote he was still using an interpreter for sermons and instructions; but by then had a fair enough understanding of the spoken word to start hearing confessions in \textit{tok ples}.

Another factor leading to Paul’s abandoning his regular investigations of the Huli was probably the fact that Berard had returned and resumed the work in Huli that he had begun with Michellod and Agilu even before Paul had reached the Highlands.
During early 1956 Berard had been working in the area north of Mendi, compiling dictionaries in both Karint and Antikal dialects. In the Karint, he leaned upon Michellod’s earlier work there and obtained additional help from Yoyo and anthropologist D’Arcy Ryan. In the Upper Mendi he used Hagen translations Father William Ross had prepared during the previous 20 years.

Returning to Tari on June 5, Berard resumed work on the Huli by closely examining three Huli books Michellod had earlier prepared, namely the life of Christ, the first part of the Yule Island catechism, and a second primer. This exercise involved taking 10 basic verbs and studying various conjugations for the past, present, and future tenses.

Though largely a hit and miss proposition, the exercise was, under the circumstances, possibly the best that could have been expected. In October 1956 Berard wrote of efforts to increase his vocabulary. “I look forward to reaching the point soon,” he wrote, “when it will begin to snowball, and my tongue ‘will be loosened’.”

In the Yobiya school which he started while working on the Tagari River bridge in early 1957, Berard emphasized a primitive literacy in Huli and taught the boys the mechanics of reading and writing syllables and simple words in their own language. He composed another small primer for these literacy classes and used Michellod’s Huli books in Christian doctrine classes.

During the second half of the year, Berard wrote a brief examination of conscience in Huli and started the translation of the remainder of the Yule Island catechism.

During these same months, language studies among the Capuchins took a seemingly small, yet surely significant step forward. In late August Otmar convened the first meeting with his newly-appointed councilors, Henry and Berard, and the language problem was discussed at length. Father Firmin Schmidt, rector of Capuchin College in Washington and a provincial definitor, had been gathering information in the States about possible solutions to this problem; and the council was asked to discuss his findings. According to Berard much of this discussion revolved around the training of a specialist in linguistics.

The language problem surfaced again in November at the assembly called by Father Claude Vogel during the first provincial visitation of the Capuchins in Papua. It became obvious in the process that the distinction between SVD and MSC language policies was not so clear-cut as the friars had once thought.

Henry shared with the assembled friars a number of pointers recently obtained from Father Alfons Schaefer, SVD, pioneer missionary at the very successful Mingende parish in the neighboring Eastern Highlands. The very first point he had made was:

> Learn the native language of your locality and learn it well enough to give instructions and to preach in it, even if it takes two years. It is better that way than to depend on interpreters for the rest of your stay in the Mission.

Following Henry’s presentation, Otmar read some directives from Bishop Sorin, who had visited the Southern Highlands the previous month. Sorin told the friars very plainly that study of the local language was one of their primary duties.

> The vernacular…will be the only sure means you will have during your life time of conveying your thoughts to the mass of the people. While you aim at teaching English to as many children as possible, it will be a long time before it becomes second nature to them. The children may be able to understand the catechism in some degree if it is taught to them in English, but they will not have the proper understanding which is necessary for Baptism. Also, you must reach the adults;
and that is completely impossible without a knowledge of the vernacular, which is the only language they speak and understand thoroughly.

If anyone had any doubt of the seriousness with which the Bishop wrote, he spelled it out: “Natives **must** be taught the catechism in their native tongue. If a missionary cannot learn the native language, let him go back to his own country —*aut discant, aut abeant.*” Nor did he drop it at that. He went on to spell out in detail how they could and should go about learning the language and of the importance of their working with the older people as well as the young.

Berard, who had been studiously working at the language all along, told Sorin in a letter of Dec. 18 that he felt that neither the directive nor the friars’ good intentions would have much effect on the “language barrier” until language study was put on the daily schedule, just like the daily meditation.

> Some definite time must be established for this study...Perhaps I am bit over-sensitive to the handicap of being ‘dumb’ in the vernacular. I can’t help but feel as Zechariah did: with a message to announce, but no words with which to express it!

Berard was right, too. All the discussion had very little immediate effect on the problem. A number of good intentions were recorded in various documents, but no time was set aside; and things seemed to go on as before. But the ball was now rolling in official circles. True, Claude did not even mention the language problem when he reported his visit to the province; but at least he and the definitors were now aware of the seriousness of the problem and slowly but surely steps would be taken to alleviate it.

One wonders whether there was any relationship between Firmin’s appointment as prefect apostolic and the decision to finally provide the mission with linguistic skills. The timing does, however, suggest that maybe there was. In any event, his appointment marked the turning point in the struggle.

While yet a provincial definitor, Firmin searched for almost two years for a suitable academic program and was well aware that the friars in New Guinea had “repeatedly expressed the need of training in linguistics.” In the very letter in which on May 21, 1959, he sent Claude a copy of his appointment as prefect, Firmin also informed him that Fathers Timon Kaple and Benjamin Madden were both interested in attending the Summer Institute of Linguistics at the University of Oklahoma at Norman, June 15 to Aug. 28, a course which had been strongly recommended by Father Lutzbetak.

Both of these future missionaries attended the SIL that summer; and during the “pastoral” or fifth year of theology, they took additional courses in missiology, anthropology, education, and linguistics at the Catholic University of America. Hearing of their official appointment to Papua in July 1960, Firmin wrote to Father Giles Staab that he expected them to

> [...] be a big help...in our language problem. By this time I have been thoroughly convinced that until we are able to communicate fluently in the native languages, our influence on the natives will be quite limited. A number of the Fathers here are working very diligently on their respective languages. Father Berard knows his very well. He completed a good bit of the catechism in it, and has translated a number of prayers. He also has a grammar completed. Father August is

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459 Let them either learn or leave.

460 Perhaps Father Gary also had something to do with it. In his chronicle for Dec. 7, 1958, he speaks at length of the SIL and mentioned both his acquaintance with Karl and Joyce Franklin who had recently settled in at Muli and Fr. Bus, SVD, who had taken the course that summer at Norman and had told him “that anyone going into new territory should take the course.”

461 Required of all new priests between 1957 and 1965.
a bang up job in his language at Kagua…. Father Senan is working hard on the languages of his outstations and according to all appearance, he is making good progress. With the coming of Fathers Timon and Benjamin, we should get a new impetus in overcoming the language barrier; although we don’t expect them to have infused knowledge of these languages. They will have to work hard at them.  

Firmin proposed to the provincial authorities June 27, 1961, a plan for making the pastoral year of theology available at Mendi for those who were going to be assigned to the mission. Among his reasons for this was the possibility of thereby allowing the young men to concentrate on the Papuan languages. In his cover letter he said,

> To my knowledge, nowhere in the world is the Kewa or Huli language being taught. In fact, these and other languages of our Mission are not known outside the Southern Highlands. It is most urgent for the future complete Christianization of our Mission that the missionaries be fluent in their respective languages. It is true a missionary, no matter when he comes to the mission, could immediately start concentrating on the language. However, making the language an integral part of the fifth year of theology would not only impress the young men with the importance of knowing the language but also guarantee the time for immediate concentration on the language.

A prospectus which Firmin sent along with the suggestion indicated that during the year they would have more than 50 hours of coursework in basic linguistics, and about 275 hours of study in particular local language.

Later that year Fathers Samuel Driscoll, who had taken linguistics courses at CUA during his “fifth year,” and Roy Schuster arrived and began working with the Imbongu and Kewa languages, and Firmin managed to get August and Senan enrolled in a government-sponsored course in linguistics at Goroka, which lasted from Oct. 23 until Dec. 1.

In early February 1962, Father August told Firmin that during the next six months he planned to “walk around less…work at training the local catechists, and…concentrate on studying the local languages […]”.

Benjamin took this a step further and on April 9 moved into a bush house at Kombeyekipu, where he spent three months in intense study of Lower Mendi. That November, August built himself a hut at Yami and likewise “sat down” to study West Kewa more intensely for three months.

In the summer of 1962 Fathers Dunstan Jones and Matthew Gross enrolled in a missionary linguistics course at Georgetown University, which claimed to be the first of its kind at a Catholic university. After this six-week course, they departed for Papua to begin at Mendi their “fifth year of theology.” During their eight months there, Benjamin gave them additional training in basic linguistics and Matthew worked with an informant named Francis Paro in the Huli language and Dunstan with Joseph Neri in Witu.

Afterwards, Dunstan was assigned to assist in the outstations of Pangia, where Father Gary Stakem had been working for nearly two years. Very soon after Dunstan’s arrival on June 8, 1963, frequent references to the value of the vernacular began to appear in Gary’s chronicle.

> June 12: “Dunny uses some of his tok ples, and the natives eat it up.”
> June 16: “Dunstan spoke a few words in tok ples, and the people gave rapt attention. Shows that tok ples is the thing.”

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462 Schmidt to Staab, July 2, 1960.
463 August printed his Kewa translation for the catechism July 4, 1962
464 Neri in 1979 was head evangelist for the Pentecostal Mission.
June 23: “I read a short talk in *tok ples* that Dunny had written. The people paid good attention.”

June 26: “Dunstan made a big impression with the people at Mainyateke. People said that now that prayers are in their languages, they will be faithful in coming to prayers.”

Despite the annual Mission Conference in 1964, there was a two-hour discussion of theological terms and the vernacular. Benjamin made a plea for greater efforts in acquiring fluency and wherever possible mastery of the local languages. He went on to point out that while, due to the missionary’s incomplete knowledge of a language, he needed to be prudent in translating theological and catechetical terms, still he also should not be timid. According to the minutes, “participation in the discussion of the matter…manifested the deep interest of all…and illustrated the serious problems connected with such work.”

Probably this discussion led to Firmin’s arranging for a week-long language seminar prior to the 1965 Mission Conference. Though participants of this seminar asked that it be made an annual affair, the next one was not held until 1967. From then on, however, diocesan language seminars were held annually until 1971.

These seminars, which in large measure were animated by the energy of Benjamin and Father Roy Schuster, brought together all of the friars actively working on various languages to compare materials, explore common problems, motivate one another to renewed fervor, and actually spend some time making translations.

It was clear already in 1970 that the future of these seminars was in doubt. Participants questioned the value of diocese-wide meetings which frequently treated materials of little value in other language areas. Besides asking that accomplished linguists from outside their own number be invited to conduct the seminars, the group recommended the holding of regional language seminars within the different parts of the diocese.

While the seminars were discontinued in 1972, that year was also marked by an extraordinary number of individual initiatives throughout the diocese. Fathers Albert Alexandrunas and Steve Reichert both “went bush” in an effort to come to grips with their languages (Witu and Pomerbel). Father Don Debes reduced his bush patrols to a minimum so as to concentrate on East Kewa. Father Malachy McBride spent six weeks at Koroba, where he went through Huli grammar with British Capuchin Father Gabriel Lomas for two hours a day and practiced speaking the language the rest of the day. That same year, Senan attended a translation institute at Martin Luther Seminary in Lae, and Samuel attended a two-month course in Nipa offered by Rev. Ron and Margaret Reeson of the United Church.

Meanwhile, it must be noted, group activity was very much alive in the Western end of the diocese. Even a year before the 1970 diocesan seminar made its own ineffective recommendation for regional seminars, the Huli Language Conference had been born at Tari.

During early 1969, missionaries of Tari and Pureni had met at least twice for renewal assemblies held in preparation for the Pennsylvania Province’s extraordinary chapter of 1969. It was probably on these

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465 “Fr. August presented resolutions of the language seminar to Bishop Firmin for his approval” (Jones chronicle, May 14, 1965).
466 *MDN*, March 1972
467 Margaret wrote *Torn Between Two Worlds* (Madang: Kristen Press, 1972, 207 pp.) which examines the effect of Christianity on native peoples in the Mendi region, and (with A. Harold Wood) *Papua New Guinea Highlands: a bridge is built; a story of the United Church in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea* (Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church, v. 5).
occasions that Timon began pushing the idea of bringing more uniformity into translation work the Capuchins and their coworkers were doing in Huli. Until then each Catholic missionary had gone his own way, and a variety of spellings and even greater diversity of liturgical versions were in evidence. Timon prevailed on all to gather at Tari for the first Huli language seminar on April 25, 1969, and four veteran missionaries (Berard, Paul, Timon, and Matthew) attended, as well as two recently arrived ones (Gabriel and Father David Nies of the Archdiocese of Sydney). The group immediately got down to work, assigned texts for translation which they agreed to share with one another, and set deadlines.

Early on, the group agreed that, while they would not wait until their command of the language had improved before venturing to produce and use texts, they also would never regard any translation as definitive. Thus, they continually reworked their texts, especially those used in the Mass and Sacraments; and already by 1974, the Eucharistic Prayers were about to be revised for the sixth time. The group also decided that everyone, regardless of his progress in Huli, would share equally in the burden of translating. Thereby everyone was forced to keep improving, and reportedly no one ever felt left out.

The group’s membership changed many times over the years as missionaries moved in and out of the Western Deanery, but practically all of the priests in the area actively participated. In time, the Huli Language Conference (HLC), as it was eventually named, became more organized with regularly elected officers: a chairman, and internal and external secretaries.

Between 1969 and 1977, at least 32 meetings were held, most of them two and a half days in length. The majority were held at Tari or Pureni, but the Conference also met at times at Koroba, Komo, and Margarima. Chairmen of the HLC included Matthew and Gabriel, as well as Fathers Cyril Repko and Patrick Ruane.

Even in the land of the Hulis, the joint efforts eventually slacked off. At a meeting in January of 1977, it was decided to have the HLC meet only once a year, but for a two-week session. The first of these was planned for May of that year, but there is no evidence that the HLC met again until January 1983, when the personnel of the Western Deanery started having language meetings following their quarterly deanery meetings.⁴⁶⁸

Due to the work of the Conference, the Huli language today has the richest literature of all the Southern Highlands languages. A bibliography of materials published by Catholic missionaries in the Southern Highlands (mostly mimeographed or spirit-duplicated) lists 267 items in 13 different local languages. Well over a third of these are in Huli, and most have been refined by HLC team work.

By compiling their individual findings, members of the HLC have produced a fine Huli-English dictionary and an extensive English-Huli vocabulary list, each of which contains well over 5,000 words.

Matthew was primarily responsible for 33 of the 91 Huli works. His published materials include not only a wide range of liturgical and scriptural works, including the Book of Ruth, but also materials prepared for use in literacy programs, such as stories about flying foxes, traditional songs and dances, rice, elephants, The Three Pigs, St. Conrad, and Huli initiation rites. He also translated a booklet on the ovulation method to assist the Oldenburg Franciscans in their family planning counseling.

The brightest light of the HLC was Gabriel.⁴⁶⁹ At least 32 works are attributed to him, including a series of six readers, of which more than 10,000 copies had already been printed by 1979. He also produced a

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series of 13 lessons in the Huli language, and a 288-page Huli prayer and song book, which upon the diffusion of the first 2,000 mimeographed copies, was reissued in an offset edition of several thousand more.

Gabriel was widely respected by the Huli people because of his mastery of their language. This afforded him some information unknown even to many of the Hulis. Thus, he uncovered a secret second language which the Huli men had developed to confuse evil spirits while out on hunts. This second language is known only by the older Huli men, and the women and young people are generally not even aware of its existence.\footnote{Fr. Roger White said the custom had also been found at Tambul in Fr. Colman Studeny’s area and in Roger’s own Imbongu area.}

A very important activity of the HLC in which Gabriel was heavily involved was the promotion of inter-denominational language efforts. Early in its existence, the HLC realized that the advantages its members were already enjoying (less duplication and greater uniformity, with consequent greater productivity and less confusion for the people) could be expanded geometrically to everyone’s advantage, if the various Christian denominations in “Huli-land” could work together on Bible translations.

The first overture was made towards the Unevangelized Field Mission, which was years ahead of the Catholic translators. The friars had been using copies of UFM linguist Murray Rule’s grammar for nine years already. The Conference’s first request in May of 1970 met with a “definite indication of non-cooperation.”\footnote{Writing about the APCM’s refusal to share with the Catholics, Peter Woode, an Anglican-born British Voluntary Service volunteer at Tari High in the early 1970s wrote, “It was almost inconceivable that for nearly 20 years a group of religious men and women, who had devoted their lives to bringing Christianity and development to the Tari Valley, had lived side-by-side in a state of virtual undeclared warfare. The Hulis were certainly baffled and amused by the fact that the white men were vehemently proclaiming salvation through this foreign religion, and yet not only could they not even agree amongst themselves on the matter, they were even vehemently antagonistic to one another. One one occasion [Margaret] Clancy, one of the Catholic lay missionaries, asked a member of the APCM mission for a lift in their otherwise empty vehicle. The missionary, who had probably expounded the story of the good Samaritan to the Hulis, refused to carry Clancy in his vehicle. This intolerance, the intrigue which the Catholics had employed to try and gain access to the APCM translation of Huli, and the jealousy with which the APCM guarded it, must rank high as an example of blind dogmatism and unchristian behavior” (Woode, \textit{Pigs in My Garden}, 2007, p. 84).}

Timon and Gabriel decided to try again, however, and visited UFM headquarters at Tari to see if they could get Rule to lecture the Conference on Huli orthography. Rule himself happened to be visiting at the time, and both he and his church’s leading Huli translator, Rev. Alan Sinclair, expressed a willingness to speak to the HLC. Rule further offered to share his grammar and dictionary with the Conference. The two men cautioned, however, that such decisions were not theirs to make, and that officials of their church were generally reluctant to cooperate with Catholics. Their suggestion that a formal request be put in writing was followed by the HLC regarding both the lectures and the dictionary.\footnote{Huli Language Conference, minutes of 10th meeting, Tari, May 27, 1970.}

Within a few months, officials of the Australasian-Pacific Christian Mission (as the UFM had meanwhile been rechristened) announced that Rule and Sinclair would offer a series of public lectures on Huli orthography at government headquarters in Tari in late September.\footnote{Huli Language Conference, minutes of 13th meeting, Tari, Nov. 3-4, 1970.} This solution avoided the problem of directly aiding the Catholics, and effectively put APCM skills at the disposal of the HLC;\footnote{HLC, 10th meeting.} but more...
than that, it broke a considerable amount of ice. In early November, the HLC officially adopted Rule’s orthography, 475 began discussions which quickly led to the acceptance by the APCM, HLC, and the Christian Mission in Many Lands of a common translation of the Our Father, and the HLC decided to work with the Australian Bible Society and the APCM translators on a Common Bible.

The HLC had already been in contact with the Bible Society about the possibility of printing small scriptural passages for use in literary programs among the Huli. This Society, which had also been working with the APCM people, did much to encourage cooperation among the various Christian churches, and in 1972 it published 10,000 copies of a set of six texts, translated by Gabriel and Matthew and checked for accuracy by Sinclair.

The Bible Society announced in 1974 that it wished to publish within 18 months all parts of the New Testament which were available in Huli. In anticipation of this, Gabriel worked on the Gospel according to Luke, and he was later assisted in this by Father Dominic McGuinness. 476

In a meeting at Waite in October 1975, representatives of five Christian churches agreed to work on the Huli New Testament editing committee, and Gabriel and Firmin Pandago, Catholic catechist at Yobiya, agreed to represent the HLC. The resulting interdenominational committee has been meeting regularly since then – at least as late as 1979 – at mission stations of the various denominations in an attempt to achieve a common Huli New Testament. For example the entire group met at Gubari Feb. 14-18, 1977, to check a translation of Romans 1-8. The group tried to stay together for these week-long meetings, blocking off all other assigned work “so that we can give this time to the important and sacred work at hand.”

At least one section of the New Testament has already been completed in this way and published in June 1977 by the Evangelical Press at Tari. It contained 10 epistles (I & II Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, Jude, and I, II, and III John); and the three by John were translated primarily by Gabriel.


Friars who have produced noteworthy literatures in languages other than Huli are: Benjamin in Lower Mendi and Det; Senan in Antikal, Karint, Nipa, and Witu; Samuel in Nipa and Imbongu; Roy in Central Kewa and Det; Dunstan in Witu; Matthew in West Kewa; Roger White in Imbongu and Lower Mendi; Don Debes in East and South Kewa; Steve Reichert in Pomberel and Foe; and Mike Yore in Witu.

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475 HLC, 13th meeting.
476 It is not yet clear whether or not it was ever published separately.
477 Haba nalolene bi gohenge lo wing ago, Port Moresby, Bible Society of Papua New Guinea, 1982.

Though an ecumenical undertaking, the 1,008-page book carries the imprimatur of Firmin M. Schmidt, Bishop of Mendi. He is the only non-biblical person whose name appears in the book.
Through silent witness such as this, these Christians force those who observe them to ask questions: What makes these men what they are? Why do they live as they do? Why do they live in our midst?


Bravo Sierra Calling

Pope Saint John Paul II told the bishops of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands visiting him in Rome in 1979 that of all the many achievements of the Church in their lands, he wished to extol “the great witness of Christian love that has been given by the missionaries…. May this witness of love go on forever in Papua New Guinea and in the Solomon Islands,” the Pope added.

The Pope saw this witness of love as being shown “through personal and concerted activity in the church, through loving attention to the material needs of people, through educational endeavors, through medical and health care initiatives…through a multiplicity of services freely rendered to the cause of human dignity,” and above all through “a burning desire to bring the Gospel of Christ into the heart of every individual and community.”

It was probably Father Roy Schuster who wrote in the Kagua chronicle,

> I went out by motorbike [to Mapenda in Father Pete Meis’s area] and happened to fall and couldn’t start the bike. An old lady was standing near and we started to talk. I asked her who was the priest who looked after her area. She said: “I don’t know his name, but he’s the man who loves me.” A nice compliment for Pete.

Such manifestations of love permeate the entire history of the Diocese of Mendi, but as the Pope suggested, this is also true of every other diocese in the two nations. His Holiness went on to say, however, that each local church “has its own identity… with its distinctive gifts of nature and grace…” and thus “gives unique expression to one aspect of Christ’s fullness.”

The question naturally arises: What is the special gift of the Diocese of Mendi? And the Pope himself—perhaps unwittingly—touched the answer. In ending his talk, the Pope encouraged the Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands bishops to be concerned about their collaborators in the Gospel—especially their priests. “Our relationship with Jesus will be the fruitful basis of our

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478 Kagua chronicle, June 10, 1974.
relationship with our priests, as we strive to be their brother, father, friend, and guide,” the Pope told his fellow bishops. “For the entire Church—but especially for the priests—we must be a human sign of the love of Christ and the fidelity to the Church.”

“Brother, father, friend and guide…” It would be difficult to find four better words to describe Mendi Bishop Firmin Schmidt. Very much in the midst of his fellow missionaries, he takes a sincere interest in each one and treats him or her as a responsible co-worker. This in turn is symptomatic of an extraordinary concern which most of the Mendi missionaries seem to have had for one another over the years.

In 1975, Firmin thoughtfully invited Father Alexis Michellod, MSC., to revisit the scenes of his early labors in Tari and Mendi. “The Bishop sent me a ticket and told me to come,” Father recalled, “and I was really amazed at what I saw.”

When Michellod had left the Southern Highland in 1956, there were only nine other foreign missionaries working there, and not a single Southern Highlander had been baptized into the Catholic Church. “It was still a pagan land,” Father recalled.

The missionaries were living in bush houses and their activity was restricted to a few small sections of the Southern Highlands. Roads were just beginning to penetrate the area, and the native languages were still closed doors to most of the missionaries.

By the time Michellod reappeared two decades later, there were more than a 100 Catholic foreign missionaries, nearly as many indigenous teachers in Catholic schools, almost 300 local catechists, and some 34,000 baptized Catholics. Several of the young men were already in the seminary training for the priesthood, and at each main station there was a large number of shiny permanent buildings. Nearly every large population center of the diocese had its own missionaries. The Mass, moreover, was being celebrated in the vernacular languages, and the various missionaries had translated part of the Bible into diverse languages.

All these things impressed the Church’s proto-missionary of the Southern Highlands, but reflecting on his visit, Michellod said that what moved him most was the family life of the missionaries. “When I was with them at Mendi and Tari in the beginning I had already felt this; but now I was even more impressed.” Michellod saw the Capuchins, the religious of many other congregations, and the lay missionaries—individuals from many nations—as forming “one big family with their papa, the Bishop. You could feel the spirit there of St. Francis.”

Michellod, however, is not alone in noticing this spirit, which the friars themselves now call *fraternity*. Many others, both before and after him, have commented on it, and a large guest house at Mendi and steady stream of visitors further confirms it. Even though Mendi is quite out-of-the-way, Bishop Firmin was able to observe in his journal in mid-1977, “It is rare that we are without guests.” Nearly four months later he added, “A variety of guests constantly streams through Mendi and our Mission.”

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480 Schmidt chronicle, Aug. 29, 1977.
Many of the visitors have come from overseas—parents, families, and friends of various missionaries, numerous bishops, a couple apostolic delegates, three Capuchin general ministers,\footnote{Clement Neubauer, March 19-23, 1961; Paschal Rywalski, Oct. 1975.} a dozen or more Capuchin provincial ministers, Cardinal Timothy Manning of Los Angeles,\footnote{Jan. 10-12, 1975 (MDN March 1975).} and countless lesser lights. Most of the visitors, however, have been fellow missionaries who came from within Papua New Guinea itself, and many of these missionaries went back to their own missions deeply impressed by the family spirit of the friars and their coworkers.

It would be presumptuous to say precisely what factors led to this fraternal atmosphere; but it is not at all difficult to find manifestations of it, which in turn have doubtlessly contributed to its growth and permanence.

From the earliest days of the mission, the friars gave evidence of the premium they put on fraternity, and before any new main station opened, provision always had to be made for preserving the fraternal life of the friars. Following the Capuchin mission statutes, Father Otmar Gallagher refused to open any new station until he could place at least two men there.

One exception to this rule was when the vast Kagua Valley was opening up and he did not have another man to send with Father Stanley Miltenberger. Even then he made every effort to see to it that at least once a month either another friar visited Kagua or Stanley was taken to another station. Further exceptions were made only after improved roads made it easier for solitary friars to visit one another.

In the earliest years, there were very few general meetings of all the friars, and some of the missionaries did not see one another for years. Practically every one of the friars in Papua, however, was carrying on an extensive correspondence with their confreres back in the States.

The original Capuchin band of six spent six days together at Tari at Christmas of 1955; and the next time all were together was in November of 1957, when Provincial Minister Claude Vogel visited the mission, accompanied by his secretary, Father Edward Pikus. After he visited the main stations, Claude called all the missionaries to Mendi. In expectation of this event, Father Berard Tomassetti wrote, “It promises to be a bit like the Chapters of Mats—each fellow bringing his own bedding along, amice and purificators, etc. But it will be a good shot in the arm for all of us.”\footnote{Tomassetti to Don Nally, Nov. 6, 1957, in PL 5:9.}
After that it was two more years before all the friars were able to get together again. The occasion was April 1, 1959, when the friars celebrated Brother Claude Mattingly’s overly anticipated 25th anniversary of profession. By that time Brother had finished building the new friary at Mendi, which was able to accommodate all 10 friars. The event brought together not just the friars, but well-nigh all of expatriate Mendi. The staff of the Methodist missions attended, and Harry Cox, a government worker prepared the meal.

By telling of all the culinary goodies, one friar wrote, “The biggest treat of all was getting together with our own men, resting among our own kind, and enjoying the unexpressed but definite feeling of fellowship.” Another friary described it as “three wonderful, hilarious days. The kidding and wisecracking was Capuchin through and through.” Still another wrote, “We enjoyed our get together immensely… One needs a thick skin to enjoy them,” he added, “since the ribbing flies thick and fast and no one is excepted.” A fourth friar wrote, “You can imagine the noise and the yelling that went on when we were all together for the first time in almost two years… It was certainly an event to be remembered, and I wish we would get together more often.”

That October, Firmin came as apostolic prefect, and from then on the meetings became more regular. At least twice a year, all the friars have come together for a week or more of mass fraternity.

One thing no one noticed at the time was the fact that Brother Claude was professed March 19, 1935, so his 25th anniversary would have been only in 1960 (Bede Herrmann, *Tabellae Chronologicae* 1971-1954, p. 71).

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484 One thing no one noticed at the time was the fact that Brother Claude was professed March 19, 1935, so his 25th anniversary would have been only in 1960 (Bede Herrmann, *Tabellae Chronologicae* 1971-1954, p. 71).
485 Tomassetti to Friends, April 6, 1959, in PL 8: 6-7.
486 Tomassetti to Friends, April 6, 1959, in PL 8: 7.
487 Farkas to D. Nally, April 7, 1959, in PL 8: 7.
489 Miltenberger to Pastorius, April 5, 1959, in PL 8: 5-6. And many other friars filled much of PL 8: 5-15 with reports of the celebration.
Between April and July each year, the friars have usually had a week-long mission conference to discuss a wide array of problems of the apostolate, and for several years the preceding week also was an additional time of special camaraderie with many friars coming to Mendi for special language studies.

In addition to the conference, the friars have annually convened in Mendi for a week’s retreat during the November-January school break. Provincial visitations and the celebration of the various evolutionary steps in the formation of the diocese also brought them all to Mendi.

It was a wonderful feeling to see Mendi…and to see all the friars. Father Berard had just returned from the States, and there was Brother Alfred—newly assigned to the Missions. After the chatter died down and our needling one another ceased, we got down to business the second afternoon—after clergy exams were over. The talk centered around a catechism compiled for our use, and by our own missionaries; laws were drawn up for this work and a committee selected. On two evenings films were shown and we had a card game. Every evening was a very pleasant affair. All the non-Mendi friars—most of them—slept in the permanent store shed. Ben was over there to “chaperone” us. Sleep was permitted only after everyone was talked out. Our get together at Mendi that week was successful in every way—and the good it did to the friars to see one another is immeasurable. 490

Over the years, friars have also found a wide variety of reasons for visiting neighboring stations, such as farewell dinners for homebound missionaries, name day celebrations, recollection days, joint language studies, and sometime simply to be with one another. 491

The chronicles are also replete with examples of friars caring for and sharing with other friars, such as the Erave friars’ sending several boys to Kagua bearing fruit and vegetables to help the friars there celebrate the Feast of St. Francis, 1961, and the Kagua friars’ sending them back laden with fresh eggs.

A very striking example appears in the Pureni chronicle for April 6, 1973: “Received news of Father Gabriel’s mother’s death in England. Father Matthew biked to Koroba to give sympathy and support…to Father. On the way, he ran into Father Malachy [from Tari] who was on his way to Father Gabe for the same fraternal reason.”

During his own visit to the Southern Highlands in 1979, the present writer was struck by still another aspect of the friars’ spirit of fraternity, which for some strange reason hardly ever appears in the records. This is indeed surprising, since it is also the most important aspect, namely the friars’ prayerfulness.

At Mendi, in addition to Lauds, Vespers, and community Mass, the friars, sisters, and lay missioners faithfully came together for the Office of Readings, a daily meditation, and a weekly Eucharistic Holy Hour. At other stations, there were various combinations of these and other forms of prayer, such as prolonged periods of shared prayer.

491 E.g., Schmidt chronicle, March 18, 1963: “Ben walked to Nipa to visit Senan who had been at Nipa about seven weeks.”
Still another special expression of fraternity has been the remarkable care which the missionaries have taken to maintain contact with former lay missionaries and the way they often go out of their way when on home leave to visit one another’s families and as many of the homeland friars as possible.

Nothing, however, symbolized so vividly the family spirit of the Mendi missionaries as the radio schedule which reunites them on a daily and sometimes even thrice-daily basis. Operating under such exotic “handles” as Hotel Whisky, Bravo X-Ray, and Charlie Foxtrot, each station of the diocese and the missionaries at the Kap seminary and the Mt. Hagen’s teacher’s college tune in each evening before supper to hear “Bravo Sierra calling.”

Recently Mendi’s Bravo Sierra has been lay missionary Bob Biale. Before him, Brothers Joseph Day and Claude Mattingly were the regulars. Fathers Colman Studeny and Berard Tomassetti, and many others have also manned the mike. The missionaries are not at all surprised when even Bishop Firmin takes a turn as host of this diocesan round robin.

Priests, brothers, sisters, lay missionaries, and indigenous seminarians all join in covering the “sked” at their respective stations in an ever-changing variety of vernaculars. American English, Australian English, the Queen’s English, “pidgin English” (Melanesian pidgin), English with French, German, or one of the Papuan languages. One can hear them all as the missionaries exchange greetings and concerns with one another.

Government regulations for the single-side-band “sked” restrict its use to business purposes, and most PNG tele-radio communication networks are carried on in a crisp, terse, all-business fashion. Business on the Mendi diocesan “sked,” however, is conducted more after the warm manner of the American country store where Bishop Firmin grew up. An ordinary evening can provide enough information to fill a small newsletter, but more importantly it keeps all of the missionaries in touch.

Interjected as they are into the bulk of business, the congratulations, encouragements, offers of prayer, and various other personal touches support each of the missionaries. Even when away from the main station, they are able to listen in on the short-wave band of their transistor radios.

Considering the effectiveness of the “sked,” it is indeed remarkable that it took so long to become a reality. Already in 1955, when the first Capuchins were preparing to leave for Papua, a group of friars at Herman—Kieran Quinn, Adrian Conrad, and Earl Meyer—began collaborating on establishing an amateur radio station which might one day be able to provide instant contact with the missionaries in Puerto Rico and New Guinea. Fathers Kieran and Adrian 492 provided the equipment; and Adrian taught the fundamentals of radio to Brother Earl, who in turn became the Pennsylvania Province’s first licensed ham.

Earl then taught many of his fellow clerical students at Herman and Washington; and within a few years, Benjamin Madden, Herman Joseph Huttinger, Brian Newman, Benno Bartemeses,

492 While on a visit to Annapolis with Father Victor Green, Adrian “picked up some electrical gadgets at the Army Surplus with a view to developing a ham station in Herman. I have been urging him to keep going on this” (Green to Gallagher, Nov. 23, 1955).
Duane Haselhorst, and Malachy McBride all had regular operator’s licenses. In Puerto Rico, Fathers Evan Anderson, Francis Roscetti, and Owen Schellhase also obtained licenses, and regular contact was started between there and the mainland.

After his arrival in Mendi, Father Benjamin set up a station\(^{493}\) and was occasionally able to establish contact with the friars at Washington and Puerto Rico, as well other hams, who helped him reach the stateside friars and the missionaries’ families. Within a few years Fathers Brian Newman and Malachy McBride were doing the same. As a method of trans-oceanic communications, however, the radio had severe limitations, and if anyone had a message of real importance, it was generally considered more reliable to send it by mail or telegram.

Before Benjamin had even left Washington, however, the idea had already occurred to some of the Papuan missionaries that the radio’s real value lay in establishing local contact. “It is interesting to read…about the progress of the radio hams now operating in the clericate,” Berard had written to Washington in 1958.

A few weeks back, Brother Mark happened to tune in on a two-way radio conversation…which made us think of such future doings in our own mission by the likes of these clerics-made-missionaries. We were tuned to the radio sked between Bishop Leo Arkfeld, SVD, from Wewak to his missionaries scattered about the vicariate. He calls each station to pass news along, finds out about the weather, and what are the needs of the Fathers…It was good to tune in on the “party line” of the SVDs, hear the German and American accents, and above all, the interest they show in one another and in their Society.\(^{494}\)

It was four more years, however, before serious plans were laid for starting Mendi’s sked. What probably started things moving was the fact that Assistant Mission Procurator Father Don Nally visited the Mission July 14 to Sept. 4, 1962, and was able to hear both Benjamin’s trans-oceanic traffic and the “skeds” of other missions. Before he left, he agreed to arrange for the financing of a similar arrangement in the Southern Highlands. Minutes of the mission conference in November 1962, said the system “should be installed by the next meeting.”

Few things in PNG, however, proceed at the planned pace, and the predictable string of obstacles kept the “sked” from becoming a reality for three more years.

The evening of March 23,1965, the first transmission was made between Mendi, Tari, and Kagua. Erave joined the network March 29, and the chronicler pronounced it “really wonderful.” Ialibu was on the air April 7; and when Pangia and Pureni came in the next evening, all the stations were operational except Nipa, which had been set up so recently that a set had not yet been obtained for it.

Today [in 1984], 17 stations and the airplane are in the network, and the following synopsis of a randomly selected daily schedule monitored at Kagua illustrates just how totally the many missionaries of Mendi involve themselves in the workings of the diocese.


\(^{494}\) Stakem chronicle, Aug. 16, 1958, noted that the Protestant missions, the Wewak vicariate, and part of the Madang vicariate have such networks “Perhaps someday we’ll get that.”
The “Sked” for Sunday, June 24, 1979
a synopsis monitored at Bravo Victor (Kagua)
by Bravo Bravo

BRAVO SIERRA <Mendi>
Father Cyril Repko was at Mendi ready to leave the next morning for the States, and Bravo Sierra (Brother Joe Day) and others wished him a safe trip.

ALPHA SIERRA <Mt. Hagen> & BRAVO ZULU <Kap>
Bravo Victor tuned in late and missed the transmissions with Alpha Sierra and Bravo Zulu.

CHARLIE DELTA <Tari High>
Sister Mel Hoffman, the headmistress, informed the Bishop of the outcome of a sticky administrative problem at the high school. Bravo Sierra told her that her application for a passport would be held up until she could send in two signed photos of herself.

BRAVO TANGO <Tari>
Father Dunstan Jones wanted to talk to Charlie Foxtrot, and Lay Missioner Mick Flew wanted to talk to his “mate” Dan Hall at Bravo Whisky.

BRAVO YANKEE <Pureni>
One of the Handmaids of Our Lord agreed to stand by the next morning with a weather report, so that Mike Delta Charlie (the mission plane) could bring in a load of fuel and sugar on its way to pick up Charlie Echo for a consultor’s meeting.

BRAVO OSCAR <Koroba>
Father Dominic McGuinness explained his uncharacteristic lack of a message by suggesting that the rain at Kotoba “has damped our ardour.”

CHARLIE ECHO <Komo>
Father Gabriel Lomas received astounding news that a check for $10,000 had arrived from Capuchin general headquarters in Rome for a community self-help project at Komo, and he and Bravo Sierra joked briefly about what a fine holiday they could have with $10,000.

CHARLIE FOXTROT <Margariima>
Lay Missionary “Seppi” Fuchs assured Father Dunstan that he would try to get the wife and family of veteran catechist Peter Tangelia on the next day’s public transport vehicle, so they could join Peter at Tari for his brother’s funeral.

CHARLIE ALPHA <Nipa>
A high school boy at Mendi wanted to know if the report was true that his father had died at Nipa, and Seminarian Colman Marone assured him it was. Father Sam was out in the bush, and was due back Tuesday.

CHARLIE CHARLIE <Pomberel>
Father Steve Reichert wanted to speak to Charlie Bravo.

CHARLIE BRAVO <Det>
Father Roy Schuster alerted Bravo Sierra that Mike Delta Charlie might be needed for a medical emergency involving a woman in the Det health center. He also inquired when various visitors

495 BB, i.e.Blaine Burkey.
would be coming there and learned Father Gary Stakem would be at Det “next week” and Father Bob McCreary on July 16.

BRAVO UNIFORM <Ialibu>
Sister Norah Tobin’s mother arrived at Ialibu, and Bravo Sierra welcomed her to the diocese.

BRAVO VICTOR <Kagua>
Father Albert Alexandrunas wanted to reserve rooms for his “cowboys” who were coming to Mendi for the annual rodeo and ball, and he wanted to know when Mike Delta Charlie would be able to bring in liquid refreshments and take a load of fresh eggs and Father Blaine Burkey, who had arrived the day before, to Bravo X-Ray.

BRAVO WHISKY <Erave>
Father Lester Knoll wanted to borrow a slide projector from Pangia, but was able to make arrangements to obtain one from Mendi. Father Roger White at Bravo Uniform was able to inform Les that Lay Missioner Tim Kubas had just passed through there on his way to Erave.

BRAVO X-Ray <Pangia> & HOTEL WHISKY <Wiliame>
Arrangements were made for Lay Missioner Monica Daly to be taken from Erave to Pangia and Lay Missioner Kerry Anne Seagrott from Pangia to Erave.

After the first go around, Bravo Sierra backed up to allow individual stations to talk to one another.

Father Gabe wanted to pass on information that a Koroba girl had just had a daughter at Komo, but Father Dominic said he first wanted to bring Charlie Echo (who had just received the $10,000) back to earth by informing him that England had been beaten by the West Indies in the World Cup soccer finals.

Charlie Charlie and Charlie Bravo talked about something which was generally inaudible at Kagua, and Bravo Sierra occasionally had to help even them understand one another.

Mick Flew and Dan Hall (at Tari & Erave) then spent a few minutes of playful banter with one another, all the while, however, planning when and how a number of local carpenters could be moved from one end of the diocese to the other. This conversation also revealed the news that the major seminarians from the Erave Spiritual Year program would be going out to visit various parishes in the diocese the following week, and that several lay missionaries from Erave and elsewhere were planning on attending the Mendi Ball.

And thus the Mendi mission family shared with one another two or three time a day, every day of the year.

One of the finest appreciations of the spirit of the Capuchins and their co-workers came from General Definitor Aloysius Ward from Great Britain, following a general visitation of the friars. It aptly recaps this entire chapter.

I can truly say I have never met a better spirit among friars anywhere. It is obvious that the Province had sacrificed only its best men for this mission. Fraternity is really lived here. They are men of great faith and prayer. They come together whenever they can, and when they do they always pray some of the office together and concelebrate Mass. There are no rules about this: it is simply a fulfillment of their own needs and wishes. Three times daily there is a radio-telephone communication in which all the friars take part and in which they take a keen interest. Their devotion to this simply expresses their concern for one another: true fraternity in fact. And yet I
doubt if I heard the word “fraternity” once!  

And on a more impartial level, Cardinal Manning told his flock in Los Angeles,

The missionaries here are beyond compare … there is a compassion here, a friendliness, a sharing, a mutual supporting… Everyone seems concerned for the brothers. There is no evidence of an identity crisis.

\[^{496}\text{Aloysius Ward, Jan. 20, 1971.}\]
\[^{497}\text{The Tidings, Feb. 7, 1975, quoted in MDN March 1975.}\]
There are close links between evangelization and the advancement, or liberation and development of man… How can the new commandment be preached unless the real, authentic development of man is fostered through the creation of justice and peace?


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…And Then Came Dawn

The first morning this writer spent in Papua New Guinea was a doubly thrilling one. Only moments after a breathtaking daybreak at Bomana, Pope Saint Gregory the Great reached eastward 12,000 miles and forward 14 centuries with words seemingly written just for the occasion. The Church’s official prayers that morning had Gregory saying in his Morals on the Book of Job:

Dawn is the transition from darkness to light, and therefore the Church of all the elect is deservingly called “the dawn.” For in being brought from the night of disbelief to the light of faith, it is like dawn after darkness and before the splendor of eternal day.\(^{498}\)

Each new day rises on Papua New Guinea in a spectacular splurge of sound and sight rarely, if ever, experienced by those who live in the temperate zones of North America and southern Australia.

On the coast, dawn sparks to life one of the world’s richest assortments of birds, who vie with one another in twittering, tweeting, and trilling their tropical greeting to the sun as it explodes into view. In the mountainous hinterland, it is not the sudden sight of the sun itself which impresses its presence, but rather its brightness which so swiftly overpowers the intense darkness gripping the land. This is even more pronounced for visitors accustomed to having artificial lighting at their beck and call 24 hours a day, since in only a very few places on the island is this convenience available.\(^{499}\)

\(^{498}\) Bk. 25 of Gregory’s Morals; Thursday, Week 9, Reading II.

\(^{499}\) Most main stations have long had gasoline generators, but these have often been out of commission for weeks and months at a time, e.g. Pangia, March-Oct. 1971. Even at places where hydro-electric power is available round
This phenomenon so struck Karl-Heinz Stellmach, when he was filming his 1971 documentary of the coming of the Capuchins and their co-workers to the Southern Highlands, that he opened each of the three half-hour segments of the movie with various sensations of daybreak in Papua New Guinea and named the trilogy “...and then came DAWN.”

A new light was bursting on the Papuan Highlands through the ministry of the friars and their fellow workers, and Stellmach’s film was to be a record of many of its facets. First and foremost, the friars were intent on liberating the Papuans from dark fear of evil spirits and their mistrust of members of other clans. This they were doing by flooding the people with brilliant Good News that God was a Father who loved and cared for all of them without exception, and even wanted to share His life with them.

To bring this message to the people, the missionaries were regularly exerting mighty efforts, enduring countless privations, frequently taking dangerous risks. By the time of Stellmach’s film this was already showing its effect in the tens of thousands that had requested Baptism and were now finding solace in the Sacraments. The light, however, was wider and brighter than that; and together the people and the missionaries were thrusting towards other new horizons.

From the very beginning, the friars found it necessary to engage in activities not directly spiritual in nature. Some of these – such as operating sawmills and building roads, bridges, airstrips, and huts of all kinds – at first glance seem totally geared towards making their own activities as missionaries more tolerable. These roads and bridges also served, however, to start bringing the various people together and enabling individuals to move outside the confines of their previously limited worlds. The roads further gave them a sense of security not previously possible on the narrow paths through the bush.

Other activities of the missionaries, such as treating sores and illnesses and teaching English and arithmetic, were more geared towards helping the people; but even these were often seen as ways to make the people more receptive to the spiritual light.

In all of these processes, however, a stone-age people began leaping into the space age. People who had not even seen a horse or an automobile were suddenly acquainted with the airplane. Naturally the reactions were occasionally humorous, such as the boys who ran a great distance after Brother Claude Mattingly wondering when his “landrover” jeep was going to take off, as well as the one who, after dumping his load of rocks, carried the empty wheelbarrow back on his head.

One of the Popes wrote that “it is peculiarly the task of the laity to Christianize society and its institutions.” It was probably this same pope who wrote that “newly emerging nations are earnestly seeking to improve the socio-economic condition of their homeland. Through no fault of their own, they lack personnel trained to carry out the desired improvements. Here the

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the clock, it is not uncommon for dams or waterways to wash out shut down the hydros. Ialibu had its first lights Nov. 4, 1959. Pangia got its first generator April 29, 1964, and within a week its first electric illumination.

500 “Broken Arrows,” “Go in Pace,” “Tambus.”
Catholic lay workers can help whenever needed and in doing so apply the commandment to love one’s neighbor as one’s self.”

Once the Church had managed to contact the more populous areas of the district and had at least initially made its message known to the people, it settled down to a two-pronged evangelization, which on the one hand preached the Good News of salvation, and on the other put its new commandment into action by directly fostering the material development of the people.

Much of this broadening of the Church’s mission in the Southern Highlands was made possible by the numbers of religious sisters and lay missionaries who became available at this time. Their efforts in upgrading the educational and medical activities of the mission had already been spoken of in previous chapters. It would be appropriate here, however, to speak of an altogether new facet of missionary work which rose up side by side with the people’s efforts to develop as an independent nation.

Father Berard Tomassetti’s work as an engineer is particularly noteworthy in considering the material development of the country. Besides the two Tagari bridges already mentioned at length in earlier chapters, Berard designed the Pureni airstrip, the dam and hydroelectric installation at Pureni, similar projects at Kagua, Mendi, Tari High, and Kanabea in the Kerema Diocese, and helped with such projects at the Yampu leprosarium at Par in the Mt. Hagen Diocese, Fatima College at Banz, and at Det. He also advised on other projects such as the one at the United Church station at Mendi. More recently he has presented the government with proposals for a shorter route for the Mendi-Kagua road and for a Nembi River bridge near Det.

**Saw mills**

The late Father Timon Kaple was a guiding hand in bringing about the successful sawmilling in the Southern Highlands. His family ran a lumber mill in New Washington, Ohio, and when he arrived in Papua New Guinea in 1960, a complete saw mill quickly followed him as a gift from the family. Monsignor Firmin said Tim and Mark arrived in Mendi June 12, 1961, on their way to Madang to uncrate the sawmill.”  

While on a visit to Tari later that year, Firmin went with Tim and Mark to Hangapo where the sawmill was set up. “I was very favorably impressed by the machinery,” he noted, “but could readily see that a stronger motor with the greater RPM’s is needed. I told Tim to order a big air-cooled diesel Lister.”

Seven years later, Firmin was in to Tari to bless and officiate at the opening of a local council saw mill, which the diocese had assisted in establishing. “We loaned them a thousand dollars, gave a donation of the agent’s share, and taught one of the boys to run the mill. Besides Father Timon and Father Myron set it up. I also gave a brief talk and ran the first log through.”

Ialibu had its own saw mill even earlier, almost since the beginning of the mission. As elsewhere, the first local lumber was prepared by pit saw. The first mechanical unit, however, had been acquired as early as December of 1956 and eventually assembled in January of

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501 Schmidt chronicle, June 12, 1961.  
502 Schmidt chronicle, Nov.9, 1961.  
503 Schmidt chronicle, Dec. 11, 1968.
1958. This unit was used in preparing much of the lumber milled in the Ialibu Valley. In August of 1964, Father Timon went to Ialibu to set up another new sawmill. Meanwhile in Pangia, in March of 1963. Father Gary sold a pit saw for £9 to some men at Ange at Pangia, who agreed to pay 1/6 for each good plank. A month later Sugu of Mandanda wanted to go into business. He would buy a saw from Gary and in return would saw wood for the church. If it’s his own wood, Gary would pay 2/ per plank. If Gary’s lumber, £8/100 planks. A year later Gary discussed the same sort of deal with people at Tindua, and soon Wabea also was sawing under the same agreement.

A small sawmill project began at Det in the middle of 1970 with impetus from the church committee. The diocese of Mendi loaned money for equipment which was installed by the end of the year. Meanwhile two men were sent to another mill to learn how to serve as a sawyer and storage manager. It took some time for the local people to get properly organized, but eventually some 60 men, distributed proportionately to the size of the various lines, became equal share holders in the company with each being expected to work their fair share. And the share holders decided how the profits were to be distributed.

The company cut its first log on Oct. 30, 1971, and in the first 19 months they had already repaid the diocese one third of the cost of the machinery, and by late 1974 each man was receiving about $100 a year for his work. Father Ben Madden, the pastor, who encouraged and advised the project along with a lay missionary, saw the project as building initiative among the people.

There is a gradual realization of change, and a preparedness to meet that change. There is evidence of responsible use of money in relation to their family and society. And finally there is charity as evidence in their offer to aid the community and the mission…. Realistically, it is worthwhile because men, always imperfect, are gradually realizing their own potentialities more fully. They are men changing Papua New Guinea.

One of the Highlands’ most successful industries to date had been the Lama Saw Mill near Ialibu, which was begun by the Diocese of Mendi through the ministry of veteran lay missionary

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507 Stakem chronicle, April 27, 1963.
508 Stakem chronicle, April 28, 1963.
Gavan Spillane of New Zealand. Through his leadership it has developed into one of, if not the most productive, locally owned businesses in the Southern Highlands.

Spillane first came to the Southern Highlands in 1963 as a lay missionary, and after training at Rabaul, began teaching at the diocesan central school at Erave. He is still remembered for the beautiful lake he built there. When the school closed in 1967, Spillane moved to Ialibu and began training young men in animal husbandry and carpentry.

Spillane left the mission in 1966, and spent the next three years in construction work in New Zealand, during which he learned a great deal about the milling of lumber. He arrived back on the Island on March 19, 1969, preparing to organize a carpentry and technical high school.

In February of 1974, Father Berard flew to Ialibu for a sawmill meeting."

In September 1975, Father Maris went to Mendi to see the Bishop about the Lama Co.’s buying the sawmill from the diocese. Gavan Spillane built up the sawmill into a separate entity from the parish and turned it into a totally native company.

The Chairman of the Church Committees Association received a check on June 24 for K25,600 as the first installment of payment for the Lama Sawmill Pty Ltd which was formerly owned by the Diocese of Mendi. Father Berard accepted the check in the name of the Diocese and Alfred Pundiap, C.C.C. president, accepted it in the name of the Association.

At a meeting of the consultors on April 22, 1976, Father Berard reported that another company had taken over the Lama Sawmill.

**Tea Plantation**

Already in 1956, after meeting with Father Otmar, Father Michellod spoke of raising coffee as a means of support for the mission.

Later when the Erave station was set up, it was intended that the mission would eventually be able to at least partially support itself through a coffee plantation. When Australian Lay Missionary Bill McQuillan, arrived in Mendi on June 8, 1961, Bishop Schmidt had already decided Bill would “take over the farm development at Erave.”

This project never fully materialized, however, and in the mid-1960’s, at the suggestion of the government, the Diocese of Mendi moved in a different direction, aimed not so much at supporting the mission as in teaching the people to support themselves.

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511 Schmidt chronicle Feb. 21, 1974.
512 Goetz chronicle.
513 MDN May-June 1976..
514 Michellod to Sorin, Feb. 4, 1956.
515 Schmidt to Tomassetti, June 8, 1961.
516 If this was the government’s suggestion, why did they have to argue to get the land?
The first mention found of it is in a 1965 letter of Father Otmar Gallagher to Father Valentine Young. The latter had contacted a young farmer who wished to serve as a lay missionary, and Otmar wrote that on Sept. 19 he had learned “that a group of people about 10 miles down the valley from our station here in Mendi are willing to sell a 50-acre block of land to anyone who is interested in setting up a small agricultural school and a first aid post there. The government could not do it at the present time.” Like so many first initiatives in the Mendi story, Father’s interest was tainted with religious competition. “I feel that if we don’t, some other mission body will. Naturally, I’m not in favor of that.”

When Firmin visited Port Moresby on June 16, 1966, he visited the department of lands about the diocese’s plan for a tea plantation, and noted “…They seemed most cooperative. They favored our getting the plantation, but the special board made up of heads of departments was a bit hesitant.” The land department “requested me to write again to the board to express our plans and capabilities. With this letter they hope to force the special board to a favorable conclusion.”

On his return from Australia on Oct. 25, 1966, Firmin found Otmar in Port Moresby. “He had come to be present at Land Board Meeting which was to consider the mission’s application for a 1,400 acre tea block at Inambu, 7 miles south of Mendi.” The two of them attended the meeting, at which “the board agreed to grant us the lease.”

The plan eventually emerged that the Diocese of Mendi would invest in a 450-acre plot at Inambu near Tigiri in the southern Mendi Valley and would begin a tea plantation. In conjunction with the government, the diocese would encourage local investors to plant smaller areas all around the diocesan plot. Once this was underway, the diocese would build a processing factory on its lease and buy green leaves from the local investors.

On Nov. 6, 1966, Firmin took Father P. Murphy SVD to the tea plantation.” He was favorably impressed with our progress.

In June of 1967, Firmin spoke of Otmar and Bill McQuillan going to Mt. Hagen in our Toyota to pick up the John Deere caterpillar for our plantation.\textsuperscript{518}

On July 14, 1967, Firmin recorded “Bill rode the caterpillar to the plantation site today. John Powell returned to the sawmill.”

On Jan. 2, 1968, Firmin noted “work at the plantation continues. Father Otmar has about 40 school boys to help put up a fence for cattle.”

Bill McQuillan devoted the next seven years\textsuperscript{519} developing the diocesan block. He was assisted at various times by Bob Campbell and Roger Johnson (two years each).\textsuperscript{520}

\textsuperscript{517} Gallagher to Young, Sept. 21, 1965.
\textsuperscript{518} Schmidt chronicle, June 19, 1967.
\textsuperscript{519} Six according to MDN April 1973.
\textsuperscript{520} MDN April 1973
1968, May 19 – Firmin took Bishop Desmond Moore to see the tea plantation and was amazed at the progress.  


1968 – Campbell & McQuillan from the tea plantation came to Mendi for a celebration.

1969 – “Bill McQuillan and Bob Campbell are planting out the trees from the nursery. With their 100 workers they can plant about 7,000 per day. There are about 4,000 per acre.”

Bill told Firmin on Oct. 11, 1970 that our land for planting tea at Inambu may be inadequate because we cannot find enough suitable ground for cultivation.”

At Moresby in September of 1968, Firmin met “Roger Johnson VSO who is taking over for Bob Campbell at the tea block.”

The factory was never built at Inambu, because the local investors never followed through on their part of the bargain, and the acreage was insufficient to support a factory. In the meantime, of course, the Mendi-Mt. Hagen road improved to the point where it was possible to take the leaves to the Mt. Hagen Tea Growers processing plant in Mt. Hagen.

In July of 1972, Father Otmar, Bill & the Bishop drove to Mt. Hagen to see Mt. Hagen Tea Growers.

The first pickings from Inambu went to the factory in early 1973. Two trucks a week were being sent at that time, but they did not all reach their destination. MDN for May of 1973 reported a truck loaded with 9,000 pounds of tea leaves went into a ditch on Mt. Giluwe. The previous week’s picking, moreover, had never been picked up because the road was closed. “Things are bound to improve,” the paper predicted.


“There was a meeting today of the Tea Board of Management. The board includes leaders of lines at Inambu, the main workers, the Bishop, Father Berard and Father Colman.”

521 Schmidt chronicle May 19, 1968.
524 Schmidt chronicle, June 13, 1969.
525 Schmidt chronicle, Nov. 9, 1970.
526 Schmidt chronicle, July 20, 1972.
527 Ibid.
528 Schmidt chronicle, May 28, 1973. (McQuillan was back until 1976, and then back again until 1979, when MDN March-April 1979 said: “Bill McQuillan left after 15 years service with the diocese.”).
Tea Board Management met on Dec. 20, 1973\textsuperscript{531}

There was another meeting of the DC, ADC, DASF, local people and mission personnel in our tea block on Jan. 9, 1974. The locals hit the government hard for its “lack of cooperation.” \textsuperscript{532}

“That Isaac, a native young man from Mt. Hagen arrived at the end of the month to take over the management of the tea block. Bernie Roney, who took Bill’s place in April 1973, was returning to Victoria after a year here.\textsuperscript{533}

“Bill McQuillan came back April 16, 1974, from Vanimo where he was the last six weeks setting up a sawmill.”\textsuperscript{534}

“Mila Thomas of Mt. Hagen Tea comes for a visit three days later.\textsuperscript{535}

There was another meeting at the tea block on June 24.\textsuperscript{536}

At a meeting of the consultants on April 22, 1976, Father Berard reported that the company which had overtaken the Lama Sawmill was also making a bid for Mendi Tealands, and the Association of Chairmen of the Catholic Communities was now registered.

Eventually, the Diocese turned the ownership of the tea block over to the Catholic Church Committees, an independent corporation consisting of the chairmen of all the church committees in the Diocese, the Bishop, and Berard. This corporation in turn went into partnership with the national government in forming Mendi Tea Lands, with the C.C.C. controlling 40% of the stock, the national government 40%, and the World Bank 20%.

At a later date,\textsuperscript{537} the Chairman of Church Committees Assn., Inc., was the holder of 90% of the shares of Mendi Tealands Pty Ltd.

It still needs to be researched as to whether they have ever made any money; if so, how much; whether it will ever pay for itself; what the C.C.C. really is; and what it has to do with Mendi Tea Lands.\textsuperscript{538}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{532} Schmidt chronicle, Jan. 9, 1974.
\footnotetext{533} Schmidt chronicle, Jan 31, 1974.
\footnotetext{534} Schmidt chronicle, April 16, 1974.
\footnotetext{535} Schmidt chronicle, April 19, 1974.
\footnotetext{536} Schmidt chronicle, June 24, 1974.
\footnotetext{537} I forgot to cite the ref., but probably. MDN since refs. to April and May 1973 MDN are quoted on the same slip of paper.
\footnotetext{538} Tomassetti’s comment on Ms.: “Good question. No one talks about it!!”
\end{footnotes}
Agricultural

A more fundamental development effort that involved many more of the friars was the agricultural component.

In 1956, Father Michellod spoke of raising cattle and coffee as a means of support “Dimipa can be our ideal place for cattle. Natives are ready to go look for cattle at Mt. Hagen.” 539

In May of 1957, Father Otmar Gallagher wrote to Father Claude Vogel that he had been intending to buy some cattle at a government auction at Goroka, but had told this to Bishop Ignatius Doggett, OFM, of Aitape, who said “He would give us about six or eight young calves.” 540

At the same time Otmar wrote he had purchased nine eight-week-old pigs, two of them sows, from Father Krimm for Ł5-0-0 each. (ca. $12.50). “We hope that the natives are interested enough to breed their sows to our boars when they are old enough. That should help improve the natives’ pig line. Even if they do not care to do that, the extra boars can provide us with a bit of fresh pork in a few months or so.” 541

In 1965, Father August walked six head of cattle from Mt. Hagen to Kagua. 542

In 1967, Bishop Firmin visited Jack Hamilton, government vet at Lae, with a view of getting cattle from Australia. 543

In August of 1968, cattle were very much on the minds of the Mendi friars. On July 30, Bishop Firmin reported, “Cattle from Madang arrived today.” 544 It seems there were 36 of them, and half had ideas of their own. On Aug. 1, Firmin noted that Father Otmar and the school boys had been trying for three days “to round up 18 head of cattle that had escaped from the inadequate government paddock.” By evening six of the 18 were caught, and 12 still at large. The other 18 are safely at the paddock.” 545 By Aug. 6, 15 of the 18 had been recovered, 546 and two days later, Fathers Otmar and Colman and Bill McQuillan took 14 head of cattle to Inambu. They tied them up and hauled them in a Landcruiser. 547

Later on, 548 Firmin wrote that “August and two native boys from Kagua go to Banz via plane to pick up cattle and drive them in.” 549

539 Michellod to Sorin, Feb. 4, 1956.
540 Gallagher to Vogel, May 29, 1957.
541 Gallagher to Vogel, May 29, 1957.
542 Jones chronicle, April 30, 1965
543 Schmidt chronicle, March 5, 1967.
544 Schmidt chronicle, July 30, 1968
545 Schmidt chronicle, Aug. 1, 1968.
546 Schmidt chronicle, Aug. 6, 1968.
547 Schmidt chronicle, Aug. 8, 1968.
548 When? Get the date.
549 Where were they for and what happened to them? Where did the Inambu herd come from?
Later at both Pangia and Kagua, Father Albert Alexandrunas used his knowledge of farming to train New Guinea natives in raising various animals and by numerous cooperative arrangements he has encouraged men of the area to set up small ranches of their own and through profit-sharing these men have been able to start their own herds.

Albert apparently got his first stock from the diocesan block at Inambu. He and Fathers Myron Flax and Don Debes, all farm-raised friars, began driving 79 head of cattle from Inambu to Kagua on Oct. 4, 1977.

An even longer cattle drive was held the following year when Albert and another friar drove three water buffalo from Kagua to far-off Komo on May 2-9, 1978. The parish at Komo had pooled its resources and purchased the three water buffaloes, which it rented out to various people including government personnel for various projects such as rolling the airstrip at Komo. They were still being paid for doing this in September 1984.

Albert was also instrumental in the organizing the Kagua Rodeo and agricultural expositions at both Pangia and Kagua.

Pete Meis had a herd of cattle at Wiliame in the late 1970’s, and many cattle raised in the Wiliame kau banis were later sold to help support the Wiliame stations and to help start other herds. Many other development projects are noted in the Wiliame chronicle, but which if any of these survived as long-term development for the people needs to be checked. They included the raising of ducks by primary school students, the cultivation of silk worms by Standard 4 students and their parents, the raising of sheep, and the raising of coffee.

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550 This probably was done by truck, as Father Albert has no recollection of walking water buffalo to Komo (Stakem to Burkey, Sept. 2).
551 Are these still in operation?
552 Wiliame chronicle, Aug. 28, 1976, and Nov. 5, 1977; Stakem to Burkey, Sept. 2, 2016..
553 Not known if any connection with Albert’s at Pangia.
556 Begun in April 1973, the project realized in July $1 “for the silk from the first 700 silk worms.” During January 1974, 9,000 worms were spinning, but the project was not mentioned again after that.
**Medicine**

Another major area of development was in the field of medicine. Lou Ciancio, the first American lay missionary, brought considerable first aid skills with him, but the first registered nurse to join the Church’s mission was Pat Bayer from Pittsburgh. Pat first worked as a teacher for the mission, but eventually added health care to her duties, and in 1967 began full-time work as a nurse. She began clinics at Muli, Kapokapopilye, Tukupangi, Tokomakup, Kou, Kopale, Orei, and for a brief time at Ialibu itself.

Elizabeth McGettigan and Catherine Ward started a clinic at Tindua in 1968, and the latter also started women’s clubs. Rosemary Kombukal and Clare Ann Tio began medical work at Det on July 18, 1968, and the following year two lay missionaries went there: Elizabeth McGettigan as the mother/child health nurse and Frances Rowe as a teacher. The clinic at Pureni was started in 1970. COMPASSION gave the Ialibu church committee a Toyota for the people to take the nurse there to her bush clinics.

Lay Missionary Mary Dowling, an Australian nurse living at Nipa, commuted to Margarima and started health work in much of that area in 1972 by inoculating more than 1,000 people. She began a medical center at Margarima and ran numerous motherhood/child health clinics. Plans were to have her take up residence at Margarima, but mission policy required that women lay missionaries be assigned only in pairs or groups and a second lay missionary could not be spared for Margarima.

Eventually Sisters Lukas and Veronica of the Swiss congregation at Det provided medical care to the area until several Swiss lay missionary nurses Rosle Zagner, Madeleine Seeholzer, and Elizabeth Ledagerber were able to settle there in 1975. After that the Swiss sisters returned and one of their Sisters was the government’s medical health officer for the area.

The church was also involved in the setting up of the Koroba hospital.

**Education**

One of the first areas the laity stepped into in the Southern Highlands was the establishment of schools. In the earlier chapters we have already seen numerous laymen from other areas of the country who brought their own admittedly limited knowledge to the aid of their fellow New Guineans.

Father Paul Farkas was the first education officer. He was appointed in 1957 and immediately made a tour of the schools in the Yule Island vicariate. He and the other missionaries did not always see eye to eye. He and Berard once had quite a discussion on education today that developed into a minor blow up. “We parted friends,” Paul noted. “This is the first time that we got so heated over the subject.”

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559 Farkas chronicle May 31, 1957.
Soon after that 16 men arrived from Yule Island to act as teachers. Aged 19 to 24, all but one were without teaching certificates. They taught at Tari and Mendi. By the following year, the Bishop noted in a report of the establishment of a prefecture that “12 more are now preparing to go, for a minimum of two years’ service to the Church.” That same year, 14 young men were sent down to the coast to give them advanced training at Mainahana. One of them was Francis Kili, who was one of the earliest Southern Highlanders to return to teach in the Catholic schools.  

Expatriot lay missionaries were responsible for the establishment of schools in Ialibu in 1962 (Rame, Toohey, Fisher), Kagua in 1964 (Fisher, Toohey, McDonnell), Pangia in 1965 (O’Neill, Ferguson), Nipa in 1966 (Fisher, Payne), Det in 1968 (Betar, …), Tigibi in 1969 (Taylor, Scanlon), and Orei in 1970 (Bautovich, Butterfield).

In 1968, the Diocese of Mendi and the other Highland dioceses organized a regional teacher training college at Mt. Hagen.  

1968 – Mission Meeting - decided “a survey to be made for the location of a high school to be opened by 1971.”

1968 – got results from the Standard 6 exams. Only 40% of those who take exams can qualify for secondary education. 31 of 34 (91%) from our school qualified.

1968 – Several sites seemed good; 4-1 in favor of Tari; biggest problem with Tari is transportation and communication. We are banking on the fact that by 1972 at the latest we will have a usable road from Mendi to Tari.

1968 – Consultors had several meetings to determine where Dioc. Cath. High School should be built. Decided to meet after retreat for decision.

Four of our Second Form boys have been accepted into the administration teachers college: John Nono, Luke Wombul, Ronald Wandua, and Floyd Peave.

1969 – Meeting of consultors at the Mendi site they had looked at for a high school. It was now being used by the government as a prison. After an entire day of discussion, reagreed on Tari. The site there is substantially the same, but its acreage has been reduced to 173 acres.

David Anju and Cletus Kelelo are going to the secondary teacher’s college at Goroka.
1970 -- Meeting of the high school board with Mr. Jones, head of secondary schools in the territory. We had agreed to open the high school in Tari in 1971. However since the Lands Department was slow in granting the lease, it is now impossible for us to have the buildings complete in time to begin. We finally agreed to open in 1971 and that the local government council in the Southern Highlands will put up bush buildings to be used for the first year. Mr. Jones also practically promised a dollar-for-dollar subsidy for at least two years. Selection of students also discussed.

“The opening of the high school has been delayed by a month or so. The local government council which is supposed to have everything ready are by this time a bit behind schedule. We were very fortunate to get almost 50% of Standard 6 pupils of last year into the high school. That is about 20 above the territorial percentage. At the high school this first year we will have Sister Mel and Sister Charlyne, Father Robert Craig, Michael Richards and Thomas Umbi (a native lad). The permanent buildings at the Tari High School site are coming along fine. We should have the first stage finished by June.”

1971 – Ben & Claude go with me to Tari we have several meetings with staff.

1971 – All of us go to the high school site. Berard to do some surveying. Buildings are marked. We were happy to see that two dormitories are almost finished. Stephen Carole & Christopher Hawkes, two VSOs are doing a fine job.

See article by Paul Farkas on Tari High, MDN January 1974.

A more recent development in education has been the forming of the DCDC at Koroba and Nipa. This a two-part finishing school for girls who are not going on to college. Why is it of value? In June 1980 the MDN spoke of MISEREOR giving funds to set up the Nipa branch.

Other Cooperatives

In the Central Deanery, Father Roy Schuster spearheaded a cooperative which eventually involved all four parishes of the deanery. Members of the parish have been encouraged to participate in a cooperative which in 1979 owned three trucks, sawmills, coffee plantations, and other business concerns which not only allowed the four parishes to pay most of the costs of permanent church construction, catechists, etc., but also raising the standard of living of the parishioners themselves.

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569 Schmidt chronicle, Jan. 5, 1970.
570 Schmidt chronicle, Aug. 28, 1970.
571 Schmidt to Isobel Bautovich, Jan. 27, 1971, written after her return to Australia.
574 The cooperative did not survive Fr. Roy's departure, however, and it all fell through.
In 1976, the vocational school at Pangia was producing 2,400 buns a week and selling them in Mendi.\textsuperscript{575}

There is a long article on Self Help in \textit{Mendi Diocesan News} for Pentecost 1977.

In 1969 there was a consensus statement from the friars on socio-economic development. Should find it and add where appropriate.


\textsuperscript{575} Pangia convent chronicle, 1976 (no special date).
The person who has been evangelized in turn evangelizes others. Here is the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization, for it is inconceivable that a man should have received God’s word and committed himself to God’s reign and yet not bear witness to and proclaim the Gospel. Paul VI, “Evangelii Nuntiandi,” 1975, n. 24

22

Coming of Age

The goal of every genuine missionary must be not only to implant the Church in an area, but also to nurture that local Church to the point that it no longer depends heavily on foreign help. This is understandably a bittersweet goal since at the same time that one promotes promising new growth, he is also called upon to anticipate his own future dispensability. Working to implant the Church, moreover, does not assure that the local Church will automatically reach independent maturity. A definite effort is required to seek out willing workers, and extraordinary sacrifices must be made to well train a few despite the fact that many seem to be in such need. Through the years the Capuchins have become more and more convinced of this, until today a large share of their energy is aimed at formation of tomorrow’s local leaders.

The goal of indigenization obviously has not yet been totally achieved even in parts of the nation evangelized more than 100 years ago, so it should be no surprise that the goal also remains unfulfilled in the Southern Highlands, where first generation missionaries are still active. Surely it will be many years before the local Church has national priests and religious in sufficient numbers to take over the work of expatriot Capuchins and their expatriot co-workers. True to its title, therefore, this book can trace “only the beginnings” of a local church standing on its own, a church which, nevertheless, is slowly coming of age.

These beginnings are as diverse as the life and activity of the Church herself; they involve the clergy, the religious, and the laity.

576 The analogy of a parent cutting the cord asserts itself here, but a better comparison might be that of a plant bearing a fruit, the seed of which then reproduces itself.
The Priesthood

The first local man to serve as a priest in the Mendi Diocese is Father Simon Apea Soge, pastor of the Nipa parish, who was ordained by Bishop Schmidt at Ialibu on Dec. 15, 1977.

Simon’s ordination was the first flower of an effort made back in November of 1963, when Father Louis Vangeke, the first native Papuan priest visited Ialibu, Kagua, Erave, and other Southern Highland stations. It was a most striking announcement to the boys of the Southern Highlands that they also could be priests; and the seeds of many vocations were thereby cultivated. 577

The idea had actually been planted prior to Vangeke’s visit, and John Iai of Ialibu had approached Monsignor Firmin a year earlier about studying for the priesthood. He had just finished Standard 7 at Fatima High School in Banz, and Firmin considered having him finish Standards 8 and 9 before going to the seminary. 578

Firmin decided to let him go, however, and on Jan. 22, 1962, at Ulapia near Rabaul, John Iai became the Mendi mission’s first seminarian. 579

Over the years, there were many others. By January of 1965 six Mendi mission seminarians were at Ulapia: John Iai, Cletus Kelelo, Firmin Walipa, Senan Koa, Dennis Tonge, and David Aipe. 580

When Firmin visited the seminary in June of 1966, the previous six were still there, as were three new ones, Henry Koiae, Dominic Diya and Timon Ombiolo. 581

Some of these and other new ones enrolled at the new seminary at Kap in subsequent years.

The second and third priests from the Mendi diocese were Colman Marone from Wepinam near Det, ordained on Dec. 15, 1982, and Colman Renali from Erave, ordained on Jan. 21, 1984. Others who were studying at Holy Spirit Seminary in Bomana were David Keta from Sumi near Kagua, who left in December 1982, and Leo Yakopa from Kagua, who later was an ADO in the Southern Highlands. 582

577 Erave chronicle, Nov. 2, 1963. Simon said Fr. Gregory Smith told him Louis Vangeke, a black Papuan priest was coming for a visit. Simon asked, “Can a black person become a priest?,” and Greg answered“Any color, but no women” (Apea to Burkey, Nov. 11, 1984).
582 2016: There are now 10 diocesan priests incardinated in the Diocese of Mendi: Fathers Elijah Alembo, Robert Gigmai, Pius Hal, George Makaja, Nelson Matthew, Harry Mawoi, Allen Mugaja, Alex Remba, Isaiah Timba, and Elias Zambra. Father John Wenambo from the Kundiawa diocese is also working in the Mendi diocese.
The Religious Life

The first person of the Mendi diocese to seriously consider the possibility of entering religious life was Rose Elizabeth Moro of Kagua who went to Port Moresby as an aspirant with the Handmaid of Our Lord in February of 1968. She decided, however, not to continue. The first young lady from the diocese to take vows as a religious was Sister Rosemary Gama Talibe from Pureni, who made first profession as a Handmaid on Feb. 26, 1979. She was followed by Sister Betty Irame Laya from the same parish who made profession as a Handmaid in 1980.

In the meantime, the first young men of the diocese had entered the Capuchin postulancy. Two men from the upper Mendi, Firmin Walipa of Tulum and Senan Koa of Ekari, graduates of St. Fidelis Seminary at Kap received postulancy habits from Father Gary in February of 1971. Shortly after that, Aloysius Nale, a teacher at Ialibu, was received as a lay brother postulant. The three postulants spent the following year with Father Maris Goetz at Erave.  

On Feb. 19, 1972, the Capuchins opened a formation house at Bomana with Father Peter Meis as postulancy director for “Brothers” Senan and Firmin. Pete also taught in the major seminary where the two postulants were enrolled in the first year of philosophy. “Brother” Aloysius taught that year in the government’s primary school at Erave. Between January of 1973 and January of 1974, however, all three had left to take up other occupations. First, Firmin took employment with the public health

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583 Check Schmidt chronicle, Feb. __ and 14, 1971.
department at Mt. Hagen. Five months later Senan discontinued his studies, and at the end of the year Aloysius left to work on the staff of Christopher Yano Belo, minister of public works.

The first Papua New Guinean to actually become a Capuchin was Camillus Bukale from Karkum near Mirap in Madang Province, who entered the novitiate in 1975. Since he was the only candidate at the time, he made his novitiate under the guidance of Father Gerald Walsh, O.F.M., at Sixteen Mile near Port Moresby. Camillus made first profession as a Capuchin on Feb. 8, 1976, and continued studies for the priesthood at Bomana. He left upon the expiration of his temporary profession in 1979.

The Capuchins opened a novitiate at Pangia in February of 1976. A couple thousand Witu people celebrated the occasion with a sing-sing and mu-mu.\(^{584}\)

The first three Southern Highlanders to make profession as Capuchins were Charles Evan Epei Wapa of Kalawira in Kagua parish, Clement Wepo from Ialibu, and Paul Tua Kende from Kagua, who made profession on Feb. 2, 1978 along with four other brothers: Ferdinand Kawai Kutil from Alexishafen, Salvianus Amai Manup from Karkar, Mike Tei Bare from Simbu province, and Joe Tata Way from the Sepik area. The last two became the first Capuchins to make permanent profession of vows on Feb. 2, 1982. Brother Michael was also the first national Capuchin to be ordained to the priesthood and Brother Joe the first to hold office in the Order. Mike was ordained May 31, 1984, and Joe was appointed vicar of the Saraga fraternity on February of 1984.

The first young men from the Mendi diocese to make permanent profession in the Order were Brothers Mathias Olape from Pureni and Mark Nande from Kagua. Both took their final vows on Jan. 25, 1984.

In addition to these, Isaac Koi from Porane near Kagua was a major seminarian with the Sacred Heart Missionaries.

\(^{584}\) Wiliame chronicle, February, 1976.
In 1974 Bishop Firmin announced it was time to begin laying the foundation for an indigenous religious community for women in the Diocese of Mendi. After much discussion it was decided that this institute would be nurtured by all of the other groups of women religious working in the diocese and Sister Annata Holohan of the Oldenburg Franciscans was assigned to begin training the candidates at Kagua.\(^{585}\)

Sister spent the following year in the Philippines studying courses in religious formation,\(^{586}\) and then began contacting young woman interested in joining a new house. The sister formation house in Kagua and blessed on the Epiphany in 1976, and Claudia Boli Abua from Mendi, Janet Ramu from Ialibu and Carmel Nari from Kerapia in the Western Highlands came together as a “Pious Union” and began a pre-postulancy, which then into a postulancy. Claudia discontinued half way through the year, and when the other two also left, the postulancy was suspended in early 1977.\(^{587}\)

A second attempt was made in 1978 with a pre-postulancy live-in for four women. Claudia Boli\(^{588}\) returned to the candidacy and was joined by Patricia Pueme from Kupienda, Kagua; Maria Kundipanu from Muli, Ialibu; and Elizabeth Epei Kumien from Pangia. All four entered the novitiate on Dec. 8, 1979, and Sisters Patricia and Elizabeth were professed Jan. 23, 1982, as the first Franciscan Sisters of Mary of the Mendi diocese. After a brief period of work in the Tari parish, the two of them took up residence with Sister Dominik Vögtli of the Baldegg Franciscans at Sumi.

At present Sisters Clare Wipa Mindil from near Ialibu and Angela Wareame Roha from near Sumi are in the FSM novitiate, and five more are in postulancy.

Some of the early Franciscan Sisters of Mary and candidates in 1984: front row, Josepha Waia, Josephine Wapu; first middle row, Clara Wipa, Elizabeth Epei, Angela Roha; second middle row, Patricia Pueme, Alice James, Christina Moke; back row, Maria Kaupa, Mildred Mone, Sabina Kerepia.

\(^{585}\) Greiwe 114..
\(^{586}\) Greiwe 115.
\(^{587}\) Greiwe 121, 125..
\(^{588}\) Greiwe 121, 125..
\(^{2016}\) Claudia is still with the community.
Lay Vocation

Catechists

Chapter 13 has already discussed the catechetical school at Erave, but it is appropriate to expand here on the work of the catechists in the work of the Church. From the start it has been evident that the work of the church could never have succeeded without the labor of hundreds of dedicated catechists who told their own people what the missionaries had handed on to them. At first these were entirely from other evangelized areas of Papua New Guinea, in particular the Mekeo area near Yule Island and the Mingende area in Simbu province.

The next large group of catechists came from among the “kes bois” who literally followed the missionaries everywhere they went and received their instruction on the road. Among the earliest missionaries to employ this method of training catechists was Father August. He was followed in this by Fathers Gary, Senan, Benjamin, Dunstan, Cyril and others.

In recent years the best catechists from each area are being sent to Erave for a three-year training, which gives them increased status and pay when they return to their parishes.\(^{589}\) The parishes bear part or all of the expense of sending the catechists through the Erave training. At many, perhaps all of the parishes, the catechists come into the main station for regular updates in their training and also to discuss and plan para-liturgical celebrations which they direct in the absence of the priest. Many of the expatriate Sisters who once taught in the schools of the Diocese are now engaged in this continuing training of catechists.

Teachers

This brings us to another aspect of the self-actuation of the Southern Highlands Church. Practically all of the grade schools of the Diocese are now under the care of native Papua New Guineans.

Most of the first Catholic schools in the area were run by young Catholics from other areas where the people had been first evangelized decades earlier. Later many of the lay missionaries and religious women raised the status of these schools to higher levels, but the plan was always there to enable local Catholics to take over the schools.

The first primitive step in this direction was the sending of several Southern Highlanders to a school in Mainohana in 1958. The shock of going from the mountains to the coast was too much for the first group, and subsequent groups were sent to schools run by the Divine Word missionaries in the Eastern Highlands. We have already discussed the school which the friars themselves opened at Erave in 1961. Though closed in 1967 upon the resignation of Father Gregory, this school trained many young men who are now among the high ranks of the Catholic teaching profession in the Southern Highlands. In 1973 the diocese of Mendi joined with two

\(^{589}\) The Wiliame people have supported their catechist by a yearly tax of 50 cents for each man, 30 for each woman and 10 for each child.
other Highlands dioceses in forming its own teachers college at Mt. Hagen, and the diocese has assigned some of its own missionaries to help staff this school, such as various Oldenburg Franciscans and Australian lay missionary Algra Clark.

Parish Councils

Still another sign that the Church is coming of age in the Southern Highlands is the formation and development of the parish councils. Already on Sept. 12, 1966, Bishop Schmidt recorded a meeting he had with the church committees of the Pureni area, in which he gave them medals as an insignias of their office. These committees, he wrote, “had decided where I would have confirmation in the Pureni area, since I could not stop at all places.” One of the first committees set up was at Kagua. On Nov. 3, 1971, the Kagua council voted 14-7 to build a new grass church instead of a permanent church and also a new school. The committee further decided that no paid workers would be allowed on the church project.

Parish councils were commissioned at Tari and Pureni in May of 1973 and today every parish in the diocese has such a council made up of both men and women from throughout the parish. These councils take a large hand in the shaping of the direction of the work of the parish. They are responsible for hiring and firing the catechists, choosing those who are to go on to Erave, deciding what construction will be undertaken in the parish, and in some areas they take part in the decisions as to who is ready for baptism and confirmation.

These committees are also expected to raise the funds for church buildings. Already on August 15, 1974, when Bishop Firmin blessed the new St. Conrad’s Church at Pureni, the president of the church committee presented him $2,000, one-half the cost of construction. The other half was paid off on Aug. 9, 1977.

The chairpersons of these parish committees are members of a diocesan-wide committee which performs similar services to the entire diocesan Church, and this group has the controlling interest in Mendi Tea Lands.

*For more on church committees, see Mission Mtg. of 1967
Had one in Tari already in 1962!!*
Liturgical growth

Another facet of the indigenization of the Church has been efforts made in adapting the liturgy to the local culture. In May 1974, the diocesan catechetical commission spent five days at Pangia seeking ways to adapt the baptismal rite to the local culture.

Some of the results included:

- Use of immersion in local river, especially in the Ialibu and Pangia parishes. Roger started using it about 1982 or 1983.
- Localized renunciation of killing pigs to an evil spirit and agreement not to pay back one wrong with another wrong.
- Use of the promise stone at times of proclamations and creeds, thus making tok strong, hard and constant as stone.
- Instead of using white garment, making themselves nice, by painting themselves – as nice on the outside, so make us nice inside. Godparents continued the painting.
- Skipping use of candles during the day as it made no sense; instead had it at night. The Easter candle was in the church, and each person had a little unlit candle. At a certain time the Easter candle was lit. Then each newly baptized person’s name was called. “Come and receive the light of Christ. Each came in and lit his/her candle. By the time all came in, it was bright inside and they were able to tell the story of new light.
- Oil was brought in gourds, local tree oil, and it was rubbed all over, not just a dab.
- In proclaiming the Creed, a bilased (decorated) warrior with a stone climbed on the pinnacle of the church and asked “Do you believe in this”? The baptized pointed to it and said, “We do believe.”
- As a renunciation rite in some areas, they beat the ground with long sticks to drive away evil spirits, and two fellows went around the baptized person beating the ground. They used to do this around their gardens.
- Godparents would call out the names of those being baptized.

Basic Christian Communities

One of the most recent developments involving the laity in their own future is the movement toward the establishment of thriving basic Christian communities in the diocese, which are able to keep the faith alive when and where priests and other missionaries are not available on a regular basis. The idea was not a new idea for Papua New Guinea. The Venerable Bishop Alain

590 Use of extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist was first instituted in 1969. Firmin Mandako, Sister Solange and Moses started at Pureni on Sept. 2, and Ludwig at Kagua on Sept. 14.
De Boismenu had stressed the concept already back in the 19th century. Bishop Firmin was acquainted with it also and cosigned a Croatian bishop’s plea at Vatican II for the formation of germinal Christian communities.

In the evolution of the Mendi diocese, the idea’s time had come in July 1979, when the annual Mission Conference decided to have another diocesan-wide meeting Sept. 10-14, 1979. This meeting in turn chose to develop a pastoral plan by early 1980 to move the diocese toward the formation and promotion of Basic Christian Communities.

The diocese had its second general assembly on Basic Christian Communities during the week of Dec. 7, 1979. Dr. Darrell Whiteman and Sister Mary MacDonald of the Melanesian Institute in Goroka assisted. After another general assembly, the diocese published a 23 page *Pastoral Plan, Diocese of Mendi* in English and Melanesian pidgin on March 30, 1980.

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*(Obviously this chapter was still in progress. Much research is needed on this chapter. And the sooner the better.)*

*Should examine the concerns of the Custody Chapters concerning interaction of local Capuchins with the expatriate ones.*

*See Cyril Repko’s article “Bittersweet” in Evangelization in Papua New Guinea*  

*With indig. Friars: go back and look at notes of interview with the PNG Bratas.*

*Efforts at supporting themselves.*

*Cf Bishop’s chronicle Dec 1961*

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591 Bishop Joakim Segedi (1904-2004), Auxiliary Bishop of Križevci, Croatia.  
593 Sister had earlier been stationed in Erave.
Down from the Mountains

History’s threads are more intricately woven than anyone could ever hope to fully appreciate. When individual strands in this tremendous tapestry are traced, familiar yet apparently unrelated items and events often turn up intertwined.

Follow a bit the thread of the activities of Father Callistus Lopinot, native of Geispolsheim near Strasbourg in Alsace. Callistus was in the first band of German Capuchins which Rome sent in 1904 to the Caroline Islands, several hundred miles north of New Guinea. Sensitive to political implications of Germany’s purchase of the island from Spain, Vatican officials had sent him and other friars from the Rhine-Westphalian province to take over the work of veteran missionaries of the Capuchin Order’s Spanish provinces.

This was quite a challenge to the Westphalian Capuchins, as they were still pulling themselves together from the ravages of Bismarck’s Kulturkampf. Two decades earlier, exiled Wesphalian Capuchins had joined confreres from the Bavarian province in creating the American province of Pennsylvania, and barely a decade ago many of these same Westphalians had returned from America to help rebuild the Order in the Vaterland.

During his first decade in the Pacific islands, young Father Callistus mastered the Chamorro language well enough to prepare a grammar, a dictionary, a catechism, and a Bible in that tongue.

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594 Burkey, Als Ich in Cumberland War, Cumberland: SS. Peter & Paul’s Parish, 1975.
595 When Callistus studied theology at Krefeld in the 1890s, he lived with Capuchin Brother Juniper Janssen, brother of St. Arnold Janssen, the founder of the Divine Word Missionaries. Juniper had spent the Kulturkampf in exile with his brother’s young community at Steyl in Holland (Ralph Wiltgen, “Father Callistus Lopinot, O.F.M.Cap.,” Wiltgen-Collection, pp. 3254-3255).
596 He produced a Chamorro Bible in 1909 and a Chamorro catechism and Chamorro-German dictionary in 1910 (AOFMC 83 (1967) 276), the latter of which was later published as Chamorro-Wörterbuch nebst einer Chamorro-
Callistus was sent to Guam in 1910, but the American governor there refused him entry, as some high official in the Marianas had flagged Callistus as a dangerous revolutionary. Callistus was then for a while in the service of the archbishop of Manila, who encouraged him to become a secular priest and offered him a position as inspector general of the archdiocesan Catholic schools. Not wishing to leave the Order, Callistus refused the position, at which point the new Capuchin Vicar Apostolic of the Carolines and Marianas, Bishop Salvator Walleser, asked the Capuchins to assign him to the more mundane task of developing a coconut plantation in what is now Papua New Guinea.\(^{597}\)

Following his episcopal consecration in 1912, Walleser had received encouragement from Pope Saint Pius X to start such a plantation to help support his mission. Unable to find land in the Carolines and Marianas, Walleser turned southward to the neighboring German colony of Kaiserwilhelmsland (Northeast New Guinea as the Australians later called it.) Monsignor Eberhard Limbrock, SVD, the first Catholic prelate in that area, assisted Walleser in acquiring 470 hectares (nearly two square miles) of bush land near his own headquarters at Alexishafen.

Taking leave of his fellow Capuchins, with the understanding that one of the lay brothers would join him in a few months, Callistus arrived at Alexishafen on May 3, 1914, and thus gained the distinction of being the first Capuchin to work in what is now Papua New Guinea. Exactly eight weeks later, World War I began, and Callistus was not to see any of his confreres for another seven years.

When Australia took over Kaiserwilhelmsland in September of that year, Callistus asserted his French origins and went on with his work, encouraged by Monsignor Limbrock’s belief that the war would not last forever.

Callistus’s plantation was about three miles west of Alexishafen\(^{598}\) near an old deserted village called Gayaba, but he lived with Father Theodore Averburg, SVD, at the nearby Danip plantation until he was finished building his own friary at Gayaba. Father Averburg extended his donkey-powered rail system to Gayaba to enable Callistus to take the ironwood logs he had hewn from his land to the SVD Brothers’ sawmill at Alexishafen.

In the friary at Gayaba, Callistus built a chapel with doors extending onto a veranda where his ever-expanding labor force could attend Mass. Daily one of these workers fetched the missionary’s meals for him from the Holy Ghost Missionary Sisters at Alexishafen. “We all lived wonderfully together,” Callistus later told SVD historian, Father Ralph Wiltgen, “and I felt as if I were a member of your Society.”\(^{599}\)
Callistus started with 16 employees: but by 1919 he had 100. Two years later, 35,662 coconut palms had been planted on 323 of his 470 hectares. Before the trees had a chance to mature, however, Bishop Walleser wired Callistus that Japan, which was now administering the Carolines and Marianas, had deported all German-born missionaries. Walleser himself had in fact been gone for some time and was engaged as an unofficial auxiliary bishop in Brooklyn.

Callistus remained at Gayaba and kept developing the plantation, while the Holy See arranged to reassign the Caroline and Mariana Islands and their plantation to another missionary society; and thus Spanish Jesuits arrived in February of 1921 to take over the administration of Gayaba. Father Callistus remained until June 19 to introduce them to the area and the work. Eventually the plantation became—and is today—part of the Danip plantation.  

Callistus’ life-thread subsequently took him to Rome where he served as undersecretary for the Capuchin missions 1921-1932; then to Madagascar (now Malagasy Republic) where he served from 1932 to 1937 as the first apostolic prefect of Mayote, Nossi-Be and Comore (now the Diocese of Ambanja);  

Follow momentarily now several other threads that had woven their way through Callistus’ life.

Bishop Walleser and many of Callistus’ former co-workers in the Carolines and Marianas were reassigned in 1922 to the new mission of West Gansu in China, which later became the Diocese of Tienshui.

Weaving their way into this same venture were two Capuchins from the Pennsylvania province, the American group which the Westphalians had helped establish four decades earlier. Fathers Agatho Rolf and Rudolph Blockinger were the first American Capuchins to go to a foreign mission. They were joined in 1925 by Fathers Gabriel McCarthy of the Pennsylvania province and Felix Schelb of the Detroit-based Calvary province, and in 1926 by Father Sylvester Staudt werder. ARP Provinzial hat das valle Verfügungrecht über das Manuscript; and Opus 63-548: Die Karolinenmission den spanischen und deutschen Kapuziner 1886-1919 zusammengestellt nach den Jahresberichten von P. Callistus Lopinot, OFM Cap. Rom, am Tage der Priesterweiche des ersten Karoliner in Korror (Palau) 9 Februar 1964. Fr. Callistus’ Gayaba chronicle was committed to the Rhine-Westphalian Capuchins in 1921 (AOFMC 83 (1967) 276).

Both properties are presently owned by the Archdiocese of Madang, but are no long plantations (Reichert to Burkey, Madang, July 6, 2016).  

2016: Gayaba camp during World War II was used by the Japanese as an unfenced concentration camp for all the missionaries of the area. Today it is the site of the Maria Helpim shrine, destination of the popular annual pilgrimage commemorating the missionaries who suffered during the War (Anna-Karina Hermkens, “Sacrifice and Resurrection: The Annual ‘Maria Helpim’ Pilgrimage in Madang, Papua New Guinea,” https://www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/hermkensjorpaper.pdf (accessed July 7, 2016)).

601 Appointed May 15, 1932, resigned in 1937 (Catholic-Hierarchy http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dambn.html (accessed May 13, 2016)). Another intertwined thread: During these very same years, a young Papuan lad by the name of Louis Vangeke was on the island of Madagascar, studying for the priesthood. Louis was ordained in Madagascar in 1937, the first of his nation to enter the Catholic priesthood. He also became the first Papua New Guinean bishop in 1970, serving as auxiliary bishop of Port Moresby 1976-79 and bishop of Bereina 1979-1982. He died Dec. 15, 1982. He visited the Mendi mission in 1983 (cf. Chapter 22).
of the Pennsylvania province. Gabriel, Felix, and Agatho died of typhoid in 1929 and 1931, and Sylvester transferred to the Pennsylvania province’s new Puerto Rican mission in 1930, and after a few years to another brief mission stint in, of all places, Guam in the Marian Archipelago.

For two decades Father Rudolph remained at work in China. After laboring briefly at Gingyang and for many years at Hweihsein, he moved into Tienshui, which boasted a church, a school, and one of the finest hospitals in the district.

The area where Rudolph worked was poor and undeveloped, and his stations were repeatedly victimized by bandits who robbed him of virtually everything he had. Still he gladly would have spent the rest of his life in China, if the Communists had found room for the Catholic Church in their plans.

Father Rudolph was the last Capuchin missionary expelled from China. After an agonizing three years of harassment as a prisoner of the Communists, he was brought to trial on May 10, 1952, charged with being an American spy. Though not found guilty, he was ordered to leave China the following day and thus began a 19-day trek to Hong Kong and freedom.

At this point Rudolph might have been expected to return to America for a well-earned rest. He chose instead to cast his lot with his fellow Pennsylvania Capuchin, Father Henry Kusnerik, and friars from various other nations who were working to establish the Capuchin Order in Australia under the leadership of Father Anastase Paoletti.602

Father Rudolph served for another 17 years in Australia and died at Brisbane Dec. 12, 1969. During these years he watched as Father Anastase and then Father Henry became involved in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. He also welcomed many of his countrymen as they went to and from the Papuan mission. As noted earlier, general and provincial superiors spoke of the possibility of Rudolph’s joining his province-mates in the Papuan Highlands. He considered it, but feared his 69 years might prove more of a burden than a help. On the occasion of his golden jubilee as a priest in June 1964, he paid a visit to most of the stations in the Mendi diocese, where he made quite an impression on the local folk who at that time had never seen anyone 78 years old.603

602 See Chapter 4.
At this point, the Capuchins were about to take on a new adventure in the life of the Church in Papua New Guinea.

Until then, the friars’ entire post-war mission activity on the island had been directed toward the Southern Highlands. Now they were also called to start a regional minor seminary for the bishops of the area on the northern coast of the island.

Word of the request first reached the Capuchins’ Roman headquarters on Jan. 7, 1966, in the form of a letter from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, wherein it was stated that in recognition of the missionary work done in Mendi over the last few years, “the Congregation wanted to entrust a new regional seminary at Kap to the Capuchins of the Pennsylvania Province.”

Subsequent investigation by the general minister of the Order revealed that the idea had come from Cardinal Gregory Agagianian, Prefect of the Congregation, and that while other religious congregations were willing to take on the assignment, the Cardinal wanted the Capuchins to have it precisely in recognition of the Pennsylvania Province’s “intense missionary labor” in Mendi.

The very reference to other religious led to the suspicion that there was also a hidden motive, namely the desire of the Congregation to avoid having one religious order get too much of a monopoly on the training of a native clergy.

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604 John Baptist of Farnese (hereafter Farnese) to Janeck, Jan. 28, 1966.
606 Staab to Janeck Feb. 6, 1966.
The matter was naturally referred to Father Thomas More Janeck, acting minister of the Pennsylvania Province, in a letter of Jan. 29. Either this letter reached the States in record time or the matter was also relayed by telephone for already on Feb. 7, Father Giles Staab, who for some months already had been a general definitor in Rome, indicated that he had received on Feb. 5 (the previous Saturday) a letter on the subject from Thomas More.

Giles recommended that the Province honor the Holy See’s request since the request “is sacred, for we know it is God speaking, and when he speaks we know that, in spite of all difficulties, He will see us through.”

The provincial definitory did not see things that simply, however, and unlike the 1955 definitory (see Chapter 5), decided to write the general definitory: “It is with sincerest and deepest regrets that we must inform you that our Province is not able to accept the directorship of the Seminary in Madang.”

Thomas More proceeded to point out that the Mendi mission itself was in need of more manpower, likewise the mission in Puerto Rico, and that because so many young friars had been assigned to Papua and Puerto Rico in the previous decade, “the age level of the friars within the Province has risen to an extent where old men must carry burdens that would be great even for young men of youthful vigor.”

That was not to be the end of the matter, however. Just a few months earlier, Firmin Schmidt had been consecrated as the first vicar apostolic of Mendi and it was decided that Thomas More would return with him to Mendi in order to be present for his installation as apostolic vicar, as well as to conduct a canonical visitation of the Mission.

At the same time the general administration of the Order appointed Thomas More as a general visitator of the Capuchins in Australia; and as Firmin and Thomas More were to stop in Rome on their way to Mendi, they received invitations to visit Cardinal Agagianian, who again informed them of his desire.

On this occasion, Thomas More informed the Cardinal that the Province simply could not assume the responsibility, and Firmin expressed his strong opposition to the idea on the grounds that he had very urgent needs for additional manpower in his own vicariate.

Following Firmin’s installation in Mendi, Thomas More visitated the Capuchins in the Mendi vicariate, and then went to Australia, where on July 2 he received another letter from the general definitory saying that they had received another letter from the Congregation.

In this letter, dated June 3, Archbishop Pietro Sigismondi, Propaganda Secretary, said that the Congregation “still deems it opportune that the seminary at Madang be entrusted to the

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608 Janeck to Farnese, Feb. 18, 1966.
609 Janeck to Farnese, Feb. 18, 1966.
610 Farnese to Janeck, June 11, 1966.
611 Schmidt to Janeck, July 28, 1966.
612 Janeck to Clementissimus, July 12, 1966.
Capuchins. That is the express wish of the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation, His Eminence Gregory Cardinal Agagianian.” The letter went on to say that “with warm insistence” the Congregation still wished the Order to undertake the direction of the seminary.\textsuperscript{613}

The Order, of course, could have asked some other province to assume the task, but the general definitory made it clear that it expected the provincial definitory to reconsider and send an affirmative reply. Having another province in New Guinea, the general definitory argued, would create “an incongruous situation” and would also unintentionally slight the Pennsylvania Province.\textsuperscript{614}

Such torturous reasoning made it clear to Thomas More that Rome simply would not take “No” for an answer. So he cryptically cabled Firmin on July 5, asking simply: “How many students at new minor seminary?”\textsuperscript{615}

Firmin correctly interpreted the cable and the next day flew to Madang to visit Bishop Noser, chairman of the Bishops’ seminary committee. In the course of conversation, he was able to learn that Noser expected 70 boys in three forms to be enrolled in the new seminary, and the following day he sent word to Thomas More.\textsuperscript{616}

Upon his return to the States, Thomas More informed the definitory of what had happened, and the definitory reluctantly made the expected decision. Thomas More called Giles on July 20 to inform the general definitory that the provincial definitory had unanimously accepted the directorship and would furnish three men from the province and another one from the vicarate, on the condition that lay missionaries would be allowed to teach there.

The general minister of the Order, Father Clementissimus of Vlissingen on July 22 cabled Thomas More: “Propaganda confirms acceptance Seminary Madang. Go ahead. Letter Follows.” In the letter, written the same day, Clementissimus said that the call “brought us great joy, but our feelings were nothing compared to that of the Cardinal Prefect. That very morning in an interview the Cardinal had “expressed his gratitude and happiness and he will later convey his thanks in a formal letter.” The Cardinal said he was happy that the Capuchins would have the Seminary, since, in Clementissimus’s words, “in the formation of seminarians, even the younger ones, it is necessary to instill in them, among other things, the spirit of self-sacrifice, and he felt that the Capuchins had that spirit.”

Firmin received a cable from Thomas More the following day naming three friars who would be coming from the province—Christian Fey, director; Angelus Shaughnessy, spiritual director; and Armand Yeaglin, procurator—and indicating that another would be chosen from the men already in the Mendi mission.\textsuperscript{617}

Firmin wrote on July 24 that he thought that Father Christian ought to spend a month of orientation at the country’s other regional minor seminary at Ulapia. He informed Thomas More

\textsuperscript{613} Farnese to Janeck June 11, 1966
\textsuperscript{614} Farnese to Janeck, June 11, 1966.
\textsuperscript{615} Schmidt to Janeck July 7, 1966.
\textsuperscript{616} Schmidt to Janeck July 7, 1966.
\textsuperscript{617} Schmidt to Janeck July 24, 1966.
that the place at Kap would not be ready for occupancy until 1967, but that the Divine Word society’s former high school at Maiwara, less than a mile across the bay from Kap, would be made available and according to Bishop Noser “hardly any work is necessary to move in there.”

This latter information was greatly altered in Firmin’s report of July 28, when he noted that considerable work would need to be done. He also took the occasion to recommend that veteran missionaries be appointed as prefect and procurator at the seminary, since they would understand the local mentality better and have a better grasp of the logistics of obtaining supplies. He further suggested that St. Fidelis might be chosen as patron of the school.

There is no indication that Thomas More ever had a chance to suggest the name. The official decrees of the Congregation, which assigned the seminary to the Capuchins on Sept. 8, states that it will have St. Fidelis as its patron, and in a Sept. 14 cover letter which forwarded a copy of this decree, Father Clementissimus said that he had to give an answer quickly to the name of the patron and had suggested St. Fidelis. Another decree of the congregation in a pun worthy of Christian himself stated in formal Latin that “the Sacred Congregation for spreading the Christian name” had named Christian of Pittsburgh rector of the seminary.

Besides the three stateside friars named in July, two were named from the Mendi vicariate: Fathers Henry Kusnerik and Brian Newman. Christian, Angelus and Armand left Pittsburgh on Oct. 23, 1966, and travelled through Rome so as to be able to be received by Pope Blessed Paul VI and to consult the Mission Office as to the nature of their commitment.

At this time they also met up with none other than Father Callistus Lopinot, who informed them that the site that had been chosen for the new seminary was about four miles from the site of his former plantation at Gayaba. The trio continued on to New Guinea and were surprised to learn that Callistus had died on Christmas Day, just three months after their chance meeting.

To help prepare for the buildings for the opening of the minor seminary, Brothers Mark Bollinger and Felix Shinsky were on loan there from the Mendi mission from November of 1966 until May 24, 1967.

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618 Firmin had visited both places in the company of Fr. Don Nally already Aug. 19, 1962.
619 Schmidt to Janeck July 24, 1966.
620 Schmidt to Janeck July 28, 1966.
621 Prot. No. 4097/66
622 Prot. No. 4098/66
623 He is buried at the basilica of St. Lawrence outside the Walls (AOFMC 83 (1967) 277).

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opened Feb. 9, 1967. In addition to the friars already mentioned, there were two laymen on the 
staff: John O’Brien and a Mr. Miller from PALMS. Father Christian was told there would be 70 
or 80 students for the first year; 116 showed up.\footnote{625}

The Bishops conference gave the Capuchins a special commendation in 1982 for their work in 
staffing the interdiocesan minor seminary at Kap.\footnote{626}

The Capuchin’s work at Kap was not really their first work outside the Southern Highlands. On 
numerous occasions various friars had given retreats to different groups around the island. Father 
Gary Stakem directed two retreats for Divine Word missionaries at Madang in November of 
1958, and Bishop Schmidt did the same in June and July of 1963. Firmin gave another to the 
Brigidine Sisters of Port Moresby in June of 1966, and Father Gregory Smith one to the Sisters at 
Fatima College in Banz in January of 1965.\footnote{627} Father Gary gave others to the OFM, the MSC, the 
groups of Sisters in Wewak, Goroka and Port Moresby. And there were many others who did so, 
including Fathers Otmar, Berard, Paul, David, Roy, Dunstan, Matthew, and Maris.

Also as indicated earlier in Chapter 21, Father Berard helped on engineering projects in many 
areas; Father Timon Kaple helped set up a saw mill at Mandem in 1969.

The Capuchins moved into Holy Rosary parish at Saraga (Six Mile) on Jan. 1, 1983. Father 
Samuel Driscoll and Brother Joseph Way, Papua New Guinea’s first solemnly professed native 
Capuchin laybrother, took over the care of some 7,000 people. Eight settlements of generally 
unemployed migrants from other parts of the country—people from Chimbu, Karema, Goilala, etc.—were 
the main focus of the ministry. One of these villages was above the city dump, and another across the 
road from it. Both were built from scavenged materials.\footnote{628}

The decision to do so had been made by a special chapter at the end of June 1982. According to 
Father Benjamin Madden, the idea behind accepting the parish was “to establish a base from 
which to experiment in and seek other apostolates outside of ‘formal’ parish work.”

\footnote{624} Schmidt chronicle, May 24, 1967. 
\footnote{625} Fey to Janeck, Feb. 27, 1967. 
\footnote{626} Maybe someone can find a copy of this commendation. 
\footnote{627} There were others too: Otmar surely & possible Gary 
\footnote{628} Provincial Porter, no. 47 (April 1983) 4.
On Pentecost morning, Mary presided in prayer as evangelization began under the action of the Holy Spirit. May she shine like a star on the evangelizing action which the Church, in obedience to her Lord’s will, must constantly undertake anew and carry through, especially in these times which are so difficult yet so full of hope! (Pope Blessed Paul VI, “Evangelii Nuntiandi,” 1975, n. 82).

24

A Special Providence

In a somewhat elegant palace on Rome’s Via Po, a short walk from Capuchin general headquarters, Archbishop Romolo Carboni, the Holy See’s Nuncio to Italy, graciously received the present writer in August of 1979. The Archbishop still had fond memories of a part of the Church he had never seen.

Most—if not all—of Carboni’s successors as the Holy See’s liaison with the Church in Papua New Guinea have managed to make it to the Diocese of Mendi. Cardinal Maximilien de Furstenberg, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Church, must still remember bunking down with Monsignor Firmin in a cargo shed—but at least he got there! Indeed even Pope Saint John Paul II himself—on May 7, 1984—got within 40 miles of Mendi. Carboni’s plans, however, to go there fell through at the last minute, because of the 1958 death of Pope Pius XII.

Carboni could have been justly proud of his role in the Church’s accomplishments in Mendi—and indeed in many other areas of Papua New Guinea. It was his persistent pleading for missionaries that eventually enabled many new areas to hear of Jesus and his Good News. The Archbishop was quick, however, to refocus attention on the working of God’s special providence in the Mendi story.

Distinguishing between God’s ordinary providence over every day, hour, and minute of our lives and his extraordinary providence through the miraculous, Carboni loudly insisted that there is
somewhere in between also “a really special providence of God.” He maintained further that God has shown such special providence to the Diocese of Mendi through the mediation of Mary.

When Carboni began his search for missionaries in 1954, the Universal Church was in a year-long commemoration of the centenary of the definition of Mary’s Immaculate Conception; and after repeated failures in his search, the Archbishop began a novena of prayers to Mary, “After so many talks, so many letters—receiving no concrete, no positive, no affirmative answer—receiving no priests, brothers, or sisters, I prayed hard to Our Lady,” Carboni said, “and I said to her during Mass, ‘Our Lady, if these new missions are important, are indispensable, are vital for the Kingdom of your son, Jesus Christ, then help us’.”

From that time on, according to Carboni, the replies to his requests became more positive. Even a stab in the dark paid off: opening the U.S. Catholic directory to the listing of religious communities, the Archbishop randomly chose and wrote to the American Montfort Fathers, whose provincial promptly replied he would come to see about accepting a Fly River mission at Daru.

Once the Pennsylvania Capuchins had agreed in 1955 to help evangelize the Southern Highlands, Father Henry Kusnerik was sent to look over the new field of labor, and both before and after this inspection he called on Archbishop Carboni in Sydney. He later wrote,

> The Delegate was insistent that Our Lady had a hand in finding the Communities to give a hand in the Territory: so when I came back to Pittsburgh I suggested that the new Mission field be dedicated to Our Lady and furthermore under the title that is peculiar to our Order, the Mother of the Divine Shepherd.

This Marian title, first promoted by Isidoro Rodriguez of Seville, Blessed Diego Jose of Cadiz, and various other 18th century Spanish Capuchins, had been recommended once again by a circular letter of the Capuchin general minister on Christmas of 1954. The letter had just been translated into English and was being read at table in the friaries of the Pennsylvania Province in August and September 1955.

Details are lacking on just how the decision was made, but already on Dec. 1, 1955, in his first letter from the Southern Highlands, Father Otmar Gallagher wrote Father Victor Green, “You’ll be happy to know that Bishop Sorin has approved our selection of our Blessed Mother under her title of Mother of the Good Shepherd as patron of our mission area.”

God’s special providence thus came to be shown to the Southern Highlands Catholic missionaries through the intercession of Mary, and over the years this providence has been far more spectacular than the events that led the Capuchins to Papua in answer to the Archbishop’s prayer.

The rapid progress from mission to church and the steady support which the efforts of the friars and their co-workers have received from all over the world are remarkable enough, but it almost

629 Her patronage of the cathedral was also confirmed in the apostolic constitution establishing the Diocese of Mendi.
borders on the miraculous that three hundred individuals—as well as a few hundred visitors—have been so protected from really serious harm during the Capuchins’ first thirty years in Papua New Guinea. Not a single foreign missionary of the Mendi diocese has been critically injured during these three decades, despite an incredible array of dangers.

In the popular mind of their fellow Americans, the most serious dangers to the first missionaries seemed to lie with the local population, which had spent so many centuries involved in inter-tribal warfare. Foreign explorers had found headhunting and even cannibalism prevalent in various parts of what is now Papua New Guinea. Cannibalism had been reported in such widely separated places as Maiwara on Milne Bay, Kunimaipa between Port Moresby and Lae, Baimuru in the Purari Delta, Samberigi south of Erave, and Telefomin at the headwaters of the Sepik.

This will be in better perspective, however, if one keeps in mind that there is abundant evidence that there are few areas on earth, especially around the equator, where cannibalism has not been practiced in times past. This holds true for Europe, North America, and Australia, too. In Papua the only salient difference is that “times past” are still not terribly far removed from the present.

Since the area still has the “Savage Papua” reputation with many people who have never been there, it is perhaps necessary to reaffirm what the Southern Highlands missionaries themselves now take for granted: that is, that they have actually been in very little danger of being harmed by the people of Papua New Guinea—no more than they would have been by people of their own countries.

A careful reading of the extensive records the friars maintained for a quarter of a century failed to produce even a single instance where any of the expatriate missionaries were ever physically harmed in any way by another human being. The most serious violence that could be unearthed was an instance when one of the catechists lost his temper in a salary dispute and slapped a priest in the face, and another when a missionary tried to stop some people from driving at night on the mission airstrip, found out too late that they had been drinking, and was slugged in the face and knocked down by one of them. Even these actions, however, were more remarkable for their singularity than for their severity.

Not long after the first friars arrived in Papua, the Pittsburgh Press learned of five American missionaries’ being killed by spears and arrows in the South American country of Ecuador and immediately jumped to the conclusion that missionaries in New Guinea were in similar danger. The anonymous writer refused to take the friars’ word for it that they were not in danger. “A study of the letters arriving here,” he wrote, “shows that their football among the savages is

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631 2016 observation: Long after these pages about the first 25 years were written, more precisely in January 1991, Fr. Malachy McBride was seriously injured by a band of robbers whom he chased off the mission compound at Det. He lost his right eye as a result of them bombarding him with rocks.
632 Jones chronicle, July 26-27, 1966. The next day the catechist provided the missionary & Fr. Dunstan with a “nice chicken meal...as a token of his sorrow.”
loaded with dynamite, even though they seem to be unaware of it. They report such ominous things as: ‘Many of the men carry axes, clubs, bows and arrows, bush knives and spears’.”

It was the headline that really upset the missionaries. “None of our relatives and friends, particularly our parents, liked the idea of our coming over here,” Father Otmar wrote, “and we no sooner get them used to the idea that we are in no danger from the natives in particular, than he blares forth in a nice big headline ‘Pittsburgh Friars Brave Death at Mission in New Guinea Wilds’.”

Denying that their situation was “loaded with dynamite,” Otmar, a former Puerto Rican missionary, countered, “It’s loaded with wonderful opportunities to do wonders for God and these neglected people. And there is nothing ominous about the men carrying axes, clubs…, bows and arrows, etc. Practically the entire male rural population in Puerto Rico carried machetes… Tell him to forget the idea that any of us are going to provide a meal for any of these people over here…”

Before disposing of the idea, however, perhaps it should be said there were a couple of tense moments over the years. One occasion in 1954 involved Father Michellod in the upper Mendi Valley; the other in 1962 involved Fathers Benjamin Madden and August Rebel in the Nembi Valley. Moving through territory which had seen very few white men, these missionary-explorers found themselves faced by large groups of men who appeared to be threatening to attack them. In both cases the missionaries avoiding turning and running, which at that time might have triggered an attack, but rather pushed on directly towards the “attackers,” who themselves then turned and fled.

Another threatening situation was the one Bishop Firmin Schmidt and General Councilor Father Aloysius Ward (now the Archbishop of Cardiff) found themselves in on Christmas of 1970.

In the afternoon I took Father Aloysius to Tikeri, where there was a sing-sing. A fight broke out between two lines over dispute of a kina on top of a post. I tried to break it up—but without success. Arrows and clubs were flying all over the place.

That was the way Firmin’s account ended, so apparently no one was hurt.

A perhaps even scarier moment gripped Father Dunstan Jones at Pangia in 1967. Father Albert Alexandrunas had accidentally killed a pig that was rooting up land around the friary, and the owner was quite incensed. Dunstan made the mistake of going into the house and slamming the door, only to hear something crashing against the house. Looking out he saw the owner wildly swinging his stone ax. Father quickly averted further violence, however, by letting the upset man hear him sending a note to the local kiap. Unaware that the note was simply an acceptance of a dinner invitation, the warrior promptly disappeared.

When they get to reminiscing of such moments, the older missionaries love to recall Father Albert Alexandrunas’s being sent to say Sunday Mass at Pumi on Nov. 27, 1966, shortly after his arrival in Papua. Hardly anybody showed up; and partway through the Mass, the priest’s

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634 Schmidt chronicle, Nov. 27, 1966.
colleague and server, Colman Marone, learned from some of the local people that the entire area was in the midst of tribal war which had already that very morning seen about 13 people killed. Like all good legends, the story changes a little each time it is told; but it is still exciting to conjure up pictures of Colman hanging on for dear life as Albert gunned his motorbike back to Mendi, without bothering to remove his Mass vestments.

Albert and the others can assure you, however, that the real dangers in Papua New Guinea come not from the people, but from the very land itself, which despite its incomparable beauty has fiercely resisted man’s attempts to “tame” it.

Travel into and within the Highlands was for many years almost totally dependent upon airplanes, and there can be hardly any more dangerous area in the world to fly. Pilots fly there by sight, and their own lives and those of their passengers frequently depend upon their ability to pick out through the almost ever-present cloud cover familiar sights in the hundreds of valleys hidden among the equally numerous limestone crags jutting thousands of feet above the mile-high valleys. Bishop Firmin once wrote,

We make every effort to keep the danger and the risks at a minimum, but there is no kidding ourselves, there is plenty of danger, and risks, even when we try to use every precaution. Flying is one of the unavoidable dangers of this mission.

In the history of other Papua New Guinea areas, there are reports of many Catholic missionaries, at least ten priests included, who have gone to their deaths in air crashes in the country’s treacherous Highlands. Father Joseph Walachy, SVD, who had frequently assisted the Mendi missionaries and had trained several of their pilots in mountain flying, and his religious superior, Father Joseph Bayer, SVD, died in a crash June 28, 1965, near Asaloka Gap, and Father Henry Hoff, SVD, who had provided similar services to the Capuchins, crashed at Mingende, Feb. 3,

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635 2016: Colman Marone was ordained a priest of the Mendi diocese in 1982, and died in active ministry at Mendi on Feb. 15, 2015.
636 Tribal fighting does still go on from time to time. But the missionaries do not run away from it. Thus one can read in the Pangia convent chronicle for 1976: “Towards the end of September tribal fighting broke out between two of our Catholic tribes, the Wiliames and the Wallas. The cause of the fighting was over land boundaries. Two men were hacked to death with axes and one young man was killed with an arrow, more than 100 pigs were slaughtered and the Wiliame village was looted and money and kina shells were stolen. Immediately following the fighting Father Michael [Yore], Sister Maureen [Dwan] and a lay missionary nurse spent a week in the area hoping that their presence would be a means of stopping further bloodshed. The pay back system is still very much a part of the culture of the Witu. To date nothing further has developed but this is not to say nothing will.”
637 Interestingly enough, the local people saw these natural dangers as the work of evil spirits; after the introduction to Christianity this became more specifically “the devil.” Writing to Monsignor Schmidt on Nov. 9, 1964, Sister Claver Ehren said, “The older kids told us they think the devil is working here to make big trouble because the Fathers are getting the kanakas ready for baptism. They claim he buggered up Fr. Otmar’s mouth and the plane. They’re sure the devil tried to kill us in the fire because we’re pulling too many children away from him in school.” (Schmidt chronicle, Nov. 16, 1964; also reported in Gallagher to Senan Glass & Cyril Repko, Nov. 14, 1964).
1968, fracturing his skull, his back, a leg, an arm, and his jaw. Hoff survived only to be killed in another crash near Tabibuga Nov. 30, 1974.639

During the 27 years that the Mendi diocese had its own plane (1956-83), its pilots flew more than a million and a half miles and had many an anxious moment, but there was never an accident which harmed anyone. The six accidents involving pilots of the Mendi diocese all took place on airstrips. The most serious and most recent was on Feb. 6, 1969, when Brother Jerry Perrault ground-looped at Mt. Hagen, doing such extensive damage to the plane that it had to be replaced; but Jerry and his fellow pilot, Nyron Martin, were both uninjured.

A freak accident involving the plane, but not the pilot, happened at Mendi on March 10, 1961. Father Benjamin Madden was turning the propeller of the plane to loosen up the oil, when to everyone’s surprise the motor started up. Ben was cut on his arms and elbows and lost some blood, but no bones were broken.

Another oft-recalled event involving a plane happened in December 1974 when an aircraft touched down short of the Mendi strip and nearly ran over Father Brian Newman as he walked onto the eighth green of the Mendi Capuchin Golf Classic.

Indeed walking has regularly proven more dangerous to the missionaries than flying. Many sprained muscles, pulled tendons, even broken bones have been incurred on the torturous trails; and at times they have been further aggravated by the felt urgency of plodding on.

Bishop Firmin wrote of such a walk, back in 1968. Twenty minutes into a three-hour trek to Tiri, he had “a very nasty fall,” spraining his ankle. At first he thought it was broken, but he struggled on over some very bad tracks. “Several times I thought I would have to give up.” After confirming at Tiri, the Bishop walked another three and a half hours the next day to the Iaro bridge below Muli. “I don’t think I have ever been under a greater physical strain,” he wrote. Nine days later, he saw a doctor who decided to put it in a cast to keep him off it.640 But even that did not stop the Bishop. He had a heel put on the cast and within a few weeks was out confirming again at Det and other places.

Most of the accidents which the missionaries have experienced, however, have been part of the struggle between motor vehicles—especially motorcycles—and the winding, bumpy, muddy roller-coaster trails which passed for roads. One can seriously wonder if there is a single friar in the diocese that has not had one or more falls from a motorbike of some sort. There are some friars also who must have lost all track of the number of spills that they have had. Still, even though most of the friars have scars to show for cuts and burns thus sustained, none are known to have suffered any permanent debility thereby.641

639 Besides those mentioned in the text: Also Bishop Steven Applehans, SVD; Bishop Franz Wolf, SVD; Father Harry McGee, SVD, (July 18, 1961); two diocesan priests in Wewak diocese, (June or July 1967); and a couple of priests in Kerema diocese.


641 Fr. Dunstan Jones burned both legs badly on a motorcycle, Dec. 20, 1962, on a trip to Nipa, according to Schmidt chronicle. Fr. Otmar had a bad spill about June 1964 and had to go to Australia to get his teeth and mouth fixed. Fr. Gary noted on Oct. 30, 1965, Fr. Colman Studeny had fallen off a bridge and his bike came down on top of
More than a few of the friars have also been injured by falls from bridges, sometimes with a
motorbike, sometimes without. \(^{642}\) Probably the most spectacular and the most talked-about fall
happened on Holy Saturday of 1969. In expectation of the coming of the Swiss Sisters to Det,
Father Benjamin Madden was building a convent there and had arranged to have a large load of
plywood brought from Mendi as far as the Lai River. Expecting it to take just a couple of hours,
a large group went out to the river to bring the plywood to Det before supper.

Benjamin went with his 12 Simbu catechists who had come in from the outstations for Easter.
Lay Missioners Elizabeth McGettigan and Frances Rowe, who had just put two turkeys in the
oven, went along, planning to spend an hour or so sightseeing near the bridge and then motorbike
back to Det.

The bridge in question was a row of narrow saplings suspended by thin vines from two heavy
vines dangling about 120 feet across the river. These large vines in turn were moored by small
vines to trees along the banks. Ben strung his catechists at intervals across this swinging bridge,
with himself down in the center. Then they began to pass the large sheets of plywood down the
trough and on up to the Det side of the river, where the tractor driver piled them on the trailer.

The weight on the bridge intensified by the bouncing and swinging became too much, and the
bridge started coming apart near the Det side. Hearing it snap, Ben yelled to his catechists,
“Hang on to the bridge.” Eight were able to do so; and once the bridge hit the water, they were
quickly washed over to the Mendi side. The rapids meanwhile carried the others downstream, but
they eventually hit a slow current and managed to get out of the river.

It was now nightfall, however, and all except the tractor driver and two of the Simbu catechists
were on the opposite side of the river from their station. Ben called across to the driver to meet
them up the river at Wepinam crossing and then set off on foot with the others.

For the lay missionaries the worse was still to come. Even during the day, the trail was
treacherous—steep, slippery, and full of holes—and the two women, not anticipating such a
hike, had on very light foot covering. Two catechists, however, took each one by the arms and
kept them moving forward. At times they simply pulled them through the mud.

Shortly before midnight the group finally came to the crossing, which for the women was the
scariest part of all. Supported by two catechists each walked across the two narrow logs which

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\(^{642}\) While crossing the Iaro River Jan. 2, 1964, Fr. Dunstan Jones was pulled by baggage into the stream. “I got a few
bumps but managed to hold on to a rock until Frs. Augie and Roy got me out safely” (Jones chronicle Jan. 2,
1964). Fr. David fell off the Kagua River bridge with a bike and badly hurt his arm, Nov. 14, 1965, and about the
same time Fr. Cyril fell off his bike. Fr. David also fell into a big pulley on a turbine 28 Aug. 1966; Fr. Henry fell twice
“while putting up a building” and skinned his right knee badly and tore the ligament in his knee, Sept. 1958
(Gallagher to Vogel, Sept. 25, 1958); Fr. Allan slipped near a sawmill at Wiliame and sustained a deep wound which
required 23 stiches from lay missionary nurses at Wiliame, 20 July 1971; Sister Gaudentia was almost killed when
her car went off the road and bridge near Poroma and hung by a thread.
connected a large boulder in midstream with the two banks, all the while hearing but not seeing the raging torrent splashing below. They later found the two turkeys cooked to a crisp, but everyone was grateful just to be home unharmed and able to celebrate another Easter.

More plywood had to be ordered, of course, for the Det convent, and this calls to mind another type of danger. On Feb. 28, 1975, the convent at Det burned to the ground. The one at Mendi had suffered the same fate Nov. 6, 1964. In each instance the entire convent was in flames in less than 12 minutes, and the Sisters saved little more than the clothes they had on.

Fire, of course, is always a serious danger, since most of the buildings, permanent or otherwise, are built of flammable materials. Stone, brick, and concrete are out of the question, due to the rather frequent earthquakes that shake the area.

In the Highlands, these earthquakes have not been particularly destructive, but several of the friars have had close calls when unexpected gusts of wind have thoroughly collapsed bush churches and bush houses about them. Six large buildings were thus flattened on the Yareporoi station on 2 March 1967, yet only one woman was even slightly injured.

Other accidents experienced in the mission could just as easily have happened in the missionaries’ home countries. Father Myron Flax, for example, was a farmer in Kansas before studying for the priesthood and went 11,000 miles away to Pureni to be attacked and injured by a bull Nov. 15, 1967.

Another near tragedy evolved at Tari because of the interaction of two expatriate cultures. Father Paul caught a cold in April 1957, and the Australian medical officer sent him some cough syrup with instructions to take one teaspoon every two hours—but no more than that, since it contained morphine. By the third day, Paul was unable to “see straight, walk straight, or hear straight.” The MO took one look at him, and said, “You have morphine poisoning.” Only then did it occur to anyone that American teaspoons are twice the size of their Australian cousins.

Speaking of illness, probably the most annoying peril that faces the missionaries is the prevalence in the country of malaria. There are very few long-term missionaries, if any, who have not found themselves periodically put out of commission by this pesty parasite of the bloodstream.

Another parasite less frequently experienced is the leech. Father Roger White had quite an encounter with one of these bloodsuckers on his exploratory trip to Keba (Kepa) in the desolate

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643 Sister Claver to Schmidt, Nov. 9, 1964. Brother Claude was building an addition to the friary at the time. He fixed the addition up for the Grafs, and the sisters moved into their house, and by Nov. 15, Claude showed the Bishop plans for the new convent. (Schmidt chronicle, Nov. 16, 1964).
644 Gary and Sam were in the house at Tinda when it blew down July 2, 1961. Bedding, etc., was all soaked and a fire started, but no one was hurt. Myron was in his bush church at Orei when it collapsed. Wiliame church collapsed in June of 1970.
645 He suffered a punctured ear drum (Schmidt chronicle, Nov. 20, 1967). Bishop Firmin, another former farmer, hurt his wrist in Madang “while helping to unload a cage for a bull at Brahmin.” He eventually ended up with a cast on both his wrist and arm.
646 Quite a few have also suffered hepatitis, e.g. David in December 1972; Allan, Bob, and Paul.
east end of the Kagua parish in October of 1970. A leech bite on Roger’s knee became infected and worked its way into the knee cap, even though the sore had healed on the surface. The young men with him half dragged, half carried him all the way back to Mapenda. Roger ended up in bed and on crutches for three weeks.

The missionaries, of course, have also had their share of ordinary illnesses and physical complaints, and these have often involved their having to wait longer and to travel much farther than they would have had to at home for medical assistance, but the only one of these problems that ever developed into anything critical was the heart failure of Father Timon Kaple, who in the Mission’s 29th year was the first Capuchin to die in Papua New Guinea.  

This in itself is a sign of special providence, considering some of the medical emergencies. In mid-1971, for example, there were two lay missionary girls who had attacks of appendicitis at Pureni. On the second occasion, there were so many bridges out of commission that Father Matthew Gross had to drive the bumpy 15 miles to the Tari hospital on a motorbike with the suffering lay missionary riding pillion—and this at night. The girls were flown to larger hospitals at Goroka and Mt. Hagen and both were soon well and back at work in Pureni.

During the Capuchins’ first three decades in Papua New Guinea, the Divine Shepherd has certainly protected his envoys through the intercession of His Mother, the patroness of their missionary activity. Brother Alfred Vincent put it more succinctly, “Divine Providence takes care of itself.”

For all of these extraordinary instances of special providence, may the Lord be thanked. And as the second 25 years continue rushing by, may all those connected with the Church of the Southern Highlands frequently renew the prayer to Our Lady Mother of the Good Shepherd, found in Bishop Firmin’s motto: “Vigili Custodia Nos Pasce Maria—Shepherd us, Mary, with your vigilant care.”

Ultima in mortis hora,
Filium pro nobis ora;
Bonam mortem impetra,
Virgo Mater Domina.

When the shades of death are falling,
On thy son in prayer calling,
Gain us grace in peace to die,
Virgin Mother, Queen on High.

Taim Mipela Tu Llaik Dai
Pre Bai Jisas I Sambai
Strongim Mipela I Stap
Virgo, Mama, Kwin Antap.

647 Others with heart conditions on the island have included Fr. David (April 1973), Frs. Henry, and Fr. Christian. Fr. Sam suffered from a kidney stone in about April of 1968.
Not because I love you less,
Not because I love you more,
But because God calls me.
-- Walter Voordesekers, C.I.C.M.

25

The Book of Brothers

Papua New Guinea is rather unique among many territories where the worldwide Capuchin fraternity is currently being implanted, since friars from six nations and eight different jurisdictions currently live and work there side by side.

Most of the friars come from the twin American provinces of Pennsylvania and Mid-America which were formed by the 1977 division of the old Province of Pennsylvania, the province which accepted the care of the Mendi Mission back in 1955.

The Province of Great Britain sent its first missionaries to Mendi in 1967, when it became evident that it would no longer be able to send new men to its former missions in India.

The next country represented was Australia, whose vice province sent Italian-born Father Bonaventure Rodighiera to PNG in 1970. After 15 months, however, he returned to Australia.

In 1975, the first native of Papua New Guinea was invested in the Order, namely Brother Camillus Bakulles Arek. Since then there has been a small but steady stream of young men expressing an interest in joining the Order.

Brother Peter O’Rourke renewed Australia’s involvement in the Mendi Custody in 1979. Peter spent a year of his formation for the priesthood in the Southern Highlands, and after a year of priestly ministry in his home country, returned to PNG.

Meanwhile in 1980, Father Gregory Menezes, Goan-born member of the Province of Switzerland, arrived. He had formerly labored as a missionary in both Tanzania and Indonesia.
Finally in 1982, both the Province of Western America and the Vice Province of the Philippines decided to make Papua New Guinea part of their own missionary efforts. Father Oscar Garces and Gabriel Guevara arrived from the Philippines, and Father Bill Trauba from California.  

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1. ALBERT ALEXANDRUNAS:

A 1939 native of Allison Park, Pennsylvania, Father Albert Alexandrunas (Pennsylvania) has been in the Southern Highlands since 1966. Besides his long-term pastoral ministry in the parishes of Pangia (1967-75) and Kagua (since 1975), he is well known for his efforts to promote agriculture and animal husbandry in the Southern Highlands. Father Albert is currently a regional councilor of the Capuchin Order (since 1983) and a consultor of the Bishop of Mendi (since 1978). Earlier he was the first chairman of the Mendi priests’ senate (1973-75) and dean of the diocese’s eastern deanery (1978-81).

2. ALFRED VINCENT:

Brother Alfred Vincent (Pennsylvania), born in Keene, New Hampshire, in 1929, and sent to PNG in 1961, has earned there his reputation as a dedicated and determined worker by his many construction efforts on behalf of the local church and his fellow missionaries. Two projects which stand out are the huge compound of St. Joseph’s High School near Tari and the hydro-electric project at Mendi’s diocesan headquarters. Brother’s workers know him as a demanding supervisor who readily assumes and pulls much more than his own load. He has also served on the diocesan ecumenical commission (1972-73). Brother died in July of 2016.

3. ALLAN WASIECKO:

Father Allan Wasiecko (Pennsylvania) of Mt. Oliver, Pennsylvania, was 27 when he came to PNG in 1969. In addition to pastoral work in the parishes of Pangia (1970-75), Erave (1976) and Ialibu (since 1977). Allan was the first resident priest at Wiliame. He has also been involved in the formation of the local clergy by his assistant directorship at the spiritual year for major seminarians at Erave (1976) and similar work with young Capuchins at Pangia (1979-80) and Ialibu (since 1982). Allan has been a regional councilor for the Capuchins since 1981 and has also served on the priests’ senate and the diocesan ecumenical commission.

4. ALOIS BEDUM:

2006: Since 1984, there have also been friars in PNG from the Tanzanian, Congo and Indian (Karnataka and St. Francis Kerala) provinces.


2016: Allen later served as vice-provincial minister and returned to the States in 2015-16.
Brother Alois Bedum (PNG national) from Madang has been a Capuchin novice at Pangia since January 1984.\textsuperscript{652}

5. ALOYSIUS NALE:

Strictly speaking, Brother Alousius Nale (PNG national) was not yet a Capuchin when he decided to leave the friars. It is proper to recall him here, however, since he and two other PNG nationals (Firmin and Senan, q.v.) were the first of their nation to seriously attempt to follow the Capuchin way of life, and though only a postulant, he wore a Capuchin habit during his two and a half years with the friars.\textsuperscript{653}

6. ANGELUS SHAUGHNESSY:

After encouraging Lou Ciancio and Pat Bayer to dedicate portions of their lives as lay missionaries to PNG, Father Angelus Shaughnessy (Pennsylvania) of Rochester, Pennsylvania, then almost 36, took his own advice and volunteered to help staff the regional minor seminary the Order was asked to open at Kap. Following 12 years (1966-78) as teacher and spiritual director there, Father spent another 16 months caring for the people of Mendi’s Karint sector. He returned to the States in 1980 and has resumed two earlier careers as a retreat director and a spiritual assistant to the Secular Franciscans.\textsuperscript{654}

7. ARMAND YEAGLIN:

Pittsburgh-born Father Armand Yeaglin (Pennsylvania) had already taught for 14 years in Stateside seminaries at Herman, Pennsylvania, and Victoria, Kansas, (during which time he has instructed many friars now in Papua New Guinea) and had been involved for an additional 13 years in full-time parish ministry, when at the age of 55, he agreed to help staff St. Fidelis regional minor seminary at Kap. Armand served as a science teacher and procurator during the school’s first three years. Since returning to the U.S. in 1969, he has ministered as a chaplain to hospitals in Pittsburgh and Monongahela, Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{655}

8. AUGUST REBEL:

After ministering a year to the Karint outstations, Father August Rebel (Pennsylvania) joined Stanley Miltenberger at Kagua and zealously sought to reach every part of that populous valley. Arriving in 1959, he found two outstations; by 1963 he was caring for 38. August was the first friar to begin the peripatetic training of local catechists and one of the first to commit himself to learning the native language. With Benjamin Madden, he penetrated the right bank of the Nembi in 1962. His 1966 departure and subsequent resignation from the priesthood was a heavy blow to the mission.

\textsuperscript{652} 2016: He later was professed, but left the Order in 1997 and lives at Megiar near Madang.
\textsuperscript{653} 2016: He lives in Ialibu, and has a second wife.
\textsuperscript{654} 2016: Angelus also served for many years as general minister of Mother Angelica’s Franciscan Friars of the Eternal Word.
9. BENEDICT POPE:

Born in Cumberland, Maryland, in 1929 and raised at Avilton, Maryland, Father Benedict Pope (Mid-America) devoted the first 21 years of his priesthood to a teaching ministry in the field of physical science. For 13 years he was on the staff of St. Joseph’s Military Academy in Hays, Kansas (now known as Thomas More Prep/Marian). He then taught seven years (1968-74) at St. Fidelis Seminary in Kansas City. At both schools he did an immense amount of maintenance work. Since his return to the U.S. in 1974, Father has been engaged in a number of pastoral ministries in Hays and Antonino, Kansas, and St. Louis Missouri.

10. BENJAMIN MADDEN:

Father Benjamin Madden (Pennsylvania), with Timon Kaple one of the first two trained linguists, started developing the Det parish in 1961 and eventually became its first canonical pastor. Besides starting and caring for about 40 stations in the Det and Lower Mendi areas, he also personally labored on many physical improvements, especially at Det, where he built a medical clinic, an airstrip, and a hydro-electric plant. One of the diocese’s first trained linguists, Ben has researched the Lower Mendi and Det dialects and has done much to encourage others to study their own local languages. After serving for three years as cathedral administrator, he was elected Capuchin superior regular (1977-83) and strove to promote the well-being of the friars and the implantation of the Order. He was also twice elected president of the nation’s conference of major religious superiors of men. Born in Cumberland, Maryland, in 1933, Father has been in PNG since 1960. Other offices held have included diocesan consultor, prefect of studies, professor of pastoral theology, dean of the central deanery, and member of the priests’ senate.

11. BENJAMIN REGOTTI:

Father Benjamin Regotti (Pennsylvania) was born in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, in 1951, entered the Capuchins in 1971, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1979. He has been stationed at Ialibu since arriving in the Southern Highlands later that year. Until 1982, he had the care of the Muli sector of the parish, but since then has restricted his activities to the Kewa-speaking stations in the neighborhood of Amburugi. Along with Allan Wasiecko and the other expatriate friars stationed there, Father has also been responsible for the post-novitiate formation of a number of PNG national lay brothers.

12. BERARD TOMASSETTI:

2016: Benedict later transferred to the Pennsylvania Province and died Dec. 9, 2008.

2016: Ben Madden was rector of St. Fidelis Seminary 1985-1995. He returned to the States in 1913-14 and has been offering pastoral assistance in Philadelphia.

2016: Ben Regotti left the mission in 1992-93 and later served as a secretary in the Capuchins’ Roman headquarters and presently as a federal prison chaplain in Philadelphia.
One of the original band of Capuchin missionaries, Father Berard Tomassetti (Mid-America) had already been in PNG during World War II as a Seabee engineer. Since his return, he has often used his skills to assist both the church and civil government, by designing numerous bridges, airstrips, roads, buildings and hydro-electric operations. Berard’s Tagari River bridge accessed the Pureni, Koroba and Lake Kopiago parishes, and he personally evangelized the Pureni parish and served as its first canonical pastor. His initial contacts there and in the Tari and Mendi areas are described in various chapters of this book. Berard served both as a councillor to Father Otmar (1957-60) and a consultor to Monsignor Firmin (1959-60), as well as diocesan administrator pro temp (twice), chairman of the ecumenical commission, dean, diocesan communications coordinator, and secretary and advisor of the Chairman of Church Committees Association. On the national level, he has also served as secretary of both the national commission for development and peace and Caritas Papua New Guinea. He is currently the Port Moresby-based executive secretary (since 1980) of the national conference of Catholic bishops and national director (since 1983) of pontifical mission aid societies. In 1978 Berard represented the Capuchins of Oceania at the Order’s third plenary council held at Mattli, Switzerland. That same year, both the national government and the governor-general decorated Berard for his long, dedicated service to the country. This service has included his sitting in the Southern Highlands Province’s interim assembly as well as on the pre-provincial advisory board and the provincial health board.  

13. BONAVENTURE RODIGHIERA:  

Father Bonaventure Rodighiera (Australia) labored for about a year (1971-72) among the people of the Kewa-speaking area of the Ialibu parish. Born in Camporovera, Italy, in 1936, he studied dogmatic theology at the Gregorian University in Rome and, both before and after his service in Papua New Guinea, taught briefly in Capuchin seminaries in Australia: at Wynnum North (1954-65) and at Plumpton (1973-74). He also engaged in pastoral ministry in Capuchin parishes at Perth (1954-67), Leichhardt near Sydney (1967-70), and Petrie Terrace in Brisbane (1972-73). He left the Order in 1974.  

14. BRIAN NEWMAN  

Forming national priests and religious is the major thrust of Father Brian Newman’s (Pennsylvania) missionary career. Patrolling the Karint, Erave and far-east Kagua outstations for three and a half years prepared Brian to be a prefect and teacher at Maiwara and Kap (1967-75). Following another nine months in Kagua’s Kuare sector, he  

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659 2016: Malalchy McBride said the people could not pronounce Berard’s name so they called him Mbilai. “When I was first assigned to Burani, I traveled around the parish area, a quite vast area which used to include Gumu, Goloba, Hedamali, Hiwanda, Irawi, Angahabere, Jobija, Tobani, Magara, Halung, Tabaja, Mandiago. I would go by motorbike and wherever I would go I would stop and ask people, young and old, if they belong to a Church, a Mission. ‘I Mbilainaga kogoni’, would be the answer: ‘belong to Berard’.” (“Berard Tomassetti, OFM Cap.: Wake Service Panegyric” <https://www.seraphicmass.org/news/berard/panegyric.htm> (accessed Aug. 19, 2016).  


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served as the seminary’s rector (1975-81). He then studied general and Franciscan spirituality so as to prepare himself to begin working at Pangia in 1983 as novice master for the Capuchins. Born in Morgantown West Virginia, in 1935, Brian received his appointment to PNG in 1963.  

15. CALLISTUS LOPINOT:

Though he was not yet written up here, his story was told at length in Chapter 23.

16. CAMILLUS BAKULLES AREK:

Brother Camillus Bakulles Arek (PNG national) was the first of his nation to actually enter the Capuchins. A 1973 graduate of St. Fidelis Seminary in Kap, he made his novitiate (1975-76) at Six Mile near Port Moresby with the Franciscans from the Aitape Custody and made first profession as a Capuchin on Feb. 8, 1976 at the age of 22. After three years of instruction at Holy Spirit Seminary, Bomana, interspersed with a year of pastoral work in Pomberel parish, he decided not to seek permanent profession in the Order and is currently a businessman in his home province of Madang.

17. CASPAR ALKURA HANDING:

From Josephstaal parish near Madang, Brother Caspar Alkura Handing (PNG national) was trained at Mt. Hagen’s Holy Trinity Teacher’s College and taught four years in Mendi’s diocesan schools before seeking admission to the Order. Having finished his postulancy at Erave’s spiritual year and his novitiate at Pangia, Caspar made first profession in 1979 (aged 25) and, after additional Capuchin formation at Tari and a few months’ pastoral work at Wiliame, began seminary studies at Bomana. He did not renew his vows the following year, but is continuing studies for the priesthood with the Madang archdiocese.

This is all the further I got in writing individual paragraphs on the various brothers. Though not retyped at this time, there are about 50 pages of data collected for enabling the writing of paragraphs on the other friars, namely the following:

18. CHARLES EVAN EPEI WAPA (PNG national)

19. CHRISTIAN LAWRENCE FEY (Mid-American)

20. CLAUDE HENRY THOMAS MATTINGLY (Pennsylvania)

21. CLEMENT WEPO (PNG national)

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661 2016: Brian returned to the States in 1913-14 and serves as confessor at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

662 2016: Christian returned to the States in 1981, served in a number of formation programs and fraternal services, and died June 13, 2002.

663 2016: Claude died at St. Fidelis Seminary, Kap, on Jan. 4, 1996, and is buried in Mendi.
22. COLMAN JAMES STUDENY (Pennsylvania)

23. CYRIL MARK REPKO (Pennsylvania)

24. DAMIAN DIBAWI ARABAGALI (PNG national)

25. DAVID KETA (PNG national)

26. DAVID LAWRENCE DRESSMAN (Pennsylvania)\textsuperscript{664}

27. DENNIS BALI (PNG national)

28. DOMINIC McGuINNESS (Great Britain)

29. DOMINIC PINAWA (PNG national)

30. DONALD DEBES (Mid-American)

31. DUNSTAN JAMES JONES (Mid-American)\textsuperscript{665}

32. EDDY EKESA (PNG national)

33. FELIX BENEDICT SHINSKY (Mid-American)\textsuperscript{666}

34. FERDINAND KAWAI KUTIL (PNG national)

35. FIRMIN MARTIN SCHMIDT (Mid-American)\textsuperscript{667}

36. FIRMIN WALIPA (PNG national)

37. GABRIEL MANANZAN GUEVARA (Philippines)

38. GABRIEL LOMAS (Great Britain)\textsuperscript{668}

\textsuperscript{664} \textit{2016}: David returned to the States in 1985 and died Sept. 24, 1994.

\textsuperscript{665} \textit{2016}: Dunstan later transferred to the Pennsylvania Province. He was a naturalized citizen of Papua New Guinea and wanted with all his heart to be buried there, but died on the way from Pittsburgh at Denver on June 26, 2006. He is buried in Pittsburgh.

\textsuperscript{666} \textit{2016}: Felix returned to the States in 1972.

\textsuperscript{667} \textit{2016}: Firmin returned to the States in 1995, wrote his memoirs, and died Aug. 4, 2005.

\textsuperscript{668} \textit{2016}: Gabriel left the mission in 1981, and later left the priesthood.
39. GARY JAMES STAKEM (Pennsylvania)\textsuperscript{669}

40. GEORGE CASPAR KANDAMAIN NAIP (PNG national)

41. GERALD FABIAN PERREAULT (Pennsylvania)\textsuperscript{670}

42. GREGORY MENEZES (Swiss)

43. GREGORY ROGER SMITH (Pennsylvania)\textsuperscript{671}

44. HENRY JOSEPH KUSNERIK (Pennsylvania)\textsuperscript{672}

45. HENRY MORBANG (PNG national)

46. HENRY WABANGA WAPU (Pennsylvania)

47. JOE WALA KUNA (PNG national)

48. JOHN AISOLI (PNG national)

49. JOHN HAYOKO ANGAI (PNG national)

50. JOHN PAUL FLAHERTY (Pennsylvania)

51. JONATHAN PATRICK WILLIAMS (Pennsylvania)

52. JOSEPH VICTOR DAY (Pennsylvania)\textsuperscript{673}

53. JOSEPH TATA WAY WAMA (PNG national)

54. LAWRENCE POZZOULI (Great Britain)\textsuperscript{674}

55. LESTER JAMES KNOLL (Pennsylvania)\textsuperscript{675}

\textsuperscript{669} \textbf{2016}: Gary left the mission in 1973, when he was elected to the Pennsylvania provincial council.
\textsuperscript{670} \textbf{2016}: Gerald left the Order in 1972.
\textsuperscript{672} \textbf{2016}: Henry left the mission in 1980, worked for awhile in Australia, and then returned to the States. He died Feb. 26, 1990.
\textsuperscript{673} \textbf{2016}: Joseph returned to the States 1991-92.
\textsuperscript{674} \textbf{2016}: Lawrence left the mission in 1988-89.
56. LUKE TOPA PONENGE (PNG national)
57. MALACHY ROBERT McBRIDE (Mid-American)
58. MARIS GENE GOETZ (Mid-American)
59. MARK JOHN BOLLINGER (Pennsylvania)
60. MARK OGA NANDE (PNG national)
61. MATHIAS MAKAPE OLAPE (PNG national)
62. MATTHEW JAMES GROSS (Mid-American)
63. MICHAEL KIGL (PNG national)
64. MICHAEL TEI BARE (PNG national)
65. MICHAEL YORE (Great Britain)
66. MYRON GODFREY FLAX (Mid-American)
67. MYRON MADALA PAKA (PNG national)
68. OSCAR GARCES (Philippines)
69. OTMAR EDWARD GALLAGHER (Pennsylvania)
70. OWEN GERALD SCHELLHASE (Mid-American)
71. PAUL PUA KENDE (PNG national)

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2016: Lester returned to the States in 1987-88.
2016: He returned to the States in 1994 and served as associate at Queen of Peace parish in Denver, while making immense efforts to assist the mission in PNG. He died in May 1, 2008.
2016: Brother Mark died at St. Francis Seminary, Kap, on May 30, 1996, and is buried in Mendi.
2016: Mark returned to the States in 1990, and has worked in parish ministry and mall ministry.
2016: Michael left the mission in 1983.
2016: Myron returned to the States in 2003 and has worked in mall ministry.
72. PAUL JOSEPH FARKAS (Pennsylvania)

73. PETER KOYAPU WAREA (PNG national)

74. PETER SERVILLIAN MEIS (Mid-American)

75. PETER O’ROURKE (Australian)

76. PIUS MONAIP (PNG national)

77. RAYMOND CHARLES RONAN (Pennsylvania)

78. ROBERT CRAIG (Pennsylvania)

79. ROGER (LEONARD) WHITE (Pennsylvania)

80. RON MESHANKO (Pennsylvania)

81. ROY ROBERT SCHUSTER (Pennsylvania)

82. SALVIANUS AMAI MANUP (PNG national)

83. SAMUEL EARL DRISCO (Pennsylvania)

84. SENAN KOA (PNG national)

85. SENAN PAUL GLASS (Pennsylvania)

86. SERVILLANO BUSTAMANTE (Philippines)

87. SEVERIN MICHAEL SINCHAK (Pennsylvania)

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2016: Bob left the mission in 1973, and is a hospital chaplain.

2016: Roger left the mission in 2003-04 and is in pastoral ministry.

2016: Ron left the mission in 1983-84 and later left the Order.

2016: Roy returned to the States in 1979-80, served in parish ministry, and died March 1, 2012.

2016: Samuel returned to the States in 2010-11 and is in pastoral ministry in Cleveland.

2016: Senan returned to the States in 1982-83, and has been in pastoral ministry.

2016: Servillano is now serving on the provincial council of the Australian province.
88. STANLEY HERMAN MILTENBERGER (Pennsylvania)

89. STEVE REICHERT (Mid-American)

90. TERRY HANNAN (Australian)

91. THOMAS NOGHO (PNG national)

92. TIMON PAUL KAPLE (Pennsylvania)

93. VICTOR ALBERT KRILEY (Pennsylvania)

94. WILLIAM TRAUBA (Western American)

And now for a photo which catches most of the friars and other priests who were in the Mendi Mission in its first 25 years. It was taken at the summer mission meeting in the 24th year.


2016: Timon was the first friar to die in Papua New Guinea, on April 15, 1984. He is buried there at Tari.

2016: Victor returned to the States 1986-87 and has done pastoral ministry.

2016: Bill left the mission in 1985-86 and has served since as a missionary in northern Mexico.

Taken from Provincial Porter, 3,2 (Oct.-Nov. 1979) 2-3.
God’s Word came into the world nearly two millennia ago, personally and permanently touched a few lives, and returned to the Father. His few years on earth, as told in the Gospels, was really only the beginning. Moved then by the Holy Spirit, the Word’s apostles went out into what seemed to many to be the entire world. Really, however, it was still only the beginning. When the Capuchins and other latter-day disciples arrived in Papua New Guinea’s Southern Highlands in this century, they had reached one of this world’s last frontiers. After nearly 30 years of intense effort, their immense efforts and accomplishments are still only the beginning.

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The Last Word

Writing “Only the Beginnings” has been the most challenging single task of a lifetime.

First came the demands of SCOPE. The first 25 years of the Capuchins in Papua New Guinea and the history of the Diocese of Mendi cover mostly common ground, yet they are not identical. Jointly sponsored by the bishop of Mendi and the superior regular of the Capuchins, this book was expected to cover both areas. Rather than try to exhaust either one, however, Only the Beginnings has limited itself, as its title suggests, to first efforts in all of the various facets of both subjects.

The next challenge encountered was that of AUDIENCE. The study was to be directed toward four widely diverse groups of people:

- American friends of the Papua New Guinea mission, most of whom had never been anywhere near the country;
- Their counterparts in Australia;
- Papua New Guinea nationals; and
- Expatriate “Mendi missionaries” from 20 different nations.
Very little could be presumed when writing for the first two groups, of course. Yet on the contrary, the author was always well aware that too much could also be presumed, since many people in the latter two groups knew far more about the subject than he. The author is grateful, therefore, to all those who have critiqued various drafts.

TIME and DISTANCE also complicated things. Most of the work was done literally a world away from where information was handy, while the author maintained a plethora of other previously assigned activities. Correspondence and interruptions were thus much heavier than should normally have been the case; and many people—including this author—anxiously wondered whether the “silver jubilee” book would be ready even for the golden jubilee.

ACCURACY, however, was the real challenge! One missionary had the Franciscan simplicity to suggest that the book should be designed as a best-seller. Had the author taken this dream serious, he probably would have been forced to ignore his own strong desire to achieve authenticity and objectivity, while at the same time respecting the rights and sensibilities of those written about.

As a seminarian more than a quarter century ago, the author began collecting and publishing letters from pioneer Capuchin missionaries in New Guinea. This was done in response to a resolution of the Pennsylvania Capuchins’ 1957 educational council. Eight volumes of letters which eventually emerged still stand as a good record of the first four years of the Capuchins’ mission to the Southern Highlands.

Publication of Papuan Letters was suspended, not from lack of material, nor because of decreased interest at home, but paradoxically because of apprehensions in Papua itself. A number of the missionaries feared their letters might be misinterpreted if read by someone other than the addressees. Others disagreed with some of the conclusions or generalizations their coworkers were making in the letters. But what was even worse, veiled criticisms of other missionaries made privately were finding their way back to Papua publicly, and to those on the scene the criticisms were readily apparent and painful.

Imagine then the concern that hounded the author as he made countless patrols into some 10,000 pages of journals and personal letters freely made available to him during a ten-week visit to Papua New Guinea in 1979 and then set out to wrest therefrom a short but reasonably accurate summary of sundry beginnings. If he has still unwittingly stepped on anyone’s toes, he is indeed sorry.

Through the years bridging Papuan Letters and Only the Beginnings, the author has maintained both interest in and contact with the friars in Papua; and he still thinks the world of every one of them—but much so that he somewhat regrets promising early in the project not to paint any of them in heroic proportions. He cannot resist, however, speaking in superlatives of the cooperation with which the friars and their friends flooded him in his research.

The bishops of Mendi and Bereina, the Pennsylvania provincial minister, the superior regular of Mendi, and the vice provincial of Australia all gave him ample access to their archives. Others

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697 ACPSA 12, 2 (August 1959) 58.
permitted him to poke his nose wherever he wished in every Capuchin house in Papua New Guinea.

Still others freely supplied him with numerous personal letters, diaries, and the like, all of which are preserved in a special section of the provincial archives of the Mid-American Capuchins. The list of generous fellow travelers on the search for data includes most of the friars who have ever been connected with the mission—and countless others—far too many to start naming here.

The willingness of so many to make so much available carried with it a heavy responsibility. Stories being told here are still going on. They deal with living human beings with the normal amount of faults and foibles and with sensibilities that need to be respected with a reasonable amount of reticence.

Later-day historians will be able to, and probably will, speculate on the effects various individual temperaments, differing philosophical viewpoints, and personality clashes had upon decisions made and actions taken. Such an approach will help bring the characters back to life, and no one need fear that such future efforts, if honest and objective, can in any way seriously tarnish the fine reputation the friars of Papua New Guinea now enjoy.

For the present, however, it would be good to keep in mind that Only the Beginnings has had no aspirations of being a “definitive” history of the first years of the Capuchins in Papua New Guinea nor of the Catholic Church in the Southern Highlands. No one could realistically hope to say “the last word” on these subjects while so many people are still around who will now have opportunities to tell it “the way it really was.” Indeed the present author will be somewhat disappointed if they do not seize such opportunities, for he never intended this book to be in any way anything more than Only the Beginnings.

Deo Gratias!

Epilogue: Over the past 30 some years, I have felt the reason I never put an end to Only the Beginnings had been the numerous distractions I allowed to intervene. At this point I’ve upgraded that opinion.

In the Mendi Diocese News for April-May of 1979, the editor said I was “expected to be in PNG (Mendi Diocese) from June to August, ’79 – to prepare a booklet to mark the 25th Anniversary of the departure of the first Capuchin missionaries to Papua New Guinea in October.”

Giving serious thought to that expectation, I now have to admit that what really sculled the whole project was my plan. It was utterly over ambitious. I worked hard on the book for five years, while the friars in PNG would have been satisfied with a booklet two months after my visit, rather than a tome some unknown years later.

It does gives me some unexpected satisfaction to realize now that, even though still unfinished, Draft 14 is substantially superior to the early PNG friars’ original expectation. Regretfully, however, a score of them have not lived to see it.
Thank you, Thank you, Thank you,

I can not thank enough the generous friends who, in donating some of their Easter season, resurrected this copy by retyping my 1984 typescript:

**Lay men and women**
- Beth Rohde, ch. 7
- Ellen Lane, ch. 20;
- Liz Lane, chs. 8 & 26
- Ethel Younger, ch. 16
- Marcia Korinek, ch. 9
- Jim Little, chs. 2, 4 & 25
- Kathy Lane, chs. 14 & 24
- Sue LaneWilliamson, ch. 18 & 21
- Toni Schreivogel, chs. 12, 13, 15 & 19

**Capuchin Franciscans friars**
- Earl Meyer, chs. 10 & 22
- John Kolencherry, ch. 6
- Augustine Rohde, ch. 5
- Jordan Rojas, ch. 3
- Peter Meis, ch. 17
- Duane Reinert, ch. 23
- Blaine Burkey, introduct. & chs. 1 & 11

Special thanks also to Father Peter Meis who, besides tracking down numerous facts, gave me 20 pages of invaluable suggestions for improving the manuscript, and to Mrs. Toni Schreivogel and Ms. Rose Lane, who proofread the entire draft.
More on the History of the Mendi Diocese & the Capuchins in Papua New Guinea:


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Papuan Letters / Herman: St. Lawrence of Brindisi Mission Unit, 1958 and ff., 7 vv.

Farkas, Paul (Pennsylvania Prov.) (d. 2000)
Papuan Tales. / Pittsburgh PA: Typecraft Press, 1999, 46 pp., $10.00

Grewe, Ruth, Sister

Lenssen, Frans A CMM, compiler
Footprints in the Ocean: History of the Catholic Church in Western Oceania / Bomana: Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2011

Meshanko, Ronald James.

Reichert, Stephen (Mid-America Province), Bishop.

Reichert, Stephen (Mid-America Province), Bishop,

Reithofer, Hans.
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Schmidt, Firmin Martin (Mid-America Province), Bishop

Schmidt, Firmin Martin (Mid-America Province), Bishop

Stakem, Gary (Pennsylvania Prov.)
Stakem, Gary (Pennsylvania Province)

Stellmach, Karl-Heinz, director [16 MM FILM]
…And Then Came DAWN / Waldsassen, Germany: Stellmach Films, 90 min

Tomassetti, Berard (Mid-America Prov.)

Werner, Ray
Angels with Broken Wings, 77 pp., $12.00

Woode, Peter.
Denver & Pittsburgh, 15 November 2016. This printing of *Only the Beginnings*, commissioned by the Capuchin Provinces of Mid-America and Pennsylvania, is dedicated to the Catholic people of the Southern Highlands and Hela provinces of Papua New Guinea on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the canonical erection of the Catholic Diocese of Mendi by Blessed Pope Paul VI on 15 November 1966.