

Robert & Verna Stutzman

Box 497

Ukarumpa Via Lae

Papua New Guinea

Ph. #011-675-77-4518

Fax #011-675-77-4111

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Dear mom,

In our November prayer letter we wrote that we were planning a trip to Lou Island during the Christmas season. We had bought our tickets and were all excited about spending Christmas on the island. Then we got a letter from the island telling us once again to change our plans due to lack of accommodation for us on the island. It became apparent to us that the Lou people don't want us living on their island, because every time that we have planned to stay there, they have always acted like there was no housing for us, even though we have been aware of some empty houses that we could have rented. (This may be due to the fact that they are exclusively Seventh Day Adventists and they know that we are not SDA. We are not aware that any white non-SDA has ever lived on Lou Island.)

At any rate our Administration has a policy of evaluating a new translation project after two years to see whether it is a feasible project. We have been in the Lou program for three years already, so we have been more patient than required by our Administration. Perhaps because we had to leave the Tauade program a few years ago, we tried extra hard to make the Lou program work. But our Regional Director decided that 'enough is enough' and he has pulled us out of the Lou program. This may come as a surprise to you, but we've been aware for quite awhile that this was a possibility. It hasn't been easy 'coming to grips' with this change in plans.

Robert and our Regional Director, Don Toland went to Lou Island this past month to inform the Lou people of this change in plans. No one expressed any regrets about our leaving. In fact, the translation committee chairman seemed relieved, because he was tired of trying to get the people to cooperate with him in building us a house. The people were very eager to buy all our building supplies. The supplies were all sold in 30 minutes. People who had not had 10¢ to buy a Bible story book in their language came with hundreds of kinas (=dollars) to buy our building supplies. Of course, we were grateful that we were able to sell the supplies on the island and did not have to transport them back to Ukarumpa, but their actions were a confirmation to us that we were doing the right thing.

In our last letter we mentioned the Carla computer programs. We've gotten as far as we can go with the Nyindrou-to-Lou adaptation of the New Testament without input from a native Lou speaker. We have written to several men on Lou Island asking them to come to Ukarumpa in the next few months, so we can finish off the Carla set-up. So far we have heard nothing from any of them. If we finish the Carla set-up, we should be able to send the Lou people drafts of scriptures in Lou as fast as the scriptures are translated into Nyindrou.

Please pray about our future. For a number of reasons, we would really like to take a home assignment for a few years at the International Headquarters in Dallas, Texas. We feel really 'burned out' with field work. We never fully recuperated emotionally from the attack on us in Sopo several years ago. Robert has a continuing pain in his shoulder where the wires were put in to hold his shoulder bone together. If the pain gets too bad, those wires will have to be removed with surgery. Jeremy is less than 18 months away from High School graduation and he will need a lot of help from us in getting settled somewhere in North America. Coming home while he still has a year of High School left, should be beneficial in helping him make that transition. We also feel that we need some time to assess just where God wants us in the future, whether it is back here in PNG or another field assignment.

Our plan is to leave PNG at the end of June this year and fly to Manitoba. We will pack our household goods that are in storage there, and move them to Dallas, Texas. Robert has been invited to be the Assistant Accounting Operations Manager in the Dallas Wycliffe Office. They are really short-staffed according to a recent e-mail from Dave Knutzen, the accounting manager there. He writes, "Dave Cram has let me know about your interest in helping here in Dallas. It was a real encouragement to learn about your interest. We have a very critical need here. I just learned this week that my assistant has taken a new job outside of WBT and will be going on LOA (leave of absence). We have been working together for three years. He is leaving because of low financial support and will be greatly missed." Verna will continue to help translators adapt scripture from one language to another using the Carla computer software and will also adapt the scriptures into Lou, provided a Lou speaker comes to Ukarumpa soon to help finish the Carla set-up.

This is not an easy move for us and requires as much faith as the move to PNG did 12 years ago. Please pray that God would give us and our directors wisdom as we plan for the future.

In His Service,



Robert & Verna Stutzman