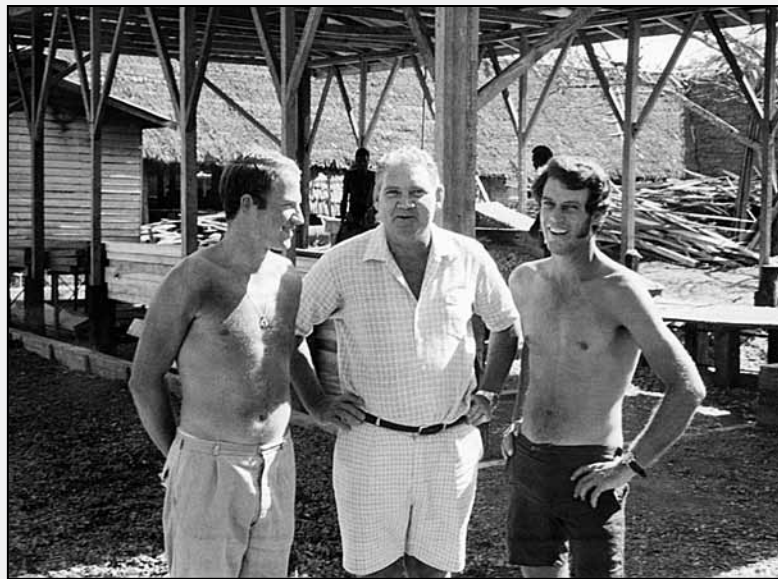


Angoram and the Expat Tribe, 1968



Angoram Council

More on Big Men

Big Men (*Bik Men*) in New Guinea were the traditional leaders. Although villages had old, powerful families, any man could become a Big Man if he had the right combination of speaking ability and organizational skills. His personal charisma and drive gathered men to him.

The ability to *tok strong* (talk strong) controlled most situations in New Guinea. Long debates animated the men's *Haus Tambarans* far into the night. This style carried over into the Territory's village councils, often to the exasperation of expat officials.

Figure 9.3: Man poles his crocodile prow canoe from Angoram towards his home on the opposite bank of the Sepik.



The Territory's Administration purchased land from traditional owners to expand Angoram.

Along with ground for government buildings, they purchased two other parcels. The Service Camp, a short walk upstream, provided allotments for Sepik servicemen who fought with the Allies in World War 2. A second area, the Gavien land settlement and rubber plantation project that Ron had hoped to survey for Lands, allotted blocks to mostly local poor people without traditional land; for example, families from the stilt village of Kambaramba.

A third group of parcels came from Mopa, a Big Man in the area. Unlike many owners, Mopa sold his traditional land to Sepiks who settled permanently in Angoram. He felt resident families ought to own their land, pay a reasonable price and build secure homes.

As a result of these allotments and sales, extended families around Angoram owned their land, even if they came from other areas. Tribal and clan groups held customary title, usually recognized by government law, to most of the country. Permanent housing was difficult to come by outside a person's original village, especially in urban centers. As a result, illegal squatter camps became common. Good jobs included housing in the contract, still a typical situation today.

Angoram government projects and wage jobs with expat businesses attracted families from all over the East Sepik. These villagers stayed in town for months. Angoram's central location, just at the top of the Lower Sepik, meant canoes came and went daily. Clans brought their ceremonies and arts with them. Sepik stilt houses provided safe refuge for people and livestock during high water months. Everyone, including the carvers, worked in the cool shade under their homes in the dry.

Vendors at roadside and town markets sold fish, produce, betel nut chew supplies and a few carvings, some traded down from distant villages. Women twined *bilums*, wove sago baskets and other practical containers. Their extra products swayed enticingly for sale in the breezy, thatch-roofed *haus win* shelters along the river.

The Administration formed the Angoram Local Government Council from nearby village Big Men. The Council sponsored co-ops and similar projects.

Besides approving town infrastructure projects, the Council sponsored *singsings* with Sepik groups invited to perform traditional dances. Some large events



Figure 9.4: Angoram *Haus Tambaran* with bird-winged finial and two faces woven into the gable. All posts are carved.

Figure 9.5: Gawi and family sit in nearby shade. He and others bossed the *Haus*, especially when artifact buyers arrived. They maintained order, checked that prices and pay were straight — and probably took their cut from the sellers.





Figure 9.6: Ron with Mr. Gallop, a craftsman who carved hard, oval gallop nuts into small decorative faces and sold them to the expats. They ended up on cocktail swizzle sticks, key rings and necklaces.

This *Haus Tambaran* was replaced with a new one in the 1970s. Ron bought the *Haus* post in this photograph sometime in the 1990s from the man who owned it. He still has it. The face at the base is part of a figure which extends five feet below the ground. The elderly carver had a smaller post still standing nearby. He wanted the two to stay together, but Ron doesn't remember if he bought the second post.

dinar: A debt, a promise of payment.

included visiting dignitaries and dancers flown in from outside.

Veterans in the Service Camp organized and built the Angoram Council's *Haus Tambaran*. Men from many villages cut the timber, carved the posts and beams, painted the palm bark panels for the sides and ceilings in the ceremonial styles of their areas. Besides serving as a gathering place, the men brought their artifacts to display and sell. Interesting carvings and ethnographic pieces turned up in all these venues.

Angoram with its stable expat and local communities provided a good base along the Sepik River for an artifact dealer. As Ron became better known, people held pieces for him.

They knew he paid a fair cash price on the spot, unlike some dealers who promised to pay at a later date after they sold the piece somewhere else and sometimes never paid, or paid months later and only under pressure. Ron never owed a debt, called *dinars* in New Guinea, to anyone.



singsing: Ceremonial festival, included traditional ceremonies as well as modern events like the Mount Hagen Show and the Goroka Show dance competitions.

Figure 9.7 (left): Lower Sepiks with shell *bilas* dance in a ceremonial canoe constructed of palm fronds over a cane framework, Angoram *singsing* circa 1968.

Figure 9.8 (below left): Painted bark *pon-gols* like these enclosed the sides and ceiling of the Angoram *Haus Tambaran*. Each set came from a different village.

Figure 9.9 (below): Two boys with coastal-style dance hats wait their turn.





Figure 9.10: Ron (on left) joins Bill Barclay in his tropical dress whites, Donald Dunham from the United Nations and Ulle Wahlfors (ILO) in Angoram, 1972.

Figure 9.11: Tambanum *mwai* masks by carvers in Angoram.



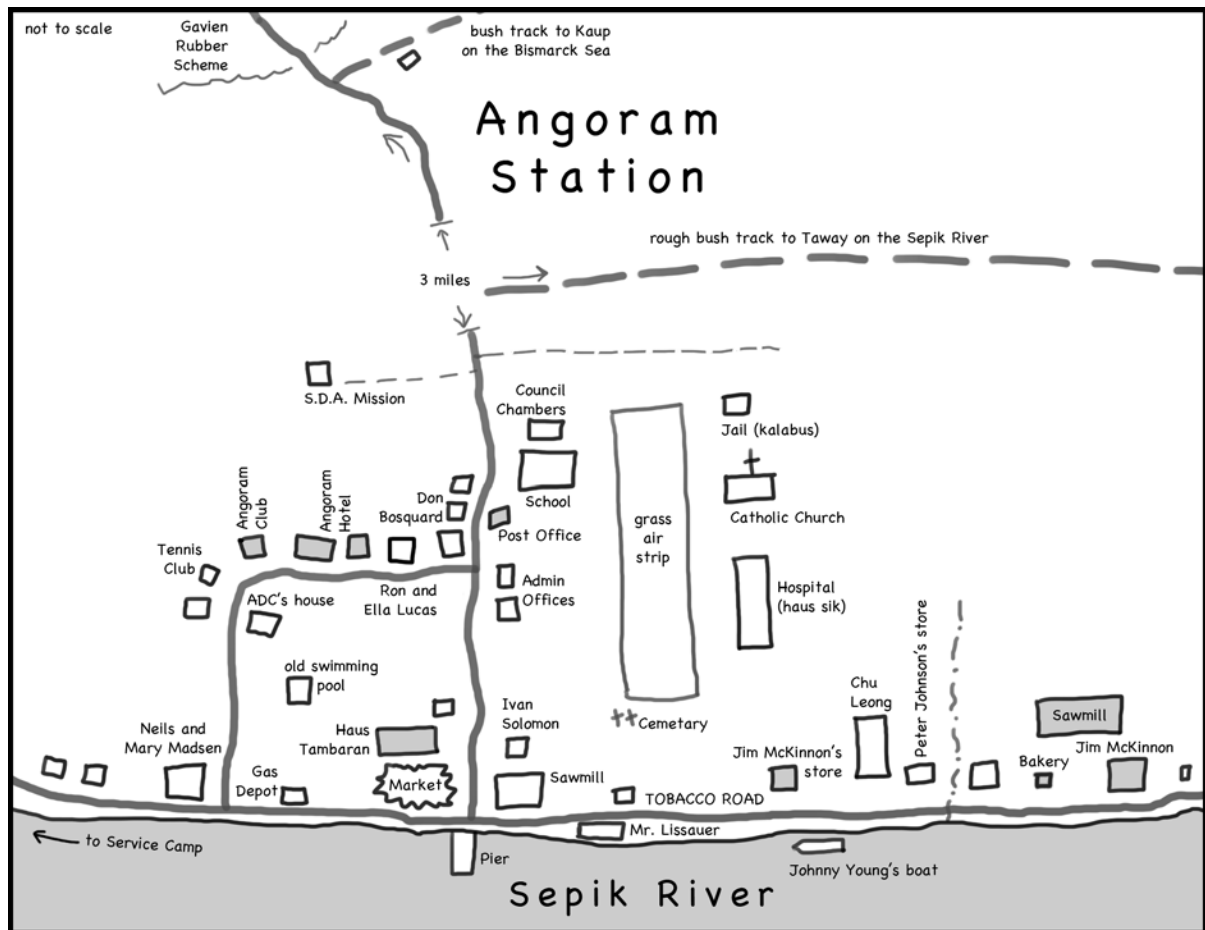
The Expat Tribe

No road reached Angoram from Wewak until the 1970s. A rough dirt road ran out from Angoram to Gavien and two bush tracks cut through the jungle, one to Kaup on the Bismarck Sea and one to Taway on the Sepik. Diesel freighters, aluminum dinghies with outboard motors called river trucks and dugout canoes supplied the town.

Later, a simple grass airstrip formed a T with the river. The Administration kept the grass down, hand cut by prisoners using long, curved knives called *serifs*. They had less success keeping people and animals off. The airstrip crossed an old path and villagers resisted taking the long walk around. Pilots looked carefully for people and animals before landing on any New Guinea airstrip.

Air transport included a weekly four-to-six seat passenger plane that delivered the mail, plus assorted government, mission, private and charter planes. A 1970s flyer from the Wewak airport listed over one hundred fifty airstrips, mostly maintained by the missions, in the East and West Sepik.

Angoram's shortwave radio in the post office came on the district sked twice a day. The sked functioned like an early telephone party line, everyone listened in on everyone else and warned their friends if they



Map of Angoram Station

The fate of the monkey pod trees

Ron enjoyed their shade. They reminded him of Hawaii where they were called *koa* and the wood was popular for bowls.

However, the Council didn't like the monkey pods. Their shade kept the dirt roads muddy, especially along the steep hill down to the pier. Tractors bogged and people had to stop and walk their motor bikes up. Barefoot villagers slogged through mud. One year he came back and found them all cut out. He always wondered what happened to the wood, but no one seemed to know. The stumps sat there for years, baked black in the sun along the hot, but very dry, road.

Malaria control and unintended consequences

Government malaria control agents distributed mosquito nets and sprayed for mosquitoes. Malaria debilitated and killed on the Sepik. Early on, before studies showed the bad effects, agents sprayed DDT. The villagers didn't like the spray from the beginning because it also killed their cats and then the rat population exploded.

Figure 9.12: Ron's membership badges from the Angoram Club and from Wewak's Sepik Club.



overheard they were in trouble with the Administration. In town, people sent a *pas*, a note hand-carried by one of their staff, to the store to place an order, to their friend to meet them for lunch and so on.

Important buildings on the west side of the airstrip besides the hotel included the Angoram Club, the Council chambers, the school, the post office and the Administration's offices, called Admin for short. Off on the east sat the Catholic church and the hospital.

Big monkey pod trees grew every twenty or thirty feet on the sides of the main road. More trees, some too large to put a man's arms around, shaded the expat houses and the Admin buildings.

About fifty expats lived in town and another twenty-five or so, like Ron, came and went. The native population also fluctuated. Estimates varied from one to three thousand through the 1970s, depending on how large an area around the town was included.

The Administration employed five expat patrol officers. There were two expats at the government hospital, plus expat school teachers, malaria control officers and the *didimen*, agriculture extension agents who assisted with rubber, coffee, chickens and pigs.

Expats created their own fun. After work and on weekends they partied at their members only Angoram Club and the tennis club. The ubiquitous clubs — yacht clubs, tennis clubs, golf clubs,

any-excuse clubs sprang up wherever enough expats put up money, often as little as one hundred dollars a head, to start one. Clubs sponsored charity events, lottery drawings, sports competitions, dances and fashion shows. Members received badges, voting privileges, a place to eat, drink and make contacts, sports facilities and, in Angoram, an expensive slate pool table brought in by boat and occasionally used by members and their loves for other purposes.

Australian custom demanded that a man shout (buy) a round of drinks for everyone in his group. Ten people, ten drinks, no matter what. The bartender knew his regulars' usual, brought the drinks without asking and handed a man his bill when it was his shout. The American custom of nursing a couple of drinks all night didn't exist. Until the early sixties, only a few prominent locals drank in bars and clubs, but when they did gain the legal right, rounds of shouts fueled the profits of often rowdy beer gardens.

The Angoram Club hosted the annual Angoram Ball. Guests flew in from all over the Territory in small private planes. Even at this isolated outpost in a jungle clearing, women showed off their best cocktail dresses and long gloves. Men wore suits or the proper Territory dress attire of white shirt, Bermuda shorts, white knee socks and polished shoes. The people, music

Expat families

Many expats who took jobs in New Guinea planned to make a career of it and brought their families with them. Ron and Ella Lucas arrived in Angoram in 1967 from Rabaul with their three, soon to be four, rowdy little boys. Ron Lucas taught school in Angoram.

Expat teachers in rural New Guinea schools didn't need Australian teaching credentials, but they received training from the Administration before starting their posts. They made do with minimal supplies and simple buildings. Their students remember most of them as dedicated teachers who cared about their village pupils.

Towns like Wewak had the money to attract and supply the more upscale international schools. Most expat children attended local schools at least through grade six.

For higher grades many went off to boarding schools in the Territory or overseas. Some mothers moved with their children "down South" to Australia while the fathers stayed to work. The expat children who started in New Guinea made international friends and often went on to interesting careers.

Ella mothered everyone in Angoram with comfort, food and a cuppa, the Aussie term for a friendly tea or coffee. Most expats needed that at times.

A mutual friend lived with her husband on a houseboat in Angoram during her first pregnancy. Every morning she threw up in the forty gallon drum used as a toilet seat in the outhouse on the back of the boat. Every morning a hungry catfish looked up at her — waiting.

Another Englishman in Angoram

Don Bosquard clerked at the government office and sold stamps at the Post Office. He expected exact payment and refused to bother with giving small change.

A proper man, pucker as they say in England, he wore a cravat scarf instead of a tie. Promptly after the Post Office closed at 4:08 p.m., he strolled up to the Club and stayed until it shut down at ten. His house boy, Rastas, cooked him proper evening dinners of roast lamb or pork and potatoes.

One night Ron walked up to the Club about eight as it “started to rain like hell.” Rastas came around the corner from Bosquard’s house with an umbrella, closed. He waited under the Club eaves in the rain for his boss and refused to open the umbrella.

Ron shook his head and went on into the Club. At ten, Bosquard came out, Rastas put the umbrella up over him and they walked home.

and food matched similar dances at small town social clubs of the time.

Angoram was well known, the most interesting of the Territory’s outposts. Still, it remained very isolated. Small freighters arrived irregularly. The pier of heavy *kwila* planks and wood pilings projected out level from the road, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide, into the Sepik. The Council built a forty foot long, thatched, barn-like building on the downstream side to house villagers who sometimes waited days for a ride out. They slept there until a boat showed up if they had no place in town to stay with relatives or friends.

Boats docked overnight, unloaded the following morning until around noon, loaded Angoram’s cargo in the afternoon and left early the next morning. Everyone flocked down to the pier when a ship docked to look for their packages and to make sure

their outbound shipments got on, as there was no long-term storage at the pier.

The trade stores’ groceries included potatoes and onions, piled bags of rice, tinned goods like fish, corned beef and condensed milk. There might be appliances, outboard motors, vehicles and

Figure 9.13: Plaited palm frond panels enclose the bar at the Angoram Hotel, artifacts for sale stand outside, 1970s.



the hardware needed to repair them. The government, the hotel and other large operators drove tractors with trailers down to carry their cargo back. The bars usually ran out of beer a week or two before the boat arrived. The hotel unloaded two to three hundred cases of beer to restock.

Ron recalls, "When I first came to Angoram, Peter England opened a case right there on the pier. We waited around at eleven in the morning in the sun drinking hot beer while our cargo loaded or unloaded."

Angoram thrived, but it depended on outside money from the Australian Territorial government and its employees; on missions funded by overseas offerings; on black sheep remittance men who lived with the money their families sent to keep them out of wherever they came from, and on the expat entrepreneurs who searched for timber, gold, crocodiles and sometimes artifacts.

In most of the world, including Southeast Asia, the governments of the colonial era were finished, but in the Territory, Australian rule of its U.N. protectorate seemed set to last at least a generation. The Queen of England was the titular head of Australia and of the Commonwealth, which included most of England's former colonies, so things didn't seem to have changed much. The Commonwealth class system carried the English royal tradition into New Guinea with

Rats and rat control

Many buildings, including the Angoram Club, used blind, plaited panels of sago or coconut palm fronds, as walls. Blind walls were decorative, cheap and provided ventilation in the muggy heat, but the buildings weren't rat proof. Ron sometimes bought a large, green tree python at the market to clear rats from his house. The snake usually lived behind the stove or up in the ceiling until it finished off the rats, then left on its own.

One house he rented had a weld mesh and screened sleeping room in the middle of the building to keep out both rats and mosquitoes. He let a Swiss doctor and his wife sleep there one night when the hotel was full, but warned them not to leave the sleeping room's door open. They didn't listen. They wanted a breeze. The wife woke up when a rat licked salty sweat off her forehead. It gave her a good bite when she hit it. Ron caught their wrath in the morning, even though he had warned them. Resident expats were often not inclined to help tourists because many came to New Guinea with unrealistic, sometimes dangerous, expectations.

At the Club, a large grey wharf rat ran along the two-by-four beam behind the bar every night. One evening a member put his pistol on the bar and waited for the rat. The rat appeared, the bar boy ducked, a shot rang out, the rat escaped, but the member caught hell from club president Don Bosquard. The bullet shot through the palm frond wall and could have killed someone on the road outside.

Artifact buyers at the hotel

Hotel guests provided amusement. Once Ron drank on the porch at the hotel bar and watched a new artifact buyer on the verandah. A long line of carvers waited while the expat selected a few pieces from each man, paid the carver and told him to take the pieces around back to his room. After twenty minutes or so, Ron noticed some of the same carvers and the same pieces back in line again — and the buyer never caught on.



Figure 9.14: River boat double canoe with expats, including Angoram entrepreneur Sava Masik seated on right.

annual Queen's awards, honors and titles. Australians and New Zealanders of British descent traveled home to "Mother England." Other immigrants came from Europe, especially Eastern Europe, after the Iron Curtain fell. Chinese merchants and their families, many in New Guinea for several generations, ran trade stores and other enterprises throughout the islands.

Catholic and Protestant missionaries arrived in New Guinea well before the world wars. Interestingly, they were usually counted separately. "There's about twenty Europeans there and a couple of missionaries." The Catholic fathers often drank, so they might be included in the main count.

Another group created as soon as contact was made were people of mixed expat and local parentage. They called themselves Mixed Race in New Guinea. Many became part of the educated ruling class; some

lived as village people. It often depended on whether their expat parents acknowledged and educated their children. On the Indonesian side, a large number of government and business people immigrated from Ambon Island in the Celebes. Many Ambonese were of mixed Melanesian and Dutch descent. They followed the Dutch to New Guinea after World War 2.

In New Guinea, with its numerous languages, a common *Tok Pisin* term is *wantok* (one talk), those who speak the same language. New Guinea *wantoks* formed political and social alliances among themselves first. All *kago* (cargo or wealth) whether traditional or contemporary, pigs or cash, was distributed between *wantoks* along recognized chains of rank. Within that framework, people found food, shelter and help if they needed it. The Expat Tribe, with English as its primary language, fit right into this New Guinea structure. They held the power. They held the cargo. Even after Independence in 1975, their power, cargo and privilege persisted.

Angoram for the expats who lived there in 1968 was not always an easy place, but it was an interesting place. They liked to have a good time and usually did. Friends always found a place to sleep, food, drink and a helping hand if needed. The ties formed within the Angoram Clan of the Expat Tribe proved strong and lasting.

Chinese trader Chu Leong

Chu Leong owned a large trade store in a village on the Keram River. He married Elekama from Angasi Village before World War 2, but didn't pay bride price. Her older brother owed him money and the marriage settled the debt.

He built a large cargo boat on the shore in Angoram just before the Japanese invaded. Instead of leaving or burning it, he instructed his crew to saw it in half. He left his wife and mixed race children in hiding under the protection of her family at Angasi and joined the Coastwatchers. After the war, he returned, added a section to the middle of the boat, patched it back together and resumed business.

Anna Chu, his daughter, published *Kapiak Tree*, her memoir about growing up in Angoram as part of a mixed race family.

Bossing McKinnon's *banis*

banis: A compound.

In the village, *banis* usually meant a temporary fence or compound that concealed the preparations for and the secret parts of a ceremony. For expats, a *banis* meant someone's home, businesses and yard with all their sheds and piles of rotting, rusty, might-need-it-someday vehicles and machinery.

Figure 9.15: A pet possum hangs out with his friend. Mads and Mary lived upstream from the pier, beyond the market and gas depot. They built their house with off-cuts from the sawmill Mads managed and filled it with New Guinea pets. Both black and white cockatoos perched on backs of chairs, tree kangaroos hopped in the fenced yard and possums ran at night along a special ledge near the ceiling inside the living room.



The Sepik River and its vast sprawl of tributaries provided the only access to most river villages.

Not owning a reliable, fast outboard motor proved frustrating, expensive and sometimes risky, so the first thing Ron bought when he arrived back in Angoram in May 1968 was a 20hp Mercury from Neils Madsen.

Mads, as his friends called him, had recently signed for a Mercury outboard motor dealership on the Indonesian side of New Guinea. He and Ron decided to start a partnership. Ron still had his pilot's license. Mads began flying lessons in a four-seater DeHaviland with a long time bush pilot in Angoram. Ron planned to go to Irian to check on Mads' agents and collect artifacts, especially in the Asmat where Michael Rockefeller went missing. They would split the sales. Ron knew Mads dealt in artifacts on the side, including Karawari cult hooks, but he didn't know the details. All dealers were secretive. Their sources and knowledge were more valuable to them in the long run than any particular artifact.

Ron tried his new motor out on two short patrols, first on the Middle Sepik and the Yuat, then on the Karawari and the Blackwater. He became a familiar face in Angoram and along Tobacco Road.

From the airstrip, the main dirt road took a steep dip down to the junction with Tobacco Road which paralleled the Sepik. An international mix of the Expat Tribe lived along that road. Besides Johnny Young and Chu Leong, another old timer was the son of a black birder who recruited labor in Milne Bay before the war. The man told his son he made men walk the plank if they gave him trouble. Men who arrived after World War 2 included Herman Lissauer, Jim McKinnon and Peter Johnson.



Figure 9.16: Territory of New Guinea one shilling coins, front and back, 1938.

Johnny Young kept change from his trade store in a red metal box. He had Australian one and two shilling coins from between the wars, plus New Guinea shillings that were only made for four years. The coins were in good condition because before World War 2, everyone buried their money in old clothes or newspapers. On a scale of ten, many were in six or seven condition. Johnny let Ron sit on his floor with the little girls eating candy and the half empty coffee cups with sugar ants crawling over them and sort out what he wanted. He only let Ron pay him a shilling for

How Tobacco Road got its name

Freddie Eichorn, the German gold miner, named Angoram's Tobacco Road after the title of Erskine Caldwell's book. He married a Keram River woman. They had a son, Billy, about Ron's age. The family built a house and trade store in Angoram before World War 2 and started a fifty-acre coconut plantation at Yip.

Freddie sold both to Peter Johnson, the Englishman who ran the post office, in the 1960s. At the time, it made Peter the second largest expat land owner in the East Sepik after the Catholic church. He fenced the plantation and ran twenty head of cattle on it to butcher and sell at his trade store, but lost more to local rustlers in the end than he sold.

Karawari cult hooks come out

Mads employed Ivan Solomon as his field boss. Ivan, a slender man married to a big woman, both of them from German mixed race families in Madang, had five children. His job took him up the rivers ordering logs for the sawmill. He patrolled the Karawari River and its tributaries for rosewood and Klinki pine.

Local people took him to the caves that overlooked one of the tributaries of the Karawari. Ron patrolled by there about the same time, but he never heard about the caves. Ivan later told Ron it was very scary because the caves were full of bones and spirits. He became the first outsider to go into the Karawari burial caves and bring back the spirit hooks to Angoram where he gave them to Mads.

Ron never learned who actually exported the hooks, but said no Administration officer in Angoram would have given them a second look. They appeared worn and weathered, rubbish carvings as far as patrol officers were concerned.

However, the first Karawari cult hooks created a sensation in New York, selling for thousands of dollars. The 1968 catalog, *Caves of the Karawari*, was published by D'Arcy Galleries, New York.

Figure 9.17: Ron and Mr. Lissauer chat on Tobacco Road. The Sepik flows on the right.

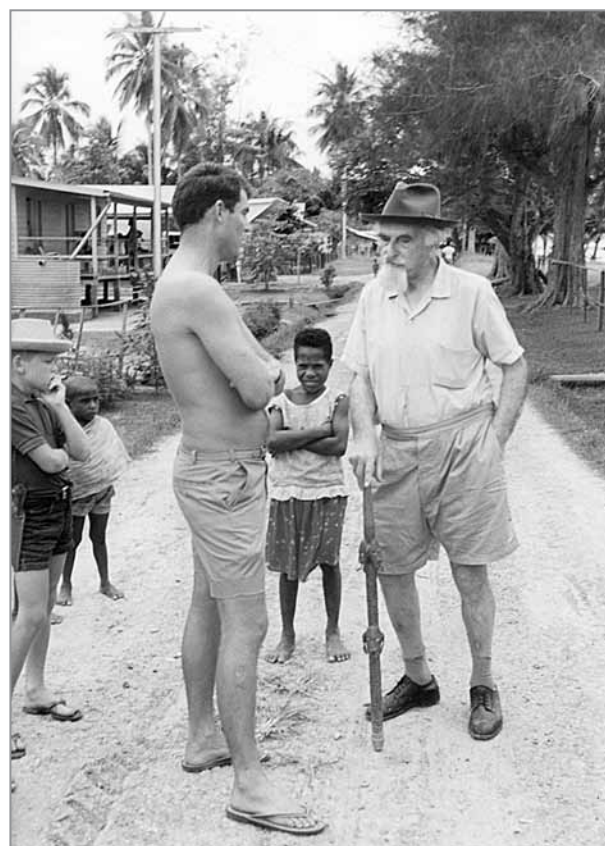
Mr. Lissauer, safe refuge in Angoram

Herman Lissauer, a German Jew, escaped to England “on business” when Hitler rose to power. His two oldest sons slipped through Holland and into small English ports, but the Nazis caught his wife and two younger sons and sent them to a concentration camp. His son, Mark, said they survived by “thousands” of bits of luck. England shipped Mr. Lissauer and his sons with other German passport holders to Australian POW camps. After the war, the reunited family started an herbal business in Bolivia, but civil war trapped them under a staircase for days. They wanted a safe place.

His family returned to Australia, but Mr. Lissauer tried Angoram in 1958. Dozing under the shade of its monkey pod trees, it seemed secure enough.

He started exporting *kanda*, cane for furniture, but the Sepiks never brought enough in. However, his nickname became *Masta Kanda* (Mr. Cane). His European courtesy stood out from the casual customs of Tobacco Road. Ron always called him Mr. Lissauer.

Mark visited his father in Angoram for the first time in 1960. He told us every time he came, his father made him repaint the whole house with creosote oil to keep the termites out. Keram River men worked for *Masta Kanda*. They fed slow fires in his smoke house where artifacts hung alongside drying meat, skins and herbs.



a shilling, the face value of the coins. Ron kept some for his own collection, others he sold in Sydney for ten to twenty-five dollars each. He made thousands of dollars from that box.

Ron and others who came to Angoram often stayed with friends, even in the rougher quarters along the Sepik. Ron bunked in one of the extra bedrooms in the back of the trade store at Jim McKinnon’s near Johnny Young’s boat. Very basic, no doors or screens on the windows, but it was free; plus Jim told him he could use any off-cuts he wanted to build his artifact cases.

McKinnon, a former boxer from north Queensland, remained a solid hulk of a man with a slight stoop,

curly graying hair and a twinkle in his blue eyes for pretty women. Every woman was “Princess” to him.

Nicknamed Deadly Dudley, McKinnon had been a war hero, mentioned in Dispatches of high honor in the Australian Army. With two bullets in his leg on Shaggy Ridge, he crawled out and pulled first one man, then three more, out of the line of Japanese fire.

Jim kept a lot going on in his Angoram *banis*, with other projects scattered all over New Guinea. He ran the typical expat small businesses in New Guinea, except he juggled more than most. At the dock where government work boats pulled in, he owned the Shell petrol agency. His big bush material sawmill at the bottom end of Tobacco Road employed forty-five men.

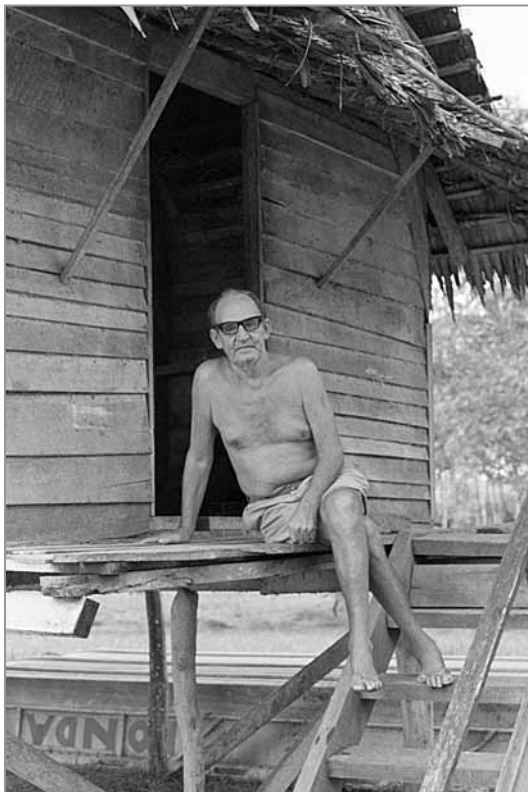


Figure 9.18: Yuat River masks carved by younger men, but their newer style did not sell and they stopped making them.

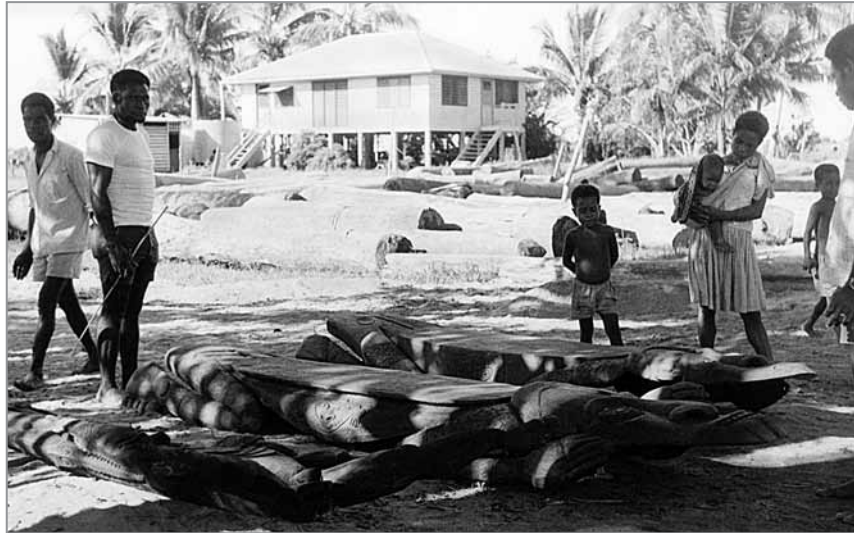
Johnny Young's store sold fish, rice, newspaper for cigarettes and a few artifacts. He told Ron to take a look at his old, traditional Biwat masks from the Yuat River, a style Ron hadn't seen. On the Yuat he paid forty cents for a mask, but Johnny wanted two hundred and twenty-five dollars each. Ron at that time never spent that much on a piece, so Johnny offered them to John Pasquarelli, who bought them immediately.

Pasquarelli started in New Guinea as a patrol officer, but other activities suited him better. He dealt in crocodile skins and artifacts, tried politics and tourism.

Figure 9.19: A friend of the Pork Pie King of England, Bob Mackie in his usual attire, relaxes on the porch of his house.

A wealthy Englishman who made his money in meat pies, the Pork Pie King stayed with an expat crocodile hunter on Tobacco Road. He took the bottom bunk in the little slat-floored house, but woke up after midnight in a shower. His host came home drunk, forgot he had a guest and peed over the side of the bed.

Figure 9.20: Keram River carvings laid out for sale in shade along Tobacco Road in front of Jim McKinnon's house. The kitchen is in the back of the house, near the steps to the rainwater tanks. Tanks were the only way to get clean, fresh water.



Simbai gold

Many servicemen from World War 2 who stayed in New Guinea tried prospecting. Jim proved luckier than most, he found almost pure gold at Simbai in remote mountains back of Madang south of the Ramu River. He built an airstrip and developed the mine. David Attenborough described Jim's early lonely days at Simbai in *Journeys to the Past*.

The Simbai were short, not quite pygmies, who lived in the Schrader Range, Madang Province. Jim hired Simbai men to work for him all over New Guinea.

A licensed gold buyer, Jim kept gold dust and nuggets in Nescafe cans on top of his refrigerator in Angoram, maybe four thousand dollars worth. Ron worried about thieves, but Jim didn't. Only banks could buy gold, and only from government licensed dealers.

One tooth of pure Simbai gold shone in the upper plate of his false teeth. His heart was pure gold, too. At Independence, he gave his mine to the Simbais. Anyone could ask him for a loan. If he had it, he gave it and forgot repayment.

Ron remembers the walk back with Jim late at night from the Club. Jim's sawmill men appeared, black men out of the black shadows along the track whispering, "Pist, pist, *masfa*, two shillings." He handed out money. It was the weekend; his men deserved to have some fun.

Famously absentminded, he once dropped the Pork Pie King off at Simbai while he flew to pick up a part for his Angoram sawmill. About a week later in a Madang pub, someone asked him what happened to his English friend. Jim completely forgot him, left him at Simbai, but the Pork Pie King didn't mind. He ate food from Jim's trade store, slept in the back room and happily trekked the spectacular mountains.

Nearby, in a shed about the size of a double car garage, his employees bought crocodile skins.

His trade store employed six *sameris* (women seamstresses) who made *meri* blouses for village women on treadle sewing machines in a shed near the sawmill. At the store, a big freezer chest held butter, pork chops, lamp tongues and lamb flaps. His bakery sold the only fresh bread in town.

Jim trekked all over New Guinea recruiting village men for two-year contract work on plantations in the Territory. Recruits from the Sepik reported to him in Angoram for transport to the plantations. He ran coastal and river boats from Madang up the Sepik and the Ramu, plus a charter airline, Kokomo Air.

He carried on in an enthusiastic mixture of Aussie English and *Tok Pisin*, a pure stream of consciousness conversation: the design for a better shallow-draft boat for low-water shipping, a trade store building on

the Ramu, his latest political plans. He never locked his house when he went out to the Angoram Club at night, his generous personality and powerful reputation protected him; besides which, he really did not worry about anything for very long.

Ludwig Somare, the father of Papua New Guinea's future prime minister, used to leave his four wives in Kaup to talk politics with Jim in Angoram. As Michael Somare pushed for Independence, Jim helped found one of New Guinea's first political parties. At Independence, he gave up his Australian citizenship for Papua New Guinea citizenship.

Jim won the Middle Ramu seat in the Territory's 1968 election for its Second House of Assembly. He planned to give his maiden speech on June 4th when the Assembly convened. He didn't need to be gone long, a couple of weeks. He asked Ron to mind his Angoram businesses while he was away.

Ron owed a lot to Jim. From a 1969 letter to his mother, "My sincere thanks for the

Jim's dance at Ma Stewart's bar

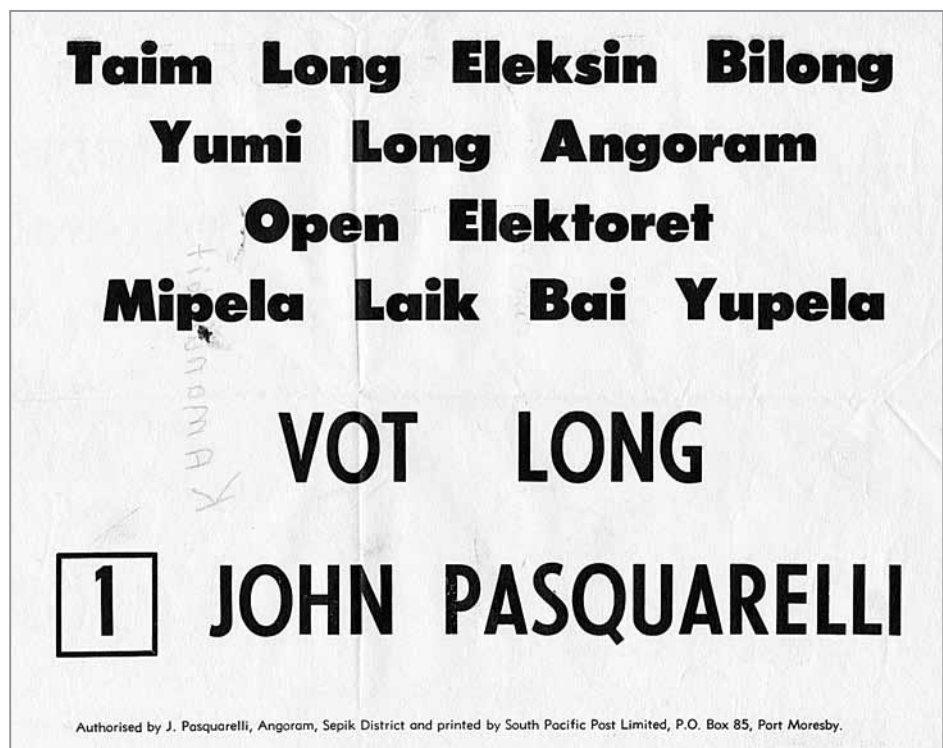
One of many stories about Jim happened after World War 2. Ma Stewart, Johnny Young's sister, ran a pub in the gold rush center of Bulolo Wau between the two world wars.

Her fame came when she heaved a drunken Errol Flynn eight feet down off the porch of her pub after he refused to leave. After World War 2, she came out to Lae, bought a two-story Army Officers' Club quonset hut cheap and converted it into the famous Cecil Hotel.

Jim drank in her bar. A happy drinker, he sometimes danced a Scottish jig on her little round tables. One night a drunk heckled him, called him a pouf, a queer.

Jim told him to piss off, but the fellow kept it up. Jim jumped down, floored him with two punches, fractured his jaw and cheekbone, then he jumped back up on the table and kept dancing. He never missed a beat.

Figure 9.21: John Pasquarelli's *Tok Pisin* campaign flyer for the House of Assembly.



Michael Somare

The son of Ludwig and Kambe Somare, Michael was born in Rabaul where his father, a sergeant in the police force, was stationed. During World War 2, he attended a Japanese primary school in his home village, Karau, in the Murik Lakes district of the Lower Sepik. His earliest lessons were in Japanese and he liked the Japanese teachers.

After the war, he continued his schooling and earned a teaching certificate. He taught school and also became a radio announcer in the East Sepik.

Somare and the Territory's Administration became increasingly at odds over his outspoken views that independence should come sooner rather than later in Papua and New Guinea.

During this time, the final acts of overt Western colonial rule played out in Southeast Asia. Indonesia under Sukarno forced the Dutch from their last stand in the eastern half of New Guinea. Many Melanesians felt that the Javanese and other Indonesians merely replaced the Dutch. However, dubious elections ended European rule in 1969 and handed the Dutch U.N. protectorate to Indonesia. The United States fought an ultimately losing battle in Vietnam against Vietnamese Communist soldiers, a remnant of French colonial rule in Southeast Asia sucked into the broader context of the Cold War.

Somare and others founded the Pangu Party in 1967. Elected to the Second House of Assembly in 1968, he became the first leader of the opposition in the Territory's parliament.

sending of seeds and chilies to Jim McKinnon. I appreciate that more than you realize. He's been so kind to me for the last two years, gave us a house and car in Madang, canoes and motors and house on the Sepik. He's a real kind fellow. I can never do enough to repay him, he loves the chilies. I usually carry a bottle or tin to him every time I go up."

Ron said okay, but only for a couple of weeks and no more because he promised Barbara he would not spend so long in New Guinea this time. Jim's *bani*s needed a lot of minding, and much of it Ron learned as things turned up.

He recalls, "In the early morning, I'd get the forty-five sawmill men checked off for the day and tell them what to do. We had a *so dokta* (saw doctor) who sharpened our big four or five foot in diameter blades.

"To get logs to the mill, people made rafts in the villages. They cut all year in their area upstream in the dry. Then in high water, they floated logs out in narrow channels they dug to the side rivers and on to the Sepik. There would be fifteen to twenty men, plus some wives and kids, dogs, coconuts and bananas on those rafts, plus maybe a simple thatch house on it and a canoe tied on to go back up river in.

"Rafts of logs were sixteen to eighteen feet wide and sixteen feet long or more. We wouldn't take any

log under nine feet long because that was too short to use for buildings. They put four to five heavy logs of *kwila* or *garamut*, which were too dense to float, in the middle of the raft with the lighter wood on the outside. We paid double for those heavy logs.

“All these rafts started turning up. They tied up at the top of the Service Camp so they didn’t overshoot the mill or find there was no place to tie up. The rafts didn’t have motors, they just drifted down, so there was no easy way to bring them back up river if they missed. They floated on out to the Bismarck Sea.

“Men came down to the mill to ask if they could bring their logs in tomorrow. I could only do so many a day. I’d give them a day, say, number four day, Thursday. When they got there, we tied their log raft to a big wire cable and winched each log up a slot in the bank and rolled it into their pile — really big logs.

Next morning I went with two men and a metal tape. One man held one end, the other man ran the tape down and called out the length, girth and type of wood. That man was a smart guy and he could speak English.

“I’d ask the men, ‘Where’s all of Solomon’s logs?’

“Each man knew his logs. I wrote down his first log in my book, then



Figure 9.22: Ludwig Somare carved this mask for Jim McKinnon. Jim gave it to Ron for his father as a thank you for the chilies.

Figure 9.23: Dozens of log rafts wait for Jim’s sawmill in Angoram. Mills paid more for the densest woods, *kwila* for house posts and beams because of its strength, resistance to rot and termites, and *garamut*, the preferred wood for the big slit-gong drums (which were also called *garamut*) in the *Haus Tambarans*, which was also used in milled timber construction.



Figure 9.24: Mangi, Jim's manager, inspects racks of crocodile skins drying outside McKinnon Enterprises, Tobacco Road, Angoram.



the next one and the next. After four or five hours, I'd take a break, go eat lunch at the hotel and figure the accounts. For softwoods, Jim was paying about a dollar-eighty for one hundred board feet. One man might have twenty-eight dollars worth of logs. The next might have forty-two dollars. Another might get sixteen dollars. It was their full cash money maker for all year. I'd do all the reckoning and that afternoon I'd pay them."

Ron also managed Jim's trade store, "Jim wanted me to keep an eye on things there, too. The manager and his wife sent their teenage daughter in to flirt with me, hoping they could nick some butter out of the freezer, but it didn't work."

Jim employed many Kambot Village men from the Keram River to work at the mill. His baker, Mospa, was also a Kambot. The bakery consisted of six fifty

gallon drums on their sides covered with clay. Mospa worked on a bench opposite these bush ovens. He built substantial fires in each one. When the wood burned down to red hot coals, he put in metal pieces of salvaged Marsden matting (a grating used on swampy airstrips). The bread loaf tins sat on that, then he propped sheets of iron in front of each one.

Ron recalls, “Mospa got drunk every Friday night after he got paid, so there would be no bread on Saturday which was a big shopping day. I started paying him on Saturday instead. He’d get rowdy and end up in jail. I’d have to bail him out. I’d let him sit there until Monday unless we needed the bread. He baked at four in the morning and the bread sold out by nine. It was twenty cents for a little loaf.”

Figure 9.25: Ron's line of artifacts photographed in front of Jim's McKinnon's *banis* includes a Kambot figure, a Middle Sepik River *tumbuan*, a Marip Village *tumbuan* and a large Middle Sepik hook. More artifacts lean against the stacked logs on left.

Jim's house is in the background and the typical overhung gable of a Keram River house projects in on the right.



Figure 9.26: Ron and Keram River carver, Ignas Waybenang with his statue which they sold to Dr. Gajdusek when he visited Angoram. Ron has photographs of the carving on display at the National Institute of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, USA.

Ignas began carving in his teens. His brothers, Zacharias and Paulas, joined him at Jim's sawmill. Besides their large figures, their innovative bas-relief carvings decorated their flat panel story boards, as well as tables, panels and doors.

Dr. Daniel Carleton Gajdusek studied *kuru* in New Guinea. He and Baruch S. Blumberg were awarded the 1976 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their research.

Kuru, or laughing sickness, was a fatal disease found among the Fore in the Eastern Highlands, transmitted between villagers who ate the brains of deceased relatives. The Fore believed this custom passed on the deceased's powers to surviving kin.

Cannibals were not always head hunters and neither practice was common in New Guinea. Where it occurred, both were governed by customary laws — village or clan traditional practices.



One of Mospa's younger brothers, Ignas, worked at the sawmill. He carved stools with powerful squatting men holding up the seat. Keram villages were famous for the beautiful palm bark paintings that decorated their *Haus Tambarans*. Ignas started to carve those designs on off cuts from the sawmill and sold them to local expats and tourists. He and his brother, Zacharias, and later, their younger brother, Paulas, developed these into a contemporary New Guinea art form, story boards. Ignas and Zacharias carved a beautiful lintel to go over their brother's bakery.

(Ron bought this lintel in Kambot in 1995 from Mospa. He wanted Ron to have it because it meant a lot to them and it would rot away in their village. It hangs in the portal of his home in Tucson.)

Ron said, “I also had to buy the croc skins. Mongi, Jim’s *bos boi* (manager), knew what he was doing and I didn’t. At first, I lost more money than I took in. One of the expats on Tobacco Road sent his man up two or three times a week to sell skins for beer money. They sold me freshwater for salt, at a three times difference in price and a lot more beer.

“There were thirty-two categories. A man would come in with one hundred to four hundred dollars worth of skins. Mongi measured across the belly below the armpits, starting two scales down from each armpit. That was the size. Then it had to be graded.



Figure 9.27: Carver Zacharias Waybenang stands to the right of his black cockatoo man. On the Keram, the black cockatoo, uniquely plentiful in the area, remained a powerful totem from head-hunting days.

Figure 9.28: Zacharias poses with his chisel and split-leg male finial carving; Cletus helps hold it upright. Zacharias’ earlobe is pierced wide enough to hold a shell ring during ceremonies. Both brothers developed personal styles. Ignas carved with an elegant, subtle hand. Zacharias’ forms were more three dimensional and flamboyant.

Figure 9.29: Mongi, Jim McKinnon's *bos boy*, and his off-sider, Franz, grade skins outside Jim's croc buying shed.



The first division was between large scale, fresh water and small scale saltwater. An inch of salty was worth about two dollars and twenty cents.

“Another job was checking recruits. Five to twelve of Jim’s recruits came in from their villages about once a week. Jim got around twenty-two dollars for every man. Government regulations said recruiters could only sign up sixty percent of a village’s able-bodied men, so enough men remained to do the work and protect the place. There was a huge demand for labor and village men had few opportunities to earn cash. Big plantations needed six to eight hundred men.

“We’d line the recruits up around nine. They had to be above puberty. Mongi hollered, ‘*Apim arm!*’ (Raise your arm.) We checked by looking for hair under their arm because no one knew their age. Mongi couldn’t read or write, so I did the write-up, got their names,

villages, guessed their ages. They got a blanket, a knife, fork, spoon, plate, cup and rations.

“Every three men got one tin of meat a day, Spam or fish, plus one pound of rice per man rationed in a cook pot, two to three sticks of tobacco a week, two sheets of newspaper to roll smokes, one to two boxes of matches, a spoon of salt. All this was regulated by the government.

“Sometimes they had to wait three to five weeks until Jim came back to transport them out. They got fed and slept in the *boi haus*, a thatch roof building. I gave out rations on Monday or Saturday.

“Once they got to the plantation, they were paid about four dollars and fifty cents a month, full room and board, medical, boat fare over and back, plus a blanket and some personal stuff. They bought other supplies from the plantation commissary on credit. They could plant gardens, hunt and fish on their day off. They worked for two years before they got paid. If they ran away, they got nothing; ninety-five percent finished. At the end, it was about one hundred dollars, enough to pay bride price back in their village and get married.

“Jim told me he’d be back in two or three weeks after he gave his speech, but he ran on New Guinea time. After three weeks, I sent a telegram off to Barb that he wasn’t back yet. By six weeks, she was sending

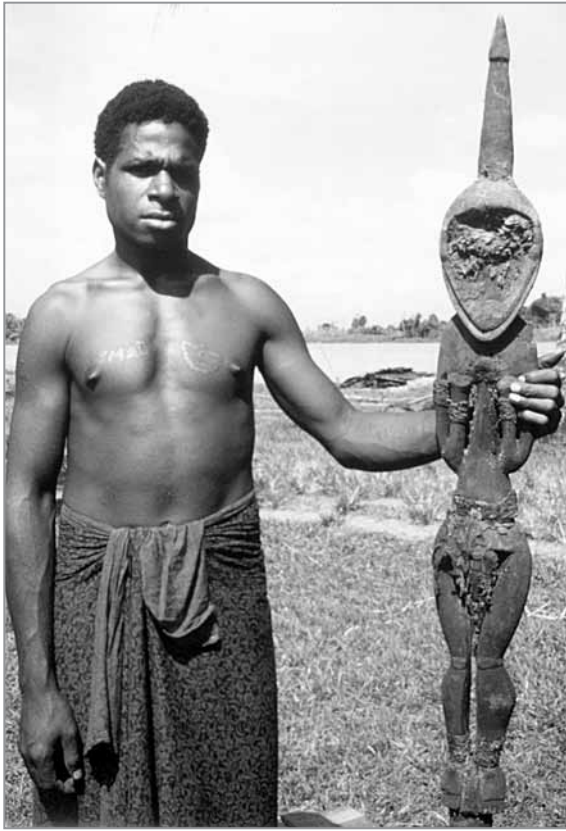


Figure 9.30: James holds a unique Pora Pora figure brought to Ron in Angoram. The skull was missing. Either it had rotted or it was still valuable as the men did not bring it in to sell with the carving. Pieces of the figure's *laplap* and woven armbands were still intact. The restored carving is the frontispiece for this chapter.

me two telegrams a week, 'You'd better come home or there's a divorce.'

"I was just about chewing my nails, but I was happy because I was buying artifacts. I couldn't go out rounding on the Sepik because there was too much to do at Jim's, but people came in all the time wanting to sell me something. I'd tell them to wait. I was that busy. Sometimes I forgot all about them.

"Some men from a place on the Pora Pora came up one morning with a long bundle, almost six feet, wrapped in these real dirty old burlap rags. I was busy. They waited all day for me. They could have gone off to sell to someone else, but they knew me. So I thought I'd better take a look before I went up to the Club. They unwrapped these greasy rags. Inside was this really old, unique figure, one of the best pieces I ever bought. I missed the Karawari cult hooks, but I was lucky on that one."

Ron finally left for Sydney on a Friday. On the weekend he sat on the outside toilet at home reading the Sunday newspaper when he saw a small headline, "*Plane Crash Outside Mount Hagen Kills Test Pilot and His Two Passengers.*" He felt right away it was Mads and Mary. A telegram later that day from Peter Johnson confirmed his fears.

The couple often flew to Mount Hagen to buy a load of vegetables for their pets. Something went wrong and the extra weight probably took them down. A U.S. Navy plane from Guam later carried some of their animals to a new home at the San Diego Zoo.

After Mads' death, the Administration found Papuan heads in their house along with the Mercury partnership papers. Ron knew a Mumeri man sold human heads to Mads and other dealers. Ron told Admin he didn't know about Mads' artifact business. He did know he had lost two good friends and that Indonesian New Guinea and the Asmat had to wait.

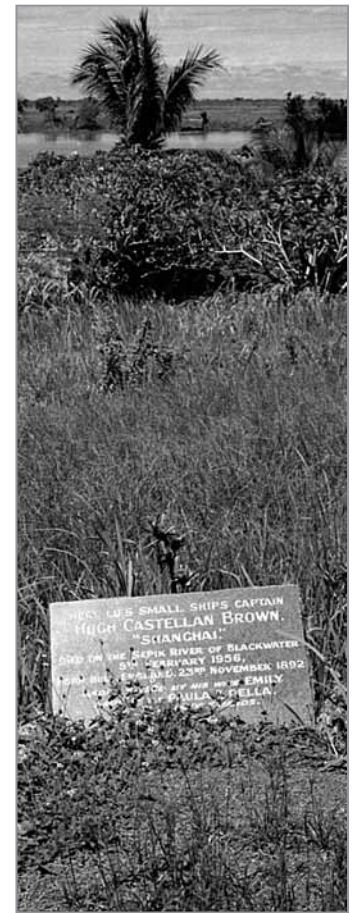


Figure 9.31 (above): The graveyard in Angoram with the tombstone of a river boat captain who died on the Blackwater River in 1956. The Sepik River flows on in the background. Life in New Guinea was often short, the end unexpected.

Figure 9.32 (left): Neils and Mary Madsen's tombstone in the Angoram Cemetery.