

RE BOUGAINVILLE, from Eric Andrews

I will try to remember what took place in Sydney and give comments on the significance.

Jim Coulter came up from Melbourne [on 19 August, 1969] and was staying with me. He and Geoff Warren met Paul Lapun and Raphael Bele to try and help them in Sydney. Geoff and Jim reported to me that their hotel was 3rd class and that they were cold and uncomfortable. I knew Paul was a friend of George Wood, so I invited the two people to come and stay with us.

At table Jim helped Paul, and Eric tried to make friends with Raphael. He was very bitter and refused to eat white man's food for three or four days, living on bananas, which Winsome provided.

The first night Peter Hastings turned up with a girl photographer in short skirts above her knees which she pulled up higher as she rudely pointed a camera in Paul's face allegedly trying to photograph him. It was a blatant attempt to throw him, and they wanted to take the two out on the town at night.

Paul resolutely refused and refused their offer of a barrister to advise them. Peter Hastings was a nuisance and kept phoning over the next few days.

Winsome had guidance to feed the men and take no notice of what they were doing otherwise. She could then answer the phone and say she did not know where they were.

Jim and I tried to encourage Paul and Raphael to have guidance about what to do.

Jim's was to follow Paul's guidance, which he did in detail. Paul finally had guidance:

1. To see Sir Maurice Mawby, the Chairman of the Company.
2. To see Sir John Gorton, the Prime Minister.
3. To see Mr Barnes, the Minister of External Territories.

It was agreed to see them in that order.

I tried to make friends with Raphael. He was bitter and kept to his room for three days except for meals. He explained to me that "if someone wanted his land and he did not want them to have it, they would have to kill him or he would kill the person." They did not want a white community within 3 miles of their village, to protect their women!

They needed legal advice and did not trust Peter Hastings and his friends, so on Sunday I knew Don Mackay would be working as usual. I rang his private number, and Don agreed to see them in the office on Sunday afternoon. I knew Don well and Paul accepted him as advisor. Don agreed to take the case and went to Bougainville for about 2 weeks to talk to the people. His office had worked on an agreement with island people previously and he was able to help get a settlement.

On Monday we had to follow Paul's guidance, so early Jim rang Sir Maurice Mawby down in Melbourne. Mrs M. said, "He's just left for the office." Jim looked at his watch and guessed 20 minutes. Rang the office. The doorman answered as it was early, "He's just coming up the steps, Sir." Sir Maurice took the call and readily arranged a meeting with Paul and Raphael [that same day].

The next hurdle was to see Gorton, the Prime Minister. Jim was a close friend of Tony Eggleston [Press Secretary to the Prime Minister] and the Prime Minister met them [the next morning] and had a good interview and arranged for them to see Mr. Barnes. (Raphael was very forceful at that interview and said what his feelings were for about 10 minutes.)

The next interview was easy with the Minister as Gorton was on Paul's side and made it clear that a change was necessary.

It was significant that Paul had guidance to see them in that order, 1 – 2 – 3. Jim had guidance as to how to arrange it. So, it worked.

They came back to Sydney and flew off to Bougainville. Don Mackay managed to go up there also.

Paul got flu and went to bed for 3 days and then managed to have strength to address the villagers. Don Mackay drew up the legal agreement and gave them good, straight advice.

MY COMMENTS AND EVALUATION (Eric Andrews)

I think the time in Sydney was critical. The men came down bitter and wanting war. They were sent to arrange a fight in the courts. They left seeking reconciliation and a way of working together.

You talk of MRA and MRA doing it. What is MRA but God at work in the world.

Jim, Winsome and I were ordinary people trying to live under God's direction. Jim had more experience and was acknowledged as the leader. He had seen the 'light' when at school. Winsome and I had met it in 1954 and went on a world tour which became a training course.

We together provided care and friendship and allowed God to work through us to combat the bitterness [of the men], and [the] impurity of the Press, to provide an atmosphere where Paul and Raphael could begin to change and lose their bitterness.

The days at Mosman sheltered Paul and Raphael and freed them from the devastating influence of the media on full chase of a story using human nature at its worst. We gradually gained their confidence and provided friendship. God began to change them and prepared them for their interviews with the Company Chairman, the Prime Minister and the Minister

for the Territories. The order of the interviews was important. We could never have thought of that.

With the confidence built up we were able to advise them on a solicitor to conduct their case. I had known Don Mackay and worked with him for years. He had kept me straight and we both knew 'integrity'. Paul when introduced was able to accept our advice. Don was not influenced by the Press or anybody but gave independent advice which was ultimately adopted.

Paul's change continued in his quiet times in Bougainville when he was sick for 3 days. He was then able to confront the villagers and helped to change them.

Raphael's change was more gradual, but it was significant. It was helped by a book of illustrations of [Renaissance] Raphael's works of art in Italy. They were [of] religious subjects as understood in the 1500s. The villagers were very impressed. I had guidance to send it up to them. Luckily or by guidance I found it in Angus and Robertson's [bookstore] and posted it. I had no idea it would be used in the village.

The whole episode is a picture of God at work in the world. George was overseas at the time, but if he hadn't worked on me for many years, I would never have invited Paul and Raphael to my home. There, Jim, Winsome and I worked together because we had built up friendship and confidence through 'change' over many years.

Many people had a part, many of MRA, many from ordinary walks of life. It was all coordinated by a force unseen which we call God.

God put the metal into the ground, God had a plan to get it out, but also God had a plan to use his people under guidance to fight the forces of evil in the world.

That is the factor that should be stressed, that God can tell people what to do, if they will listen, and live purity so that they can hear.