



*Rev. H. Hage*

**HAGE, Hartley Bernhard Rev.**  
Was born at Angaston, South Australia, on May 31, 1930. After receiving elementary education, he had 4 years theological training at Immanuel Seminary, followed by 12 months Anthropology in Sydney, a course in Linguistics, 1 year in the Teachers' Training College, Adelaide. He was commissioned at Light Pass by Rev. A. H. Schubert on February 13, 1955. He left almost at once together with his wife, nee Myrtle Klemm, and arrived at Lae, Territory of New Guinea, on February 20, 1955. He was stationed at Heldsbach, 1955-56, Amron, 1957, and since 1958, at the Teachers' Training School, Bumayong. (Aus.).

1955-

FROM HELDSBACH to HAGEN

Rev. Hartley HAGE (1955-1972)

For almost 16 years my wife and I lived and worked in five of the six districts of the Church - a rather unusual experience for ordained missionaries in the fifties, who normally learnt the language of one district and remained there. The highs and lows of those years are contained in letters to our folks in Australia which were kept and recently returned to us. We didn't dare read them now, for it would have made the task of writing a short resume of our years quite impossible.

Deeds Done

During the 1930s, when still a primary school lad, I remember sitting under towering pine trees for an open-air Mission Festival at Immanuel Church, Light Pass. The preacher made a direct call to young people

to enter the ministry and from then on I felt I knew what God wanted of me. While attending the Lutheran School at Light Pass, I came across one of Dr Paul White's Jungle Doctor books. Thereafter I read every one of his books I could get my hands on and decided to become a missionary in Africa. This goal remained alive in me until my second-last year at Seminary when I was told it was impossible. For a while, I was exceedingly depressed. Happily, Dr Sasse, one of my teachers, invited me to his home and presented the challenge of New Guinea to me. Peace of mind returned and I joyfully accepted God's call there.

Following graduation from Immanuel Seminary at the end of 1952, I spent another two years preparing for New Guinea. One year was spent at Sydney University studying anthropology and that certainly helped to give me a positive, brotherly attitude towards the New Guineans at a time when a loving paternalism was more the order of the day. The second year was spent at Adelaide Teachers' College and that was a highlight of my many years of study. What I didn't know at the time was that all my years in New Guinea would involve me in education of one kind or another.

#### Home at Heldsbach

I guess we had expected to live in a bush home, but never did. As a newly married couple, we arrived in Heldsbach in February 1955, and settled in the humble home occupied by Rev. Willi Flierl for some years. (It has been replaced by a two-storey edifice.) We looked at the tiny rainwater tank and were sure it would soon be empty, but it never was, thanks to the regular rains. Funny what you remember!

Our two years at Heldsbach were filled with new experiences. Truly memorable is the singing of the congregation on a Sunday morning, and the inspired preaching of Teacher Mufuanuc. A highlight for us was to have him as dinner-guest one day. Students and teachers tended to venture no further than the verandah of the mission house in those years, with some occasionally setting foot in the study. Apart from my years at Heldsbach, I was involved with rather

small teachers' training classes and was able to invite all students to a meal and fellowship evening in our home. These were truly special occasions.

Regular trips to the government school at Dregerhafen for religious instruction and to conduct Sunday services were high points during this period. It involved driving the old army jeep as far as the Mape River, crossing that on a canoe, and then trying to start an even older jeep housed on the other side. On one occasion, all my efforts were in vain and I dared to ride Doug Kohn's motorbike to Dregerhafen - the only time I have ever ridden such a machine!

#### From Heldsbach to Hagen

The birth of our first child was a highlight naturally, and memorable. We were at Ampo and Alwin Zimmermann had shown me which jeep to take if we had to go to the hospital at night. Sure enough, around 2 a.m. it was time to go, but I couldn't get the lights to work and didn't want to wake Al at that unearthly hour. So one anxious husband drove his expectant wife all the way to the hospital by the light of a torch. Somewhere near old Chinatown, a New Guinean policeman, also holding a torch, tried to flag me down but since he was on foot I kept going. However, after depositing my wife at the hospital - I wasn't allowed to stay - I didn't dare drive back to Ampo. I walked! By the way, all of our six children were born in New Guinea and there was some drama with all but two of them.

#### Delightful Amron

Sitting on a hill with a magnificent view over the ocean, Amron was a lovely place for a home. We often watched the rain moving across the ocean towards us. What we won't forget and didn't enjoy were the fierce thunderstorms that came up the valley and seemed to explode just above the roof.

It was a bombshell that brought us to Amron in 1957 for what proved to be an exciting year. The Administration was beginning to demand the certification of teachers and an ability to conduct schools in English. A representative group of young men from the Yabem,

Kotte and Graged Districts came to Amron and I trained them with a view to obtaining their "A" certificates. It was very much a case of flying blind because details of requirements were extremely sketchy.

What did make this a memorable year though, was trying to mould into one student body three distinct and proud linguistic groups.

#### Bumayong's Baby

For us, Bumayong has the distinction of being the home where we lived the longest in N.G. - a whole five years. The large Yabem Area School and the smaller English School were already situated at Bumayong, not so far from Lae. My task here was to take graduates from the English school and prepare them for the "B" teacher's certificate. Helping me was Okamaesa Alung who had been one of my students at Amron. When we had our first furlough in 1960, he accompanied us to Australia and that was an unforgettable experience for both him and for us. I thoroughly enjoyed working with that man, and after furlough he was in charge of the practice school.

Expectations of the students were high. Imagine my surprise and dismay one Monday morning when I arrived in the classroom to find that not a single one of the twenty odd students had done his weekend assignments! I told them I was so shocked I couldn't teach them that day, and I walked across the oval to my study. I was equally impressed by the fact that they remained in the classroom all day, taking only the usual recess breaks. Interestingly enough, two of these men later became District Presidents of the Church.

Mine was the smallest and youngest school on the campus - the baby, but we enjoyed wonderful fellowship with the Marty Heist, Harold Brown, Bill Stoll, and Colin Rohrlach families. How could we ever forget those trips together into Lae for Sunday evening service and after that, the many welcomes to new arrivals at the Mission Guest House!

#### Rare Opportunity

Under threat of closure by the government, many of the Lutheran Village Schools were designated as

Religious Literacy Centres. It's all a long, interesting story in which I became involved too. I was appointed Religious Literacy Officer and this led me to undertake a survey of schools in almost every circuit in the Lae, Finschhafen, Madang, Goroka, Chimbu and Hagen districts. What an experience that was! I won't forget 1964 in a hurry.

It was indeed a rare opportunity to gain an appreciation of the Church and Mission, and to enjoy the fellowship of missionaries from so many different nationalities and backgrounds. One little story will suffice.

My destination was Ponampa in the Goroka District. Heinrich Bamler was taking me in his Landrover, starting from Raipinka early in the morning. Unfortunately, there had been heavy rains and we got bogged a number of times. To make matters worse, the road ended at a river, for the bridge was broken. So we walked, stopping every so often because Heini Bamler had quite a severe fever, but insisted on continuing. Several New Guineans accompanying us discussed carrying the sick man. However, this was too horrific to contemplate and he got to his feet in a hurry.

It was just on dark when we reached Ponampa, utterly exhausted. What hospitality awaited us - a roast dinner followed by peach pie and ice-cream! We really didn't feel like eating and I had the peach pie for supper. Anyhow, after the meal, the missionary asked, "What did you come for?" Well!! (My itinerary had been carefully planned and circulated.)

Wau and Wow!

The place and the exclamation do belong together. For us coastal dwellers, the crisp mountain air of Wau was truly exhilarating. What a wonderful place for a holiday with the family in those comfortable cottages, with all needs provided for and a swimming pool as well!

Truly memorable are the 10-day Mission Conferences and the many, many friendships made. For a number of years I had the enjoyable challenge of being Conference Secretary. When I asked my predecessor if

he had any advice to give me, he simply said, "Anticipate the conclusion of the debate and have a resolution ready." It was good advice and it was rather fascinating to see how near the mark I could get. So often people simply moved something without formulating the resolution and it was rather satisfying to stand up, read what I had written and ask, "Would that do?" Mind you, it wasn't always that simple, especially on that memorable occasion when Conference had a most spirited and emotional debate about selling the Mission Supply House in Madang.

As a secretary, I have had the highest regard for Dr Kuder as Conference Chairman, or simply as chairman of the Mission Executive. Only once did he leave me sitting high and dry. It was just after morning worship at a Mission Conference at Wau. He opened the meeting in the usual way and then proceeded to castigate the noisy, late-night revellers who had robbed him of precious sleep. Next thing, he walked out amid a deathly silence, and there I sat, facing about 180 Mission Staff wondering what to do next! Well, it was one way to get a message across, and he returned in due time to continue giving us his inspirational leadership and sharing his great wisdom. I would have to say that the Mission Conference was the highlight of the year, even though the seats became awfully hard, and we held our breath until the heavily-laden DC3 actually lifted its wheels from the end of the Wau airstrip and sped us on our homeward way.

#### Historic Sattelberg

In 1963 we moved to this "saddle mountain" and I had my first experience of living on a circuit station. For many months of the year our home was shrouded in fog for a large part of the day, and we found it difficult to imagine Sattelberg as the health station in the early years of the Mission. It was here that my wife became very ill and we subsequently spent several years in Australia before returning to New Guinea.

While on this station, we celebrated the wedding of Gerd and Gerdi Sander. At the last minute, I had to stand in as best man since the ship carrying the chosen attendant had not arrived. Just before the wedding service, we made another sudden decision. They were planning to spend their honeymoon at Sattelberg, going on trips to villages but living in the guest room. Since my wife and family were away at the time, I offered them my house instead. Just as well, for it rained almost non-stop for a fortnight with almost no opportunity for walking and they would have been cooped up in one tiny room.

#### Townies

Living in Goroka, with electricity 24 hours a day, was quite an experience. Before we enjoyed this, we had a year out at Rintebé, another one of the Teachers' Training schools. Our older children have fond memories of Rintebé with its airstrip. They often interrupted their correspondence lessons to dash out and see who had arrived.

After 10 years living in coastal areas, we certainly enjoyed our years in the Highlands. What we didn't particularly enjoy here was the need to bring in all the children's things at night, and the many callers saying, "Mi laik wok."

#### Last Stop

From Goroka town we moved back into the "bush" in the Hagen District. Once again, I was asked to start a new Teachers' Training School, this time for District Bible School teachers. It was located at Kitip, just across the road from the Kotna Hospital. We used a 16-seater bus to take us to the Kentagle District Bible School for practice lessons. This work I found truly enjoyable.

Shortly before concluding our work in New Guinea at the end of 1972, a New Guinean turned up at my door and said he was taking one of my students back to his village. I protested, saying that he was about to do his final exams and graduate as a teacher. What's more, he was in no danger from other students even though there had been a fight in one of the Hagen

villages. However, the man replied, "You are a white man. You don't understand!" I suppose I would have to agree, even though I had spent many years living and working with these people whom I loved and respected as fellow members of the Body of Christ.