

ISLAND ECHOES

Serving Christ in the Islands of Micronesia and the Philippines



Pacific Missionary Aviation

A MAN CALLED ABRAHAM

By Melinda R. Espinosa

Not so many years ago, a young missionary named Abraham “Bambit” Balayo and his family were on furlough in Manila. Only days before departing for Palau for their third term of service with PMA—Bambit’s oldest daughter, who was seven at the time, had a life-threatening accident. Bambit called his dad just to let him know, and his dad’s entreaty was: “Come home, Bambit. What has happened that you’re facing so many trials now? Come home. You have a place here in the school that I’ve founded!” His dad also knew that PMA’s ministry in Palau, where Bambit served, was undergoing changes and challenges; hence, his strong urging.



ON THE COVER: Pastor Bambit and Joy Balayo with their children Romeena, Berneace, and Jaeden

Bambit heard his dad’s pleading; however, his reply was, “Dad, my name is Abraham. I must trust the Lord. He is the One in control.”

Abraham “Bambit” Balayo had given his life to the Lord as a child. And even though he was a pastor’s son, he had delayed fully surrendering to Him until later in life. Making the Lord the Master of his life didn’t happen until after Bambit had completed his college education, a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Management. Now he planned to manage his own 13-hectare parcel of farmland (approx. 35 acres) of timber and mango trees in the Philippines.

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But God had different plans for him.

He met Joy del Rosario, a childhood friend, at a church conference they both attended. Joy, who was a missionary kid and the daughter of Pastor Romy and Annie del Rosario (PMA missionaries to Palau), had always wanted to be a mission-



Ordination and dedication

ary. During her fourth year in college, she felt the Lord leading her to complete her degree in music. She knew this music would be used for His glory and in service to Him.

After that meeting, Bambit and Joy began to correspond with each other, and their love for one another blossomed and grew, despite their long distance courtship. After two years passed, they were married. Life could have been simpler for Bambit and Joy, but they had two different roads stretched before them. They could be part of the Philippine ministry of Bambit’s dad who founded and manages a school for Moslems. Here, the Muslims would

be lovingly confronted with the Person of Jesus Christ. Or Bambit and Joy could go back to manage Bambit’s farm.

But only a few months after Bambit and Joy were married, Joy’s father, Pastor Romy, became extremely ill. After only a month in the hospital, he passed away. During his funeral service, the pastor who led the service gave a challenge: “Whom shall I send? Who will go for me? Who is willing to go to Palau and continue the work there?” Without consulting each other, both Bambit and Joy stood. Both of them had received a calling to serve with PMA in Palau. Almost immediately, they put “feet” into their faith by applying to PMA as missionaries in Palau. After their interview



Pastor Nob Kalau prays for Pastor Bambit

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TO KNOW GOD'S WILL

By Boyet Punzalan, Youth Pastor



Young people and carwash ministry

Spring Break 2005 was the perfect time to hold our PMF Youth Retreat because we were going to be saying good-bye to graduating seniors who'd soon leave Pohnpei for universities abroad. We wanted the young people to enjoy a special time, yet also take with them treasures from the Word of God concerning their life and their future. So, we thought,

there wasn't a better theme for our Youth Retreat than "To Know God's Will".

Nahlap Island, a tiny atoll off Pohnpei Island, was the setting. The retreat was highlighted with life testimonies shared by our pastor, **Nob Kalau** and wife **Sylvia**. Pastor **Epel** and other businessmen and members of



Fun time

our church, **Hubert, Haser** and **Gary**, spoke on the different aspects of God's will. These important topics included day-to-day life, career planning and choosing a life partner.

Group dynamics and workshops led by **Bev** and **Pia** were great learning experiences, and also lots of fun. Pia tirelessly took care of the children so the adults could concentrate on the program. Parents of the children served as counselors and shared devotions each day. And we won't forget the tasty meals prepared by several women, headed up by **Merme** and **Mary**.



Counselors and youth

Later, when I asked the young people for their comments about our retreat, they responded with an overwhelming message: "It was too short!"



Devotion time

I believe God made a breakthrough in each of the young people's lives, especially in the significant area of parent-teen relationships. I thank God for parents and friends who made this spring break possible!



Refreshing time with God

**"My Son,
do not forget
my teaching,
but keep my
commands in
your heart,
for they will
prolong your
life many years
and bring you
prosperity."**

Proverbs 3:1-2

MORE THAN JUST A LEARNING CENTER

By Mercy Burata, Missionary Teacher

Praise God for a recent successful graduation day of Pacific Mission Fellowship Learning Center on Patnanungan Island in the Quezon Region of the Philippines. Parents and guests enjoyed our program as the children sang special numbers, recited poems and memory verses, and received awards.



The Graduates

Fourteen little ones were promoted to first grade that day. Our pastor, John Arancillo, shared a message based on our theme for the day: "I Am Special." Parents listened attentively as his message emphasized how to treat and encourage a child as a special gift from God. A team of visitors from our Manila

office, our Pilot & Captain Malcolm Cleope and his wife Mary, Joel Legaspi and Mr. & Mrs. Stibal, were also in attendance.

It's been a joy to realize the Lord's goodness to these students throughout this year. They have learned so much! Yet the children were not the only ones who learned. God has challenged me, stretched my faith in

Him often, and allowed me to learn many things through my interaction with the children.



With Ms. Mercy



Guest Delores Stibal distributing gifts

Him often, and allowed me to learn many things through my interaction with the children.

My little "stars" inspire me to encourage them. I'm not only able to provide them with the basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic but, more importantly, God has enabled me to share with them the truths from His Word, and the children have absorbed those truths like simple sponges.

I remember one little boy who wanted to quit school. One day he asked me, "Teacher Mercy, is it really important for me to study and go to school?" I told him how important learning and studying were so he could prepare himself for his life ahead. His behavior changed overnight! He surprised his mother by his newfound eagerness to go to school everyday. My reward came when he told me, in a very serious voice, "I do not want to be nothing. I want to be somebody someday."

It is my prayer that what the students learn at our Center will always remain in their hearts. That God's words will not depart from them, as they grow older. And this teacher has a promise from the Lord: that when we "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old, he will not depart from it!"

TEAM WORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

By Melinda R. Espinosa

February 2005 marked a special time in the lives of our Palau and Yap Mission Teams. Our Yap Team flew to Palau to enjoy a time of refreshment, fellowship and retreat with our Palau Team. **Norbert Kalau**, PMA's CEO, and **Melinda Espinosa**, CFO, joined the group as well. The retreat's theme was: "Team Work Makes the Dream Work".

The retreat was a refreshing time for everyone, especially the morning sessions



PMA Palau and Yap team with Nob and Melinda

about "Church Engaging Society." This important topic was a great encouragement, because this is what PMA is all about: Engaging society, impacting the islands and cultures through our various ministries/services and allowing Christ to transform individuals.

Afternoons were spent in revisiting our Mission, Vision and Core Values, as well as planning for the future. Evenings were spent with the rest of the Pacific Mission Fellowship (PMF) core group, along with members attending the seminar, taught by our special guest speaker, **Pastor Nonon Punzalan**, from Manila. Pastor Nonon conducted a successful and well-attended seminar based on **Author and Pastor John Maxwell's**, "Equipping Leaders to Reach Our World." This was Pastor Nonon's third time to be a guest of PMA. He had also conducted the seminar in Guam and Pohnpei. We are blessed to have him be a part of the training for our current and future leaders,

and also, teaching on an integral part of our mission statement, to "Disciple the Faithful."

Yap Team member **Simon Hammerling**, who attended PMA's Retreat for the first time, shared: "In the mornings, we talked about a "church engaging society. This idea has challenged me to make my life count, and to be an agent of transformation where the Lord plants me. We often get lost in the routines of mission work and church, attending to our duties and responsibilities, attending Bible studies, prayer meetings, and other activities. Soaking up information, remaining passive, not really impacting society with our lives. Not being the light and salt as we should be.

My first thought on the theme, 'Equipping Leaders to Change the World', was "Wow, this is so overwhelming. So much to learn and understand. So many ideas. How can I remember all of them?" I realized that whether I liked it or not, whether I knew it or not, I was impacting lives around me. Someone always watches our lives and emulates us, for better or for worse.

It made me more aware of my responsibility and accountability to God. It opened my eyes to what a leader is, and should be. It reminded me that we are leaders wherever we are. And that I can begin to be that person, by being consistently faithful under His authority.

It is my prayer that the Lord will continue to work in my life to someday be a servant leader, and to always be a good role model to those who are within my sphere of influence. To be that agent of transformation wherever He plants me. May I always be aware of the Lord's help.



Group photo of seminar attendees

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK: JOMALIG MEDICAL OUTREACH

By Joel Legaspi

On April 8, 2005, we flew a medical/dental and eye care team to Jomalig. This outreach was part of the ongoing follow-up on the islands after having suffered two consecutive supertyphoons in December 2004. A feeding program of undernourished children was also put in place in conjunction with the medical outreach. The feeding program was administered under Pacific Mission Fellowship (FMS' outreach church) and they served over one hundred children, feeding them congee with chicken.

Our dentist examined a total of 51 patients, our medical team attended to 40 patients and our eye doctor examined 30 patients. All in a day's work.

We are so thankful for the assistance of one doctor and two medical assistants from the Jomalig health center.

The medical flight was sponsored by CBM/RBI, who also provided funds for medicines. Rice donations came in from Philrads ministries. Other medicines and supplies came through project Luke Ministries Asia. Indeed the work in the islands is not the work of just one man or one organization. We are thankful we have partners who believe in what we do and who help us serve the island peoples.



The FMS Team



A busy day for our volunteer dentist



Dr. John at work



Medical assistant screening patient



Doctor Volunteer checking Patient



Malcolm and Amos assist in distributing medicines

(A Man Called Abraham, cont. from pg. 3)

and the application protocol were completed, they left for Palau. And Bambit and Joy rejoiced in the fact that the Lord had brought them together, and now He had given them the same mission and vision.

Bambit's assignment was to administer the mission station: taking care of finances, general services and general administration; he was also involved in various Bible studies. But as the years went by, it was clear that the Lord was leading Bambit more and more into pastoral service. Bambit saw the need for caring and nurturing the congregation, and most especially, the discipling of men.

PMA leadership also saw this, and they provided the resources for Bambit to take a Master's course in Pastoral Ministries. While still taking classes online, he handled on-the-job training and was able to implement what he had learned in his studies.

After two years, Bambit was ready for the challenge of pastoring the growing Pacific Mission Fellowship church in Palau. He finished the ordination process, and in February of 2005, he was ordained a pastor. It had been nine years since the Lord had called Joy and him to fulltime service with PMA. At the keyboard often these days, Joy leads the Sunday morning worship team.

Bambit and Joy, who are parents of three lively youngsters, see their daily challenges in the ministry as "God's incidents". And just as the Old Testament Abraham trusted God, Bambit and Joy continue to have faith that He will provide, and will sustain and protect them, as they continue to trust Him completely.