

# TT-EXTRA: Asia Minor

„To the thirsty I will give freely from the spring of the water of life.“ (Rev 21:6)

Mid-February 2018

## Of VW Beetles, “Yamyam” and Bridges in Distant Lands...

Shortly before Christmas 2017 we were on board the aeroplane on the way to Asia Minor – a ministry visit and to see friends – but only for a week! This had been planned for a long time and it was the wish of our dear colleagues who have already been working in this particular country for 14 years and can speak the national language perfectly. A week seemed all too short, but what we experienced in meeting people during this limited time was something very intense, impressive and unforgettable!

We want to tell you about one of these occasions...

**It was the day before we were due to leave.**



Our Austrian co-workers are also members of the local ‘VW Old-Timers Fan Club’ here in their mountain city in Asia Minor. They had the idea of inviting the club Members, who over the years have become their friends, to their house to hear about Papua New Guinea. They have a photo of a **1303 Beetle** in a silver coloured frame on a little cupboard; they took this picture themselves at one of the pre-

vious club gatherings.

At some point after this our colleagues bought themselves an old **VW LT 28** over there and now they enjoy more than ever belonging to this colourful



bunch of people from their city – mostly younger in age. That day they had a special, out-of-the-ordinary reason to invite their friends round. Shortly after our arrival we told them that Hans-Georg’s first car was an old 30hp **VW Beetle** (in this country they’re called “Vos-vos”...), built in 1955: ‘Exportmodel’ with hydraulic brakes and small rear window. In 1973 he bought it from a friend for, would you believe it, 50 Deutschmarks... The first car that we drove in PNG in 1985 was a **VW Bully** which on closer inspection was found to be made out of an old T1 – today a collectors’ item with a high market value and it was of great interest to the group – soon after the arrival of the first local guests, out came the mobile phones and the year of construction and model were discussed in great detail...

**But this wasn’t the real reason for the invitation.**

They had asked us to tell their friends about our life and work among the tribes in PNG as a further **bridge into the hearts of** these young people who up till now (with 99% majority re-



ligion) had had little opportunity to hear anything about the Gospel. The little lounge gradually filled up. Two young couples had even brought their children with them. After a short introduction with the obligatory tea and sweets and starting to get to know everyone, Hans-Georg showed his first photo on the big screen: some **really wild-looking dark men** with PNG piercings and not exactly friendly expressions... The children’s eyes opened wide and it went rather quiet in the room. We went on to tell them about the different stages of our life with this tribe and other tribal groups in PNG. We mentioned that some of the inhabitants there were **cannibals** – in the local language they were called “**Yamyam**” (!!) – and **three times Hans-Georg was in danger** of being hit by deadly arrows.

## Contact



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One of the children asked if these men were likely to come and see them.

Margret answered spontaneously and without thinking, "Two of them did come and see us later on in Austria!"

You could see that this answer was not at all what this young lad wanted to hear and spontaneously – just like Margret – he blurted out, "If someone like that comes here, just let me know, I would rather be fired to the moon on a rocket..!"

In the course of our talk it became clear how much the people over there in PNG suffered from and were trapped by their wrong conceptions of God. We talked about their "**Fear of the heathen**"... our audience also have this expression in their own language!



Our colleagues were happy that their local friends were hearing the Good News in this indirect way.

Even they – often unconsciously – are trapped by the requirements of their faith which in this country is rarely questioned, but simply internalised by most people. "Officially" there is no alternative for them! It is however good and wise that on this evening we didn't

directly put the majority religion here in question; instead we showed the lost condition of mankind in their false religious pre-conceptions and pointed to **the bridge to the living God**.

Hans-Georg also did that at the end by showing a **hanging bridge made out of bush materials** which he had to cross on one occasion in PNG. It was a bridge over a raging mountain river. Some of the local people watched to see if he would manage it. Shortly before this **fourteen people had fallen from this bridge** and were never found...

Yes, this bridge to the living God is our Lord Jesus Christ, a solid bridge that does not sway or give way!



This is very clear in a Christian song in **New Melanesian Pidgin, the trade language** spoken by 90% of the population of PNG

and we sang the song for the guests:



"Long marimari bilong GOD, EM i salim JISAS i kam, bungim yumi aninit long diwai kros.

Yu no save long mi na mi no save long yu, tasol nau JISAS i bungim yumi.

Yes, yes, yes, yes yumi kamap bung wantaim na kamap femili, femili bilong GOD."

**In translation this means:**

"It was GOD'S grace, which sent JESUS and only this way we could **gather together under the Cross**.

You didn't know anything about me and I didn't know anything about you, but JESUS has brought us together. Yes, we have gathered together and now we have become a family – God's family!"

When the young friends had left, we talked briefly about how the evening had gone.

Our colleagues were glad they had had the courage to invite the VW Fan Club round.

Early the next day we flew back to Austria.

Our thoughts about that evening were: "We'd **never** had thought of that!"

What a God-given opportunity to share our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – even if it was in an indirect way...

Our colleagues' old VW LT28 and our report about our former days in PNG helped the young people of that town learn something about the possibility of a new life, free from wrong preconceptions about faith.

**Our fellow-workers really want to stick with this group of VW fans!**

Eventually almost all old cars – even much-loved 'old-timers' – end up on the scrapheap, having made a minor and transient contribution to the meaning of life.

How much more does God have in store for us, Whose Son went to prepare an enduring place for us! (Jn 14:2-3). May our new VW friends continue to think back to that evening and may the LORD give our committed co-workers wisdom and guidance to establish good relationships in the right way, to build bridges and through their lives to be a shining light for them!

