

Golden Days

by

Philemond Yamba

I come from Pakule Village, Ialibu, Southern Highlands Province.

My village is in the middle of two mountains in the province and it also in the middle of Papua New Guinea. The mountains are Mt. Giluwe and Mt. Ialibu. Mt. Giluwe is on the northern side of the village and this mountain is the second highest mountain in Papua New Guinea. It is also ranked as the fourth highest in the world. Mt. Ialibu is on the southern side of my village, where Ialibu Station is at the foot of the mountain.

Where I come from it is very cold during daylight hours. During the night you can not sleep without a very thick blanket to keep you warm until the morning. We get our water supply from Mt. Giluwe. There is water all year round and we use it to wash, drink and wash clothes. It also irrigates the gardens.

The Highlands Highway or Okuk Highway, as it is known, runs from Morobe Province (Lae) to Southern Highlands Province (Mendi). It comes right through my village. Half of the village is on the northern side of the highway and half of the village is on the southern side of the highway. It is very easy for us in the village to go to Mendi, Ialibu and Mt. Hagen by following the highway to the east, or to the west.

I was born at 1.30pm on the 13th of November 1975 at my mama's village on the other side of Mt. Giluwe. I was born only a short time after the country first received Independence on September 16, of the same year. In 1985 I started my Grade One and I completed Grade Six in December, 1990. I was posted to Koroba High School but I did not have the school fees to continue and finish my education. From 1991 to 1996 I was back at my homeland doing nothing.

At 8.30am on the 14th of February 1997 I touched down at Jackson's Airport. Friends and wontoks were already there waiting for me so we came straight to 8 Mile Settlement. Now I have been living here for thirteen years. In March 1997 I was told to go and work with a fishing company called Tuwan Fisheries. The company owner now knows me very well. He is Ialibuan and he is married to an Australian woman. They live in Cairns, Australia.

The company had five prawn trawlers and also ran a construction business. At first, I was told to work as a crew boy on one of the trawlers at Kerema, in Gulf Province. I did not have enough experience to work on any of the other boats. They were working in the Torres Strait Islands. After four years of trawling in Kerema the bosses told me that I had gained enough experience and that now it was my turn to go to Daru, Western Province. By 2000 the company wanted three trawlers working in the Torres Strait Islands, and I worked there.

In 2005 I felt tired of going back to the seaman's life. So from 2005-07 I became a city taxi driver in Port Moresby. I really enjoyed driving in the city. But after 2007 the owner of the taxi sold the car.

Now I am staying busy with the sports that I am playing. I play rugby with our club, the D8 Mosquitoes. I am one of the founders of the club.

That's all.

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