

How I Began My Formal Education in 1966, Through The Children's Juvenile Court

by

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Some time in 1950 when I was a very small boy, I left my village in Gimi area of Okapa in Eastern Highlands Province and came to another sub-province called Kainantu. When I arrived there, a man from Kairuku area in Central Province, named Nick, found me at the front of a trade store and asked me if I would like to go to his home with him, not far from the store. I followed him to his house and he introduced me to his family. Nick was a highway driver and he used to drive Bungding Trading Company's large twenty-wheel truck. We travelled to Lae town a few days later, in the Morobe Province.

You know, at the time I was really excited because I had never seen Lae before in my life. We jumped into the back of the big truck and came down to Lae. Finally, after some time, we arrived at about four in the afternoon. When we arrived that evening I was really hot, because I had come down to a coastal town from a cold place in the highlands. Eventually though, I got used to the climate.

At that time we were based at the Papuan compound. One year later I left Nick's family and went to stay with a man called Oru. Oru came from Marshall Lagoon area from Central Province. After a few years staying with Mr. Oru, I got used to Lae town. One day I was waiting at a bus stop and I met my cousin brother, his name is Seveawa. I was very happy to see him and I went back to Mr. Oru and told Mr. Oru that I had found my brother and that I had to go and stay with him. Mr. Oru agreed and so I left him and I went to stay with my cousin brother Seveawa. I stayed with him for two years. At that time Seveawa was working with the Lae Steel Industries as a welder.

One fine day when my brother went to work, I stayed in the house by myself. A few hours later I decided to catch a bus and go to China Town. I stayed there for a full day until it got dark. At about five o'clock in the afternoon I started to walk back to the Papuan compound. I took the top town route, trying to take a short cut to get home. When I reached the street called 7th Street it was already

6.30pm and it was very dark.

Instead of following the main road, I decided to follow the side of a fence where a Patrol Officer's house was located. When I went near the house of the Patrol Officer, an Australian man, some bulldogs barked loudly and ran towards me in the dark. At the same time, I was really frightened, and I shouted and looked for a tree to climb to get away from them. I had good luck as there was a mango tree, and its branches were hanging down, so I quickly jumped up and grabbed on to the branch.

When the house man heard the noise, he put on the light and stopped the bulldogs from their attack. He came near the mango tree and told me to come down. So I came down from the mango tree. The man grabbed my hand and took me to the verandah of the house and he rang the Police. Within a few minutes a Policeman arrived and he took me to the Police station and arrested me.

After a month at the Police station, I was taken to the Juvenile Court. I stood before the magistrate, who was also an Australian. After going through the court, the magistrate said to me, he said to me, 'You have broken the law because you went to Number One Patrol Officer's house.

The magistrate found that I was guilty and he decided to punish me by sending me to Wewak Boys Town to take up training for a year to two. But just before they were to send me to Wewak Boys Town, they asked me which Church I belonged to. I told them that I was a member of Seventh Day Adventist Church. And so the court called the head of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Pastor Meeching, to their office and told him that I had been arrested.

'We have a young boy here, his name is Tamoi Meuro. He is a member of your church and he has been arrested. What do you want us to do with him? Do you want us to send him to Wewak Boys Town, or what?'

A few hours later Welfare Officers from the government and some pastors from Seventh Day Adventist Church came together to see me, and they asked me if I had been to school before. I told them that I had only been to Prep School at the Lutheran Hospital in Okapa, some years earlier. After they had gone through these questions, and some more, they gave me a packet of colour pencils, saying that I should go ahead and draw some things that I wanted to. So I went ahead and drew some boys and girls walking to the school in the remote area where there are a lot of rivers and mountains.

The government officials and my Church Pastors saw my drawing and they said

it was very good. It was so good, they told me, that they had decided to send me with a young Australian Pastor, Pr. A.R. Craig, to the remote area of Menyamya in Morobe Province. In this location there was no connection of any roads at all. When I and Pr. Craig went to Menyamya in 1966, I was on the Government's sponsorship payroll. The government used to to pay me fifty dollars every fortnight. After signing all the agreements, they told me that when I turned sixteen the government was going to stop my fortnightly payment of fifty dollars. I agreed, and while I was in Menyamya I completed grade One to Grade Five.

At the end of 1973 the Government stopped my payments and they asked me to leave Menyamya, and to go elsewhere. I went to Finnshagenin in Masa Primary School, in Pendise area and there I completed my primary education at the end of the same year.

My high school education was completed at different schools in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province, Mt. Diamond High School, and at Dela Salle Boys High School in Bereina in Gulf Province. When I left high school I started work with the National Housing Commission. One year later I applied for Agriculture Training College at Sonoma Adventist College in Rabaul in East New Britain Province. This was in 1980.

In the college, the lecturers forced me to do Primary School training and this really frustrated me, so after one year I left the college, and I ended up in Bougainville. I worked with the Church in Bougainville as a book sales man. I also worked with the PNG Harbour Board for six years after that. Other employment that I had was with the Luluai Logging Company.

In 1984 I got married to a woman from the Solomon Islands, her name was Sonaleen Sasa. At this time I was working with the PNG Harbour Board in Keita, North Solomon Province, and I have two children from that marriage. My first born child is Naola Tizzie Tanoi O. Meuro and she is now twenty-five years old. She currently lives in Honiara, in the Solomon Islands. My second born child is named Kennedy Tanoi O. Meuro, and he is now twenty-two years old. My son is named after the late President Kennedy, of the United States of America, who was hidden and protected from the Japanese Army during World War Two when he was fighting in the the Pacific. While the Japanese soldiers were looking for him, local people put him in a canoe and covered him with palms. They sat on him and directed the soldiers in a false direction when the Japanese soldiers asked them where the white man had gone. My first wife and I separated in 1987, we separated almost twenty two years ago now.

I was eventually rejected from the logging company and so I finally went home to East Highlands Province, where I contested for the Provincial Election in 1987. In the same year I started a small trade store and I bought and sold coffee. After a short while, in the same year, I left my trade store business with my older brother Solomon Meuro and I went to Bougainville, where I started another business, which I ran until 1990 when the crisis there disturbed, and eventually shut down my business.

In 1988, I married my second wife, her name is Christine Tanoi O. Meuro. We were married in Bougainville Island during the crisis there. She is a land owner of a giant Bougainville Copper mine. Christine and I have been married now for almost twenty one years. I left Bougainville twenty years ago and the PNG Government still has not paid me the compensation that I am owed. Very soon they are going to pay me in the millions.

Christine and I have four children and our eldest child is currently studying accounting and business studies at the Pacific Adventist University (P.A.U.). Her name is Agu Abigail Meuro, and she is now eighteen years old. My other three children are all studying now, Eve Arilo Meuro is sixteen and she is studying Grade Seven. Mattuselah Kemase Meuro II is eleven and he is studying Grade Four. My youngest son, Joosh Sammy Meuro is five years old and he stays at home with me.

That's the end of my story.

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