

October 14, 2014



Inside the village, at the chief's hut, several men were sitting around, each selling their wares. I bought a mask that one of them had made, and a head band which helps hold the wigs in place. And he gave me a big, red-toothed smile.

Since we are not Huli, we got to go inside the chief's house. It was two rooms. The first had a fire in the center for cooking and for heat and two platforms on either side to sit on. The back was a large platform where he sleeps. Remember – no sex in here as the women are not allowed in. That happens in the rain forest.



They then showed us how they made fire before the westerners brought over lighters. He literally created friction between two sticks and set the leaves on fire. Their hands and feet are so calloused from walking barefoot all the time that he put out fire with his feet.



After that demonstration, we walked over to the women's section, down a narrow mud path. The first house belonged to the first wife. She sat outside her house bare chested, next to some very large cabbage, weaving. Her house had a front room filled with guinea pigs, and a long corridor with stalls on either side for the pigs. The women take care of the children, the pigs, and grow sweet potatoes and other vegetables, do the cooking for themselves and their children (the men do their own cooking). The sweet potatoes, which are grown in mounds, are the staple food for the Huli, who eat it at each meal.



We then went to see the chief's second wife, who was there with their daughter and granddaughter. The second wife was also bare-chested, but the younger women were not. Again this shows how their culture is changing. Not that many years ago all women were bare chested. And while the older generation stills holds on to that custom, the younger generation has become more westernized and more self conscious. The women showed us the traditional wear for women, and then dressed Roberta and me in their grass skirts and bilums. They also demonstrated how they wove "blankets" out of bamboo which they used as shelter from the sun (before the white man brought umbrellas), blankets to cover themselves in the cold or to sleep on. The point here is that they really had everything they needed to be self-sufficient and to take care of themselves, all done with nature.





We continued on in the same village to visit the medicine man. The role and secrets of the medicine man are passed down from generation to generation. This is not a medicine man in the way we are used to thinking. He does not really do medicine and is not a witchdoctor. He is there to cast good spells on newlyweds. When a man and woman are to be married, and by the way, all Huli marriages are arranged, the father takes them to see the medicine man. The medicine man gives them special seedlings to plant in his garden and that means they will have good luck and fortune. Once they plant it, they are married. He then gets paid in pigs or shells (or these days in kina) and he puts a spell on special water inside a bamboo tube which they drink, spit out and drink and swallow. This is for good health ("good blood"). By the way, notice the cell phone around his neck...

men still pay a bride price.

As Catholicism is the major religion here, many young men and women now get married in the church instead. But marriages are still arranged and



On the way out, the children all gathered to see us and wave good-bye.

