

Day 4, Wed Oct 15, Part 1b

We got to the airport, past the market (with the umbrellas and the ever present bilum bags), and again went back through the locked gates, and then just sat on the bus waiting for the plane to land. Why on the bus? Because that was the safest and most comfortable place to wait.



The Tari airport, as I mentioned before, is very tiny. There is one very small rundown building which is the “check in” place. There is no security. And the waiting lounge is a thatched roof hut.



Our little plane finally landed, our baggage loaded, and we boarded. When I say boarded I meant we climbed up the small stairs and entered the plane which sits 6 plus the pilot. We were joined by two others, Charlie Leahy (no relation to Michael Leahy who was the first white man in PNG) and Linda Fields, both of whom live in Atlanta, and quickly became our friends.

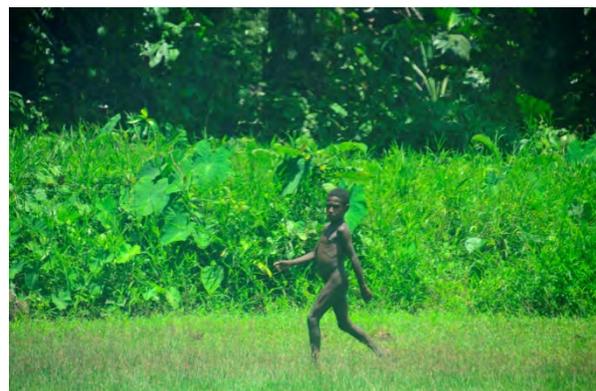


We took off and flew over the mountains, considered some of the most rugged and impressive landscapes in the world. The countryside between Ambua and the Sepik region is an amazing array of jagged limestone that seems to rise and fall at impossible angles. Along the way we passed a large mine which looked like it was just raping the land.



We flew first to Karawari where we were making a stop to get more fuel and make some deliveries to the lodge there. We flew over the lodge which looks gorgeous, but since they were sold out, we will not be staying there. The runway was just a long (or actually not that long) strip of grass along the river (which you can see through the window of the cockpit in the picture).

There were kids everywhere running to greet the plane. Two boys, maybe brothers, ran together with the older one shading the little one with a large leaf.



Many of the little kids were naked and one had clay all over his face. We got off the plane to stretch our legs and get some fresh air. It was very hot. But the kids were everywhere just smiling and staring at us. Linda began talking with them and playing hand games. They began giggling and laughing and it was the most beautiful sound. I took lots of pictures and showed them to the kids. They have beautiful faces with wonderful smiles. Some were shy but most were curious. Many of them never go to school and they speak pidgin so we communicated mostly with hand signals. One girl had some string and so we played cat's cradle. And then we all posed for a group picture. Some things are just universal. Spending time with these kids was one of the high points of the trip. I am attaching a lot (A LOT) of pictures because these kids were just so beautiful.

