

Day 6, Oct 17, Friday



We had to wake up early today, have a quick breakfast and get back in our canoe at 6:00am, bags packed, in order to make the 1.5 hour trip up the river back to Timbunke to catch our next flight. We watched the sun rise over the river as we glided along. There were very few other canoes out and the ones we did see were busy cleaning the fish they had already caught. The trees reflected in the water, looking like a cityscape and teeming with life the way a city would be, but with birds rather than people. The Egrets were out in full force, flying about and landing, feet first onto trees. They fly along, legs out straight behind them, and all of a sudden they bring their legs into a standing position and just land on a branch. I



watched lots of them in the last 2 days and they always reminded me of an airplane letting down its wheels.



We were all very quiet, just watching the scenery and trying to memorize that feeling of the wind in our faces so we could always remember it. Arnie and Roberta and Andy and I were already close, but we all became very attached to Charlie and Linda as well.





We made very good time and arrived in Timbukne after only an hour. Children were all standing at the shore watching and waiting for us. But the mud stairs had washed away, so our guides had to build new ones while we sat in the canoe.



We had time to visit the church there with its large statue of Jesus. Above the statue were some Latin words which Linda translated for us – King of the Jews. And behind the statue was a painting with Jesus and all the animals that are important in PNG – a pig, a snake, a cassowary. This is the combining of the traditional with the “newer” religions.



While in the church we heard voices of children singing and I knew right away that the school must be close by. With permission, we walked across the grass to a one-room school house. This was the younger grades with kids up to about age 8. There are supposed to be about 100 children, but many families keep their children at home rather than sending them to school. And I can't even imagine 100 children in that one small room. The children saw we were coming and began singing a song about good morning. They are learning English, and there were English words on the walls and blackboard.







I had brought a package of pens with me to give to children in PNG but the opportunity was never right until now. I gave the pens to the teacher and she was very grateful. It is not customary to give gifts, children don't beg and the tour companies suggest that we don't want them to expect trinkets from tourists. But giving the pens to the school was just so right. Visiting this school, seeing the faces of these children and hearing them sing was the second highlight of this trip.

As we headed to our plane we saw the older kids heading towards their classroom. When I say heading, I mean they were walking across the "runway" – the grass area which has lots of functions.

