

Weekend Magazine

My Peter is with God in Heaven

"PETER ToROT is in heaven with God... a place where he always wanted to be."

His wife, IaPaula, believes that. She said it. And, so apparently do others who have organised the investigation to determine whether ToRot can become a Catholic saint.

To be sure, the move to make ToRot a Catholic saint will take a long time — 25 to "hundreds of

years", according to Catholics.

And that is if church authorities decide that ToRot does have a case for sainthood.

Whatever the case, I decided to visit ToRot's widow to find out how ToRot died.

IaPaula, now 64, is blind and lives with her daughter IaMama at Vunabaur village in the North Coast area of the Gazelle Peninsula.

I found her "feeling" her way out of her daughter's house with her walking stick.

She was alone in the village and although she was blind, she told me she could still cook her own food, stroll down to the beach, only a few metres from the house, and move herself around her daughter's house.

"I can still work in the garden," she said.

"The problem is telling banana tree from unwanted shrubs when it comes to clearing bush," Paula said with a grin on her face. Her teeth showed the stain of endless betelnut chewing, and on her

"But this was not to be. "The day after we last visited him, he was killed."

IaPaula was stopping every now and then to clear her throat.

Almost 40 years had rolled by — but sorrow, that human thing, was still showing as IaPaula ToRot recalled the last days of her husband on the piece of earth called Vunaiara:

"I last saw my husband on a Monday.

"He asked me to bring his laplap, a razor blade, his crucifix, and his priest's clothes.

"I tried to ask him what was happening and he held me close to him and quietly said that he just wanted to be with God in jail be-

"It was the bad news about ToRot and a group of other workers being killed by the Japanese.

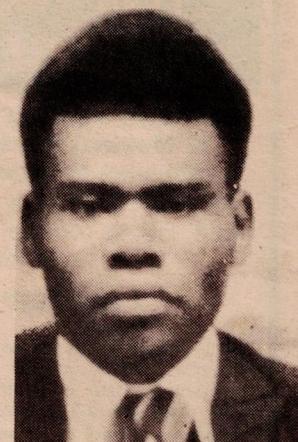
"I thought about my dream and I realised I would never be with my husband again.

"ToRot is now in heaven with God...."

IaPaula paused for a long time and continued:

"The Japanese brought my husband's body in the morning and told me he had died after being sick — but I knew they were lying.

"I saw him the day before and he was like any other young man who was well."



● ToROT



● IaPAULA

...WITH SWEET CHILDREN

left ear was a stub of tobacco which she had put out to talk to me.

This is her story:

"My husband was killed by the Japanese at Rakunai village many years ago after being tortured for several days along with some priests, brothers and sisters.

"They were taken captive when Peter and I were still at school doing our 'luk-buk' (reading) classes.

"At first they took us all away to Taogo village where they held most of the women and children.

"The men, including the priests, brothers and sisters, were blindfolded and taken to Vunaiara where the Japanese had a jail for their prisoners.

"I was afraid and I kept telling my two children, IaCecilia and IaMama that their father would soon be released.

cause he had missed his congregation for nearly six months.

"I knew from the tears in his eyes that the worse was yet to come.

"On the night after my visit I had a bad dream.

"I saw my husband in clean white robes singing with a group of sweet looking children.

"I wanted to talk to him but the singing was so loud he could not hear me calling.

"He turned and saw me just as they were disappearing into the clouds — but as we both reached out to touch each other, he disappeared.

"In the early hours of the morning of Tuesday, as I lay thinking about the dream, I heard an old man shouting that my husband had been killed.

"This time it was not a dream.

"The Japanese tied a red ribbon around my husband's head and tried to stop me from crying but I did not listen to them.

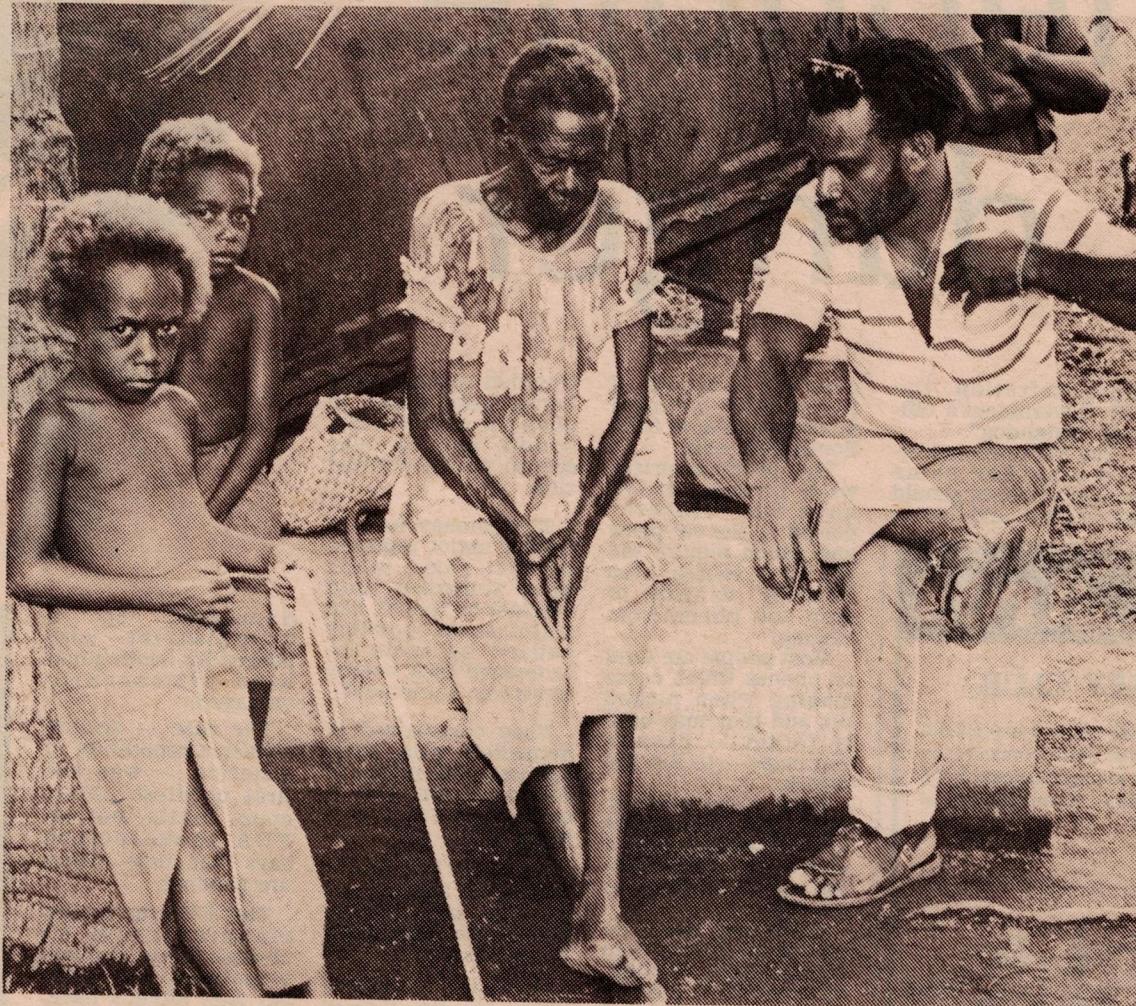
"I held my husband's body and cried. He was dead.

"ToRot's mother IaTumul came with the other villagers and we stayed at our place for the whole day wondering why ToRot's life had to be taken away like this.

"ToRot stayed with us for a short while and the following day he was buried.

"And all these years I have prayed to God to keep ToRot for me in Heaven.

"Although he has been dead these many years, he still visits me at night to talk to me and tell me that one day we will be together again."



● ToRot's widow, IaPaula talking to our Rabaul man Walter Darius. With them are two of IaPaula's young friends.

Two weeks ago at the quiet seaside Catholic station of Vunapope, near Kokopo, outside Rabaul, the Catholic Church officially opened an investigation into the life and death of Tolai Catholic martyr Peter ToRot.

The purpose: to promote ToRot's cause so he can become a saint of the Catholic Church.

Who, though, is Peter ToRot?

Peter ToRot was a catechist from Rakunai village near Navunaram about 16 kilometres from Rabaul up Burma Road from the shores of Rabaul's Simpson Harbor.

He became a martyr of the Church when he was killed in 1945 by Japanese occupation forces during World War 2.

ToRot, then 33, had challenged the authority of the Japanese.

First he refused to obey orders to stop his catechist work.

Then he urged people from his village and the villages nearby not to marry more than one wife though the Japanese had officially encouraged polygamy.

The result: ToRot was tortured and killed at a place called Vunaiara in Navunaram village, a walk of minutes from ToRot's Rakunai village.

ToRot is survived today by his widow, IaPaula, his only remaining child, IaMama, and IaMama's four children.

The other ToRot children — Andreas and IaCecilia — have died.

This week our man in Rabaul WALTER DARIUS visited IaPaula for a talk and filed this report.