

Olson Family Newsletter Update

Serving the the Lord and the Palawano people in the Philippines with [New Tribes Mission](#)
Issue # 26, August 2010

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.
~Isaiah 9:2

Dear praying friends and family,
We are back in the Philippines! Most of you all knew that we came home to Texas this summer, and spent June and July visiting family and friends. It was a blessed time – the first time in 4 years that our kids were able to see their grandparents! As I write this, Isaac and Sarah are back in school and we are preparing to return to the tribe!

It was great to see everyone that we were able to see in the short time that we were back in the USA. There were also a ton of people that we really wanted to see but were unable to because the time was so short! Also, many thanks to all of you who prayed for our family when Ginny's dad had a heart attack – we are so glad that the doctors were able to fix him up and that he is still with us!

Since many of you do not get our email and only get this printed letter that we send out twice a year, I will update you all on some of the main things that happened in the tribe between January and June when we left to go to the States.

Mailing Address:
George & Ginny Olson
New Tribes Mission
777 Jacana Road, Bangcaao-Bangcao
5300 Puerto Princesa, Palawan
PHILIPPINES

Address for Financial Support:
New Tribes Mission
1000 E. First St.
Sanford, FL 32771-1487

www.reachthetribes.com
george_olson@ntm.org
ginleeolson@gmail.com

The Rabbit Hole

As we have been studying the Palawano language and culture, we are finding ourselves feeling a bit like "Alice in Wonderland," and we are wondering just how deep this rabbit hole really goes! It started off with a lady who was pulling weeds, and when she stepped on her machete she cut her foot bad enough to need stitches. She told us that the reason she stepped on her machete was that it was a bad moon, between the full and last quarter. It is serious bad luck to work at that time!



Stitching up a wound from a machete



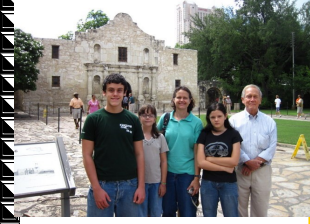
We got to visit the American Cemetery for the Memorial Day tribute before returning to Texas

Giving stitches is just one of the ways we help them with medical while studying their language and culture. We also give them medicine for malaria and treat many different kinds of skin rashes. One kind of rash comes from a *lupa* tree. My language helper told me that this kind of tree can "think." If 2 of you walk by it in the jungle and it rubs on you, then you will get a rash that will go away in 2 days. If 3 of you walk by it and it gets you, then the rash will go away in 3 days. If there are 4 of you, then 4 days is the determined length of time. Why is that? Because the tree has a quality called *usulan*, which means that it has some sort of ability to think, or it has some kind of special power, which is an animistic force of some kind that they believe in.



At a family wedding in June

As for spirits, while investigating the Palawano culture we are learning quite a bit about their spirit world. Most of their spirits are to be feared, though they have a small number of "good" spirits. These are called *Jinn* (a carryover from neighboring Islamic groups) that choose certain people to give them power. These good spirits only benefit a few people, and the rest of the people live in constant fear of the remaining spirits in the forest that they believe are constantly looking to try and kill them.



Remember the Alamo!

- Here are some more examples of Palawano animism:
- Whenever the Palawano hear a certain bird chirping ahead on the trail, they believe the bird is warning them that there is a *Lenggam* there waiting to kill them, so they will wait for about 10 minutes before going that direction on the trail, hoping he will move off somewhere else. The *Lenggam* thinks people are his pigs to eat.
 - The *Galap* spirit lives in the deep pools in the river and will try and drown anyone who swims there alone. He will tie them with his hair and pull them down into the water.
 - The *Belawey* is a giant man-eating spirit bat who will kill and eat anyone who it happens to see climbing a tree in its territory. It is also the grandfather of the flying lemur.



Minan Duin up above on the left before she passed away



Minan Duin's grave



Ginny and the family with the club foot baby returned home after a successful operation



Learning and practicing Palawano



Our partner Dave working with one of the men that helps him prepare Gospel lessons



Our missionary team reaching the Palawanos

- An *imbalo* is a spirit of a dead person, and looks kind of like a cross between a giant pig and a giant dog. It will kill and eat people in the village or on the river at night if they go outside and it happens to be there.
- A friend of mine came by our house one time with a swollen finger. He told me that a *Mengaring* spirit that lives by a big rock sliced his hand with an invisible machete when he picked some wild fruit off the tree that is there.

These may seem like silly superstitions to western people, but to the Palawano tribal people these spirits are as real as any other person. The spirits to them are not like ethereal ghosts, but are considered real physical beings that are invisible. They have lived by these fears for generations, and everything they believe refers back to what their ancestors have taught them.

Minan Duin

When Minan Duin passed away last March, we learned a tremendous amount of vocabulary and culture. She was a well-loved woman, a matriarch of sorts. When she passed away, they buried her body by the trail going up to the new village, and then everyone was afraid her spirit would come back to haunt them, so they all moved away from the new village. The village shaman showed me the barrier he built to keep her spirit from following them along the trail to the new places where they were sleeping. A few days later, 2 of her grandchildren who had not been around when she died came up into the village. I took them to see the grave (they were terrified, but said they would go if I accompanied them) and they both talked to her spirit and then broke off pieces of the wood sticks that were on the grave. They told me later this would prevent her *imbalo* spirit from following them down the trail and killing them later.

Two Victories

With all that happening, we did have 2 victories. The first was when Ginny took a family out to town for a week to get their baby's club foot operated on. The mountains are so steep here that a person who has a club foot would have a very difficult time surviving. So much of their livelihood depends on them being able to climb up and down the hills here. So we were able to get corrective surgery performed on this young boy's foot with a Filipino surgeon in town.

The second was a major breakthrough in child-birthing. In Palawano culture, when a woman goes into labor, they have at least 4 or 5 guys at a time come and push on her stomach until the baby comes out. They told us that if they didn't do that, the baby wouldn't come out, but would instead come up and strangle the mother. Just a few weeks before we left, this one woman was close to her due date, and we were concerned because her water broke early but she had not yet gone into labor. So we asked them specifically not to push on her when she went into labor.



The baby boy lives!

She went into labor finally one night, and at 5 am the baby had not yet come, so they came and asked us for help. For the first time, they were really questioning what their ancestors had taught them. Our partner Julie went over there, looked at the birth canal (something they never do) and could see the baby was ready to come. She told a man to hold up each shoulder of the mother to put her at an angle, and told her to push when she felt the contraction. She pushed, and out came the baby, happy and healthy! Julie caught the baby (something they also never do), cleaned his face off and presented him to the happy parents. Wow, what a joy to show them that a baby can be born without 5 guys pushing on the woman's stomach, and the baby can be a happy, healthy baby!

Teaching

When we return to the tribe, our partner will be writing his lessons in the tribal language, and we will go back to studying and doing the medical work. Lord willing, we will be able to start teaching the Gospel towards the end of this year! What a fantastic opportunity the Lord has put before us, and we ask for you all to continue to pray for the fulfillment of this mission!

Blessings to you all in Christ,
George for all of us
George, Ginny, Isaac, Sarah, and Abby