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ORTHOGRAHY

Generally I have followed the symbols used by the United Church for the languages of the Western Solomons. I have, however, used ng for the softer sound instead of the italic n. The following may be taken as a guide:

- g  pronounced g as in gulf e.g. Gina
- b  pronounced mb
- d  pronounced nd
- j  pronounced nj
- q  pronounced ng as in anger
- ng pronounced as in singer

Each vowel is sounded including those at the end of words. They are similar in sound to the vowels in other Pacific languages. I have departed from this convention in writing some well known place names, where to change the usual spelling would be misleading.

I have not been consistent, but I have tried to be clear.

G.G.C.
GLOSSARY

bangara  = person of authority, leading man, chief
huneke  = basket made of woven leaves
Lotu     = Christian religion, worship, the community of people who adhere to the Christian faith.
tie vaka = expatriates of Caucasian/European origin as distinguished from expatriates from other Pacific and Asian countries. Pronounced tea'e vaka
Tomoko  = war canoe

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My thanks also to my wife. Nancy, for encouragement and criticism and for typing the manuscript.
INTRODUCTION

When we come to translate the Roviana word 'gina' into English we usually put it down as "perhaps". Sometimes it might be better to say "if only..." Certainly there could have been no more appropriate name for the subject of this biography than Gina. His whole story is studded with unanswerable questions. If only Mrs Goldie had stayed in the Solomons a few years longer, his treatment and his training might have taken a quite different course...

Perhaps... if the war had not come in 1942, his story would have had a different ending...

Perhaps... if we had listened more carefully to him in the 1930s there would have been no need for the separatist group now known as the Christian Fellowship Church to distance itself from the Methodists...

Perhaps... If only... The questions are endless.

They begin with the date of his birth. Gina himself told the author that he was born on 16 September 1912, and that he had this information from Boaz Sunga who was Mr. Goldie's chief clerk and keeper of records. But there is strong evidence that he was born in late 1908 or early 1909. Since all Mr. Goldie's diaries were lost in the war, and Mrs. Goldie does not seem to have kept any record, we can perhaps never know. His age at any given time is not important. What matters most is that Belshazzar Gina was one of the most significant leaders to come out of the Western Solomons between 1930 and 1960. It is sad that his full potential was never realised as this account will show. Had he been born (here we go again) a generation later he could well have been the first Bishop of an independent Church – or the first Prime Minister of Solomon Islands!! Gina?

CONSIDER

When Gina came to New Zealand in 1924, his voice had already broken which would have been extremely unusual for a 12 year old Solomon Islands boy of his generation, or for that matter, later generations. His photo taken in New Zealand suggests a lad of 15 or 16 rather than a 12 year old. The "family tree" as given by Gina himself and the information given by A.M. Hocart as a result of his research in 1908-9 follow.
From B Gina

Hebala ▲ Tomoavara

Mili ● Evetako ○ Evegula ○ Gina ○ Alekera △ Piqe ● Enu Luli ▲

From Hocart Table 18

Hape (Simbo) ▲ Oie (Simbo) ●

Sogamaza ▲ Nua ○ Kuba ●

Vane ○ Oloduri (Simbo) ● Dulu (Kidu) ○ Miapitu (Simbo) ● Sigaduri (Munda) ○ Tuке (Simbo)

(See Table 19)

No Children

From Hocart Table 19

Hebala (Sabana) ▲ Tomoavara (Haratana) ●

Dulu (Simbo) ▲ Oloduri (Simbo) ●

Tago ▲ Evetako ○ Evegula ○ Ginabule ▲

N.B. Sabana - Bugotu refer to the same Island Haratana - Mahaga are both at Due, New Georgia

▲ Male deceased
● Female deceased
△ Male alive
○ Female alive
TIME BEFORE

It is easy to say that people first came to Solomon Islands about six thousand or ten thousand years ago, but for most Solomon Islands people there is no memory of such event. Their ancestors were placed in these beautiful islands and this wonderful sea by the Creator-God in time long past and this is their heritage and their home.¹

They have always been a very clever and innovative people. Without metals, they made stone and shell tools that allowed them to construct the houses and other things they needed to live comfortably in their land. Those close to the sea, learned to make canoes unexcelled for their efficiency and their beauty. They were able to travel long distances, often out of sight of land. They got to know not only the winds and the tides but also the fish of the sea. They explored the reefs and learned to harvest their riches. They built stone jetties and, in some places, artificial islands on which to live. As people of the shore and the sea, they were equal to any in the world.

Inland, they climbed mountains and mastered the art of growing crops on both flat land and steep slopes. In some place they made artificial stone terraces on which to plant. On land and sea they took what they needed, but they had a respect for their environment which was reflected in their spiritual ritual practices and customs.

They developed their skills in the practical things of daily living, but they also showed great artistic ability and appreciation. From great stone terraces to tiny shell valuables, from ornamented arrows to magnificent sculptures carved from fossil clam, (one of nature's hardest known substances) they made things of beauty. They were a people to whom life was to be lived in the created world of which they were a part, with enjoyment and respect. At its end, they left this place for the other world of the spirits.

It seems likely that they had contact with, and were influenced by, migrant people in days past. But they also influenced those who came in to them. Did they learn the art of pottery making from travellers from other lands, or did they teach those who carried the art across the South Pacific? Did the replacement of earlier languages like Kazukuru come about because others brought the Austronesian language system to them, or did that group of languages which include Polynesian and Indonesian, originate round the Solomons Sea? Perhaps we shall never know with any certainty. But what we do know is that these innovative, artistic and hardworking people we now call Solomon Islanders lived effectively in their islands and developed their own way.

Thiers was essentially a community of small extended family groups. For the most part it was a very egalitarian society. Older men and women were respected because of their age, and they carried authority as keepers of tradition and as people with knowledge of the important things of both the past and the present. Women and men

¹ The substance of this chapter is based on the archaeological research that has been done to date. See Laracy (ed) 1989. See also Typpett 1967 for ancestral tradition.
both had their place. In some societies, land was passed on through the women, and children belonged to their mother's clan. But in every case women had an influence that came not only from their skill as gardeners, but also because of their ability and their position as the centre of the family's life. Men were usually to the forefront in warfare and, sometimes, in spiritual matters. In one or two places there appeared to be a form of hereditary chieftainship, as in the Roviana Simbo area, and descent could be important. But leadership, for the most part, went to those who could exercise it. There has always been a place in Melanesian society for people of ability to make their mark especially if they had skills in dealing with people.

Because they lived in small communities, and were cultivators of the soil and fishers of the sea, they could, and did, exist in comparative isolation from one another. This allowed for the development of a diversity of language and culture found nowhere else in the world but Melanesia. Yet there were other things that gave them a sense of belonging beyond their dialect or language group. In the Western and Northern Solomons, skin colour was one of those links. As the blackest people outside Africa, they stood aside from the lighter coloured peoples of nearby islands. Trade, especially between the inland and coastal people was important, and to facilitate it many people mastered several languages and felt a kinship with those whose language they spoke. Even today it is not uncommon for people to speak five or six languages.

Because of this diversity and because of the importance of both land and sea, there was inevitably spasmodic conflict. Each group wanted to defend its own territory - and, from time to time no doubt, to poach on other people's land or sea. There were strict procedures for arranging marriages - but some people flouted convention and created tension. Some individuals sought an excuse to try to dominate others. So intergroup conflict was always likely to erupt into fighting. People were hurt or killed and their relatives would demand compensation - an eye for an eye, a life for a life.

It was not just the desire for material things, not even for land, that caused people to fight. They fought to obtain power and prestige (mana). That might come through feast giving, or through battle. It also came when one person could take from another spiritual power. It was not enough to kill - for some it was necessary to eat the body of the fallen enemy, for some it was important to cut off the head and carry it home to place it in a sacred place. How often the conflicts took place, how many people were killed, how many heads placed in canoe houses or in sacred places, before the palefaced people of the western world first made contact with Solomon Islanders, we do not know. Probably, as in other communities, there were times when fighting seemed to go on without end, while at other times it was almost forgotten. What is clear is that at the beginning of the 19th Century, white people began to come with increasing frequency to Solomon Islands for their own purposes. They were greedy

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2 Cheyne (1852) describes the people of New Georgia as "without exception the most treacherous and blood thirsty race in the Western Pacific." But too much value must not be placed on this. Cheyne's own sailors were hardly peaceable. Like all Europeans they came out of a very violent society. They expected "savages" to be violent, they looked for
for coconuts and turtles, and they seemed to think they had a divine right to take what they wanted. They had guns which could kill at a great distance, and they did not hesitate to use them. They supplied firearms to some local people, and they roused Solomon Island greed because of the rewards offered for turtle shell and the like. By the middle of the century they were kidnapping people and taking them away to work in distant places. Many of those taken away never returned. And when the white men sailed away they left behind a legacy of sickness. Sickness that attacked the body and brought death through new diseases; sickness that attacked the mind and soul of the community. Increased greed and the desire for revenge began to break down the patterns of life that had existed for thousands of years.

Our story begins when this conflict was already growing. It was not just the desire for revenge that sent raiding parties further and further afield, but the desire to get more wealth and gain more prestige. Even more important was the need to regain lost mana and spiritual resources. When the white man's cannon destroyed skull houses, the need to replace the skulls drove people on more and more head hunting raids. The world of the Solomon Islander was changing rapidly and life was in crisis.
THE COMING OF THE STRANGER - HEBALA

For weeks the warriors of Roviana had been getting very restless. Many months had passed since they had been out in their war canoes. There was plenty of food in the gardens and fish was easily caught. There was too little for the men to do. Some had been retelling old stories about great warriors of the past and some of the young men wanted to copy the example of their grandfathers. The restlessness grew, and at last it was decided that they would raid a village on the island of Isabel and see if they could bring back some heads to boost their prestige and their spiritual power. Preparations took time, but at last all was ready. The fleet of giant tomoko paddled down the Lagoon and out to the open sea on the way to Isabel. All night they travelled, and then just before dawn they came close to the shore where a large village was located. Quietly they paddled into the bay and as soon as it got light enough to see, they landed, stormed up the beach and broke into the houses. With terrifying shouts they woke the sleeping villagers, only to put them to death with spears and clubs. In a very short time the cries of the frightened, wounded and dying people stopped. The warriors from Roviana began to gather the heads of their victims. They had killed a great number - perhaps as many as three hundred.

While they were doing this and preparing to return to their canoes, someone heard a cry from one of the nearby huts. Two warriors went in and found, under the beheaded bodies of the family, a small baby boy. They took him out into the light and it was agreed that they should take him home.

The Roviana people were not, in the usual way, cannibals. They did not eat their enemies or their friends. But sometimes they would bring a small child back from a successful raid and cook and eat him as a sacrifice to the spirits.

Back home, the old men had been constantly on the look-out for the returning warriors. When the tomoko were sighted, the word was shouted aloud up the beach. The women and children began to gather, and by the time the canoes arrived there was a big crowd waiting for them. The warriors boasted of their victory and lifted some of the heads high up so the folk on the beach could see. Some of the warriors, when they got to the beach, formed a line ready to receive the baby who had been brought back. Their custom was to toss the child from one man to another, each giving the child a good hard squeeze. In this way the child was hurt and perhaps was already killed before the end of the line was reached, in which case he could be easily cooked. But if the child cried, its life would be spared. The cry was regarded as a message from the spirit world, since babies were taught not to cry, for fear they would attract enemies, human or spirit, who would hurt the child and its family.

At least one person had been hoping the child would cry. She was a woman who had herself been rescued from death in this way long before. When she heard the baby cry,
she ran forward with great delight and claimed him. She cared for him, loved him and fed him. She gave him the name Hebala for he had come to her across the ocean. 3

Hebala grew into a strong young man, quick and courageous. He was slave to Matequa, an important chief in the district, but his skill was such that he was given a place in the tomoko as a warrior when the people decided on a raid, or moved to resist their enemies. He learned many other things beside fighting and was a good fisherman and builder of houses.

In those days when a man wanted to get married, his family had to make the arrangements and provide the gifts that would seal the contract with the girl's family. But Hebala had no family and no family wealth. However, Matequa was so happy with his slave-warrior's work that he agreed to get a wife for him. In due time Hebala married Tomoavara of Mahaga, Dunde. Now Hebala not only had a wife to cook for him and grow his food, but he also had the hope of a family. When his wife became pregnant he was very pleased. But his happiness turned to sorrow when a few hours after giving birth to a baby boy, Tomoavara died. Now in those days it was very hard to look after a young baby who had no mother. Rather than let the baby die slowly and painfully from lack of mother's milk, the people had long before reasoned that it was better to let the baby go with the mother into the spirit world. But this time just as the new born baby was being placed in the grave with his mother, a woman rushed across the burial ground and took the baby, saying she would care for it. And she did. He was named Dulu and he grew up at Kia.

The years of Dulu's youth were times of great change in the Western Solomons. He was still a lad when the British warship, *H.M.S. Royalist* bombarded the Roviana Lagoon destroying canoes and the heads kept in the sacred house of the great leader, Hiqava. This caused great distress and sent the fighting men of Roviana on more and more raids to get heads to replace those which had been lost - and more importantly to replace the spiritual force they represented. But another spiritual force was coming into the area. For in 1902 the Christian missionaries arrived.

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3 This account is based on Gina's own story as first published in 1924. Hebala means floating on water. See Luxton 1955:148ff. In 1975 Gina gave a different account when interviewed. I have relied on the earlier version. "Tie Hebala" means a stranger, a person from across the sea.
THE MISSIONARIES

When the pioneer missionary party arrived at Roviana on 23 May 1902, they brought a new influence to a changing society. In spite of the efforts of leaders like Hiqava, many of the old ways had gone for ever and others were disappearing. The local people had learned to look with suspicion at any 'tie vaka' (people of the ship, European) who came to them.

Most white people came to the Solomons for what they could get. As sealers, whalers, traders or planters, they wanted things that would make them rich back in their home land. A few made the Solomons their home. Those who did, often married local women and had children. Therefore, while they were still concerned for themselves, they were also cared for by local people to whom they were now related. Government officers were different. They did not come primarily to make money, and some like Charles Woodford, the first Resident Commissioner, had a real concern for Solomon Islanders. But they saw them as a people who would inevitably disappear before the incoming tide of white people. In the meantime they were to be introduced to "law and order" in British fashion, and "heathen practices" were to be suppressed.

The missionaries shared some of these attitudes. They came to a 'savage people', 'a child race' determined to save them, not only by introducing them to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but also by teaching them the "Christian ways" of their own culture and society. Some of them came to love Solomon Island people with a very real and deep love, but this made them all the more determined to make "Christians" out of them. That is, they wanted them to be followers of Jesus, but in the European mould. We should not be too harsh in our judgement of these early missionaries. They were people of their time. Not only did they do tremendous things in the area of health and child welfare, but they also learnt from their Solomon Islands converts in ways of which they were often unaware. At first they were treated with suspicion and distrust by some, and indifference by most. But the curiosity of small boys (and girls) was not to be suppressed, and a growing number of boys were allowed to attend the mission school.

Since outside contacts had been made, illness had, from time to time, decimated the population, and another epidemic of introduced disease came a few years after the missionaries arrived. It took the lives of many of the leading people in the Roviana area - among them Higava.

John F. Goldie, the leader of the missionary party, who was to retain his post as Chairman of the Mission for 49 years was a man who was perhaps happiest in frontier situations where he felt himself to be in command. His best work was done in the first twenty-five years of the Mission. During that time, he found an affinity with the local bangara. Without realising it, he adopted some of their customs of feast giving and

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4 e.g. Goldie in Colwell 1914:564.
5 Goldie, 1914:569 and in other places, Burton 1910:166, 176; and Mytinger 1942:1
people management which, together with his prestige as a white man and a recognised authority figure, gave him very great status and mana among the local people.

However, it was interesting that, when in 1962 the diamond jubilee of the mission was being celebrated and J.F. Goldie had been dead only 8 years, the people's memories of him were eclipsed in a large measure by the memories of his wife Helena Goldie. Yet Nellie Goldie had been dead since 1948 and had not been seen in the Solomons for forty years. The women, in particular, remembered her journeys by dinghy with a team of girls to visit the villages; her loving care for sick people especially the women and children; her gentle strength that enabled her to achieve so much in the ordinary everyday life of the people. Perhaps because she moved at that level rather than in the official meetings of the church, perhaps because of her better command of the Roviana language, perhaps because she herself had buried her baby son in the Munda soil, perhaps because of all these things and her own gracious personality, she understood the Solomon Islands people better and was at times more sensitive to their needs than her husband.

Missionaries from European culture consistently under-valued the place of women in Solomon Islands societies. Even when they went into matrilineal cultures, they saw them as some kind of oddity that had to be ignored or overcome. They looked at the villages and saw the dirt, the poor housing and the women coming back from the garden laden down with food, firewood and one or two children. They saw the woman's husband striding ahead carrying only his spear and shield, or perhaps a bush knife. They did not look beyond those obvious things to ask how Solomon Islands society functioned. They were a very long time accepting that women's opinions and attitudes were every bit as important to the acceptance or rejection of Christianity as that of the men. Mrs. Goldie may have had the same attitude as her husband and the other men on the staff, at first. But she went to the women in the villages and into the shelters where their babies were born, where no man could go. Being able to speak the language, she became accepted as someone devoted to their welfare and in whose presence it was quite alright to talk about anything and everything. No doubt this knowledge was reflected in conversations with her husband and influenced the decisions that he made, to some degree at least.

Many years later it was said by someone who knew the Roviana people well, that "the men are wonderful in time of war or excitement, but in time of peace, they just sit around and it's the women who keep things going. Even in time of war they would starve to death if it were not for the women. If you want to start any major projects among the people, you must get the women on your side." It was also true that in the proclamation of the Gospel, the men missionaries did much of the talking, but the women, by their caring attitude presented the loving face of the Gospel as a reality to ordinary people and especially to women.

7 The late Many Wickham.
By the time Gina was born, the Methodist Mission was well established in to the Mission was growing. Translation of the Scriptures had been begun into at least three languages and the work of the Mission was prospering.

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8 In 1913, for example, there were 31 churches & 28 other preaching places 511 native members and 524 members on trial and a total of 6,625 people under "the care of the missionaries", (official Church Reports)
When Oloduri knew she was pregnant for the fifth time, she began to make preparation for the coming child. She already had three daughters but her only son had died in babyhood. So it was natural that both she and her husband, Dulu, should hope for a boy. The usual preparations were made and the "birth house" on the island of Kohiqo (Arundel) was rebuilt by Olo and her friends, and the area around about it cleaned. When she began in labour, she left Kindu with several other women, and paddled across the lagoon to the birth house. The child that was born was indeed a boy, but a feeble, sickly one. And Olo herself was very ill. While the older women present began to despair of the life of both mother and child, one of the younger ones went back across the waters to Kokeqolo and told Mrs. Goldie. Marama (as she was called) responded at once and went with several of her girl students in the dinghy across to Kohiqo. She gathered up the mother and baby and took them back to the Mission Station. The Kindu people were upset about this because no woman was supposed to return to the village until fourteen days after the birth of the child. But Mrs. Goldie ignored them and cared for both mother and baby. Because Olo had very little milk, the baby was fed on tinned milk for some time.

As soon as Olo was well again, and the traditional time of isolation was ended, she returned to her husband and family, but the baby remained for some months with Mrs. Goldie. Since Qurasae, Dulu's place, was not far away, Olo was able to come and see her baby regularly until the time came to take him home. He was then five or six months old and a healthy active infant. Olo thanked Mrs. Goldie for the care she had given the child, and said that she wanted him to return to the Mission Station when he was old enough to go to school. Neither Dulu nor Olo had been baptised though they attended Lotu from time to time, but it was clearly intended that their son should be brought up in the Lotu.

Mrs. Goldie never ceased to be interested in those whom at one stage or another she had cared for. For the children whose births she had attended, or who came to her for their first weeks of life, she had a special concern. The women folk understood and appreciated this, and could not forget that she had nursed their children safely through an epidemic in which she had lost her only baby son. As with so many other children, her interest in, and concern for, the baby Gina was very great. She had undoubtedly saved his life, and probably the life of his mother, by her care and she continued

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9 The title of this chapter is taken from a paper written by Gina himself.
10 To put together the account of Gina's early years, I have drawn on his own writings, tape recorded interviews with him and the material presented by Mr. Goldie from time to time to the Church in New Zealand. There are many apparent contradictions. This is clearly because Gina himself heard his story told by Goldie and others many times and (as we all do) could not clearly distinguish between his own memories and the stories he was told in early days. I have, however, tried to take into account all the available information and make a coherent story out of it.
11 Lotu - the Christian Gospel and worship.
looking after them both. So that when the baby returned with his mother to Qurasae, she still saw both mother and child frequently. By the time Gina was a toddler, he was as much at home with her as he was with his true mother. He was bright child full of mischief, quick to talk and eager to learn. It was not hard to believe that he was a favourite with the Goldie girls as well as their parents. So, when he was ready for school, it was natural that he become one of a group of small boys who spent a lot of time in the "Big House" (as it was called) on the top of Kokeqolo hill. These lads helped with household tasks and attended school in the mornings.

The Goldie home was a centre for all the Europeans in the Western Solomons. Planters and traders, missionaries and Government officials alike, found their way at various times to the house and enjoyed the hospitality of the Chairman. They often came for special occasions - Christmas, Easter and the annual Church Thanks-giving Day. On that day, the long church service, during which the people gave their annual offering was followed by a feast, dancing and sometimes sports. For many years, the preparation of meals for these and all other occasions was in the hands of Solomon Damusoe. This young man came originally from Lauru, but had lived on Vella Lavella for much of his life. He came to school at Kokeqolo and was soon employed in the house as well. Mrs. Goldie taught him cooking skills and he became noted for his ability to prepare meals on sea or land, even under very trying conditions.

Under Solomon's guidance, the small boys were taught to set the table, wash dishes, sweep floors and care for the ground in the immediate vicinity of the Big House. Damusoe was not just a good cook - he was a deeply committed Christian. His influence on those small boys was not only a matter of teaching them household jobs, but also of encouraging them to take seriously the Christian faith.

But in those early years, Mrs. Goldie was the principal influence on the young Gina. He loved her very much and learnt from her. She was a very musical lady and she translated many of hymns that are still sung in the Roviana language. She gave to Gina not only a love of music, but a desire to make music. As he grew older, he was able to learn some skills from the local College band under the direction of Paul Havea, a Tongan missionary, and others. He became a very good cornet player and then went on to learn to play other instruments. When the Goldies went on leave, Gina wanted to go with them, but that was not possible. He was sent to Harry Wickham on the nearby island of Hobu Peka, and stayed with him until the Chairman returned.

School was not much to Gina's liking. Many years later, someone who knew him well called him a genius - and that may well have been true. It is certainly true that he had a bright mind, but that he quickly became bored by the slow pace of the school room. In those days, only one subject was taught on one day and, because the teachers themselves were men of limited resources, things proceeded at a very slow pace. Learning was, for the most part, by rote and endless repetition. Gina's quick mind learnt all this and more, and was still left with too little to think about and do. So he began to get into mischief and to dodge school whenever he could. He himself used to

12 An account of S. Damusoi 's life was written by J.R. Metcalfe. Lauru – Choiseul.
tell stories of those days. On one occasion, he was caught by Mr. Goldie doing something he should not have been doing, and was thrust into the store room and locked up. When the Chairman came back some hours later, he found the child that he had put into the store in a loincloth (tivitivi), clad in three pairs of shorts and three shirts, and with his face ornamented with biscuit crumbs. When challenged, he offered the excuse that he had been hungry so had opened the tin of biscuits. He then expected Mr. Goldie to give him a thrashing for his naughtiness, so had helped himself to clothes off the shelf to protect his body from the expected caning. Mr. Goldie laughed loud and long at this comical imp and sent him off home with some of the clothes as a gift!

Another trick he got up to was to hide himself on the mission ship Tandanya when he knew Mr. Goldie was going on a trip, and not appear on deck until it was too late for the ship to turn back. In this he was no doubt aided by the crew. His ability to appeal to Mr. Goldie's sense of humour saved him from trouble. It was not long before it was accepted that he would go along on some of these trips as a mascot. It seems probable that Mr. Goldie found in this child a little of the son who had died so many years before. Another trick he got up to was to hide himself on the mission ship Tandanya when he knew Mr. Goldie was going on a trip, and not appear on deck until it was too late for the ship to turn back. In this he was no doubt aided by the crew. His ability to appeal to Mr. Goldie's sense of humour saved him from trouble. It was not long before it was accepted that he would go along on some of these trips as a mascot. It seems probable that Mr. Goldie found in this child a little of the son who had died so many years before. He also liked the bright youngsters who gathered round his household to perform for visitors. For example, when visitors were arriving or departing from Haevo wharf, the small boys would come to see what was going on. Sometimes Mr. Goldie would take a coin from his pocket and call, "Here kokorako (fowl), come and fight for this." He would throw the coin into the water and the boys would dive in after it. The one who got it did not necessarily keep it because each of them would try to take it from the other. Gina was a special favourite because of his ability to sing and do amusing things for the white people who came as visitors.

School or no school, Belshazzar Gina was growing up and learning more and more. His spiritual growth nurtured by Mrs. Goldie, by Solomon Damusoe and others, was helped by a special experience on the far side of Choiseul. His own memories no doubt were reinforced by Mr. Goldie's memories, but that it was a real experience we need not doubt. This is what happened as told by Mr Goldie:

"On Wednesday last we dropped anchor off the village of Seqa, on the North East side of the island. This district is the storm centre of the island, and though we have fine work going on in the village itself, the surrounding district is as wild as it ever was. The chief pointed out the stockade which protected the village and when I remarked that it was rather out of repair, he replied that they had nearly completed a new village some distance inland. I went with him to inspect this village, and after holding a service, got back to the schooner about 8 p.m. About dawn next morning we were awakened by the noise on the shore and were told that there was fierce righting going on in the village which had evidently been attacked by the mountain people... I hurried on shore and made for the village. The bushmen had been driven off and had just retreated. All over the place were the bodies of the slain. The old chief was just about passing out, shot through the lungs. The chief of the attacking party lay dead nearby.

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13 Goldie's only son died in the epidemic of 1907.
horribly mutilated. Only one man of the village had been killed it appears, but between twenty and thirty bodies of women and children were lying almost hacked to pieces in all attitudes around the village, and six bodies of the attacking party were lying near the stockade. The teacher was safe, and when I asked him whether he had any fear for himself and would he rather I took him with me he very emphatically refused to go. The chief's son, Qagaveke, hearing our conversation said, "Sir, if you hear of any harm coming to our teacher, you will know that I am dead, for they will have to reach him across my dead body!" As the dinghy pulled out going back to the ship, the people in the boat and on the shore began to sing, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me". 14

Gina himself added, “AS the dinghy came back to the ship, and we were all singing, I could see Jone Hopa standing there on the beach. I was deeply moved and resolved that I too would become a missionary."

If that was a moment of deep spiritual significance, the events of early 1922 were an emotional crisis for Gina. Mrs. Goldie, for long troubled with ill-health and concerned for her daughters who had been placed at school in Australia, finally left the Solomons, never to return. Gina was to visit her in Australia on several occasions but the sense of loss when she left the Solomons was very great.

Rev. Belshazzar Gina

A VISIT SOUTH

1924 was a very important year for Gina and for the friendship between the Church in Solomon Islands and the Church in New Zealand. Two years before the Australian Mission Board which had guided the work in the Solomons since 1902 passed control of that Mission District to New Zealand. In 1920, the Church there had sent out two of its leaders, the Rev. W. A. Sinclair and Mr. J. W. Court, in preparation for this. They had both met Gina as well as many other Solomon Islands people. It is likely that Gina travelled on the boat with Mr. Goldie when the Chairman was taking the visitors on their tour of inspection. Some years later, Mr. Goldie was writing to Mr. Sinclair about "your old friend Gina who is coming with us to Sydney."

As a result of this visit, when the New Zealand church received the responsibility for the Solomons, they had a team of five people ready to come. These people, who travelled out in 1922, were the Rev. Tom Dent, Mr. Frank and Mrs. Gladys Chivers, Sister May Bamett and Sister Lilian Berry. Each of them gave notable service to the Solomons and Gladys Chivers died at Kokeqolo in 1927. They were not, of course, the first to come from New Zealand. Sister Constance Olds had come out in 1919 and Rev. Arthur Bensley in 1921. All this had raised some interest in the New Zealand Church, but now in 1924, people were to come from "their own mission field".

Mr. Goldie had visited New Zealand while on leave in 1921, and was now due for leave again. The Mission Board asked the Chairman to come to their annual meeting at the beginning of February, and make some visits to New Zealand churches later in the year. Mrs. Goldie had continued with Roviana translation work and needed some Roviana speaking people to help her. The New Zealand Board was agreeable to having Solomon Islanders visit churches with Mr. Goldie. So three were chosen.

Stephen Agolo was from Kalikoqu, the heart of the Roviana Lagoon area, a mature pastor-teacher with a wide knowledge of his own language and customs. Opeli Pina, a younger man, had done well in College. Though he had been born in Simbo, he had been adopted by a family at Kia (not far from Kokeqolo) and had grown up in the Roviana speaking area. He had a reasonable grasp of English, though shy about using it. Gina was chosen for different reasons. He was Mrs. Goldie's foster child and she and her daughters looked forward to seeing him. Goldie himself had an affection for the lad, and Gina had the right kind of temperament to be able to respond to audiences in Australia and New Zealand. He would be a good advertisement for the Solomons.

The four men left Gizo on 5 January 1924 on the ship Marsina, travelling "first class for the comfort of the boys". Twelve days later they reached Sydney, having travelled via Tulagi and Brisbane. The short stop in that port had introduced the

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15 The visit included Bougainville & Buka as well as the Western Solomons.
16 Goldie to Sinclair 23 Dec. 1923.
17 Daniel Bula of Vella La Vella had visited New Zealand in 1916 with the Rev. R.C Nicholson. Boaz Sunga and Aisea Zomoro had also come with Mr. Goldie in 1921.
18 Goldie to N.Z. Board letter 12 Jan. 1924
Solomon Islanders to the rather frightening world of big cities, heavy traffic and strange customs. Gina said,

"Here (Brisbane) was my first glimpse of civilisation, and I was more frightened to see the big town, especially the train. Although I was very happy to go to a strange land, when we got to Sydney, I couldn't say a word because I was frightened and had to hold on to Mr. Goldie's hand everywhere we went...."  

In Sydney, the party were taken to the Mission house in Haberfield to await the arrival of Mrs. Goldie and the girls. Goldie bought Gina "one silver cornet, one mandolin, one mouth organ and one tin whistle" for him to amuse himself with! One day Gina heard a man playing a cornet in the street in a nearby shopping centre. It was a man who had been a soldier in the war of 1914-18. He was playing to earn some money. As he played, people put coins in his hat which was placed on the ground. He stopped at the end of one piece of music and seeing this little black fellow, asked him in a teasing way if he could play the cornet. "Yes," said Gina, "you try me." So he man did. First Gina played the tune the man had just finished, "The Sweetest Flower that Blows" and then went on to play "Rule Britannia" and "Advance Australia Fair". The crowd gathered in considerable numbers and money showered into the soldier's hat. A policeman came and moved the crowd on, Gina handed back the cornet and began to walk away. A lady from a nearby shop came and offered him a water melon. He happily took the melon and went back to the house.  

Mrs. Goldie and the girls arrived from Melbourne a few days after this, and took the three Solomon Islanders up to a house at Leura in the Blue Mountains. Mr. Goldie went on to New Zealand for the Board meeting in Auckland.

While Opeti and Stephen Agolo had plenty of work to do on the translation project, Gina had to fill in his own time. However the local school boys became his friends and invited him to play cricket with them. Since he had played the game at Munda, he had no trouble with holding a bat or bowling, and enjoyed his time with the lads. He also learnt to do the shopping for Mrs. Goldie, and helped in the house is he had done at Kokeqolo. Mr. Goldie returned after several weeks and the whole party were able to travel to the Goldie's home in Melbourne.

At the end of March, Mr. Goldie returned to New Zealand, and this time he took Opeti and Gina with him. They reached Auckland on the 1st April. After a few days in that city, they travelled far and wide through the North Island talking to Methodist groups and conducting worship in many churches. Mr. Goldie was the principal speaker of course, but Opeti and Gina would also talk, usually in Roviana, which Mr. Goldie translated. They sang hymns in their own language and Gina played any musical instrument that he could borrow. The party attracted much attention from Church people, and wherever they spoke many folk gathered. Memories of those visits were still very clear for some people more than fifty years later. Mrs. Chambers, whose husband was the minister in Opunake, Taranaki, recalled how they took the Solomon

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19 Gina MS
20 Open Door March 1924:9, also Gina Ms.
Islanders to the local Agricultural show. Opeti and Gina both laughed in surprise at the cows and horses with covers on. The idea of animals in clothing seemed very funny to them. At Pitt Street Church in Auckland, within a few days of their arrival in the country, Gina had borrowed a cornet, and during the service played the tune of the hymns together with the organist. The last hymn that Sunday was "From Greenland's icy mountains, from India's coral strands". Rev. Percy Knight, the minister, came down to the organist during the hymn and spoke to him. The organ fell silent for the last verse and only the sweet tone of the cornet was heard with the singing. Fifty two years later, Fred Bull wrote about this incident and said, "That has always seemed to me to be an example of what the power of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ can do to men of every race and colour."  

Those two memories are typical of the impression that these Solomon Islanders made at that time - on the one hand the difference and sometimes the strangeness, on the other the power of the Gospel to bring all people into one family.

1924 Opeti Pina, Goldie and Gina

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21 Letter from Mr. Fred Bull to author dated 4 March 1976. Note written by Mrs. E.B. Chambers also in 1976.
The effect of the visit of these three people - the pioneer missionary with more than 20 years experience and the two young men, darker skinned than anyone most New Zealanders had ever seen, and seeming very much younger than their real age, raised a lot of interest in Solomon Islands and was to bring a temporary increase in support. Some of this support was in money, some in offers of gifts like band instruments. It did little to increase real understanding of Solomon Islands people and cultures. All the church people saw was the "triumph of the Gospel" - Melanesians who could speak to them in the terms that they understood as Christian and who seem to have adopted the cultural trappings of the European style church.

For Opeti Pina, the experience was one that he could talk about for many years afterwards. It widened his horizons and taught him new things. When he went back to Australia at the end of May, he resumed his work of translation under Mrs. Goldie's guidance. They left Sydney at the end of July and on his return to the Solomons he married and settled in to his work as pastor-teacher. New Zealand was a pleasant memory but did not change his future.

For Belshazzar Gina, however, the New Zealand visit opened up a new world of opportunity. Quick of mind and filled with an endless curiosity, he had learned a lot but wanted to know more. He had made friends, some of whom were to be lifelong supporters. He had made it clear to some influential people that he had the capacity to benefit from New Zealand style education. He had also learned that he could get while people to respond to him in a way that his own people did not. Because of his desire to know more, and the realisation that New Zealand could be the gateway of opportunity, he was very ready to respond to suggestions that he might return for schooling at a later date.

One special friendship formed in those days was with Beatrice Keall, the daughter of the Rev. R.P. Keall, minister in Carterton. Gina and Opeti stayed with the Kealls and Beatrice and Gina conducted a correspondence from then on that continued throughout life. In a letter written on June 18th 1924 from Sydney, Gina wrote:

"I like New Zealand very much, and we would like to be back there again. It does (not) snow where I stay, and it is not as cold as New Zealand. Well Dear Beatrice, It is time go to bed but I want to finish This letter before I go to bed. I will not forget you and I will not forget to write to you." and he never did.  

He wrote of his dislike of Australia and his love for New Zealand (a view which Opeti appeared to share). Gina's love for the land of the Kiwi did not change through his lifetime.  

The remaining weeks in Australia were spent partly with Mrs. Goldie in Melbourne, and partly travelling to places like Newcastle in New South Wales. Then it was back to the Solomons, this time going via Rabaul in New Guinea where Mr. Goldie had to attend some business, and then home.

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22 Gina to Beatrice Keall
23 Opeti Pina told Sister Lina Jones on his return to Munda that he too had preferred New Zealand.
YEARS OF PREPARATION24

The return to the Solomons was a series of contrasts for the young Gina. On the big ship coming from Australia, he was still attracting a lot of attention from the white people. Then when the ship reached Rendova, within sight of home, there were his friends on the mission vessel Tandanya waiting to welcome the whole party. It was early Sunday morning, and they quickly transferred themselves and their luggage to their own craft and went across to Munda. As they drew in past Nusa Zonga they could see people hurrying down to Haevo, and by the time they reached the wharf the band was lined up, some of its members in uniform, playing vigorously to welcome them home. Then as Mr. Goldie stepped ashore the music changed to "God Defend New Zealand". It was 9 a.m.

There was a funeral immediately following for a woman who had died the previous day, but Gina was hardly aware of that. He was so busy greeting his family and friends and answering their questions. At 11 a.m. the church on the hill was packed to the doors and people stood outside. There was a formal welcome back to Mr. Goldie who preached to an attentive congregation. In the afternoon service it was the turn of the Solomon Islanders. Gina played his mandolin, and took his turn with Stephen and Opeti to speak of their experiences in the strange world of the southern lands. Three babies were baptised. And then it was over.

It was quite clear, that within a few days these three men, who had been so far away and done so much, were expected to return to the situation in which they had been before as if nothing had happened. For the older men it was perhaps not too hard. Stephen had his family and Opeti had to prepare for his wedding on 18 October. But for Gina, young, enthusiastic and full of ideas it was very hard to come down to being 'just a college boy' again. Among his own people, Gina was one who had been away and seen strange things, but while no doubt some of the younger boys and girls believed everything he told them, there were many who dismissed some of his stories of the travels as exaggeration. Because Gina was the kind of person he was, he was hurt by the failure of the white missionaries to realise that he was full of new ideas and by the doubts of his own people about his truthfulness. It was sometimes assumed that Gina was never nervous or unsure of himself, but he did have times of doubt and depression. One person both he and Opeti could talk to was Sister Lina Jones who had herself newly come from New Zealand. Both of them at various times went and talked with her, and found relief in so doing.

But by the end of the year Gina had settled down, at least on the surface, and was full of enthusiasm for coming events. On 23 December he wrote to Beatrice Keall:

"I received your most welcome letter a few months ago, I will not forget my friend in the Lotu, I trust that you, and you all are well. We here at Kokeqolo are all well including Mr. Goldie and Opeti. I was glad to get back and see the

24 This chapter draws heavily on Gina's letters to B.Keall and the diaries of Sister Lina M. Jones.
members of my tribe and they too were pleased to see me. I have now entered the College and Mr. Waterhouse is my teacher. Just now we are preparing for Christmas, and we will have sports football matches Tomoko races and swimming. The band too will play on Christmas Evening..." That Christmas celebration and the New Year journey to Marovo with a large party including the Chairman, Sister Lina and the Band for the opening of the Patutiva Church, probably did a lot to help Gina's readjustment and prepare him for the next year at College.

During these years the way was being prepared for Gina to go to school in New Zealand. Mr. J.W. Court and Rev. W.A. Sinclair had always hoped that some Solomon Islands students would go to that country for training so that a native ministry (as they called it) could develop. They had had Maori 'native ministers' from the earliest days of the Methodist Church there, and saw this as a logical development. Ever since Court and Sinclair had met Gina in 1920, they had recognized in him the capacity for higher education, and while they wanted other Solomon Islands students also to get a good education, he was the symbol of their hopes.

Mr. Goldie took a different view. He loved Gina in his own way, and wanted good things for him. He was also happy with the reflected glory that came when Gina pleased people in Australia or New Zealand and they praised the work of the Mission because of this. But for him, there was a vast gap between white and black people and their capacity to understand the Gospel. Perhaps he was like those missionary experts of the 1930s who claimed that no one could have sufficient understanding of the Christian faith to be ordained unless they were at least a third generation Christian!

In 1924, there had been people who wanted Gina to stay in New Zealand and go to school. But Goldie would not agree. However, over the next two years he changed his mind. For Gina, these were years of change with times of sadness and times of joy.

On the one hand he could show off his skills to people and be praised for what he was doing. On the other he had to work harder at school than he had ever done. In a letter to Beatrice Kcall dated 31 August 1925 he wrote:

"last Sunday night and the Sunday before that, Mr. Goldie asked me to play Violin in the church, so I played "St. Aldred" and "Trentham". I have been promoted, and I am in Mr. Waterhouse's class now. I find some of the work very difficult, but I am trying, we are trying to learn all we can at school, earthly wisdom is good, but there is something that is better that is the work of God... Christianity is growing in our land, but there are many peoples are still in the darkness....."

When he was not helping in Mr. Goldie's house or travelling with him on the ship, he needed to study, for Mr. Waterhouse was a demanding teacher.

By 1926 he had settled back in the local ways much better. In March, for example, he wrote of being tired after playing cricket and went on to say:

"Last few weeks we don't have any rains in these Islands, and all the water tanks became empty. There was very little water with which to make Tea for the white
people and for them to bathe in. But we natives although our tanks were also empty, but we climbed and got the young coconut and drank the milk that is inside them. We are used to drinking Stream water and the Milk of the coconut...."

He had lost some confidence in his English too, and in October he went to Sister Lina to get her to help translate a letter which he had written in Roviana. Perhaps it was the letter to Beatrice that he finally wrote on 21 October:

"...I am sitting on the verandah of Mr. Goldie's house to write this letter. It is not very hot today, and the wind is coming from the east, and my thoughts are long thoughts because although this Solomon Islands is my native land, but my thoughts fly over to you all in New Zealand, and I want very much to see you again. It is nearly three years since I went to New Zealand, but I have not forgotten what New Zealand is like. Last Friday I preached in College. When I stood up to preach I was afraid (nervous) for there were present those who would criticise me, but I wanted to preach God's word, this is the Text I took Jonah 2:7. Every Friday we preach in College, and some are sent out to preach to those who still in darkness. Last week I went to an island. I have two islands to plant my coco-nut. Some of my relatives are making copra for me. When I went last week there were many bags full, but they have not yet been weighed. This is how I went there. I went on Friday, and two children went with me. The three of us went in a little boat, and we sailed, for the wind was a good one. and the boat went on nicely, so that it was not long before we reached there. We slept there one night, and at four o'clock on Saturday we left the island, but the wind was no-good, and the sea rough, and rain fell. The children be-came frightened. I had my watch in my basket, and I looked at the time, and it was past twelve o 'clock. The wind was then very strong. At one o 'clock there came a whirlwind, and the children were very frightened. I said to them Let us have Lotu, and soon the whirlwind passed, and at two o'clock it was quite calm again, and the sea smooth. The children went to sleep, and I rowed. The wonder of it was that we left at four o'clock in the afternoon and reached Kokeqolo at three o'clock next morning. God took care of us, and we did not die in the gale and the whirlwind...."

By that time the decision had been made that Gina and Silas would go south for educations. While Mr. Goldie may not have told the young men that this would happen, by October, he had almost certainly hinted at the possibility. This would explain Gina's feeling of desire to return to New Zealand.

Mr. Goldie went south to spend the Christmas of 1926 with his wife and daughters in Melbourne. It was the first time in 25 years that he had not been at Roviana for that important occasion.
Three young men had left the Solomons to join Mr. Goldie in Australia. One, Simeon Tavaeke, went to help Mrs. Goldie with translation work. The other two were destined for school. Silas Moala Fotu was the son of the missionaries Napthali and Mele Fotu who had served the church in the Solomons for many years. He was a quiet lad who worked hard and was already part of two cultures - his parents' Tongan culture and that of his adopted country, Solomon Islands. Never-the-less it was a big change for him to come to the cold lands of the white people. Gina was returning to the land her people loved, to the excitement of meeting friends and seeing familiar places.

While Silas was shy and tended to remain in the background when confronted with new people and situations, Gina responded to the stimulation of new experiences and the attention of people with vivacity and aplomb.

All three young men travelled with Mr. Goldie to Auckland arriving on 22 February 1927. The Solomon Islanders were sent to the Mt. Albert Methodist Orphanage to live for the next few weeks. Mr. Goldie attended the Annual Meeting of the Foreign Mission Board and then came the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church. On the afternoon of Wednesday 9 March, the Solomon Islands group sat on the platform of a packed church to be introduced to the Assembly and bring their greetings. It must have been an exciting occasion for Gina - and perhaps a frightening one for the other two. On 19 March the two students were enrolled at Wesley College, Paerata, and Simeon returned with Mr. Goldie to Australia.

This College has been in existence in one form or another for more than 80 years. Its original purpose had been to educate Maori students, and right through its history it has enrolled a significant number of Maoris. Since the move from Three Kings a few years earlier, students from the islands of the near North had been able to enter. When Gina and Silas came to the school they joined a small community of 98 which included Maori and Pakeha and some Fijians and Polynesians.

By mid year, the headmaster of the College was able to report that both Silas and Gina were doing well at their school work. But it was not the work in the class room which made the most lasting impression on their classmates. Gina's capacity to laugh loud and long often caused other people to respond in the same way. This made him very popular. Through ignorance or through lack of thought, he often broke rules and got himself into trouble, but his ability to laugh at himself took much of the sting out of his failure. This was notable on the playing field. With cricket he was alright. He had played it in the Solomons, knew the rules and could keep to them. He was one of the

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25 This chapter owes a great deal to two former students of Wesley College, Harold Denton and Jim Becver, contemporaries of Gina at the College. The Wesley College Register 1974, the Methodist Times and the Foreign Mission Board Minutes are also sources of information.

26 See photo of the three young men in Luxton 1955: 84.

27 Pakeha - non Maori New Zealanders.
First Cricket XI team in each of the two years he was a student. But in football it was a different story. He played with enthusiasm (as he did every game he tackled) but seemed unable to master the rules. So he was constantly penalised.

He enjoyed himself and did play for the school at least once. In athletics it is recorded in 1928 that he gained 3rd place in the 100 yards race and 2nd in the 200 yards handicap.

But it was in swimming that he really astonished the other boys (and probably gave some of the teachers a good fright). Whereas the local lads thought they had done wonders if they managed to swim 10 or 15 yards under water, Gina could swim the length of the baths (25 yards) and turn and make it most of the way back without surfacing. He won the senior swimming championship in 1928, and he and Silas Fotu led their team of four to win the inter-house swimming competition. Both had been swimming as soon as they could walk in the warm waters of the Solomons, and were used to diving to search the reefs for fish and shellfish. It has to be remembered also that they were certainly older than the boys in their class and physically stronger. A photo of Gina and John Holden, who entered the College in the same year and was a lifelong friend, shows 'little short Gina' as towering over his friend.

Music was another area in which Gina attracted attention. His voice had broken before his 1924 visit to New Zealand, but it had now matured into a fine baritone. He often sang alone in church services or concerts. He also sang duets with the young Harold Denton whose light boyish soprano was the perfect partner to Gina's deeper notes. As

28 Letter to B. Keall dated 13 Nov. 1927.
was to be expected, he and Silas sang together in the Roviana language many times. Gina had also mastered a number of musical instruments. He had played unofficially every instrument in the Kokeqolo Brass Band and had owned a "banjo". He had a fine sense of music and could, and did, sing and play with great feeling and dignity. But he could also respond to his audience with quite a "music hall" sense of the dramatic. He played in the school concert in 1927 with a 'minstrel sextet' and in 1928 he was part of a Chinese jazz-band under the baton of Josiah Vaea who had problems keeping his band in order, "particularly a little black man who WOULD play out of tune." 31

In early June, Gina and eight other students went to a Bible Class Camp at Waikato Heads - "..we had a very nice time down there. I am enjoying myself very much," he wrote. In the same letter he notes that "I am very well indeed and enjoyed myself with the Maori boys." 32

But school was not all fun and laughter. There were more serious and more difficult things. Wesley College was basically an agricultural college and each student took his share in the work on the large farm. In summer it was not so bad, but in winter the poor Islands boys found it very difficult. A fellow student recalls Gina returning from the cowshed on a cold winter's morning after milking, very wet and quite dejected. In the class room, things did not always go well. The discipline required of all students was often irksome to Gina. He had a brilliant mind and could, when he applied himself, do very well at his studies. But it seems likely that, as with other bright students, his mind wandered away from the studies in hand. In the Junior Speech Contest of 1928 he redeemed himself somewhat with a winning speech on "Dr. George Brown".

Alongside this, we must not forget his love and compassion. It is reflected in his letters to Beatrice Keall, and shown in his care of a fellow student. Henri Cabouret had come from French Polynesia and spoke his own Tahitian language and French but little or no English on arrival. Gina took him under his wing, as it were, and soon they were conversing in simplified Roviana! That did not help much with learning English but it did give the lad confidence, a friend he could talk to, and no doubt helped him come to terms with all his studies.

In 1928 he was well settled into the routine of life at school. He wrote to his father asking for permission (and presumably money) to buy a camera for 30 shillings, so he could take photos of his friends. By the end of March in that year, he knew that Mr. Goldie had been elected President of the New Zealand Methodist Church to take office in 1929, and that he would almost certainly be called on to travel with the President, visiting churches up and down the country. This prospect pleased him greatly.

30 Letter to B. Keall 12 June 1927
31 1928 School Magazine quoted by J. Bcever.
32 Letter to B. Keall 22 July 1928.
Military drill was an adventure of a different kind. Presumably it continued through the whole year, but special full-day parades were held in March 1928 and Gina wrote about this event:

This week we are not having (classes) but we only have our Military Drill. We start at 9.30 a.m. till 12.30 then have our Dinner, from then till 4.30 p.m. I liked it very much but it is too hot to stay in the sun all the times, and also the Rifles Exercise is very heavy, and make you hot. I am one of the Corporal here and I take one section of 22 boys. Tomorrow we are going to have our Shooting Competitions and also the Captain will judge all the boys, to see who is the best in the Rifle Exercises.

Another excitement was being able to listen to the "wireless" and hear an account of the rugby match in which the All Blacks won!

It would be wrong to think that Gina coasted through those years at College without any times of worry and sorrow. The morning when he returned wet and cold from the cowshed, and so dejected, was only one of the times when he was unhappy. He was sad when the first long school holiday came on 23 June 1927. All the New Zealand boys went home to their families. Gina (and no doubt other Island boys) had to stay and work on the farm. Another disappointment came at the year's end. He had hoped to visit the South Island during the school holidays and spend a few days in Wellington on his way, to see his friend Beatrice. But that too came to nothing.

Yet on the whole, his years at Wesley College were some of the happiest years of Gina's life. His active mind could explore new fields of learning and his body acquired new skills. He had a ready audience whenever he wanted to "perform" whether it was on the sports field, at a concert or just in the fellowship of the dormitories. And he made some friends that were to be true to him as long as they lived. John Holden was one of these, and it was to the Holden family home in Christchurch that he went for a holiday at the end of 1928, and to this place he returned during his deputation travels in 1929 and 1937.
Kera and Gina
in Gisborne at Rev. Geo Frost’s home 1929.
Methodist custom was, and still is, to elect a new President of the Church each year. The election takes place a year before the person chosen takes over the office. The decision of the Conference in March 1928 to elect John F. Goldie as president for 1929, was of course an honour to him. It was also a way of drawing attention to the Mission Field that the New Zealand Church had taken under its care in 1922. Since narrowing their responsibility to one field alone, the people of the Church had not been persuaded to match their giving to the needs of the area they were now responsible for. There is no doubt that it was expected that if J.F. Goldie could spend a full year travelling through the country, he would be able to arouse sufficient enthusiasm to provide the resources needed. It was intended that Mrs. Goldie would come to New Zealand and spend some time travelling with him. For the Goldies it would be a bonus, as they now spent more time in different countries than they did together.

It was also part of the plan that there would be Solomon Islanders available to visit the churches. The most economical way to do that was to take Gina out of school. He spoke reasonable English and was already known to many people, and a proven attraction to church groups. Silas Fotu was not suitable and he returned home early in 1929, but there were other students coming. One of them, Nathan Keira, was due to come to the College in that year, but it was decided that he should have the full year on deputation with Mr. Goldie and then begin his studies in 1930.

And so it was.

Officially Gina finished at Wesley College on 24 February 1929. But before that he had already assisted the Rev. W.A. Sinclair, the General Secretary, with various visits to churches in several parts of the country. From the time Mr. and Mrs. Goldie and their daughters arrived in the country on 12 January, Gina wanted to be as close to them as was possible. The excitement was building up.

First there was the happy reunion with Mrs. Goldie and her daughters. Then it was the Annual Meeting of the Foreign Mission Board which decided that he should study through the year as a candidate for the Native Ministry.

Next it was the Conference where Gina, now joined by Kera, trailed along in the clouds of Presidential glory. The Conference opened on Thursday 21st February; the next day there was a large "procession of witness" from Pitt Street Church to the Civic Square. On Saturday they all went out to Wesley College for the opening of the Smith Memorial Chapel. The following Wednesday, there was the opening of the Trinity Theological College and Thursday night a great Missionary Rally at which Gina sang a solo. The world, or at least that part of it called the New Zealand Methodist Church, was at his feet.

For the next eight months, Gina and Kera travelled to almost every part of New Zealand. Sometimes they were together, but often they wore apart. Gina travelling with the Rev. W.A. Sinclair and Kera with Mr. Goldie. This was possible because
Gina is now able to give addresses in excellent English". 33 Wherever they went both young men sang in Roviana and in English. Gina frequently sang a popular song of the lime, "The Old Rugged Cross", and almost everyone who recalled those years mentioned this song above all others. Over and over again, Gina told the story of his family and stressed the influence of Christianity on them and the Solomon Island people generally. "Where would I be today if the Gospel of Jesus Christ had not come to our Islands?"

People were intrigued by these dark skinned young men. They were fascinated by their human interest in new things, and their ability to respond to young and old alike. Joyce remembered for the rest of her life how Gina came to their home when she was eight or nine years old. She had recently been given a black kitten. When she proudly told him that she would now call her cat Gina, he responded by telling her. "When I go home, I'm going to get a white kitten and call it Joyce." 34 Alice met him first at the home of Albert Holden in Christchurch. She was at the time a young married woman. One day she accompanied Gina to a meeting. They had to travel by tramcar. She wrote, "...he was very interested in watching the young ladies sitting opposite us. When we got off the tram, I asked him what interested him so much. He said, "Not much difference in our country only instead of red they use white make-up!' 35

Gina enjoyed being with people and having fun with them. One week-end while he was in Auckland, he was invited to go with the young people of the Bible Class movement on a picnic to Pine Island. 36 On the ferry boat, as they journeyed from Auckland central wharf there was much talk and laughter about swimming capacity. When they reached their destination, Gina and a young minister, Howard Jeffreys, both dived over one side and did not resurface to the shock of some who were watching. But a few minutes later there were cheery calls from the other side, as both had swum under the ship. Not a great feat in Solomon Islands eyes, but astonishing lo Aucklanders of the time.

The constant travelling, meeting new people, and at the same time being expected to do some study as a candidate for the ministry was very tiring. Joyce remembered how he dropped off to sleep in the middle of a family conversation - tired out. It was a salutory reminder that black people are human beings too. Back in 1924, some small children had watched with wide eyes Gina and Opeti Pina learning to ride bicycles. One day Gina had a slight accident and cut his leg. The children were fascinated to see that his blood was the same colour as theirs. 37 So many of those who shared their memories of both the 1924 and 1929 visits by Gina to churches around New Zealand remembered him as a human being - a person like themselves who could be happy or

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33 M.T. 16 Nov. 1929
34 Mrs. Joyce Buckley letter
35 Mrs. Alice Seddon letter
36 Mr. Fred Bull letter March 4 1976.
37 Mr. Harold Denton
sad, tired or full of energy, and who could respond in a human way. The reality of the
Church overseas was brought home to some, at least, of the New Zealand people.

In the Mission Board discussions this reality was raising questions about Mission
policy and practice. Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper never celebrated for
Solomon Islands Christians? Why was it that the only people in the native ministry
came from Tonga and Fiji, and there were very few of them? These and many other
things increased the pressure for the development of the Solomon Island indigenous
ministry. Though not opposed in principle, Mr. Goldie did not feel the time was right.
But even he was carried along by the strong tide of opinion and raised no public
objection to Gina's candidature.

So the high points of the year 1929, for Gina, were the Conference celebrations in
March and his acceptance by the Auckland Synod as a candidate for the "native
ministry" in November. In between, he was meeting people, strengthening old
friendships and making new ones, and attracting support for the work of the Mission.
Some of the gifts were for him personally or for the station to which he hoped to be
appointed. Instruments for a brass band and glass lantern slides were two types of gift
that came at his request. 38

John F. Goldie's work in 1929 is enshrined in marble on the old College building in
Grafton, and the chapel at Wesley College, but Gina is enshrined in the memories of
ordinary people.

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38 Sinclair to Goldie 23 April 1930.
1929 had been a year of excitement which had raised great hopes in many hearts. Gina himself prepared to go back to the Solomons, ready to take his place as a minister - even though only a minister in training - in the church of his homeland. He had dreams of pioneering mission work in some new place. He talked to one lady about going to new areas in Papua and Mr. Goldie had talked about the Lord Howe - Ontong Java group in the Solomons. At other times he saw a role for himself in the Synod of the church as the voice of his own people. But as the year 1930 went on, the hopes were at first raised and then dashed almost completely.

In February, the Foreign Mission Board held its annual meeting in Auckland. According to its Minutes:

Belshazzar Gina and Nathan Kera, both of whom have been assisting the President and General Secretary in Deputation work throughout the Dominion were cordially welcomed by the President on behalf of the Board. They fit-tingly replied, expressing their pleasure at being present and tendering thanks for many kindnesses received.

The Board went on to support Gina's candidature for the Native Ministry saying,

"...a very favourable report has been received, several members testifying' to the beauty of his character and his general qualifications for the Native Ministry."

They recommended that he be placed on probation for six years, and that a suitable course of study be prepared.40

Kera went off to Wesley College, while Gina enjoyed a few more weeks of visiting churches and being entertained and applauded. Now his time for departure was drawing near, people began to shower gifts on him for the work he was expected to undertake back in his homeland. Mr. Sinclair wrote to Mr. Goldie who returned to Australia in March saying:

He (Gina) has had a fine send off here and has been literally loaded with gifts of every kind. Mr. Ambury kindly attended to the dispatch of his things.... He has acquitted himself well in all his deputation work. and has commended himself in a very special manner to our people throughout the Dominion. I cannot speak too highly of the way in which he has conducted himself in the homes of our people. I am sorry to part with him....41

Gina sailed in the Aorangi in mid April to Sydney and met Mr. Goldie there. In early May, they left for the Solomons. As the journey proceeded, Goldie and Gina moved in to a different world. In the one, Goldie held the title and a place of honour but the real

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39 Letter, Mrs. Seddon
40 F.M. Board Minutes Feb. 1930. Note that N.Z. Ministers usually did 3years in College & 3 years on probation.
41 Sinclair to Goldie 23 April 1930
power lay with others. In the other, he was held in such high esteem that his lightest wish was considered a command by many people. In New Zealand he had enjoyed the reflected glory that came from Gina's popularity, in the Solomons he expected the young man to return to his position as a "native".

First it was on the ship itself where clear distinctions were made between races. Then, while loading copra on Malaita, some of the passengers, including Gina, went ashore to see:

"... those heathen people in their village......and we came in to contact with those real heathen people, well I never seen anything more worse than those people before.... " 42

He was echoing ideas that W.A. Sinclair had passed on from a previous visit to Malaita, no doubt to please the General Secretary, but it did not do anything to help him to a true estimation of his own people, or of himself.

When the ship arrived at Rendova, the first act of a major welcome home to Mr. Goldie took place. War canoes manned by painted warriors were there to escort the mission ship Tandanya back to Roviana. There the brass band was waiting, playing ceaselessly, a guard of honour in uniform stood to attention and hundreds of people who had come especially to see the long absent Chairman crowded round. Gina was welcomed warmly by his family. His young brother Alekera came on board the steamer to find him.

While Mr. Goldie was escorted to the 'Big House' on the hill, his companion went off to the village to greet his father, his brothers and sisters. He wrote:

"It is good to be home again, but at the same time, I miss New Zealand very much. I don't like the heat here at all. Give me the N.Z. winter every time." 43

Coming home after a long period away is always very difficult. In 1930 no one had ever heard of 'culture shock', but it was just as real. Like New Zealand missionaries returning to their homeland after service overseas, Solomon Islanders who had been away long always found big problems of adjustment. After the first few days of talk and sharing experiences words dry up for there are so many things that the returning person is interested in which are almost meaningless to his family. Gina's family could not understand his ideas and dreams except in the vaguest way, nor did they share his point of view on many issues. 44 Like the people whom he had left behind in New Zealand, the white staff wanted much from Gina and saw a great future for him, but they saw it in a 'native ministry' far removed from the kind of ministry exercised by

42 Gina to Sinclair 30 May 1930
43 Gina to Sinclair 30 May 1930
44 cf. story of Francis Talasasa Aqorao in Carter (1981)
themselves - at least in their generation. Mr. Sinclair, for example, in July 1930 wrote to Mr. Goldie saying:

"I am pleased to know that Gina has settled back into ordinary life once more and that he is back in Solomon Island dress." 45

A few years later the Rev. Tom Dent was writing to the General Secretary complaining that there had been a reference to Nathan Kera in the missionary magazine under the title "Reverend". He said:

"This is surely a mistake and unless it is quickly rectified it may do a certain amount of damage here on the Field... (it) will surely create a false impression amongst the natives..." 46

Gina himself was hardly aware of such tilings in the first months. For the prospect of going to Ontong Java as missionary was real and exciting. Within a month of his return to the Solomons he was on his way to Choiseul to work with Dr. Clifford James and gain some basic training in nursing and first aid. Ontong Java, 250 miles to the north, was a long way from any Government or Mission medical services. Any workers stationed there would be called on to help sick or injured people.

The situation on Choiseul was different from Roviana in a number of ways.

The Rev. Vincent Binet who had worked there since 1917 and the Rev. John Metcalfe who had been his fellow worker until 1929, had encouraged local leadership and indeed, relied heavily on people like Stephen Gandapeta. Though they did not really think differently from their colleagues about the place of the native ministry, they had agreed very early on, that the local church should be organised in such a way that it could carry on its work if the expatriate missionaries were, for any reason, taken away. They had used the traditional Quarterly Meeting and thus local leaders who had become Christian, and some who because they were Christian had become leaders, had a real place in the running of the Mission. The result was a strong and developing local church.

By contrast, Goldie never held a Quarterly Meeting in all his 49 years in the Roviana circuit. There was therefore no forum where the voice of the preachers and leaders could be heard. As Ngatu's diaries make clear, there were unofficial meetings of bangara from time to time. But these were to decide how to carry out Mr. Goldie's instructions rather than to consider policy. On Choiseul, though Mr. Metcalfe had been transferred to Teop in the North Solomons for a few years, and Mr. Binet was unwell, the work was carried on by the local leaders. Sister Ethel McMillan, long serving deaconess and midwife, was at Sasamuqa station and was within the limited sphere of the mission station and women's work, a person with considerable authority. Dr. Cliff James and his wife were deeply committed to missionary service but were rather radical non-conformists. Like other new and younger members of the staff, they

45 Sinclair to Goldie 16 July 1930
46 Dent to Marshall 11 April 1933
questioned again and again the traditional ways of doing things and the attitude of the ministers. While Gina would probably not have heard any of the actual discussions, he must have been aware of the Doctor's attitudes. He would have known for example that Mrs. James refused to go south to have her baby, and against all precedent remained on Choiseul for the delivery of her son.

In the six months Gina was there, he travelled with the Doctor, learned basic nursing care and made acquaintance with the leadership of the local church.

As November drew near, Gina looked forward to the Annual Synod. He had assumed that when he returned to the Solomons as a minister, even though only a minister in training, he would have been a member of the governing body of the Church in the Solomons, the Annual Synod. In this he had been encouraged by other young ministers whom he knew like Raymond Dudley. Ray was an ethnic India from Fiji who had been brought up in New Zealand and whom Gina had come to know when he attended some classes at the new Trinity Theological College in the first months of 1930. Interestingly, in all the church correspondence of the period the only references to Mr. Gina as opposed to just Gina, came from the pen of Raymond Dudley. But the perception of the ministers in the Islands was not so clear cut. At the Synod of November 1930 Gina was welcomed as

"... the first member of the Solomon Islands race to have a seat on Synod..."

But then, quite inexplicably, his name does not appear in the Synod minutes as a member until after his ordination in 1938. In 1932 it was noted that he was "present by invitation of the Chairman". Yet at each annual gathering he, (and after 1932, Nathan Kera) were there preaching their trial services and taking examinations, both oral and written. It must have been totally confusing and very frustrating to a young man ambitious for his people and himself.

In January 1931, Gina left Bambatana and returned to Roviana. On his way he stopped at Bilua long enough to preach at a Sunday service and to talk with the local people about his New Zealand experiences. Though the hope of going to Ontong Java was still kept alive, he was to be stationed at Kokeqolo for the next year. There were several reasons for this. Rev. Joeli Soakai had died early in 1930. A Tongan, he had lived for many years at Kia not far from the head Station and had been a much loved pastor and friend to the people. He had not been replaced and there was need for someone to carry on the pastoral and preaching work he had done. Another reason was Gina's health. Mr. Goldie was really concerned that he should not be sent to an island 250 sea miles from the nearest doctor when there were questions over his health. Also there was the question of marriage. Sending a young single man to such an out of the way place was not considered wise. Again it was partly Mr. Goldie himself. He had a very real and deep affection for Gina and a concern for his well-being. This comes

47 Bensley's Diary 4 Jan 1931
48 The hope was still alive in 1934 - Diary E.C.Leadley 16 June 1934
49 Goldie to Sinclair 11 Jan. 1932
through again and again in his letters to the Mission Board. He liked having Gina near at hand. But it is also true that he was finding it more and more difficult to make decisions as he got older. Urgent matters were easily dealt with and if he was challenged by anyone, within his own staff or from outside, he could act decisively. But for matters he saw as not urgent, decisions were delayed and sometimes never made.

Through the year, Gina preached and led worship, visited people in their homes and talked with them about many things. Sometimes he travelled with Mr. Goldie or other members of the overseas staff and took part in celebrations. In April for example, he went with the Chairman and Sister Lina Jones to Bilua where he led choir practices, organised games and talked with the people over the Easter weekend. In July he was one of a party who went to Marovo and held a weekend of celebration there. It was a wonderfully relaxed time, for Gina the young enthusiast had an appreciative friend in Ngatu the one time-rebel who was the acknowledged leader of the Marovo people. In the presence of a big crowd at the village of Na/areth, the young men played guitars and Ngatu and Gina danced to the music. The next day (Saturday) there were talks with some of the leading men, and on Sunday Gina preached twice at Patuliva to a gathering of people from several villages.

Ishmael Ngatu remained a staunch friend of Gina through the years. But in 1931 he was only one of a number of leading men (bangara) who talked with Gina, listened to him and responded to his ideas and dreams. He raised hope for them in involvement in the Synod. Perhaps he was even then talking of an independent Solomon Island Church - an idea he was to raise more clearly some years later. His studies for the ministry were very much an on-again off-again affair. No one in New Zealand had been able to come up with a satisfactory set of text books and course of study. They left it to the missionaries on the field, who were all busy people and who did not give the matter a high enough priority. The result was that the six year course leading to ordination was dragged out for 8 years.

The Rev. Frank Hayman who was in charge of the College at Munda, where the pastor-teachers of the church were trained, had some responsibility to help Gina with his studies. Frank was, like Cliff James, at odds with the traditional authority, and it was really not surprising that when he went on furlough he did not return. The official reason was given as lack of funds. Perhaps because he was young and unmarried and questioned some of the established procedures, Frank and Gina became very friendly and to him Gina confided some of his doubts and uncertainties.

That Gina was a bit of a "show-off and that he had high expectations of the kind of treatment he should receive was the occasion of comment from time to time.

But it was wrong to assume that he was so supremely confident that he never had doubts or fears. Nor should it be doubted that his Christian commitment was real and

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50 Bensley's Diary 8, 12, 13, 19 April 1931
51 I. Ngatu's Diary 24-27 July 1931
continuing. But he was a Solomon Islander who was seeing his dreams dissolving in the hard reality of everyday life. He was at odds with his own people from time to time and was not supported, as he might have been, by the missionaries, particularly the older people. In his times of depression he began to ask if some of his local enemies had put spells on him. Health too was a continuing problem. If he drew a connection between his disappointments and illnesses and someone trying to hurt him spiritually it was not surprising. ⁵²

Another part of his preparation for a missionary appointment was, as we have said, the requirement that he marry. He himself had eyes on a young lady who was considered quite unsuitable for him by the overseas staff. Before the year was out, Mr. Goldie felt he must act to arrange a suitable marriage. In January 1932 he wrote to Mr. Sinclair and said,

This morning I had the duty of making a proposal on his behalf to one of the finest girls in the district; 9 big, strong, beautiful girl, and as good as she is beautiful. Mary is a full sister to Sakiri Goldie. The marriage will come off shortly and if the way opens they will proceed to Lord Howe after the North-west season is over. ⁵³

⁵² F.H. Hayman - personal communication
⁵³ Open Door March 1932 p. 4 : Goldie to Sinclair 11 Jan. 1932
MINISTRY ON CHOISEUL

And so the year 1932 began on a high note. The previous year had been on the whole a good one. His friends in New Zealand had not forgotten him and he was receiving and writing letters from and to them. The Epsom Methodist Sunday School collected their annual gift towards his stipend with enthusiasm, and that zeal was communicated to the "black man" they had come to regard as theirs in a special way. 54

The marriage of Gina to Mary Niua Roni took place on 11th February. Tom Dent reported the event to the General Secretary in New Zealand saying:

Gina was happily married a few weeks ago. The occasion was a great one and everything went off in good style. Gina's wife is such a fine girl; just the one for Gina. I am sure they will be very happy together and as teacher and wife they should do good work at Lord Howe. They are both looking forward to their going there. 55

Gina's view may have been slightly different. Sister Lina Jones returning from leave in March wrote home to her parents and said,

I told (Gina) this afternoon that I was surprised when I heard he was married. He said I was surprised myself.' I said, 'Well are you glad now? He said, 'In some ways I am pleased.' It does not sound very enthusiastic does it?

While Dent and Scrivin in New Zealand, were still fostering the myth that Gina was going to Lord Howe in April of that year, Dent at least was more accurate in his comments on the young bride.

Mary was the child of a man of authority from the village of Sasavale named Roni and his wife Zima. Only three of their children lived to adulthood. When Mary was born, the risk to her health and life were seen to be great. Partly for that reason and partly in conformity with local custom, she was "given away" as soon as she was weaned. She went to the Tongan missionaries working in that area, Lasolosi Molia and his wife. It was they who named her, for she was their "pausu". The pausu relationship is a very special one. It does not deny the link with the natural parents but gives a strong link between the child and her adoptive parents, and also builds up a relationship between the two families. For Mary, the child, this meant that she did indeed know her true parents and her brothers Sakiri and John, but she had the advantage of living with the Tongan family at Bethlehem, as the settlement was called. This gave her a wider education, in the broadest sense of the term, than she might otherwise have had. But it did, perhaps, also tend to make her a very reserved and quiet person. She was hard working, loyal and one who rarely complained. For once the missionaries had chosen wisely and well. From then until her death in 1977, Mary was the strong, faithful

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54 M.T, 1931. Personal recollection of the author who was one of the Sunday School Pupils.
55 Open Door March 1932 : 4
partner of Belshazxar Gina, supporting him with an undeviating loyalty in good times and bad.  

From the outset, the marriage seems to have been a happy one. At Sasamuqa, away from their own families, they had time to grow together and learn to understand each other. Their respective families had also time to adjust to the fact that the marriage had taken place outside the normal pattern of marriages for that time.

The Choiseul to which they went was suffering from the loss of most of its white staff. In 1928 they had had two ministers and their wives, a married doctor and three Sisters. One minister went in 1929, and then in the next two years the medical Sisters, the second minister and the doctor, leaving only Sister Ethel who had been there since 1914. But as we said, the church had been prepared for such a time and its local leadership was strong and effective. As headmaster of the Mission School at Sasamuqa, Gina became part of the local community. As the weeks and months passed, mutual respect and understanding grew between Mary and Gina and the Lauru people. Sister Ethel in her annual report for 1933 tells us that:

> Our Chairman has also visited us... Dr. Sayers and Rev. A.A. Bensley pay us a visit now and again. Doctor has not a minute to spare while he is here... Gina and Kera are helping us here on Choiseul. Gina is headmaster of the school here and helps us in many ways. He has visited the outstations around Choiseul twice and is a great favourite with the people.

She went on to speak of him as a valuable worker with great potential.

During the two years they were on Choiseul, there were several trips back to Roviana when they could each see their families. Sometimes it was Gina alone who went. He was there in May 1932 when three students returned from New Zealand and the four of them entertained at a concert giving Maori dances and New Zealand style activities. But it was at Sasamuqa where they were making their home and where they expected their first child to be born in the November of that year. Gina himself had to go off to Synod to be examined in the studies he had undertaken and preach his 'trial service' - required of him as a probationary minister. But Mary stayed with Sister Ethel. In mid November, as Abraham and Neli Gasa told Sister Grace McDonald,

> "Gina and Mary's baby... died at birth. A lovely child, a girl, a big child who should not have died."  

Mary's grief was very great, and Gina's absence did not help. He returned as quickly as he could. That Christmas was indeed a sad one for them.

By mid 1933 Mary was pregnant again, but Gina was unwell. So it was decided to make a trip across to Bilua to see Dr. Sayers. Mary was doing fine, but Gina had

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56 From Mary Olo Johnston - personal communication
57 Diary Sister Lina Jones 23 May 1932
58 Letter home from Sister Grace McDonald 29 Nov 1932
developed white patches on his face and back. The doctor assured them it was not leprosy, but a skin disease for which there was no treatment. Mary went on to Roviana to see her family and Gina returned to his work.  

Because of the loss of the first child, Mary was anxious to be near the doctor for her second. So it came about that both Gina and Mary travelled to Bilua in late October - Mary to have her baby under Doctor Sayer's care and Gina to attend Synod.  As Mr Bensley reported,

Gina is a proud man these days as just before Synod opened, his wife, Mary, presented him with a bonny son in the Helena Goldie Hospital. A day or two later I was discussing names with Gina and suggested what I thought would be a suitable one. Gina said, 'No, I have got that all arranged. He is to be called Holden.'

This name was of course a tribute to Mr. and Mrs. Holden in Christchurch who had been, and continued to be, Gina's 'New Zealand family'. The baby was eventually baptised, John Holden Lianga, taking his first name from Mary's brother John and also the lad, John Holden, who had been with Gina at Wesley College.

Happy with his new son, Gina was at his best when it came to preaching his trial service. Mr. Bensley in the same report said:

Gina preached to a crowded church in English and Roviana,...it was a creditable piece of linguistic acrobatics. Gina always creates an atmosphere for himself and he comes through every situation 'trailing clouds of glory'.

...Gina is vitally alive. His wonderful voice rings with passion and ardour and his N.Z. friends will be glad to hear that he is not belying his early promise.  

Gina was passed in his year as a probationer. And so the family could leave Bilua with rejoicing.

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59 Letter Sister Ethel McMillan 13 July 1933
60 I. Ngatu Diary 28 Oct. ff
61 Report on Synod 1933 by A.A. Bensley
These were difficult days for the Solomons and for New Zealand. The years of Depression had meant a falling income. In the Solomons, copra prices had dropped away to a point where it was not worth selling it for the shipping costs exceeded the price paid. The local church's income depended almost entirely on this copra. In New Zealand, people were struggling financially and their giving to the church had dropped. Everywhere staff was being reduced and work restricted. For the Methodist Mission, it meant reduction in overseas staff and the closing down of the medical work. Even if the Anglicans had not occupied Lord Howe (Ontong Java) some years earlier, there was in fact no money to send Gina there.

Early in 1934, John R. Metcalfe returned to the Solomons after five years in the Teop area of North Solomons, and was appointed to Choiseul where he had worked for most of the 1920s. The reduction in the overseas staff had reduced the effectiveness of the work to some extent, and Metcalfe's return was obviously the right move. The ship that took him to Sasamuqa also took Gina off to Roviana on his way to a new appointment.

Ontong Java was closed, but there were other areas where Gina could help. The small group of islands collectively known as Eddystone or Simbo had been in touch with the Western world far longer than most of the surrounding places. Because of the good harbour and the responsiveness of the people, whalers, sealers and traders had used it as a port of call. Merchant ships from Australia also had visited the islands regularly. When George Brown was planning to open Methodist mission work in the Western Solomons, he had thought that Simbo was a good place to begin. In the event, the invitation of Frank Wickham and Norman Wheatley, two white traders resident in the area, and the opportunity to purchase the small island of Nusa Zonga took them to Roviana, a much more central and better location.

Visits were paid to Simbo and Samoan missionaries placed there in early days. Perhaps because of the distance from medical help, or the high incidence of malaria, it proved to be a very unhealthy place for expatriates. The Samoans died and were buried there. The missionary in the 1930s was a Tongan, Napthali Fotu. Like Gina, he was a probationary minister. Like the Samoans before him, he was fighting a constant battle against ill health. In 1933 he was due to go on leave, and it was agreed he should do so early in 1934. Gina's appointment therefore filled a real need. But there was also another reason for sending him. The Seventh Day Adventists who had first come to the Solomons in 1914 and had a sizeable work in Marovo and a station on Kolombangara, had recently placed a teacher on Simbo, and Mr. Goldie reported Gina's appointment to the General Secretary in Auckland saying,

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62 Nai Fotu began his work in the Solomons in 1912, returned to Tonga in 1919 and then came back to the Solomons in 1921
"I am placing Gina at Simbo this year as the Seventh Days are attacking us there, and he is more than a match for them." 63

The Roviana people and the people of Simbo have had very long links. Gina himself had family ties with some of the people. Yet they were not so closely related as to make it difficult to exercise his ministry among them, as might have been the case in some other places. The Tongans were living at Nusa Simbo and Gina went to the village of Masuru on the second of the two main islands.

In the event, Nai Fotu does not seem to have gone on leave at all. His wife died and was buried there, and in 1939 he himself followed her to the grave. 64

Gina and Mary could now begin to exercise a ministry, free from the constraints of the rather rigid patterns of the traditional expatriate dominated mission station. And in this ministry both of them played a significant part. In addition to his regular preaching and pastoral work, Gina took charge of the school and began to broaden and improve its range of studies. He trained choirs for the young and for older people, and planned concert items for them to give on special occasions. Mary was busy among the women folk. At Sasamuqa she had learnt from Sister Ethel and was able to apply her knowledge with typical commonsense to the situations she found on Simbo. There was never enough medicines, but both Mary and Gina did the best they could. In March 1935, Gina told Mrs. Holden in Christchurch about their work and their problems:

Unfortunately we have no medicines now, we are expecting that Mr. Goldie will be here at any day, but evidently he didn't turn up - so I am going to try to get across to meet the Steamer at Gizo, and then on to Roviana to get some medicine if I can. There is a lot of sickness about Simbo now, and since Sunday I have closed the school, because a lot of young people got dy sentry and a few of the older people. But the bulk of the people got fever, headache and colds. Mary is the only one who is able to go about, so she went round to see the sick people and she prays with them, but cannot help them with medicines. I am not at all well since the beginning of this year, but I don't want to take any notice of it, because there is a lot of work to be done. Early this morning someone from the other side of the island came with the news of a woman who was expecting a baby at any minutes - so they wanted Mary to go and see her, so she went with them and just on the moment she got there the baby was born, but the mother was in such a terrible state, so no one cares about the baby and they thought the baby was not alive, but Mary took the baby and bathe it in warm water and then after a while the little baby cries and Mary gave him some milk which she took with her when she left here. Mary tried to do what she can for the mother all day.

63 Goldie to Scrivin 12 June 1934
64 Nai Fotu and his family are mentioned very rarely in the surviving missionary correspondence. Like other Pacific Island missionaries they are forgotten people as far as the New Zealand Church was concerned. Silas Fotu, Nai’s son was at Wesley College with Gina.
today, but it is impossible. We wish the doctor could be near. I went this afternoon to see her but I don't think she will live for another two days. Mary and I took the baby, and we are going to be his father and mother. It was such a bonny little baby boy. If Mary were not there amongst them the baby wouldn't be alive. God save his life. Unfortunately we haven't got any milk so we are going to take the baby to Roviana some day and give to the Sister to look after him for a while.

Simbo was still known in the outside world as a very scenic place, and Gina's presence and his capacity to speak English was also becoming known. He reported in the same letter:

On the 6th of this month, while we were in school, there was a steamer which came to our little harbour, and it was such a lovely tropical morning. It was the *Rosaura S.Y.S.*, from England. Not long after, the anchor was dropped, a small launch came down to inquire about my name, and they told me the owner of the ship and the Captain would like to see me. So I went up. They wanted me to take them round the island to have a look round. So first of all, we went by a small outboard launch, and I took them to see the hot springs on the other side of the island which they said they have seen something alike the hot springs in Rotorua, N.Z. And then I took them to see the Corals and the Coral fishes and I can assure you they were quite excited to see the Corals. The owner of the ship's name was Lord Moyne. He was such a fine Christian man and everyone on board were very nice. There were only 27 of them on board. Lord Moyne invited me to have dinner and tea on board, of which I accepted it with honour. They all came down in the afternoon to see the boys playing cricket, and also to see our school works, and they were both surprised and pleased to see such work as that being done in these islands. The owner allowed all my school boys and girls to go on board to have a look round, which they were quite pleased to do so. Because it was the first time they ever went through the steamer. Mary was also the first time she been to the steamer. The crew were very kindly showed us round the ship. They asked us to give them some tunes, so we sang some songs and hymns which they were delighted to hear. They gave us some little presents also some cold drinks. It was a lovely day for us all, and they went away early next morning. They said they have been to all the big ports in New Zealand. They were travelling round the world on holidays. It was a great day for all the children here.  

But excitement was followed by sadness. Gina's health was not at all good. Two weeks after the visit by Lord Moyne, Gina and Mary were on their way by canoe to Roviana, for Gina was in the grip of a severe attack of pneumonia. The doctor had gone from Bilua but Sister Vera Cannon at Munda was a very competent nurse. On arrival, Mr. Goldie reported that his condition was very serious, but after a few days of treatment and care, he was on the mend.  

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65 Open Door June 1935

66 Goldie to Scrivin 30 March 1935. Leadley Diary 20 March 1935
husband to hospital but she had also brought the baby she had rescued a short time before. This child could now be cared for in a place which had more resources than at Simbo.

During the two and half years that Gina and Mary spent on Simbo before Gina again travelled south, they seemed to have been away from the place a good deal. Health problems were one reason. Sister Lina noted in a 1936 letter to her family that Gina was again down with pneumonia - for the "second or third time". Then there were other people to take to hospital. That became a little easier when the medical work at Bilua was re-established in 1936 under Sister Edna White. To her Gina and Mary took sick people and motherless babies. 67

But there were still the festive occasions. Mr. Goldie still liked to have Gina around for any sort of celebration and Gina did not have any objection to the excitement of such events. Mary used the opportunities when her husband went to Roviana to visit her family at Sasavale.

This period was a time when the work on Simbo was strengthened and Gina came to understand better the responsibilities of a minister. But there were difficulties. Some of them resulted from the studies required of the busy young minister as part of his preparation for ordination. Like many in similar situations, Gina found time for study hard to come by. When he went to Synod he could, and did, conduct his trial services with great acceptance. In 1935 the report signed by J.R. Metcalfe and A.W.E. Silvester is very favourable. Among other things it says:

... the opening hymn and prayer created a fine spiritual atmosphere which grew in intensity reaching its climax during the appeal of the preacher. Thus the impression of the service upon the hearers was of great spiritual value and the spirit of reverence, worship and appropriation of the message was manifest. Gina had an excellent pulpit manner and his voice is of such calibre as to make listening an easy matter. ... An excellent appeal was made in the closing sentences and a challenge issued for all to accept Christ at His word and fulfil the great commission. The sermon gave great evidence of careful preparation and deep thought and the ability to read and assimilate the essence of what was read..... In delivery the sermon was all that could be desired and sincerity of the preacher was ever manifest. The effect of the whole service upon the congregation was most pleasing and achieved something of Spiritual worth...

Even his written exams were reasonably well done. But the abilities he was showing were more than matched by his expectations, and those expectations were often disappointed. He still had no real voice in the decisions of the Synod, or had any of the Solomon Islands people. He had tried to persuade the leading men of the church to press for a place in the meetings, but in spite of some support at first, no one was

67 Letter Sister E.M. White July 1936
prepared to challenge the authority of the Chairman. Even Ngatu, Gina's friend, who was at time angry with Goldie, would not publicly challenge the veteran missionary. 68

It is hard to say what would have happened in the years after 1936 if Gina had remained undisturbed on Simbo. But his ministry there was to be interrupted in a way that was to have lasting consequences for the Church in the Solomons, for the Church in New Zealand and for Gina himself.

68 e.g. I. Ngalu's Diary Feb. 1934
GINA TO THE RESCUE

Of all the cuts that had been made because of the depression, none was more serious than the closing of Helena Goldie Hospital and the withdrawal of the doctor and nurses.

However, many people were not content to let things remain in a bad way. The Rev. K.A.H. Scrivin who had served in Papua for 18 years, replaced Mr. Sinclair as General Secretary in the work of Foreign Missions (as it was then called). He travelled the length and breadth of the country telling the story and encouraging the local churches to give more. As the economic situation improved, people began to respond and support grew. But Scrivin saw the need for something more to inspire New Zealand Methodists.

As early as October 1934, Scrivin was writing to Mr. Goldie with plans for Belshazzar Gina to come to New Zealand in 1937 on deputation - that is to visit the churches and tell them the story. The focus was to be "Send back the Doctor". Dr. Allenson Rutter was completing his training and it was hoped that he could be available for appointment in 1938. But before that could be done a lot more money was needed - to support the doctor and two nurses and to provide the necessary medicines and equipment. The Board and the Mission District acted in faith, and in 1936 sent Sister Edna White back to Bilua. Edna was an experienced nurse who had prepared the way for the coming of Doctor Sayers in 1927 and worked with him until family circumstances called her home. She was acquainted with both the Roviana and Bilua languages and was respected by the people.

In all the planning there is no evidence that Gina himself was consulted. It did not seem to have occurred to anyone among the mission staff, at home or abroad, that it might be asking a great deal of a man to leave his wife and young family, or a young woman to be separated from her husband for at least a year. Only at the very last, at the annual Synod in November 1936, did some members of that meeting express doubts about the wisdom of sending Gina to New Zealand on such a journey. Whether their concern was for Mary and Gina and the family, or whether it was a concern that he would over-dramatise the situation we do not know.

Mr. Goldie went south to Melbourne following that Synod to spend Christmas with his wife and family. Gina and the young Harold Cant left the Solomons early in the new year. Harold was being sent from Marovo to Wesley College and it was good to have experienced Gina to travel with.

On their arrival in Sydney, there began a royal progress that for the next eleven months resembled the life of a film star or a pop singer. During the stopover in Sydney, unknown to anyone in New Zealand, Cinesound Film-Makers got hold of Gina and put him into one of the short reviews that were used in public showings.

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69 Scrivin to Goldie Oct. 1934
70 Silvester to Scrivin 22 June 1937
before the feature film. Gina was shown first as a 'headhunter', then sitting at the keyboard of a large pipe organ clad in a decorous suit. Then he turned to the organ and played it. Following that he spoke to the audience telling of his people and his faith. Mr. Goldie did not learn of this until April, but he was happy to know that the film would be shown in theatres round New Zealand as well as Australia.

Then it was on to New Zealand, to find that he was booked to speak in almost every Methodist Church from Kaitaia to Bluff. This demanding schedule took little account of the strains such journeying and the constant speaking and singing engagements must impose on anyone. Photographs were taken and then copies by the hundred were made on which Gina signed his name. These were then sold up and down the country to raise money. Later an envelope with his photo printed on it was posted from New Guinea by the Rev. A.H. Voyce to those who were willing to pay. It was no doubt an excellent publicity device, and indeed copies of the photo are still proudly kept by some people to this day.

For the most part Gina revelled in it. He was travelling in a country which he knew and loved, meeting friends, telling his story and the story of the mission work in a way that drew an immediate response from many people.

In March he went south from Auckland and spent a short time with Frank and Ruth Hayman whom he had known at Kokeqolo. While there he got his first mail from home - 42 letters! They came from his wife and relations but also from the people at Simbo who missed his lively presence. Then it was on to Christchurch for Easter and a brief stay with his beloved 'Father and Mother' Holden at Redcliffs. He attended the Young Men's Bible Class camp over that weekend and enjoyed himself to the full. After that was over he took up the work planned for him - travelling and speaking, singing and entertaining.

He moved first to the Wellington District. Two days later came news of Albert Holden's sudden death. Gina was devastated. He later wrote a tribute which was published in the June issue of the Open Door magazine. He told how from his school days the Holdens had made him part of their family. Mrs. Holden had written every mail to him all through the years. At the Easter camp Albert Holden had told the boys present that:

... he had been interested in Mission work for a long time, but he had felt a much closer interest since he had known me, and since he had a son who was a missionary in the Solomons. Then he told them that he and Mrs. Holden have always looked upon me as a son to them.... It is a great privilege for us... to meet a man of such good Christian character as Mr. Holden, and those few days and hours that I spent with him I shall never forget as long as I live....

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71 Goldie to Scrivin 5 April 1937
72 Hayman, Open Door June 1937 p.7
73 Open Door June 1937 p. 11-12
A few days later Gina went down with an attack of malaria, and had to postpone some of the meetings he was to have taken.

The weeks that followed have become enshrined in the legends of the New Zealand church. Almost every area has its own stories about Gina's visits.

I had the pleasure of meeting Gina in Patea Methodist church... he is a very talented person who could play any instrument and sing He sang 'The Stranger of Galilee' and 'The Old Rugged Cross' and had a wonderful voice and personality. He shook hands with all the congregation at the door.  

This was typical of the warm memories people had. Then there is the story about the circus. In an unnamed place, the question of postponing Gina's meeting with the church folk was raised because the travelling circus was coming to town with its elephants and lions, its conjurors and acrobats. But Gina insisted the meeting be held. In the event, the weather turned sour and the wind was so great that the circus people could not setup the big tent required for their performance. Disappointed people who had come in from miles around, saw the lights on in the church and came in till every seat was taken. Gina responded and gave a tremendous talk and sang several times. It was the finest missionary meeting ever held in that place.

It was not only in churches that he spoke to people - A letter from the secretary of the Christchurch Businessmen's Club expresses appreciation of his talk and says

74 Miss E. Robins to Author 14 March 1976
75 LOTU August 1938 p.13
Mr. Gina's address to our members was most impressive.  

But the most lasting impression was made on people already committed to their Church and the Lord of the Church. Let a word from the furtherest south be a witness to this:

Although by no means one of the largest meetings addressed by Gina whilst in New Zealand, I honestly think that he had done as much if not more for Missions here than elsewhere. Bluff was practically non-missionary minded even the church folk, but he has created quite an interest.

The letter goes on to say that the people would be willing to raise money to help with a motor boat for Gina in his work at Simbo.

The visits were a success in that, at least in the short term, they did heighten awareness of the Solomons and the work of the mission and certainly helped to increase the Board's income and make sure the medical work could continue.

For Gina himself, while he revelled in the public meetings and the obvious admiration of so many people, his health was not always good and homesickness no doubt played its part. Letters which had come at first in large numbers, became fewer Mary too was feeling his absence. She wrote to her husband and told him about the family. And in September he received a letter asking him to come home at once. There had been an

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76 Letter dated 15 Nov 1937  
77 G. Knowles Smith to Scrivin 2 Dec 1937
epidemic in the Solomons which had caused several deaths and made many people sick. These included the people at Sasavale where Mary was living with her children. Their young daughter as Gina wrote.

... has not been well for a very long time and Mary said that it is a great worry to her and she wants me back as soon as possible because she has no one to help her and the little girl is only 12 months old, and is covered with sores all over her body..... I do not think Mary is very happy, and so I have decided that I want to go back. 78

He was answered with soft words but no action to meet his wishes.

But the year did draw to a close and some of the last visits and talks were of value to Gina and to the people who heard them. From Christchurch, for example, there came a telegram on the 18th November: "Enthusiastic Synod session, Gina present. Suggested you obtain gramophone record of him for future use. Thompson." That suggestion was

78 Gina to Scrivin 30 Sept. 1937
followed up, and Gina did in fact make one or more gramophone records at radio station 1ZB before his departure.

On December 7 there was a big farewell meeting in Auckland. Pitt Street church was crowded and the Rev. E.T. Olds led the gathering. There were speeches by representatives of the Bible Classes, the Women's Missionary Union, the Sunday Schools and the Board of Missions. Gina sang a duet with Rev. Clarence Leadley who was on leave at that time and then a solo. Mr. Leadley spoke to the gathering and then Gina closed the meeting with his response. It was a very emotional moment for many present including Gina. Nine days later he sailed from Auckland.

He was travelling with much baggage, for the people of the church had been very generous to him. Gifts of all kinds for his work on Simbo had been showered on him. The biggest was the whale-boat which was named the *Clara M. German*. Mr. and Mrs. German of Nelson had been strong supporters of Foreign Missions all their lives and they had given, and were still giving, generously to the fund to "Send Back the Doctor". They had also responded to Gina's stories of his own work and given the gift which made the purchase of the whale-boat possible. Other gifts included books for the school and a packet of typing paper printed with Gina's name and address, "Methodist Mission, Masuru, Simbo, Solomon Islands". In all there were 12 cases of goods for Gina and the work on Simbo as well as the boat.

In New Zealand, Gina left behind a great many people who thanked God for all that Gina was and all he represented. It was shown in many ways. In those days of ocean travel, it was the custom to say farewell to people from the wharf-side by throwing paper streamers to them, which each person held until the paper broke as he ship moved away. In Gina's case there were so many streamers from the wharf-side that people commented on this." At a more lasting level, the response of the church was represented in a resolution of the Annual Conference which met in February 1938. They said, among other things:

"That the Conference records its special appreciation of the services rendered by the Rev. Belshazzar Gina. The subject matter of his addresses has varied and been inspirational to a high degree. As a guest in many homes he conducted himself as a Christian gentleman. The interest aroused by the man himself, and by the messages he has given, has resulted in a substantial increase in receipts, and better still he has given hundreds of people of other churches as well as ours, a new and wider impression of the worthwhileness of Christian Missions, and many of his hearers have themselves received spiritual uplift. As he returns to take up his work again in his native land, the Conference prays that God will continue to bless greatly Belshazzar Ginu, a modern miracle of grace."

On the voyage, Gina preached each Sunday and attracted crowds of people. It is said that he later received letters from sailors away in other parts of the world who had been on that ship and told of how his preaching had led them to Christ. The last of those services was at Tulagi, the capital of the Solomons in those days. More than 30 years later, a man from Malaita recalled how impressed he had been and how he had
never forgotten that occasion. As at other times, Gina had given Solomon Islanders who heard him preach a sense of pride in being a Solomon Islander.  

Having achieved a very good pastoral deputation record, Gina's future seemed to be opening up for great things for himself, the church, and the Solomon Islands.

From oral testimony collected by Sir Lloyd M. Gina from Geoffrey Kuper (who travelled with him); a man from Malaita and an Anglican Priest who had been in Auckland when Gina was preaching out-of-doors!
ORDINATION

Gina reached home in early January 1938. He was very pleased to see his wife and children again, and no doubt they were glad to see him. He brought gifts for them and lots of stories to tell. Within a few days, however, he had a bad attack of Malaria, and thereafter had to be careful to take quinine regularly.

As soon as he was recovered, he began to travel. 80 In New Zealand he had gone to the churches to talk about the Solomons. Now he went to the villages to talk about New Zealand. He visited Simbo briefly, then travelled up the coast of Ranoqa to Vella La Vella and across to Duke, speaking wherever there was opportunity - formally in worship services, informally to the people, especially the leading men of the villages. Then he went off on a two week trip that Mr. Goldie called "an evangelistic mission round New Georgia." 81 This time he travelled in a powered launch with his brother-in-law Sakiri Goldie and was pleased to meet his old friend Ishmael Ngatu at Patutiva. On 23rd February, he wrote to Mr. Scrivin telling these journeys and saying:

... it seems a long time since I left New Zealand. However I am glad to be among my own people again, but all the time I miss New Zealand very much. ..... I have been visiting several islands and villages since I got back, telling the people of my experiences in New Zealand, and the desire to serve God more earnestly, in the right directions and to seek His Kingdom first before anything else. Everyone did enjoy hearing about the doings in New Zealand and more pleased to learn of the love and the interest of the New Zealand people towards them.....

It appears that the local people were in fact happy to have Gina and hear his message. Ngatu records in his diary for 17 February, "Gina told us about his visit to Sydney and New Zealand. We were very pleased." Since Ngatu rarely expresses his feelings in such entries, this suggests strong support. Gina went on to tell of problems with seas and a broken-down engine coming back from Marovo. He told Mr. Scrivin that he hoped to return to Simbo shortly.

In early March, Gina and Mary were back at Simbo. The people were glad to see them. Medical care was improved. With the new boat Clara M. German they were able to take patients more easily to the Bilua hospital. The first patient to be taken was Naphtali Fotu, the Tongan minister who had been a sick man for years. Then there were other trips and at one stage it seemed that they needed to go about once a week. On a calm day it could take up to 16 hours to row, but in strong winds and stormy seas the journey was quicker but the danger greater. However the new boat proved satisfactory.

Following the pattern of similar gatherings he had shared in New Zealand, Gina organised a Bible Class Easter camp which brought together about 45 young men for

80 Much of this is based on Gina's letter to Scrivin 23 Feb. 1938
81 Goldie to Scrivin 19 Feb. 1938
study, worship and games. He believed that there was a strengthening of the spiritual life of many of those taking part.

The school had continued in his absence, of course, but Gina brought to it a sense of excitement and many new ideas - some of which he could implement because of the new material from New Zealand. He reported that the school included 70 in the senior school and 50 in the junior, and that they met for about 5 hours each morning, Monday to Friday. In the afternoon, the students gardened or made copra from the surrounding plantation. Money obtained from copra was used for rice to tide them over times of food shortages, or for other school needs. Thursday afternoon was a time for games - football, cricket and physical drill. Choir singing was popular and when the folk on Vella La Vella were celebrating their Thanksgiving Day, Gina took his choir over to sing for them. The young people played cricket against the Bilua team.

At the same time, Gina was getting letters from many people in New Zealand and answering at least some of them. 82

Mr. Goldie seemed to be pleased with the work being done and told Mr. Scrivin:

"He is today a more useful man for his visit to the home churches." 83

In May, Gina and Nai Fotu took a team of people in to Gizo to welcome the new medical workers, Allenson Rutter and his wife, Sisters Joy Whitehouse and Merle Farland. Then in company with the Tandanya they all proceeded to Bilua where the ship Malaita, on which the party had travelled, came and off-loaded a prefabricated house for the Rutters. Every available man was needed for that exercise. In early June Mr. Goldie took Gina on a trip to Mono and other places, so that he could talk about his experiences to the local people.

Until the end of October, Gina seems to have remained at Simbo, and built up the work there. But then it was time to move again. Nai Fotu was sick and spitting blood. Gina took him across to the Doctor at Bilua and on the 4th November had a feast there to celebrate the birthday of his oldest son, John, who had been born at Bilua 5 years before. 84 Then it was on to Roviana for Synod and his ordination. This experience he was to share with another Tongan, Paul Havea, who had been working in the Solomons since 1919, and had been Gina's teacher of music before his first visit to New Zealand. Mr. Voyce reported:

On Sunday November 27th at 3 p.m., the Ordination of Paul Havea and Belshazzar Gina took place in a crowded church. The Chairman, when he came to the ordination of Gina - his 'true son in the Gospel' - was most visibly moved, and in danger of breaking down, but recovered himself after a few moments. What a time for joy and pride! God grant Gina may be worthy of his 'high

82 Open Door Dec. 1938 pp. 3,4
83 Goldie to Scrivin reported in Open Door June 1938
84 Ngatu Diary Nov 1938
calling', and of the trust reposed in him by the Church, and worthy of the love and regard of his Chairman and 'Father in the Faith'. We believe he will.

All this was good and positive, and there was much happiness both in the Solomons and elsewhere. Problems however, were beginning to appear. At the beginning of 1939, the new President of the New Zealand Church could speak of Gina and his visit to that country and say,

.. If in one generation, our Mission has produced a man of Gina's powers, it may well be that long before the second generation has passed an Island Church may not only be carrying on a glorious work under an almost entirely competent and native staff, but may also be making an effective contribution to the spiritual and evangelising forces of the world.

While this set out very clearly the vision that Gina himself had at that time, it was very far from being the opinion of the European staff on the field. They were unhappy with Gina's apparent unwillingness to conform to the pattern they thought he should follow. Even though he and Paul Havea had been ordained, they did not judge 'native minister' competent to administer the 'Sacraments', and they saw no hope of the local church controlling its own destiny in the foreseeable future. Gina himself, did not help them to a more realistic view because he was very much an individualist, and he thrived on attention, especially from large groups of people.

There was another problem that was not peculiar to him. Like many people of all races, Gina had very little capacity to handle money. In his impulsive, generous way, he bought and he gave away without much thought, about where the money was coming from. While in New Zealand, Mr. Scrivin had to ask him not to buy any more clothes or books. On his way back through Sydney he apparently bought things and charged them up to the Mission without authority. Back in the Solomons he was tempted in two particular ways. People writing from New Zealand asked what they could do to help, thinking in terms probably of small things that cost little money. In return they sometimes received requests for things they could not afford, and took them to the Mission Board that was still working on a tight budget. The other way was from unsolicited commercial advertising. Mr. Goldie complained bitterly that Commercial firms in Australia were sending advertising material, not only to Gina but to many other prominent men. Many of these folk were tempted to order goods that appeared attractive without considering the cost. Gina was among them.

A man of great vision, Gina had problems when it came to making his dreams come true. This was especially so when money was involved - as it usually was. The adulation and generosity he had attracted in New Zealand had done nothing to help him realise that even the best schemes had to be planned within the limits of the available resources.

85 Open Door June 1939 pp. 3,4
86 Goldie to Scrivin 8 June 1939
THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

The three years that followed Gina's ordination were in a real sense the calm before the storm. It was a time when old things were passing away and new things were coming into being, even though few people recognised what was happening. What might have continued as peaceful change was torn asunder by the intrusion of someone else's war with all its horrors. The world of the Solomon Islands people was to be turned upside down.

In 1939 John Sasabeti, a man of authority who had been one of Goldie's strongest supporters, died. Soon after Boaz Sunga also died, Sunga had been the Chairman's 'private secretary' for many years and had in fact kept much of the day-to-day running of the local church under his control. Boaz Veo was getting old and though he lived for another few years was less and less able to contribute to the decision making. Younger men like Ngatu were suffering from chronic illness. Another notable Marovo man, Lemech Sigala died in that year. These men, especially the older ones, had been strong supporters of the Mission and of John F. Goldie. This does not mean that they accepted Mr. Goldie's ruling as final on almost every issue. Some of the new leadership that was to emerge during the war and afterwards were at this time men in Government service. Some had been trained in Fiji as doctors, some were clerks in the Protectorate offices, crew on ships or in the police. In the Church (or the Mission District as it was usually called) the younger men were seeking to take their place in the leadership. Nathan Kera was a probationary minister, Timothy Piani and Frank Wickham were candidates for the ministry and others were showing an interest in such positions.

By the time the war came the Anglican church in the Solomons had enough ordained Melanesian ministers to care for every village in their vast Diocese. But the Methodists had not only been slow to encourage men to enter the ministry, but even now they put off decision making from year to year. Gina had been eight years getting to ordination, and Piani who had first been talked about as a candidate in 1937 was not actually received until 1944!

Because Gina was the only ordained Solomon Islands minister and he was a person who made a very good impression on most folk, he was not allowed to remain on Simbo for long periods without interruption. Perhaps because of this, Mary also was away at Sasavale quite often and she left her older children there with her family. Usually they had not more than two children with them at Simbo. While this was misunderstood by some of the expatriate staff, it was not only in accord with local custom but was probably very good for the children concerned.

At the beginning of 1939, Gina and his people came over to Bilua from Simbo and played cricket and football against local teams. Some of the white staff had come from Kokeqolo for a holiday and Gina took a group of them out in his boat, the *Clara M. German* for a sail! Then he began a 'Bible Camp' on a small nearby island for 74 teachers, ex-teachers and leading men. This seems to have run for three days and was judged a great success. He told them more of his New Zealand experience, gave some
good Biblical studies and on doubt shared some of his dreams of an independent Solomon Islands Church. 87

In March he was in Gizo taking services, and was there again in August to meet the steamer on which Sister Lina Jones returned from leave. No doubt he looked forward to the mail that came each time the ship came from Australia.

But not everything was going well. Gina himself was paid 40 pounds a year ($80) which was considered adequate by some. Not so for Gina. Mr. Goldie had problems keeping his 'son in the gospel's' financial ambitions under control. Health also was a recurring problem. In early 1940 he was very sick for some time at Kokeqolo and at the same time his wife was at Bilua waiting for their new baby to arrive. At the end of 1939, Nai Fotu had died. While he had been a sick man for years, he had kept the work on Simbo going whether Gina was there or not. Now Gina needed to give more attention to every village in the group.

May 1941 was a time of celebration. First there was a visit to the Western District by the High Commissioner from Fiji. When he came to Gizo, the District Officer requested Gina to bring a concert party from Simbo and this he did. The assembly was impressed by the performance of the party. Gina took it on himself to talk with the High Commissioner about the problems that the head tax posed for people on Simbo who had no cash income, and the need for school equipment. As a result he was given £10 for school material.

The High Commissioner talked with Mr. Goldie who reported to Mr. Scrivin that: "I had to admit that the students prepared by Gina for the District Training Institution were as well equipped as those from other stations in charge of Europeans, although he could not be expected to carry the responsibilities of a European minister." The visiting dignitary replied that "We must not be too exacting of native teachers." 88

From Gizo it was on to Roviana for a big celebration marking the fortieth anniversary of Mr. Goldie's appointment to the Solomons. Sister Grace McDonald had protested strongly to Mr. Goldie about the people coming from Simbo because there was an epidemic of typhoid there, and she thought it unwise for them to come and no doubt spread the illness. Mr. Goldie listened to her but took no notice. 89 And so on the 23rd and 24th May there was a party, of which Gina was the principal organiser. At 5.15 p.m. the following day, Mary presented Gina with another son!

On 28th May, all the leading men from among those who had gathered for the celebration met with Gina at Haevo and talked with him about the life and work of the

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87 The first part of this chapter is reconstructed from the diaries and letters of Ngatu, Merle S. Farland, Grace McDonald and the letters of J.F.Goldie.
88 Open Door Sept. 1941 p.3
89 Letter Sr. Grace McDonald 25 May 1941. J.F. Goldie did not arrive in the Solomons until 1902, but had been appointed the previous year.
Church. Since some of those men had long distances to travel, the fact that they waited for this meeting is a clear indication of Gina's status as a leader in church matters.

The events of that month show very clearly the difference between the reality of the situation as it was seen by the expatriates and by the local people. Mr. Goldie was prepared to boast that Gina's school could produce scholars as good as any school run by white people, yet refuse to accept that he could take the responsibilities of the office to which he was ordained. The High Commissioner similarly wanted the local people to be treated as though they were in some way immature and unreliable. Neither of them seemed to recognise that Solomon Islanders had conducted their own affairs for thousands of years before Europe knew of their existence, and they had produced men and women capable of giving leadership and taking responsibility in every generation. Mr. Goldie's refusal to postpone the celebrations reflected partly his low opinion of women staff members in general and in pan that his desire to have Gina organise an entertainment for him was more important than the health of the people he professed to love so much!

Both Goldie and the High Commissioner were people of their time. They belonged to a world which had little real contact and even less understanding of the world of the Melanesian. If that was true in peace time, it was even more so in time of war.

As early as October 1939, the Resident Commissioner had asked all mission-ary staff to explain to the local people what was happening in Europe and the Middle East. While it was accepted that this was a duty they owed to the local people, the explanations they gave must have seemed very remote and unreal to the Solomon Islanders. It was not until the beginning of 1942 that the other people's war intruded into their life.

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90 Ngatu Diary
WAR!

War does strange things to people. Long ago Hilaire Belloc wrote of seeing warships sailing through the fog in August 1914. He went on to say: "Then I knew that war would come and my mind was changed." 91

And so it was in the Solomons. Minds were changed. Missionaries who had denounced tribal fighting as unchristian were now urging people to take up far more lethal instruments than their fathers had known and use them against an 'enemy' they did not know, a people against whom they had no quarrel and no hate. Government officers, who had for years told the people of the might of the British Empire and how that Empire ruled the world, were now busy organising the evacuation of white people and destroying buildings. Planters and traders fled with considerable speed. Frightened Chinese and their families were running away to hide in the bush on more remote islands. And when the fighting did begin it was a kind of impersonal carnage such as Solomon Islanders had never known. As one man recalled more than forty years later:

My people were horrified. When we fought in the old days it was because we had a personal reason and after one or two people were injured or killed the fighting stopped. If we took prisoners we made them servants but looked after them. Now we saw American soldiers capture Japanese, tie up their hands, and then cut their throats. 92

In all this confusion most Solomon Islanders did not know what to do. It was not their war.

For ordinary village people it was bad enough. They clung to their villages and their gardens, their pattern of life as long as they could. Then they fled inland, or to another island, seeking safety. Even then they retained their basic way of life as far as possible. 93 For some, especially those who were or had been in Government service, those who had positions of authority in the Church or community it was more difficult. In the end it was often personal loyalties and personal antagonisms that decided how folk would respond. Government employees, for the most part, believed they should obey the District Officer whoever he was. For many Christians, faithfulness to the Church and the Lord of the Church, as they understood him, was a determining factor. Doctor Hughie Wheatley went with others to the Shortlands to relieve suffering and found imprisonment and death in Japanese hands. 94 Rev. Paula Havea travelled tirelessly by land and sea to keep in touch with the church in the New Georgia group and on Choiseul. Nathan Kera, trainee minister, stayed with his people

91 Quoted by J. Buchan in The King's Grace 1935 :109
92 Told in 1987 at oral history conference in Honiara
93 The main contemporary witness we have for a Solomon Island view of life in wartime is I. Ngatu's diary for 1942.
94 Carter 1981 : 109ff
helping them maintain as normal a life style as the conflict allowed. Pastor Kata Raqoso respected the sanctity of the Sabbath Day and encouraged his people to do so at great personal cost to himself.  

For Gina himself, the early weeks of 1942 must have seemed to be the time for which he had been waiting: the time when he and other Solomon Islands people would take over the running of the Church and show that this was something they could do and do well. In his mid-teens he had gone to New Zealand and Australia and won attention and praise. At the same time he had seen possibilities for the future and begun to dream dreams. He had attended Wesley College a few years later and had had a tremendous time, and then for a whole year he had travelled the length and breadth of the country he had come to call his 'other home' and been the subject of much attention, much of it very flattering. That attention had been backed up by gifts of money and things 'for the work of the Mission'. But to Gina they were a recognition of his status as a bangara within his own society. He had been accepted for the ministry of the Church. That he felt a real sense of calling to that vocation, we cannot doubt, but he would also have been mindful of the tremendously high status given to white ministers in his own country. He had made friends with Raymond Dudley, a Fiji Indian who was beginning his ministry in New Zealand and against whom there seemed to be no barriers or prejudices. Gina did clearly see himself as taking up the role played by the white missionary ministers in worship, church government, and in the community. Perhaps he even dreamed of being Mr. Goldie's successor as Chairman.

Back in his own land he was listened to by his people. By some he was already recognised as having authority, not only through his descent, but also through his relationship to the pioneer Chairman. This was enhanced by the stories they heard of his experiences in the southern lands and the gifts he had been given. It is clear that for some at least of the bangara in the Western Solomons, Gina was one of them - a man making his place in a society which recognised and valued leadership as a practical skill rather than as an inherited distinction. For some of the younger people he may well have been seen as the hope for the future.

Gina's time on Choiseul had given him wider experience and status in an island where being a Roviana was not necessarily an asset. His appointment to Simbo was important. If he had gone to Ontong Java he would have been 'out of sight, out of mind' for long periods. At Simbo he was close enough to be available for all sorts of activities that had little to do with Simbo. Yet he was able to make the villages there a showcase for the kind of church community he had dreamed of. His own perception of his relationship to the people and to the church there is clearly shown in the letter he wrote to Mr. Scrivin when he wanted to leave New Zealand earlier than planned in 1937 because of his child's illness. He said:

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95 Were 1970 esp. chapters 11 & 12
96 Ngatu's Diaries provide evidence of this.
... the work on Simbo is not what it used to be. Many people have quarrelled among themselves and I know that no one else can settle it. No other teacher or Mr. Goldie, because I know from experience that I am the only one who can settle these matters with them, as being the head of Simbo by birth they will take notice of me and that means that when I go back I will have to start the work entirely from the beginning, just where I started before. Many people have gone away, left Simbo altogether, some of them have gone to Gizo Island to make their village, others have gone to Ranonga Island so you see it means that I have to go back and collect all these people, gathering them up together again - but if we leave it too late it will impossible to do anything.....

Even if one allows for a certain amount of exaggeration, both in the reports sent to Gina, and in his response to those reports, this statement is important. As we have seen, he had received 42 letters in his first mail after arriving in New Zealand. He may not have been 'head of Simbo by birth' but he was certainly related through his mother to some notable people in the area, and through his wife to a powerful family group in the Roviana lagoon. The missionaries did not really understand this. Their ideas of chieftainship had been formed from their own history of kings and lords, and reinforced by the Polynesian and Fijian concepts of hereditary chiefs. Nor did they understand the importance of women in Melanesian society. So they found it hard to accept that Gina could have status and authority apart from his place in the church.

When Gina was ordained at the end of 1938 he expected to take on a position of further authority and responsibility. And this was expected of him by the people.

Like many another ordinand, he saw that ceremony as giving him an authority which was from God, and could not be taken away from him by church or government. For years he had talked with his people about Solomon Islanders taking responsibility for the church in their midst. At various times there had been talk of a Solomon Islands deputy Chairman, and later an independent Solomon Islands Church. Gina had seen himself playing a leading role in these developments, and now he was ordained he expected some moves to be made towards this end. And many people expected this too. But not the tie vaka missionaries.

They had been nurtured in the view that it would be several generations before 'native Christians' would be sufficiently mature in the faith to run the church in the way they believed it should be done. They saw the administration of the Sacraments, the authority to perform marriages and the right to govern the church as powers reserved to them alone for at least another generation. The one person who could have taken some practical steps to achieve the looked-for results was the Chairman. But Mr. Goldie was old and put off decision making as long as he could. His advice to Gina was "wait and see how things go. There will be time enough." With the coming of war, and Mr. Goldie gone, it must have seemed to Gina and to many more that the time had come.

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97 Gina to Scrivin 30 Sept. 1937.
It should not be thought that Gina had unanimous support among his own people. There were some who he offended and some who turned against him when he did not achieve what he told them he expected to achieve. But at least until the war came many of the leading people and many more ordinary Solomon Islanders seem to have been happy with what he was saying and doing.

The white missionaries had their own difficult decisions to make. Mr. Goldie went north on the *M.V. Malaita* to catch a plane from Rabaul, and was not allowed to return when he discovered how the war was spreading south. He went on to Australia. Australian and New Zealand women and children from North Solomons as from other parts of New Guinea were hurriedly and sometimes painfully gathered up and sent away. The missionary ladies were not exempt from this. The same pressure was put on the folk in the Western Solomons. None of them wanted to go but the decisions were forced on them because of sickness, a concern for children and other personal factors. In the end each did what they considered best. It is said that later on some were blamed by others for the decisions they made, for every decision was made in good faith in the light of the information available to them at the time, and often at great cost.

From the 7th to 12th January, Gina was in Gizo with many of the missionaries and plantation managers and their families awaiting the arrival of the *M.V. Malaita* which had gone north a short time before. There was a great deal of uncertainty and rumours were flying about all sorts of things. When the ship did come, it brought news of the bombing of Rabaul and the approach of the Japanese army. On board were 28 Japanese prisoners - mostly civilian traders like Ikeda from Bougainville, a friend of Mr. Metcalfe. There were also many plantation and Government people and their families seeking to return to Australia. At Gizo they were joined by other folk. These included the missionaries' wives and children. The evacuation had been strongly encouraged by the Government, and it seemed best for the sake of their own safety and the peace of mind of their husbands that they should go.  

The Chinese who had no hope of going south, were planning to leave Gizo and go to more remote places like Ughele on Rendova if the Japanese forces came near. The three tie vaka ministers and Dr. Rutter agreed that they would stay as long as possible and make suitable arrangements to carry on the work. But within two weeks the situation had changed radically.

At first all seemed to go as planned. When the *Malaita* sailed, Mr. Silvester went back to Bilua, Mr. Metcalfe and Dr. Rutter began a tour of Choiseul and Mr. Leadley went back to Munda. Gina set off for Simbo. With the help of Aleke Sereke he proceeded to return the students from other islands back to their homes. When this job was done, he took his wife and family to Roviana.

Then on 23rd January the orderly developments were torn apart. News was received that the Japanese had occupied Kieta. The District Officer decided that all the tie vaka

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98 *Metcalfe Diary Jan. 1942*
from the Western Solomons should be evacuated and Gizo, at least as far as its Government Offices were concerned, should be rendered useless to the enemy. People: white, yellow, brown and black, became confused and frightened. They did not know that the news was false.

At Munda, Sister Grace was very sick and so was Sister Lina. Doctor had been called back from Choiseul to care for Sister Grace. Now it seemed that these two women at least ought to be evacuated to a safer place. Very reluctantly it was decided that they with the two other Sisters would leave on the mission vessel *Fauro Chief* and the Doctor and Clary Leadley would have to go with them. It was an agonising decision.99

Gina reached Munda in time to attend an early morning service of worship on Sunday 25th January when the tie vaka missionaries said a sad farewell to the people. Afterwards the whole congregation went down to the wharf and Gina led in prayers and singing as the ship sailed for the Marovo. Mr. Leadley, as the minister who was going away, talked to Gina and asked him to care for the church and told him that he could administer the Sacraments and perform marriages. Later he wrote the same thing in a letter to Paul Havea. This was a most extraordinary situation. Both Gina and Havea had been ordained in November 1938 to the "Ministry of Word and Sacraments" but had never been allowed to exercise the second function. Now more than two years later that restriction was being lifted, though without the knowledge and consent of the acting Chairman. When he heard this, Metcalfe was very angry and withdrew the permission that had been given. This may have been in part because he had not been consulted, but it was really because he did not believe that Solomon Islanders could be ministers in the same sense as he himself was a minister. Weeks later he wrote in his diary:

I have the satisfaction of knowing that I always opposed a native ministry as we have it now. Now... I think I ought to have a fair chance of obtaining a modified type of ministry without any of these foolish frills. The Rev. B. Gina ought to be the last of the Revs in these parts.100

Like others, John Metcalfe was a man of his time, and it is not surprising that he had this kind of attitude, but because it was such a strongly held conviction it is hard to avoid the conclusion that it influenced his attitude to Gina and the troubles of the next year.

Gina himself lived for the moment. The tie vaka were going and the church was entrusted to him and his colleagues, Tongan and Fijian as well as Solomon Islanders, and that was an exciting prospect.

The *Fauro Chief* and its passengers had a stormy passage to the Marovo, and after calling at Patutiva went on to Batuna. There the news was so alarming that their tentative decision to sail to Australia direct was confirmed and they set out on 27th for

99 Luxton 1955:175ff. In fact all of the Mission party returned to serve the Solomons at a later date.

100 Metcalfe Diary 18 March 1942 : Metcalfe to Goldie 24 March
this distant place. This mission ship *Cicely*, which had taken Wattie Silvester to Sasamuqa with word that the D.O. wanted all the white people to assemble in Gizo, went on to the Marovo and reached Patutiva the day after the *Fauro Chief* had sailed from Batuna. At Batuna D.O. Miller gave him the small launch *Ramada* and instructed him to go to Choiseul and bring back Sister Merle Farland, Rev. John Metcalfe and Father Binois, the Catholic priest. They arrived back at Batuna on 2nd February to find that all the other tie vaka except two Government officers, Miller and Waddell, had gone either to Australia or Tulagi.

Gina went back to his wife and family at Sasavale for a few days and while there exercised his newly given authority to baptise several children. He then went on to Marovo and found that his friend Ishmael Ngatu had gone on to Batuna. But Ngatu, who was the Government headman for the area, returned on 31st January with instructions to collect all the guns from Mr. Markham's place at Sege (just across the water from Patutiva) and ensure they did not get into the wrong hands. Mr. Miller also came and advised the people to stay in their villages for the time being. That was Saturday. On Monday morning, Ngatu, Gina and others sailed for Lire where the Chinese store was - a store that had already lost some of its stock from the activities of Malaita labourers waiting to be returned to their home island. The Chinese owner was advised to close down his store and this was done, but not before he had sold some goods to Ngatu and party.  

That was the 3rd February, the day an enemy plane passed overhead, causing mild panic. The party returned to Patutiva and were joined by Mr. Metcalfe, Mr. Silvester and Sister Merle. These three had been also to Batuna and had met with the District Officers who were under orders to leave for Tulagi as soon as possible. The three missionaries were determined to stay and now called meetings of local church leaders.

In these meetings and services of worship, Gina helped Mr. Metcalfe, who had only a limited command of the Roviana language. At the time the acting Chairman wrote in his dairy:

"Gina helped me when I was in difficulties and supplemented my talk admirably."  

Weeks later, when Gina was in trouble, he wrote:

"... as far as we could see he was helpful at Palutiva..."

At this time Metcalfe was writing "...there is little chance of the Japs occupying the group (of islands)" a theme he was to go on repeating until it actually happened. But all the local people were not in accord with his point of view. Frank Taburi told them quite frankly that he thought these three missionaries ought to have followed the

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101 Ngatu Diary 3 Feb. 1942  
102 Metcalfe to Goldie 24 Feb. 1942  
103 Metcalfe Diary 5 Feb.  
104 N,14 March
example of the others and gone. Frank was not impressed by assurances that there was no danger. 105

On Monday 9th February the missionaries sailed for Munda and on the 10th a Japanese bomber flew over the area, and even John Metcalfe became jittery. The local people teased him by offering him, a non-smoker, a cigarette to calm his nerves. Next day, Merle Farland and Wattie Silvester went on to Bilua, and Gina went back to Simbo. 106
CONFLICT

Only John Metcalfe believed, or professed to believe, that there was no risk of a Japanese invasion. 107 Everyone else in authority seems to have accepted that the Japanese would be invading sooner rather than later. The two Government officers were withdrawn and ordered south, though Waddell returned shortly afterwards to serve as a Coastwatcher. The District Officer, Isabel, was given full command of the Western Province as well as Isabel and was instructed to set up a coast-watching network. But his first task was to get the labourers away from the plantations and back to their home islands. He was also required to recruit men who could help him with the coast-watching task. At the same time he was to continue the normal duties of Government as far as possible.

The District Officer concerned was Donald G. Kennedy, a forty-three year old New Zealander who had trained in the New Zealand Army during the last year of the first World War and had since then lived largely in the islands of New Zealand's near north, first as a school teacher, and then as an Administrative Officer in the British Colonial Service. He had only been in the Solomons since 1938 and had not had any responsibilities in the Western Province until this time. So he had to explore territory that was new to him and interact with a people who were different in some ways from those with whom he had previously had dealings. 108

He was a strong, courageous man whose war-time exploits have attracted praise and admiration in the Western world. From the point of view of the Americans, he was the right man in the right place at the right time. Without him things could have been far more difficult for their cause. They were not concerned with his morals or actions that were seen as irrelevant to the war effort.

But Solomon Islanders saw a different person, arrogant and cruel. He demanded unswerving conformity to his wishes, and exercised the right to help himself to whatever he wanted. He took a delight in subjecting people to humiliation and derision. He seemed to take pleasure in the physical punishment of others - and at least one man died from the beatings Kennedy ordered. To this day he is remembered in the Marovo and when a person makes selfish demands, and strikes out at others in temper, they are said 'to be doing a Kennedy'. He lived with a Rennell Island woman at Sege and was reputed to seek other women in other places, conduct quite unacceptable to many local people. He seemed to have a special antipathy to local clergy. His treatment of Pastor Kata Raqoso of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and of Belshazzar Gina of the Methodist Church seems to have been quite disproportionate to the extent of their failures to conform to Kennedy's wishes. 109

107 This is evidenced by repeated entries in Metcalfe's diary right up to the day of the actual Japanese landing at Munda. Even when the invading army was on the nearby islands, he denied they would come to where he was.

108 N.Z. Herald 17 July 1976

109 e.g. Were 1970
Solomon Islanders were not British citizens, they were only 'protected persons' and so they did not owe any loyalty to the British Government as of right. In the end their actions were often determined by personal relationship with the various Britishers they had known, including the missionaries. If Dr. George Bogese did collaborate with the Japanese, as has been alleged, it was probably his personal antagonism to Kennedy that was the motivation. Others could hate the Coastwatcher and yet remain loyal to the cause for which Kennedy was working. Bill Bennett so humiliated and angry that he shot Kennedy in the leg, yet remained loyal to the British cause and put up with Kennedy. Ishmael Ngatu went along with what was happening but tried to shield people like Gina from the worst of the ill treatment they received. The conflict of cultures that had always been there came out in sharp, hurtful ways during the period of active warfare.

Gina was not left long at Simbo for the D.O. arrived there on 15 March. Kennedy claimed he had gone to those islands because,

Some punitive action was found necessary on Simbo Island and New Georgia owing to the social disorganisations which followed the evacuation of Europeans and the looting of their property by the local natives.\[110\]

Or did he go to recruit Gina?

In fact he arrested Gina almost at once and charged him with three offences. First, that he had forced a Chinese store keeper in the Marovo to reduce his shop prices by a substantial amount. Second that he had stolen a revolver from Lilinina plantation, also in the Marovo. Third that he had demanded a rifle belonging to a European trader from his Solomon Island wife and taken it to his house, "for her safety's sake".\[111\] The first charge could not be pressed for the Chinaman was a very long way off. In any case, the offence seems to have taken place when the Chinaman was about to leave his residence. Gina, a man of two cultures, was very familiar with 'closing down sales' in the depression years in New Zealand, and no doubt he may have suggested to the Chinaman that cutting prices was a good way to quit his goods. Kennedy's story was that Gina had "told (the Chinaman) that the white people were going and that they would now be in the islands subject to the goodwill of the natives and he must reduce his goods to quarter or half rates". Even John Metcalfe found it hard to believe that this had taken place when two Government officers were at Batuna, in the very near vicinity, to whom the Chinaman could have complained.

The second charge was no doubt true - that Gina had taken a firearm from the deserted plantation. But the man who was trying him, was helping himself to anything he

\[111\] This is a reconstruction from the diaries of Metcalfe and Ngatu. Nagatu says he was instructed to close down the Chinese store at Lire on 2nd February, though he and others were still making purchases the following day. Was this when alleged offence was said to have taken place?
wanted from every deserted plantation and mission station he visited. Kennedy felt he
needed things like kerosene refrigerators, food and petrol and few could quarrel with
that. But it is not inconceivable that Gina felt he needed a firearm for his own
protection. Ngatu had been told by Miller to gather up the firearms from Sege
plantation and no doubt from others and hand them over. Gina seems to have been
with him at that time. Ngatu took the rifle of the Japanese trader, Singana, for himself,
but no one seems to have taken note of that. 112

The third charge was the only one on which even Kennedy's "war lime court" could
convict, 113 Harold Beck was gone and his wife handed Gina his rifle and the
ammunition that went with it. Gina was convicted of "larceny" - plain theft. But was
it? In Solomon Islands terms, if a bangara came and asked some things of a village
man or woman, they would have felt compelled to give it to him. Was Gina really
concerned that if Mrs. Beck was found by the Japanese with a gun in the house they
might assume she had it to fight against them and kill her?

Rev. Belshazzar Gina was sentenced to six months' jail!

In this as in so many of the events of his life and times, there was no meeting of
minds. On 26 February John Metcalfe had written in his diary: "I am not going to
play up to Gina's view of things ..." Yet Gina had only asked if there was a radio he
could have to keep up with the war news. Metcalfe had had no qualms about taking
Miller's radio from Gizo after the D.O. had gone, and batteries from various
abandoned residences to keep the wireless going. Gina must have known this. 114

It must be questioned whether Gina, or any other Solomon Islander was going to get a
fair trial under the conditions that prevailed. It must also be a question as to what were
Kennedy's motives. Why did he consistently refuse to allow the missionaries to
interview Gina except in English and except in his presence? And Kennedy's presence
meant in effect the presence of all the people on the boat.

Perhaps the saddest part of the whole story is the way in which John Metcalfe felt
compelled to publicly announce the charges made against Gina and condemn him. He
said:

"I have not spared B.G. in the hope that uncovering his principles of conduct
may help others to take care." 115

On the first Sunday after he learned of Gina's troubles he denounced him in the
morning service at Munda. The following week he did the same in the Roviana lagoon
villages in the presence of Gina's wife and her relatives. In between he had his
suspicions confirmed. On the Monday he went to the frail elderly Boaz Veo and had
him agree that Gina had talked about an independent Solomon Islands Church with

112 Ngatu 2 Feb.
113 Kennedy used this excuse to justify another odd conviction. Metcalfe 27 July.
114 Metcalfe 18 Feb.
115 Metcalfe 5 April
himself as possible Chairman. There was nothing really new in this, but Metcalfe seemed to think it was an ultimate heresy.

And so it went on. For once a man is publicly condemned there will be no lack of people who can find something against him. There will also be some who want to gain favour with the important person by telling him what they think he want to know. Inevitably, someone suggested that Gina had had a child out of wedlock by a Simbo girl. Later in the month Metcalfe went to Simbo and had a talk with the teachers and reported:

"... everyone admitted by a show of hands that BG had acted on at least one occasion in such a manner that immorality... would be inevitable."

The whole procedure was such as to be offensive in Melanesian eyes, and the result must be regarded with deep suspicion. Then Metcalfe discovered that the lady, who was supposed to have had Gina's baby, said it was that other boyfriend, who had blamed Gina so he could avoid responsibility. Even Metcalfe had to admit that he was "inclined to believe the girl". 116

By contrast to this sad story, Gina's "imprisonment" meant he was being sent out on scouting expeditions for the Coastwatcher! First they travelled on the Wa-iai to Isabel Island and there Gina was very much at home. Through his grandfather he was related to some of the most important people in the area. He spoke the local language. Like Bill Bennett and Geoff Kuper he was a valuable aid to Kennedy. In late May, Gina was sent with two others to Choiseul to gather information from that island. He travelled in a small locally owned launch. Kennedy had lost the Wai-ai and needed any vessel he could get. In June he sent Gina with a message to Joe Martin that he wanted the launch Dandavata. At the same time with Ben Kevu, Gina made a trip to Java on Vella and to other places to pass on and gather information.

In July, Kennedy decided that the time had come to move his base of operations from Isabel to Sege in the Marovo lagoon. First he went on an exploring expedition and travelled up to Munda where he met with John Metcalfe and was apparently more willing to listen than he had previously been. But he also learned that the missionaries who had stayed behind were upset by the freedom being given to Gina. Returning to Isabel, Kennedy handed over that post to Geoffrey Kuper and moved the rest of his party across the Strait. This story has been vividly told by Bill Bennett. Of Gina he writes:

"About 2 o'clock in the morning, a very big Japanese warship went by us ... just as we were approaching Marovo we lost our dinghy. So we had to turn back to look for it. The wind was very strong that night and the rope we tied it with broke. You probably know the Rev. Belshazzar Gina. He was with us on the ship. He climbed up the mast and was looking out to sea and as soon as he saw the boat he gave a loud shout and off he jumped into the sea. That was the first time I ever heard Kennedy laugh. He landed in the sea before he got into the

116 Metcalfe 22 April
boat. After he had bailed out the water from the boat we threw him a rope and brought him back to the ship. That was the first time I ever heard Kennedy laugh".  

Once the new base was established there was need for more helpers and Gina was sent to recruit people from the Roviana lagoon area to act as scouts. Japanese activity was growing and the task of keeping track of their movements was growing more complex. Gina had Mr. Cant's boat and travelled in it on Kennedy's business. On 18 July he met up with the three tie vaka missionaries who were on their way to Marovo to hold a series of meetings at Patutiva and also to consult with Kennedy.

Gina was talking with the people wherever he went and usually in a village they gathered to hear what he had to say, as one would expect them to do. He had both the status of his former position and now as the representative of the District Officer. This did not please the missionaries.

Kennedy has put us in an absurd position. Here is the prisoner condemned for stealing guns, whom I was not permitted to interview, travelling in his own launch and giving orders to all and sundry, including a letter to me. He had called meetings at Niaravai, Kepi etc. and said outrageous things about us white folk which with all his other misdemeanours cannot lightly be passed over.

When the missionaries arrived at Patutiva it was not long before they had a session with Kennedy and Gina was discussed. He was brought in to answer the charges being made against him. He admitted that he had sent the letter to John Metcalfe but said he judged it would help the D.O. with his work. Gina then went on to attack and spoke out about the way in which his wife and family had been shamed by the preaching against him. He felt that instead of that, they should have been praying for him. Surely a reasonable response. But sadly it only drew forth laughter and accusations of being a liar.

Gina was in an impossible position.

His first loyalty was and always had been to his Church, and if he had dreamed of an independent Solomon Islands Church, who could blame him? Yet now he was rejected and made fun of by the very people from whom he might have expected support. That he had done some silly things there was no doubt but to be condemned unheard for unproven crimes was very hard to bear.

On the other hand, in his work with Kennedy, probably the most hated man in the Solomons at that time, whose lifestyle and actions went against everything that Gina had been taught was Christian, he found freedom of action and probably a certain amount of satisfaction. Kennedy, for his part gave Gina increasing responsibilities, but

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118 O'O 1988 p. 179
119 Metcalfe 18 July
120 Metcalfe 21 August
to be on the safe side, he also gave him another jail sentence. This time for aiding and abetting Bill Bennett in acquiring 11 pounds of tobacco!  

At the end of August Gina and other scouts were sent to keep watch on the Japanese in Gizo. It was a very dangerous business but they did keep watch and were able to monitor the withdrawal which took place about 21 September.

The pace of fighting was growing and it was getting more difficult to distinguish between friend and foe. American planes shot up the Mission Station at Kokeqolo and injured a Buka student. Food was getting short there and the failure to send students and staff home earlier was now creating problems. There were over 50 people on the station. At the end of September, Gina learned of their troubles and brought them a supply of fish.

On Friday 13 November the Japanese landed at Munda and occupied the Mission Station. Mr. Metcalfe and the people there had to make a very precipitate retreat to the bush. Sister Merle Farland was called down to Sege from Bilua and then evacuated in mid-December. J.R. Metcalfe stayed a little longer but he too was sent out in mid-January. Neither of them wanted to go but it was certainly advisable.

And so came to an end a year of active warfare in the Western Solomons. It was a year which had been disastrous for many people in the area. Their world had been turned upside down and the future was very uncertain. Yet the ordinary people had been steady and reliable in a way that is quite extra-ordinary. It was possible for Kennedy and his team of scouts to operate only because of the support of the local people especially in the Marovo and on Isabel. However much they hated and feared him they did not betray him. In part this was because of strong leadership from men like Ngatu and Chcini and the fact that the scouts were people they knew. These leaders did not like Kennedy and at times hated him very much, but they did have a respect for his ability and sense of purpose. Many years later, reflecting on those times Bill Bennett said :

"Kennedy was a very tough man. If it had not been for him I think a lot of things would have gone wrong in the Western Solomons."  

and Gina said :

"He was a good organiser, strong on discipline... it was necessary to be tough. He was the right man at the right time."  

They would not have phrased it like that in 1943, but there must have been a recognition of his strength. In the same way, Kennedy respected the abilities of his leading scouts. He entrusted them with major tasks and often they accomplished them, even if, like Gina they were constantly in trouble. It is not possible now to establish

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121 Metcalfe 9 August  
122 Bennett 1975  
123 Ginao 1975
the whole truth about every incident that took place but the danger was real, the
heroism was real and if the understandings of what happened are very different, is it
surprising?

The Christian missionaries had also faced a year of conflict and tension. They were
captured by the age old dilemma of the Church - what to do in time of war when the
lives and well-being of one's own people seem to be at stake. Some of them met the
situation by leaving the Solomons and no one should question their commitment or
courage. They made the decision they thought right for them and for Solomon
Islanders. Those who stayed behind were equally convinced that this was the right
thing to do. But their day-to-day actions were seen by Mclansian people who could
not understand their dilemma or the pressures that were on them. They in their turn
found it hard to comprehend the reactions of their parishioners. The good they had
done in the years before the war, the good they were to do in the years that followed
was not destroyed but only distorted by war time events.
THE VIRU AFFAIR

Viru harbour is not far from Sege as birds fly, but in the war time situation the thick bush on the mainland and the reef-strewn seas presented formidable barriers to those seeking knowledge. Gina was given a job to do by Kennedy. What actually happened we may never know.

On 16 January 1943 Metcalfe recorded in his diary:

"B. Gina was thrashed for giving lying reports of Japs at Viru when he had not been near the spot, which reports might have caused many deaths." This entry would have been based on Kennedy's report - the same report presumably as was used by a later writer. In 1979 Gina was asked about this incident and he gave the following account. 124

"When we arrived at Sege with the Salakan a, Mr. Kennedy said to me, 'You will go to Viru this afternoon' because Viru was full up of Japs. I was told to stay till we cleared up Viru. We went there and some others took the launch back to Sege and we walked inland to look for a place for our camp. We made leaf tents. Next day we sent word and told Kennedy our plan. Every day two people would go for 2 hours at a time into the bush to reconnoitre. This went on for three days.

(Someone wrote in a book that I was not carrying out instructions but that was false.)

Kennedy wrote in an angry way because it took so long to prepare, so I told the scouts not to respond to any Japanese and let them know they were scouts but to act ignorantly. But because of this I decided to actually put myself in the hands of the Japs at Viru and get the information.

I told all my boys, 'Today I will be in with the Japs without any fear of death or hunger or whatever happens. I am prepared to do it. I want Billy Bennett and one other to go back to Kennedy and tell him that today Gina is inside the camp at Viru among the Japs. But try to inform him that whatever happens, not to be afraid of me that I will tell on him. I would rather die than I would have to spoil somebody.'

(I read that piece in the book, but he doesn't know what he is talking about. It doesn't matter what they say I have done my duty and there are people who would agree.)

Before I went out I told my people that this was only me. I wanted no one to come with me because to go into the enemy means death or hardship. However three boys insisted to come because they said they had been called to help the war effort, and they volunteered. I told them it was by their own will whether they came or not.

So we came to a tent and I told them to wait under a tree and I would go into the tent. So I went on a little way and entered the tent. I stood there but no one noticed me. I

124 Gina's story was told to his son and taped in 1979 as a response to Walter Lord's account in his book Lonely Vigil. In other interviews with the author in 1975 he described being flogged but for a different offence - being late with a report.
went out and then I went in again and coughed. They were getting ready for breakfast. They cooked rice and opened a tin of salmon. They looked at me and said, 'Kanak, Kanak. Come, come.' I tried to pretend I didn't understand. I wasn't frightened. They looked just humans and I had nothing to fear. They invited me to breakfast so I called the three boys to come. There were four plates of rice and one tin of salmon. After we had eaten they gave us a cigarette but we pretended we did not know how to smoke. Two soldiers went outside and were talking. Then two of them fixed their bayonets and told us to stand. They came and took me out and one stood in front and one behind and we came to another tent and they got a piece of paper (a pass). Then we went to a huge tent (made of leaves not canvas). It was filled with many prisoners of war (Europeans). We had seen them earlier and were sorry for them. One winked at me and I returned their wink. They were very skinny. There were three more tents and then five more - about 50 tents altogether. As you enter Viru it was on the eastern side - Tombe.

We passed all these tents to a clearing and they took us to a spot outside the S.D.A. church and made us stand there. After a brief time the bugle sounded and when it stopped we saw thousands of people come out. We couldn't recognise them because they were dressed in green leaves but they had light skins. I told the boys not to be afraid and keep calm and watch what would happen. They all crowded round like bushes. After a while the commanding officer came out with all the glories of the Solomons on his chest - full of medals. His sword was too long for him - He was a very short boy. He bowed to them three times and all the soldiers bowed three times, and one gave a command to the soldiers - Attention! Then the commanding officer talked to them in Japanese so we didn't know what he was saying. Then he turned round and came to us and said to me,' You are an educated man.' He spoke in English with an American accent. 'You are a scout aren't you? You are doing the work for the army.' I did not reply to him in English but in Simbo and Roviana. But my teeth were red with betel nut and I spat on the floor. The three boys were afraid so I told them, 'There are two things you can do - cry or pray.'

He said, 'I am not going to let you out of this place. I am not taking any chances with you.' Then he talked to the soldiers and they dispersed. He talked to his secretary, or whoever, and he went. Then when everyone had gone he came back to us. 'If you can hear any English words I want you to talk to me. I want to help you.' I was mumbling like a dumb man. But I told him I wanted food for my starving people in the bush because they were hungry. I said this by signs and in my own language.

They separated us. The boys were sitting in the shade but I was left sitting in the sun on a stone from 8 o'clock to 3 o'clock. I could hear the people shouting or singing down below the banks. Boats were passing. The radio was going under the church. I could feel the vibration from the radio and they were sending messages by morse (faintly). I could see guards on the other bank. Someone came along and while I was sitting there slapped me hard (like timber) with the butt of the rifle. When he hit me I turned and he hit me on the other side and made me see stars. I put my hands up. I spoke in Roviana, 'God help me!'
At 3, the two soldiers came and took me up back to the bush. One soldier gave me a piece of paper and I put it in my huneke. They led me through where the gardens were. Taro was ready so I told the boys to dig some. The man ahead went off duty. I turned and asked the man behind for a knife - using sign language. He said, 'No knife' and went to get one. So I told the boys to follow me and run and we ran making ourselves as small as possible till we came to some big trees. Then we heard the rattle of bullets - machine gun rifles, but we kept running all the afternoon and tried not to listen. I said they were shooting their mothers and fathers somewhere. We missed the road to come across from our tents and landed on the beach about 6 p.m. (from 3.30 to 6 p.m.). We were tired and had cuts and bruises on our legs but we did not stop running till we were clear of the bush and then I said, 'Let's rest here. Lie down flat.' From there, because it was dark and we were hungry, I told the three to walk to the edge of the water and find shell fish to cook and I would walk on the sand to find dropped coconuts. I found two so I sat down and waited till they came with lots of cats eyes. We made a fire with matches one of the boys picked up on the road in the Japanese camp. We were very lucky. We cooked the shells in green leaves on the top of the fire. It was tambu to light a fire at night, but the green leaves hid the fire. So we had a good feed. We dug in the sand to find water. It wasn't good drink but it was OK. So then we rested and then set out to find the track to our camp. When the moon came up that gave us a little light to see by. It wasn't easy walking. We saw some wild pigs but didn't try to kill them. We tried to find the big ngali trees because there would be a track there. We walked about 4 miles. We were not allowed to cut tracks. At last I recognised our track. At the camp, when they heard us coming they abandoned camp and overturned the pots etc., which was the rule. When they saw us they were pleased.

I wrote a report and sent two boys with it and I told them to tell Kennedy what time I had returned - near midnight. Kennedy said, 'Very good'. The boys returned with a letter from Kennedy. It praised us for the successful mission. He said, 'On Wednesday you move to the beach and fish etc. and the fighter planes will come and bomb Viru Harbour on Wednesday and Thursday.' We went back afterwards to Viru at night and heard people in agony.
TOWARDS PEACE

Until June of 1943, Kennedy and his team carried on with their coastwatching activities. The fighting was growing and spreading, but the Japanese advance had been halted and the tide of war was beginning to turn. In that month, the United States Marines came to Sege and almost at once took on the task of building the airfield there. Coastwatching activities did not cease, indeed there were more people than ever involved in more places, but Sege itself was no longer the vital centre it had been for the 12 months.

In September Kennedy was withdrawn to Guadalcanal and given a brief leave before returning to his Colonial Service duties. While most of his team remained in the Western Solomons, some went with him to the east. Among them was Gina. His abilities were now required at base rather than in the forward areas.

The Resident Commissioner was faced with a difficult task. As the tide of battle rolled back, he had to re-establish a civilian administration with few facilities and few staff. At the same time he had to do it in association with an all-powerful military machine that would tolerate no interference. To achieve this he had to draw on all the local resources he could. Early in 1944, the New Zealand Army Third Division was withdrawn from Guadalcanal and their Casualty Clearing Station near Point Cruz was handed over to the R.C. for his use. This meant he was able to shift much of his base from Lungga, and from other places, to the area where it had already been considered that the post-war capital should be established. So it was understandable that men with the education and abilities of Belshazzar Gina were a very desirable addition to his staff.

As soon as it was possible, an administrative centre for the Western District was set up on Hobuhobu island in the Roviana Lagoon and Gina was appointed there as a clerk.

The Rev. J.F. Goldie had been trying to get permission to return to the Solomons and finally this was given in late 1944. He came to Guadalcanal in December and then was taken out west. After a brief look at the decimated remains of Kokeqolo hill where his Mission headquarters had once been, he was taken to Patutiva in the Marovo where there was still a house in reasonable condition and the facilities for him to make his contact with the local people and especially the local Church leaders.

Early in January of 1945 he had his first reunion with Gina and he reported to Mr. Scrivin, the Mission Secretary in New Zealand:

I have had several chats with Gina, and also with others about Gina. All I have heard is in his favour, I know the man very well, and while he needs a strong hand sometimes, I feel sure that all that has been alleged against him by Mr. Metcalfe will not stand up again a fair inquiry. He had done some very notable things in assisting the military here, and even Kennedy admits his worth in these difficult times, and apparently completely changed his mind about the lad. The people everywhere are angry with J.R.M. for his treatment of Gina before he left. He is anxious to return to our work after a fair inquiry, but I have advised him
that for the present he had better stick to his job in helping the Administration. He is with me in the Marovo, having been sent down by the Govt. to pay the Govt. men here.  

In another letter written on the 29th of the same month, Mr. Goldie said,

I have had several talks with Gina and Kera, and Gina's own explanation of the things with which he was charged bears the semblance of truth, backed as they are by abundant other native evidence, and supported by my own knowledge and Dr. Rutter's statement as to what took place at Gizo. I have not yet removed his suspension, but indicated that I am prepared to accept his statement - supported as it is by others. Gina is doing a good job for the Government, and I suggest that he be left to continue such work until things are more settled. The discipline will do him good. In the meantime I am using him in various ways.

He also reported that Gina's brother-in-law, another of Goldie's particular favourites, had been appointed District Headman.

The stories being told to Mr. Goldie by the local people were reinforced by the acting out of events of the past two or three years on festive occasions. One such occasion was in May 1945 when the people celebrated the forty-third anniversary of the pioneer missionary's first arrival in the Western Solomons. We owe this account of what happened to the Rev. Clarence Luxton who had joined Mr. Goldie a few weeks before. Mr. Luxton had been three years at Buka in the North Solomons before the war came and was not well acquainted with the Western District, nor had he been involved in the arguments about Gina in the prewar era. He did not know Kennedy. He was however an acute observer with a greater capacity to listen to the local people than some of his colleagues.

24th May. Celebrations completed and most of the natives have departed for their respective villages. It is reckoned that there were at least six hundred here for the service yesterday. There was a big gathering for a concert on the evening of the 22nd. Service at 9 a.m. on the 23rd - a festival kai-kai followed, and in the afternoon there was a long programme of dancing and singing, another concert in the evening.

The concert programmes certainly had variety, the usual standard items -

"How do you do everybody", "Old Mother Hubbard" were of course in evidence - but several songs learned from the Americans were popular items and a yodelling cowboy: dances, songs, in Tongan, Maori and English as well as the local dialect. Some of the songs told the stories of happenings during Jap and American occupation. Several plays - one was a skit on medical services rendered by the U.S. army doctors, Epsom salts for all and sundry complaints - and the surgical attention given to a couple, the man with a distended stomach was operated on and a huge "tumor" removed, much yelling from the patient;

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125 Goldie to Scrivin 6 Jan 1945
then the "woman" who was undoubtedly pregnant, was delivered of twins. A lengthy play depicted the various incidents connected with Captain Kennedy's residence on the neighbouring plantation, his methods of maintaining law and order, his preparation for scouting activities against the Japs. He was revealed as a bully who threatened all natives and cruelly treated them, striking with fist or rifle butt, threatening with pistol, having them laid across a petrol drum and thrashed - when one fainted his fear of having gone too far was very apparent; all the time he was busy his native woman, a Rennell Islander, was making free with his orderly, cook and radio operator - humour lightened the play, but it was a terrible revelation of what had occurred - the natives said that everything in the play was based on fact, and that only part of the story of brutality was told. (Kennedy was decorated for his bravery, the natives who did the work received no recognition). The longest play covered incidents at Munda, from 1942-1944.

First scene : Mr. Goldie's farewell as he left on furlough, the handing over to Mr. Leadley who would be head of the station until J.F.G.'s return.

Second scene : Mr. Leadley's farewell as he departed with the Sisters and Doctor on the Fauro Chief, the party being evacuated after word of the near approach of the Japs.

Scene three : Arrival of J.R. Metcalfe; his denunciation of the missionaries who had left, his denunciation of Gina, denunciation of all Roviana people as "liars" etc., and the statement that he was now head of the mission, and that the Japs would never come to that area. The announcement of the arrival of the Japs, J.R.M.'s exclamation. "Oh my goodness", and his very hurried departure.

Scene four : Jap soldiers arrive, set up their flag, radio station etc. The actors were all in Jap uniform, and played up to the part very well - all "local natives" vanished with their arrival.

Scene six : Marching troops heard in the distance, singing the Maori Battalion song; - troops appear. Americans in uniform complete with steel helmets, and a number of rifles, bayonets, sheath knives. Stealthy approach to the Jap position, attack with hand grenades (lighted matches), the overpowering of the Japs; Jap flag hauled down, Stars and Stripes run up while the "U.S. Troops" stood at the salute and sang the song of the U.S. Marines; "local natives" appear, U.S. troops and natives fraternize.

Last scene : the return of J.F.G. just before Christmas 1944.

Another play depicted the beginnings of mission work in 1902. J.F. Goldie and R. Rooney land among the headhunters who for the most part ignore the missionaries; first scenes in school; first attempts at singing etc. etc. Mr. Goldie said it was very well acted and true to fact reproduction". 

126 Luxton Diary
This was typical of many events in the years after the war when local people leased their fears and sufferings in play acting - a healing process for them individually and as a community.

By mid 1945 it was clear that, whatever the rights and wrongs of Gina's war-time adventures, his immediate future was in the service of the Colonial Government. Mr. Goldie had no intention apparently of carrying out a full enquiry and he was increasingly skilled at avoiding making important decisions. Nor was his enthusiasm for an indigenous ministry such that he was keen to reinstate the only ordained Solomon Island minister. When his tie vaka colleagues returned at the end of November there was certainly no pressure from them to do anything about the matter. "Bill" Gina (as he was now usually called) was a Civil Servant and an active layman in his church.
CIVIL SERVANT

The Methodist Church Synod met in December 1946 at Torokina and, without any discussion, accepted the resignation of Belshazzar Gina. No one wanted to enquire too closely into the events of the past few years. In New Zealand, the Foreign Mission Board and the Annual Conference maintained a discrete silence. Gina's name was simply dropped from the record without any comment. 127

In Solomon Islands, nothing had really changed. Gina had been working for the Government of the Protectorate since 1942 and at the same time supporting very actively the work of the church. The decision of the Synod was unimportant and did not affect in any way the mana of Gina in the eyes of his own people.

As a clerk in Government service, he fulfilled his duties at Hobuhobu until the end of 1946 and was then transferred to Honiara. He often, it seems, travelled with the District Officer as translator and guide. 128 At the same time he conducted worship regularly and trained choirs for special occasions. He had many informal talks with church leaders and others in authority in the villages. This might have upset the missionaries if it had continued, but his transfer to Honiara removed him from their immediate notice and they quietly forgot about him.

The Resident Commissioner was probably glad to have Gina in the government service for the next few years. He faced an unenviable task. Expected to re-establish government on similar lines to what it had been in the 1930s, he was yet compelled to recognise that many changes had taken place and more were to come. To meet the need, he must recruit as many Solomon Island staff as possible There were only a few people with the educational qualifications and most of these were returning to work for their Church. So a man like Gina, with a good education and a wide experience, was very welcome.

Gina worked as a clerk in the Medical Department and elsewhere as required until 1950. He also helped to train the police band. That led to an interesting situation at the time of the King's Birthday celebrations in 1947. The Resident Commissioner was anxious to put on a good show. Though Gina was under some kind of discipline at that stage for a misdemeanour, he was given the temporary rank of Sergeant of Police and made conductor of the band for that special occasion. Next day he reverted to his ordinary status. 129

Three years later, the first South Pacific Conference was held in Fiji. Gina was pleased to be chosen to represent his country. When he arrived at the meetings he found many people whom he already knew, and noted with interest that 25 out of the 54 present were Methodists! He gave two talks to the gathering, one on "Vocational Guidance"

127 This chapter is based on Gina's personal fik held in the National Archives, Honiara, N.Z. Church records of 1946 Synod and 1947 Annual Conference.
128 Ngatu's Diary 5,6, August 1946
129 Rev. T. Shepherd o.
and the other "Improvement and Diversification of Crops". He was away from Honiara from 27 April until 10 May, and it was reported that he had been well received by all the people at the Conference.

In 1948 when Gina was promoted to Clerk Grade A he was receiving a salary of £170 a year less 10% for rent. In addition, like all Government servants of the day, he and his family were entitled to free medical treatment. By 1950 his salary had risen to £200.\textsuperscript{130} This left the Government with a problem. They had established a Government school at Auki - that later became King George VI Secondary School. The Resident Commissioner claimed that the best local person they could find to teach there was Bill Gina. But the High Commissioner in Fiji objected that he was too highly paid. If he went to the school as a teacher on his present salary, others appointed as teachers would expect the same. Yet it was not possible for them to reduce his salary without having other problems. In the end it was agreed that he be posted to the school to teach but simply called "Senior Housemaster".

The Protectorate Administration later in the same year, committed itself to establishing schools where the Mission Societies had not been able to do so. K.G. VI was one of these. There was also a clearly felt need for a Primary School in Honiara - a school that was not linked, even in name, with the Churches. With this in mind, Gina was sent in 1951 to Nasinu Teachers' Training College in Fiji to do a refresher course. Once again there was controversy over what he was to be paid while on the course. Nor did it end there. By July, Gina was involved in a dispute with the High Commissioner's staff as to whether he was getting enough to meet his food bills. Deductions were being made from his pay for this purpose, but Gina claimed that the food provided was neither adequate nor suitable. He needed to have enough money to go out and buy extra from time to time. Gina was not a man to be pushed around, for he was in fact a senior Civil Servant.

At the Teachers' College, Gina was very happily placed. He made his mark with the students as well as the teachers. For example, in the first days at the college he went in to the big recreation room where there was a piano. To the surprise of the Fijian students, Gina went and sat down at the piano. They thought of him as coming from the bush, and therefore not being able to play such a sophisticated instrument. When he asked what he should play they laughed and said, "Anything". So Gina began with "What a Friend We Have In Jesus", and the students' expressions changed from amusement to surprise.\textsuperscript{131} Towards the end of the year, Gina became somewhat impatient with the lectures and asked if he could do more observation in schools like Davuilevu. But the final report of the Acting Principal was favourable. He wrote:

"Belshazzar Gina : A mature man who during his stay here has taken a wide interest in education and has, I feel, learnt a great deal. He has had special tuition from members of the staff to equip him for the leading position which it is assumed he will eventually occupy in the Solomons educational set-up. He does

\textsuperscript{130} In 1950 an expatriate Methodist Minister was paid £240 per annum.

\textsuperscript{131} S. Sipolo o.
not show the same industry as S... but has a quick brain and seems to learn readily.  (signed) R.S. Adams  

Back in the Solomons, Gina returned to his position at K.G. VI school. In March 1953 a "native school" was established in Honiara with Bill Gina as its headmaster. It became known as Government Primary School and grew rapidly as the population of Honiara grew. It received the best local staff available and some expatriate teachers including a married couple from Fiji. Michael Birt from England replaced Gina as headmaster in 1962. but Gina stayed on as his deputy and as singing teacher for all classes. His work at the school was satisfactory. Each year the Chief Education officer signed a certificate which said:

"(Mr. B. Gina) had discharged his duties with efficiency and fidelity in the past twelve months."

His Solomon Island teachers liked the way he gave them freedom to use their knowledge and initiative. Each week he called the obligatory staff meeting, but instead of dictating what each teacher must do in the coming week. He discussed policy and any problems the teachers faced and then left them to get on with planning their own work within the policy that had been decided. This contrasted strongly with the attitude of some expatriate head teachers, and was much appreciated by the local staff.  

There was no teachers' union in those days and no one particularly concerned with teachers conditions of work. Bill Gina took that on himself. He called meetings of teachers and then represented their concerns to the Chief Education Officer and to the Secretariat. One such problem was promotion. In the Civil Service, promotion was automatic, providing a worker did his job well and did not do anything distinctly wrong. But teachers were not able to become Grade 1 unless they had been to a teachers college in a "Metropolitan country". Nasinu College in Fiji did not qualify. The Government was not flexible in this sort of thing. It was to be a long time before inconsistency was removed, but Gina fought hard to achieve this He told the District Commissioner on one occasion, "If you want to employ Solomon Islanders and encourage the best of them to stay on in Government service, then you must give them good pay and working conditions with opportunities for advancement."  

Some people who had known Gina in the past, dismissed his ability to speak well and clearly as being the gift of a 'silver tongue'. The implication was that the words were fine but there was not enough thought behind them. But Solomon Islanders did not see it that way. Not only did he impress people by the way he spoke but also by the thought that had gone into his speeches. They were also impressed by his concern for them as people. One recalled how when he was knocked out in a boxing match he woke up to find Gina crying over him and offering support. Because of his gift of  

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132 Reports dated 13 Nov. 1951  
133 D. Maeke o.  
134 D. Maeke o.
speech, his thoughtfulness and his compassion, not many local people were inclined to argue with him.\textsuperscript{135}

There were, however, some problems. One of these was health In the years before the war he had suffered a great deal from illness, and though the medical facilities were better than they had been in the 1930s, there was no easy solution to Gina's problems. From time to time he would simply go to sleep wherever he was. One account from 1953 records what happened when such an event occurred during school time. A young District Officer newly arrived from England, was instructed to go to the school and inform Gina that his electric power would be cut off from his home because of his failure to pay his account. When he arrived at the school there was a lot of noise coming from the classroom. The children seemed to be running wild. The moment the young officer appeared at the door, the children returned to their seats and became quiet. Gina who had been sitting with his face down on his desk sound asleep, woke and immediately went on writing in his book as if he had never been asleep.\textsuperscript{136} This was not an isolated incident.

Gina and others who began to work for the Government during the war years were employed on the same kind of terms as expatriate staff. This meant that after a certain period of time they were entitled to three months leave, with fares paid to their country of origin. It soon became clear that that was not a satisfactory arrangement for school teachers but it was hard to change the contracts already signed. In 1961 Gina could claim that he had at least 15 years service. He was granted 96 days leave to travel to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa with the airfares for himself and his wife paid for by the Government. He was the first local officer to be granted this privilege. The Ginas took their daughter Anna with them and put her to school in Fiji at their own expense. Government would not meet those costs. The leave itself was a very exciting time for both husband and wife. Gina met up with people he had known in days past. Some like Malietoa, Head of State in Western Samoa, had been at school with him in New Zealand. Others he had met in New Zealand or Fiji. Everywhere he went he found friends - and left behind debts!

Transferring from the service of the Church to the service of the Government had meant a big increase in income, but it did not mean any increase in capacity to spend the money wisely and well. The problem Gina had over money in the past continued. He was very impulsive and often acted in good faith but with no thought at all as to where the money was to come from. He was also a compassionate person and his kindness often meant extra costs.

The official records of Gina, the Civil Servant, are full of references to his debt problems. The Government for a time, met those debts and made suitable deductions from his salary. They also advanced the money to buy a car though he himself could not drive. The amount of correspondence relating to these matters suggests very strongly that Bill Gina was so useful a man that the Administration could not afford to

\textsuperscript{135} S. Sipolo o.  
\textsuperscript{136} A. Hughes o.
do without his service, even if there were problems to be sorted out. A less valuable man would have been dismissed without hesitation.

Among the small group of people who helped to establish an effective administration in the years just after the war, Bill Gina's name should be remembered.
IN A GROWING COMMUNITY

An observer who, in 1944, lived somewhere near Point Cruz and watched the tremendous hive of military activity around him, could have been forgiven for thinking that the British Major who lectured him about the town of Honiara that was to be, was dreaming. If that same person had returned in 1952 and observed the scattered handful of old war-time buildings which comprised the town, he would have been surprised but hardly excited by the prospects for a true community in a real town. Yet he would have been wrong. For out of the ruins of the old army and airforce camps there was indeed a growing town. The 9th Station Hospital U.S Army had become Central Hospital and was providing a base for a new and effective medical service. An Ordinance Depot's buildings had become Public Works Department Stores. Shops were doing good business and Churches were crowded for regular worship.

Had that same observer returned another seven years later, he would have found a strong vibrant town full of life with its people engaged in many activities as well as their paid employment.

The people who created that town and gave it life and its own unique feeling were Solomon Islanders who had been brought there as part of their work for the Government, or to work for Trade Scheme, the Chinese traders and other employers. Among those people were Mary and Bill Gina.

It was Bill Gina that people saw and heard, but it was Mary Gina who made it possible for her husband to do so many things in addition to his paid job as a teacher. She was an astonishing woman. She had no say, as far as we know, in her marriage - she was chosen by others to be the wife of this young man who had travelled so far and done so much. She bore him 13 children, losing the first one within hours of her birth - and in the absence of her husband. Two more died at Sasavale in 1942. Zamakevu aged 2 years and Bireke. 10 months, died of blackwater fever within a month of each other, victims of wartime lack of medical care. Again her husband was away. She was

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137 This chapter is based largely on the recollections of Sir Fred Osifelo, Mr. Daniel Maeke, Mr. Stephen Sipolo, Mr. Panapasa Balakana, Mrs. Mary Johnston, and the author who was there many times from 1944 onwards. The British Solomon Islands Report for 1959-60 has provided additional material.

138 Lack of medicine and polluted water supplies played a part in their deaths and in the illnesses suffered by other children.

The names and dates of birth of the children are:
1. Nancy b. 12 Nov. 1932 d. same day
2. John Holden Lianga b. 4 Nov. 1933 d. 12 April 1989
3. Lloyd Maepcza b. 5 May 1935
4. Nancy Pigaseda b. 16 Sept. 1937
5. Shirley Pile b. 16 Nov. 1938
6. Zamakevu b. 14 Feb. 1940 d. 11 July 1942
7. Bireke b. 12 Oct. 1941 d. 6 Aug. 1942
loyal and uncomplaining, yet she was far from being a weak person. Her strength showed itself in her partnership with her impulsive generous yet often thoughtless man. Now in Honiara, she planted and maintained food gardens, kept a clean, tidy house and fed her family and many others as well. Their partnership was shown most clearly in the way they helped and supported their neighbours... other Solomon Islands families that lived near them. When a husband and father was sent away on a course, the wife and mother could look to the Ginas for help and encouragement. If children needed some extra care, or people travelling were lacking a meal or a place to sleep, Gina's household was open to them. In that caring, Mary and Bill worked together, and for many people the name Gina is still associated with the memory of kindnesses received.

They were, of course, not alone in this caring, loving attitude to their neighbours. Most people had links with one or other of the Christian Churches, and it is significant that in the first years of the town we call Honiara, it was the churches that provided people with a place to belong and a group of people with whom to do things. The Methodist Church, like the others, had begun worship services in the earliest days. In due time, the people acquired an old quonsett hut and a piece of land on which to build it. In 1960 they were the first to have a permanent church building in the town, a building erected largely by voluntary labour. In this church community, the Ginas took their place. Bill led the choir for several years. He loved music and found happiness in leading a group and making music. For this reason, he helped the Police Band with instruction and by conducting them on special occasions. He himself could play almost all the instruments and had done so over many years.

The strong sense of involvement found in the Churches, quickly spread through the small population, and other community activities were established. The Red Cross organisation began in 1951 and was the first of a number of such groups. Boy Scouts was another activity in which Gina had a special interest. He had seen something of Scouting in New Zealand, and then in 1951 he had attended a Scout camp in Fiji and enjoyed every minute of it. So he was one of the group of enthusiastic people who began Scouting in Honiara in 1954. This organisation brought together boys and young men from every racial group in the town - Chinese, European, Polynesian and Melanesian. It is interesting to note that some of the people in the Education Department who found Gina a frustrating colleague in the class room, yet were glad to accept his vision and his enthusiastic guidance in the Scout movement.  

The establishment of a radio broadcasting station in Honiara, was not only a means of entertaining people in the town, but also an important means of bringing the whole of

8. Linda Niua b. 8 Sept. 1943
9. Alfred Rasingatale b. 4 June 1945
10. Anna Seporega b. 24 Feb. 1947
11. Hugh Karuru b. 11 Mar. 1949
12. John Francis Vadaka b. 20 Dec. 1951
13. Mereseina Oloduri (Mary) b. 15 June 1953

139 Danial Maeke interview 1988
the country together. Bill Bennett who was the man trained as the first announcer became widely known right through the country on every island. But alongside him was "Uncle Bill" who conducted the regular Children's Story Time. Bill Gina was in his element in this job. He loved children, he was fluent in several languages and he knew how to tell a good story. The response was good and he continued with the regular programme until he retired from teaching.

Another of Gina’s characteristics was his curiosity. He was always attracted by new things and wanted to explore them. This helped him to learn but it also got him into trouble. In the early 1950s the Church meeting in Honiara recommended to the annual Synod that Gina be reinstated as a lay preacher in the Church’s records. But this was turned down by the Chairman of the Mission District because he had heard that Gina had been attending meetings of the Baha’i Community in Honiara. Gina was not given the chance to explain himself, and the decision was made in his absence - a fact which upset more than one member of the Church. It did not seem to occur to the Chairman that simple curiosity might be an explanation!

Gina had an abiding interest in people he met along life's way and a phenomenal memory for names and addresses. When his son was going on Government business to Australia, Gina gave him a list of names and addresses of people he had met on his visits to that country many years before. The information was accurate and the people contacted welcomed the son because of the happy memories of the father. When Sir Winston Churchill died in January 1965, Gina wrote to his widow and expressed sympathy in her bereavement. He also recalled their meeting when Lady Churchill visited the Solomons on a cruise ship many years before. In her reply, Lady Churchill not only remembered their meeting but reminded him of the model canoe that he had given her and said that she still possessed it.

As the years passed, Gina continued to be a valuable if somewhat unpredictable member of the Honiara Church. Then in 1960 there came another crisis in the Church. This was the emergence of the charismatic movement which came to be known first as the Eto Movement and then later as the Christian Fellowship Church.

The movement had its roots in the early 1930s. On the one hand there was the charismatic figure of Silas Eto who came to be known as the Holy Mama. His unusual and unorthodox ways of conducting worship had been known for a long time, but no one had recognised the strength of his hold on the people of Kusage, or understood that in certain circumstances the movement could be attractive to others. On the other hand, it attracted people who, like Gina, had felt deprived because there was no place in the Annual Synod for Solomon Islanders, which meant that the government of the Church in practice remained in the hands of the tic vaka missionaries. As long as J.F. Goldie lived there was no one who was willing to challenge his authority openly. With his departure at the end of 1950 and the appointment of the Rev. John Metcalfe as Chairman things began to change.

140 Sir L.M. Gina remembered
The Roviana Circuit started regular Quarterly meetings at which the church preachers and leaders could express their mind. In addition, Mr. Metcalfe started what he called "The Native Conference". This was a periodic meeting of the leading men from each of the Circuits where they were able to discuss freely any and every matter. The recommendations of the Native Conference were then passed to the Synod for action. Local leaders began to believe that they might have some say in the government of their church. When Metcalfe retired at the end of 1957, it was the end of an era. The opportunity was there for radical change. Silas Eto and his Kusage followers left the Methodist Church in 1960. They were followed by some Roviana speaking people, among them Gina's sister and her husband, his brother-in-law and their families. The result was that his own children were divided. Those with the closest ties to Sasavalc village and the extended family there joined the break-away movement.

Once again Gina's loyalty was put to the test. He did not at any time leave the Methodist Church. He tried to be a bridge builder and keep open the channels of communication with those who took a different point of view. The inevitable result was that he was misunderstood by both sides at different times. He was suspended as a preacher by the Honiara Circuit, much to the sadness of the minister, a New Zealander. But Gina took it with grace and understanding. He quietly continued as a loyal member of the church. After a year or two, the bitterness died down and Gina was allowed to resume preaching. It was not only Bill who was affected by the division. For Mary it was a time of great sorrow. She loved her family and to see it divided by this controversy was a strain... a strain that reduced her to tears on many occasions. Like others who tried to be bridge builders between the two groups, Mary and Bill were frequently misunderstood and their best efforts at times came to nothing. Yet as the years passed, the Gina family did help in keeping contact between the two churches.

As the years went on, the Gina children grew up and took their place in the community. In Honiara, they had opportunity for a good education and two of them had been sent to Fiji by their parents for schooling. Some found employment in Government or in commerce, married and had families. They also played their part in the community where ever they lived, carrying on the tradition of good citizenship their parents had established.

141 Mrs. Mary Johnston remembered
When Bill Gina retired from the Government Service at the end of 1965, Mary and he returned to the Western Province and went to live at Qurasae, Munda. By this time the bitterness of the early 60s had faded, and while the Christian Fellowship Church and the Methodist Church (which became the United Church in 1968) were quite separate, there was growing friendly co-operation between many individuals and families. After a few months Gina was invited to take over the headmaster's job at the Methodist Primary School at Kokeqolo. This he was happy to do. He retained this position for the next two and a half years.

Gina had long before this been restored to the position of an official lay preacher of the church. In 1969 he was reinstated in the ministry and appointed to take charge of the Mono Circuit. This was a job that was suited to an older man, as there was no great distances to travel. After three years there, he returned to Munda and was given charge of the Munda-Roviana area.

Gina was getting old, but he had not lost his capacity to capture people's attention. The Church headquarters at Munda needed some tidying up. Grass needed cutting and rubbish had to be collected. So Gina asked all the people who worshipped there to come on a certain day and give time to the cleaning up. But no one came! The next Sunday, they arrived at Church and were very surprised to find a coffin in the centre of the building. When they were all seated, their minister stood up and announced that since the church appeared to be dead, they should now proceed to bury it! The next work day was well attended and the grounds cleaned very thoroughly!

The New Testament in the Roviana language had been published in 1952. Because the language was changing very fast, that translation was in some ways already out of date when it was printed. A revision was needed. There were various parts of the Old Testament translated but large amounts for which there was no version in Roviana. The Church, in consultation with the Bible Society, decided that the time had come to look again at the material which had been printed and go on to translate the remainder of the Bible. Gina was asked to begin this work. He agreed and the Bible Society arranged for him to attend two courses - one in Papua New Guinea in 1974 and the second in Honiara in March 1975. Gina was then able to live at home and work at his own pace, which was helpful. Other people were brought in to assist with the work as required.

Gina was at home. He lived at Qurasae in his own house. He was reinstated as a minister of the Church. There was plenty of work to be done in translation and yet he could make his own pace. For Mary too, this was a time when things could be done a little slower than before, though her husband was still a very demanding person. He had very firm ideas about how his clothes should be washed and ironed, how his food should be prepared and about his right to invite people for meals with

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Based on personal and family memories.
little or no warning. Mary was not in good health by this time but she did not complain. Nor would she go to see the Doctor. On Sunday January 2nd 1977, while Bill was away preaching at Nusa Roviana, Mary had a stroke. She died two days later. Gina was devastated. The loss of his wife was something he had never really expected. She was younger than he was, and for 45 years she had been there to support him and to care for him. Now she was there no longer. A brightness had gone out of life for him and his family.

The family was scattered through the Solomons and one daughter, Mary, had married and gone to live in New Zealand. Later in that same year Gina was able to visit Mary and Charlie Johnston in the country that he had once known so well. He revisited his old school and towns and cities which held special memories for him. He met up with old friends and made new ones. Many people were glad to see him, and he for his part, rejoiced in the opportunity to be in New Zealand again.

Two years later, the name of the Reverend Belshazzar Gina was listed in the Queen's Birthday Honours. On the 12th November 1979, he was in Honiara to go to Government House to be given his M.B.E. by the Governor General. It was fitting that he should receive this award as recognition of his long service to his country, but sad that it was not given when Mary was still alive and could have shared in the happiness the award brought.

Gina had had many periods of ill health through his life time. In 1976, he had had to give up many things because of health. The doctors had talked about him having only perhaps one or two years to live. But he did live for another five years. He died on 23 December 1981 at Munda, "in a good old age". At Munda, in Honiara and in many other places people remembered him and paid tribute to his life and work. In the following April a memorial service was held in the chapel of his old school, Wesley College, Pacrata, and honour was paid to his memory.

"And all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

Alan and Gina at Munda – probably the last photo taken of Gina before his death.
EPILOGUE

"Bill Gina I admire very much. He did many silly things but he always came back again. His story is very important...." 143

"(I remember) his complete committal to work of the Lotu and the Christian way of life. He was an exuberant extrovert, highly intelligent, subject to sudden enthusiasms which did not always last and certainly sometimes lacking in judgement. But a true leader capable of delegation and of inspiring love and loyalty in those he enlisted in his work." 144

As we look back on the life of Belshazzar Gina, we need not now be concerned with the "Perhaps" and the "If only..." We can accept that he was at times inconsistent and erratic, and that he was not good at handling money. We can acknowledge that he was very demanding of his wife and family and at the same time pay tribute to Mary Gma's loyalty and loving service. We can regret that he was often misunder-stood and criticised by people who did not share his vision. But we must also pay tribute to a man who had great dreams for his people, his church and his country So many of those dreams have come true and Gina himself was one of the people who made this possible.

He had a vision of an independent Solomon Islands Church controlling its own life and witness and telling the Good News of Jesus Christ in the imagery and context of Melanesia, and he lived long enough to see some of that vision become reality.

He was a pioneer in many government and community activities Today we take for granted a Government Education System. He was the first Solomon Islander to be appointed as a Government teacher, and he helped to lay the foundations of King George VI SecondarySchool and Government Primary School Honiara.

We know the need for trade unions. Gina fought for better conditions for teachers during his years of service in Honiara and helped Solomon Islanders to see the value of joining together in trade and professional groups.

We accept our National Broadcasting System. He worked with Bill Bennett and others, and his children's hour prepared a whole generation of Solomon Islanders to be listeners.

We enjoy our highly skilled Police Band. His diverse musical skills helped to make Band music an essential part of every important occasion in Solomon Islands development to nationhood.

Many of our boys are enthusiastic Scouts. Again, Gina was part of a team who helped to found the Movement in the Solomons and give it a vision of things that could be.

143 Bill Bennett interview 1975
144 Dr. A. Rutter letter 1989
He was totally committed to his own people, the Church, and to his country. He brought the knowledge and skills he acquired in New Zealand and Fiji and used them as far as he was able, for good.

We should remember the Rev. Belshazzar Gina M.B.E. as one of those who helped his country on the road to nationhood and independence: a Christian leader in Church and community: a man who inspired many Solomon Islanders, and not a few New Zealanders. We give thanks for his life and work.
THE AUTHOR

Rev. George G. Carter

Reverend George Carter M.A. (Hons) Dip Ed., is an historian. His seventeen years' (1940-65) experience as missionary teacher, minister and the first Chairman of the Methodist United Synod which led to the formation of the United Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, gave George and his wife Nancy a love for these Islands which still radiates in George's writing about people in the Solomons. From 1966 -1975, George was General Secretary of the New Zealand Overseas Mission.

In this capacity, George gained a broader first hand knowledge of the Church in action in the South Pacific. He developed a continuing interest in the use of the documents held in the Methodist Archives' Auckland and in the development of the churches in the south west Pacific. His Book A FAMILY AFFAIR (1973) depicts the history of the churches in the Pacific from a N.Z. mission point of view. In the same year, his DAVID VOETA expressed George's concern to record indigenous leadership in the development of their own church. After his years as General Secretary, George combined field work with documentary evidence to produce in 1981, TIE VARANE, Stories about people of courage from Solomon Islands. This was a unique contribution to Solomon Islands' History.

While TIE VARANE focuses on the contribution of over thirty indigenous leaders to the building and development of their local church, the Gina story concentrates on one person alone. George's careful utilization of primary sources, the impressions made on Gina by New Zealand Methodists, information, gained from Gina's relatives, friends and others, shows Gina as a man of many dimensions. Was Gina a missionary? What was his long-term dream for his people? Was he by church standards a heretic? Was he a man ahead of his time? What type of leader was he in community, government and church? Many of these questions can only be addressed by reading trough this fascinating book.

The author passed away while this book is being published, 3rd October 1990.

Editor.
My primary sources have been documents created at the time when the action was happening. These include diaries and letters from a number of people, including Rev. A.A. Bensley, Sister M.S. Farland, Rev. E.C. Leadley, Rev. C.T.J. Luxton, Sister L.M. Jones, Rev. J.R. Metcalfe, Sister G.M. McDonald, Sister E. McMillan, Mr. I. Ngatu, Mr. J. Tozaka, and Sister E.M. White. There is also the correspondence of the Foreign Mission Department of the Methodist Church of New Zealand and the letters of Gina himself. I am grateful to Mrs. B. Nightingale (nee Keall) for making available to me Gina's letters to her, written over many years.

Secondary sources include recollections of people in New Zealand and in the Solomons, and taped interviews with Gina himself and with other people.

I have consulted a large number of books and periodicals.

Listed here are only those that have been referred to in the text.

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