

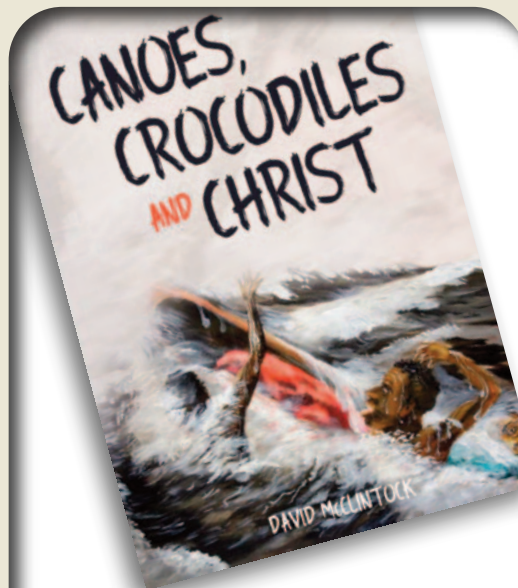


Faith-Ann A. McGarrell

**H**ow powerful is the God of heaven? More powerful than the *puri puri*?<sup>1</sup> Cannibals? Crocodiles? Cyclones? Haru Hariva's story challenges readers to answer this question at every twist and turn. In *Canoes, Crocodiles, and Christ: The Story of Haru Hariva*, David McClintock shares accounts of the life of this Adventist pioneer missionary from the South Pacific Division. A nonfiction narrative, the story is set in the tropical jungle villages and harbor towns of Papua, New Guinea. It chronicles Haru Hariva's life from the early 1900s until he died in 1967. Each chapter takes the reader on a journey with Haru as he navigates growing up in the village of Heperu without his mother, learns to love his father while living in Bootless Bay, and as he learns about Jesus at the small mission school at Hiloi. Readers will cheer him on as he pursues an education in Bisiatabu near Port Moresby, marries Kaura, and, together with her, raises 12 children.

#### From Village Chief Heir to Missionary for God

The story begins with the death of Haru's mother, snatched from his life by a crocodile. Haru's father, Hariva, a village chief, struggles with losing his wife and, shortly after, his baby daughter, Rouru. He blames the *puri puri* for bringing devastation to his family. Young Haru's loss is intensified when his father, consumed with grief and fear of the *puri puri* magic, leaves Haru behind to begin life again in Bootless Bay, far away from Heperu village. Left to live with his Uncle Purahakaia, Haru becomes a perceptive, observant young man. After a short time, his father returns, and together they move to Port Moresby. Here, Haru learns about a particular



#### Canoes, Crocodiles, and Christ: The Story of Haru Hariva

(Warburton, Victoria, Australia: Signs Publishing, 2021). ISBN 9781922373281 (Print), 9781922373298 (Ebook). 152 pages. US\$14.99. To order this book, visit <https://adventistbookcenter.com/canoes-crocodiles-and-christ-the-story-of-haru-hariva.html>.

school where children learn to read and sing songs about Jesus. At this school, he learns the song, "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know," and his life is transformed. At this school, the cloud of superstition and sorcery is lifted, and Haru sees the power of the God of heaven. Nothing kept him away from school, not even his father's beatings. Haru committed his life to sharing the gospel with the people along the Turama River, the Kigo district, the coast of Mandang, and many other locations so that they, too, could learn about Jesus and God's great love.

#### A Captivating Story

*Canoes, Crocodiles, and Christ: The Story of Haru Hariva* is a captivating story. The engaging narrative captures the reader's attention. The author, having lived and worked in Papua, New Guinea, uses vivid, descriptive language to transport readers into the thick tropical rainforests, mountainous landscapes, and tumultuous open seas.

Each of the 15 chapter titles helps tell the story as well. For example, "Taken by a Crocodile" reveals what happened to Haru's mother. The chapter titled "Saved From the Pot" relates his introduction to the people living in villages along the Turama River and their transition from a diet composed primarily of pig and human flesh to one of fruits, nuts, root vegetables such as taro, yams, and sago; from worshiping spirits to being Bible-reading, Sabbath-keeping Christians; and "Raised From the Dead" and "Vasiti" tell contrasting stories of sickness, death, and learning to trust regardless of how God chooses to answer prayer.

The book, illustrated by Bryan Paul, has a mix of

hand-drawn illustrations and black-and-white photos. The black-and-white pencil drawings highlight the theme of each chapter, and historical photos from the Adventist Heritage Center in Cooranbong, Australia, show Haru, members of his family, and various friends and fellow missionaries mentioned throughout the book.

At the end of each chapter, readers will find a “Notes” page with definitions of terms and colloquial sayings, descriptions of flora and fauna, and facts about the terrain, traditions, and historical backgrounds. At the end of the book, there is a glossary of terms culled from more than 800 language dialects spoken in Papua, New Guinea, of which Haru spoke 32. There is also a “Questions for Discussion” section that has three questions for each chapter. The questions help readers dig deeper, and this is especially effective in chapters dealing with sickness, death, loss, or unanswered prayers. Several questions ask readers to make applications to their own lives.

### Critique

Much of what takes place in this story happens in the jungle and in and around water. As a result, there are long passages describing how canoes were made out of logs, the need for canoes that would survive the strong ocean currents, the types of vines and branches that could be used to make paddles and ropes, and several instances where life was threatened or lost as a result of water. While some might find the descriptions lengthy, they provide readers with insight into how much effort, work, and skill was required to survive during this period. Children learned early to use natural resources to survive and developed a healthy respect for water—home to crocodiles and swift, unpredictable currents.

Some might question who tells this story and why it is not told by Haru’s family. A current debate in non-fiction writing revolves around whose story it is to tell. One author says it this way: “The ethical questions around writing stories that are not ours alone are ones that many writers struggle with—while others don’t struggle nearly enough.”<sup>2</sup> In the book’s preface, it is evident that David McClintock wrestles with this question. He grew up in Papua New Guinea and returned to serve as principal of the Mouth Diamond Adventist High School near Port Moresby. He taught Hariva’s granddaughters and worked with Haru’s oldest son, Daniel, who served as associate director of education for the Papua New Guinea Union

Mission. He also knew Naphtali, another son who worked at Kabiufa Adventist High School. McClintock talked with Kaura, Haru’s wife, and Zita Hibo, Haru’s daughter, both of whom shared willingly copious stories of Haru’s life. At the close of the book, there are two pages titled “The Legacy Continues,” where the author traces Haru’s legacy in the lives of his 12 children. It was their desire that he tell these stories.

More importantly, stories such as these must be told for the generations that follow. This is evident in the chapter titled “The Ultimate Price,” which relays the tragedy that took the lives of Delys, David, and Adrian Lemke, the wife and sons of Ernest Lemke, a pioneer missionary in the South Pacific Division. In this book, we read the story from the perspective of Haru and Uvaipi, another missionary. In other narratives of this tragic event,<sup>3</sup> those who were part of the rescue mission were referred to as native teachers and workers; their names were not recorded. So, it is here, in this book, that we learn that Uvaipi rescued Lester, Pastor Lemke’s young son, and took him to shore; that Haru and Uvaipi were the workers and teachers who paddled the canoe for two days to get Pastor Lemke and Lester to the Australian Petroleum Company Base along the Omati River. This book cements their names in the record of Adventist history in the South Pacific and fulfills the author’s desire that “the story of Haru Hariva is one that must not be lost” (p. vii).

**At the close of the book, there are two pages titled “The Legacy Continues,” where the author traces Haru’s legacy in the lives of his 12 children. It was their desire that he tell these stories.**

### Recommendation

Currently, *Canoes, Crocodiles, and Christ: The Story of Haru Hariva* is part of the Year 9 curriculum (Grade 10 in the U.S.) for 15-year-old students in the South Pacific Division. It would be suitable for independent reading for students in Grades 7 through 9. For students younger than 12 years old (Grade 7), it should be read with discussion and guidance from teachers or parents, especially given the weighty themes.

This book will remind readers of the days of early mission stories with references to “picture rolls” and “talking mats” (a term used for the picture roll), angel messengers, and powerful dreams with messages from God. *Canoes, Crocodiles, and Christ: The Story of Haru Hariva* captures the adventure of a far-gone era of mission work. The writing is crisp yet descriptive, and the author achieves good storytelling through rich dialogue.

The vocabulary words are simple and easy to read, even when addressing serious themes such as death, commitment, sacrifice, the supernatural, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

Overall, this book is recommended for anyone with an interest in Adventist history, and beyond that, for anyone who loves a good, true story. In the relay of Haru's experiences throughout the book, the overriding theme that "God's presence does not always insulate us from tragedy" (p. 101) is seamlessly juxtaposed with Haru's declaration and confident assurance that "God is sufficient" (p. 141). This is a message that will encourage readers, even today. ✍

---

**Faith-Ann A. McGarrell, PhD**, is the Editor of *The Journal of Adventist Education*®. She can be reached at [mccgarrellf@gc.adventist.org](mailto:mccgarrellf@gc.adventist.org).

**Recommended citation:**

**Faith-Ann A. McGarrell**, "Book Review of *Canoes, Crocodiles, and Christ: The Story of Haru Hariva*," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 85:1 (2023): 37-39. <https://doi.org/10.55668/QSVV2410>.

---

**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. *Puri puri* is what the people living in remote villages of Papua New Guinea call sorcery or supernatural witchcraft.

2. Ijeoma Oluo, "Whose Story Is It to Tell?" *Behind the Book: The Ethics of Writing About Real People* (November 16, 2021): <https://ijeomaoluo.substack.com/p/whose-story-is-it-to-tell>.

3. Lester Lemke and Mel Lemke, "Lemke, Ernest Charles (1922-2008)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* (2020): <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=E7Z2>; Editor, "A Fatal Accident in Papua: Missionary Wife and Two Children Drowned," *Australian Record* 57:4 (January 26, 1953): 4, 5: <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/AAR/AAR19530126-V57-04.pdf>.



**FREE**  
**Join today!**

## Adventist Teacher Connect

**Join a community of Adventist teachers and collaborate with colleagues and classrooms around the world!**



Connect with teachers



Participate in projects



Interact with classrooms



Engage students

Join at: [adventistlearningcommunity.com](https://adventistlearningcommunity.com)



ADVENTIST LEARNING  
COMMUNITY

Seventh-day Adventist Church  
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION