

Vending

Wikipedia The first vending machine was invented by Hero of Alexandria around 215 BC.

Blombos Cave is an archaeological heaven

Located in a limestone cliff on the coast of S Africa, Blombos Cave is an archaeological site made famous in the 1990s, when excavators uncovered 75,000-year-old beads, 80,000-year-old bone tools, and some of the earliest evidence of fishing, dating back approximately 140,000 years

Taking on the Kokoda Trek



LEFT: Alfredah and Margaret. TOP: The girls with the Australian team.

By BARNEY ORERE

PORT Moresby Grammar School grade 12 students, Alfredah Nakue and Margaret Aitsi, have a different view of the Kokoda Track from what history teaches them. Having walked the track recently, both girls say their real life experience of the track has given history a different dimension where they can relate more meaningfully.

Alfredah and Margaret have been back from the track a few weeks but it is obvious talking to them that surviving the Kokoda Track has done them a lot of good and when they tell their story, it is as fresh as if it was just yesterday.

The power of that reality is that many more young people will be motivated and inspired.

The crowning act of Alfredah and Margaret's experience is the harnessing of youth power to direct change; the importance of it being that the future belongs to the youth.

This is Alfredah and Margaret's story of how they survived the Kokoda Track and become known as Charlie's angels, completed with certificates to prove their conquest.

Their adventure lasted six days between April 26 and May 3 when 15 young Australians calling themselves "Mateship Kokoda" came up from Sydney.

The Australian team was led by New South Wales MP and Adventure Kokoda legend Charlie Lynn. It included two other MPs; Scott Morrison and Jason Clare. The idea behind it was to heal the wounds of the Cronulla beach race riots.

Charlie Lynn sponsors Alfredah's education so he included her in the tour and grabbing the opportunity the school picked Margaret to accompany her.

Both girls are very personable, charming and charismatic which is not surprising especially when your dad works in a media organisation. Margaret's late father John Aitsi worked for the *Post-Courier* as the company secretary for many years and retired very recently.

She is a bright spark so the school made an

excellent choice by selecting her for the interaction with the Australian youths on the track. Pressed by the Australians to sing the national anthem, the two girls granted the wish, adding much nationalistic flavour to the walk.

Feeling encouraged, Alfredah and Margaret also cited the pledge which amazed their Australian companions.

To hear young voices singing the anthem and saying the pledge in the bush with a deep historic background seemed to turn nostalgia into fanfare and the girls felt it.

"The feeling that overcome us was really special, quite unique and we felt really proud that moment to be Papua New Guineans and that this was our land where the history linked us to our future."

They said they expected Kokoda Track to be remote and rugged but they did not expect the mountains to be so steep.

"It was very challenging. Just learning history does not tell you about the physical side so you do not feel the hardship. So experiencing the physical side brought appreciation and we now felt very grateful to the fuzzy-wuzzy angels for what they did".

"We saw how very remote the villages are; they lack transportation, health and education. It was sad to see villagers walking across those mountains in search of transport to come to the city.

"We had very good porters who were willing to take all risks for us and they were the descendants of the fuzzy-wuzzy angels of World War 11 fame. Australians witnessed this at first hand and this is what defines Papua new Guineans.

"The popular view is that the world judges by the bad things that happen.

"But when you meet the people, you get a totally different picture and it happened on the track.

"After 67 years, we walked the path the 39th battalion of the Australian Army took in 1942 and we were welcomed with open arms by the villagers. The way they sang songs and how they looked solemn and stood still touched everyone.

"We feel our school has made an important contribution to the future of the track because the

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Australians want to make more use of our school in their 'Mateship Kokoda' initiative.

"We were asked by the visiting Australians about our feelings of the track and we said that the track should not be modernised; it should be saved in its pristine state.

"We also said that the porters and guides should be insured and that they should carry two-way radios.

"The Australians said they would look into our recommendations."

It was the singing of the national anthem that earned them the tag: Charlie's angels. But everyone agreed at the end of the journey that they had survived Kokoda.

The group was airlifted from Kokoda and had an audience with the Australian High Commissioner Chris Moraitis in Port Moresby during which Alfreda and Margaret's recommendations were raised.

A solemn visit to the Bomana War Cemetery and a camp at Sogeri sealed their conquest of the track and they split with a memorable meal at the Aviat Club. Apart from the steep mountains, were there any other shocks? Margaret: when we got to Owers corner, the toilets were quite interesting. There was just a hole and you had to stand to do your business (giggle).

The Aussies expected the road to be sealed. Here in the city we take things for granted; there are people out there who need it most, they are the people who need help. The climate was very pleasant. At Myola, I asked if the children were in the gardens. The villages were beautiful but the place seemed deserted; there was an aid post, though".

To conclude their "Mateship Kokoda" connectedness the trek group were invited to Port Moresby Grammar School where a school assembly was not only designed to welcome back Margaret and Alfredah but to include their fellow trekkers from Australia in the Papua New Guinea way of education.

Everyone had a fabulous time, especially when this involved the visitors dancing with the Pom Grammar preps in doing the Margarema.