

From fish to business

Abby Yadi once had his name written on a bullet after taking an inside photograph of a Defence Force helicopter which was published on the front page of the *Post-Courier*. His family was also threatened during the Bougainville Crisis.



By SOPHIE KUASI

ABBY YADI once wanted to become a fisherman like his father on Fergusson Island. Today he is one of Papua New Guinea's leading business journalists. He was born in November 1965 on Fergusson Island, to a subsistence farmer's family of six. For everyday living, Yadi's father would fish in the seas to provide protein while his mother would harvest staple food such as yams in the garden.

As a little boy, Yadi attended the local community school, Budoyo, from 1972 to 1978. After completing year six, Yadi went to Hagita Co-educational High School from 1979 to 1982. Yadi went on to do years 11 and 12 at Kerevat National School, near Rabaul, from 1983 to 86. During all those years at school Yadi developed skills in poetry and short story writing. He was also addicted to books and he read a lot of books ranging over all sorts of fields. Without realising his hidden talents, Yadi always wanted to be a fisherman like his father, or study at a fisheries college and then work in a fish factory.

It was one of the teachers at Kerevat who recognised Yadi's gifted talents in writing, so suggested Yadi take up journalism. Yadi thought hard about what his teacher had told him and also about his future.

'Maybe he is right,' he said to himself, 'one day I might become a very famous person and I might even have my name written on the front page of the newspaper.'

At the end of year 12, while filling in his school leaving form, Yadi decided to push aside his ambition to becoming a fisherman and applied for a journalism course at the University of Papua New Guinea. He wanted to give it a go.

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Yadi was accepted by the university to do a Diploma of Media Studies course. It was the first time the two-year course was introduced — at that time there was no degree course available. In 1987, Yadi graduated with a diploma. During his time at the university, he worked hard with other students and lecturers. Yadi did his practical reporting with *Niugini Nius* (which closed in March 1990). The newspaper offered him a job and after graduating he worked for the *Nius* for four years.

While with the *Nius*, Yadi was sent by the paper to attend a three-week course for family planning and promotion in New Zealand.

This was a really good experience for Yadi to meet people of different cultures and traditions. On arriving back in PNG, Yadi discovered that *Niugini Nius* was not publishing any more — management had decided to close down the paper. However, this incident did cause Yadi to give up hope on further developing his journalism.

‘Every day, every second, minute and hour, all I could think off was paper, pen and off course writing,’ says Yadi. He wasn’t worried as he had other options based on his desire to write.

Then suddenly, the country’s biggest daily newspaper, the *Post-Courier* was quick to welcome Yadi as a supplements reporter. Yadi worked hard to impress his chief-of-staff. He soon gained his job as a daily newspaper reporter.

In 1992, Yadi became the New Guinea Islands reporter based in Rabaul and in 1993 he became a senior business reporter for *Post-Courier*. Currently, Yadi, 30, is now chief business reporter with the *Saturday Independent*.

Simple family lifestyle

He is married to Linda who works as a cashier at City Pharmacy. They have three children; Simon the eldest is seven years old, Sandra five and Kennedy is three.

‘I am a very dedicated father, my family is top priority and off course my job as a journalist. Therefore, I am not that sort of party person who is out every weekend enjoying a few drinks,’ Yadi says, giggling. Yadi lives a simple lifestyle and wants his family profile to remain as it is.

The late University of PNG journalism lecturer Peter Henshall was Yadi’s inspiration — he helped and encouraged Yadi a lot. Yadi’s key journalism technique that has helped him the most is his outgoing personality which has developed many contacts among all types of people in all walks of life.

‘It is very interesting getting to know different kinds of people and the most important thing to remember is the way you present yourself in your profession,’ Yadi says. ‘Sometimes, after I have just finished a story just in time for the paper to run, I feel like saying, “That’s it I’m never going to do this again”.’



Abby Yadi (*inset*) and one of his controversial 'gunship' photographs. Photos: *POST-COURIER*

Yadi says smiling. Yadi is a dedicated person — both towards his work and his family. He has been involved with several lawsuits because of some stories he had published in the paper. Some businesses claimed his report to be false but Yadi always responded with evidence to prove his stories. Despite all the deadlines he has to meet everyday in his profession, Yadi still has time to read books and magazines. A recent book he has read is Josephine Abaijah's biography.

'I read a lot of different stories from overseas authors but to read a book written by a Papua New Guinean lady is really very breath-taking,' Yadi says.

Most pressing need for journalists today

The most vital need for working and ongoing journalists is that even if they have graduated with degrees from whatever universities, they have to start all over again when they are out in the field. This is simply because there is a shortage or there is hardly any specialised or trained journalists in all the different areas of our society or community. Therefore, the universities should introduce and make available the various types of courses to train young journalists in areas such as politics, business, sports and fashion so that they become specialised in

those particular areas so when they are out in the field they know what they are doing and as a result they will be more dedicated and professional in the own field.

Yadi has been a journalist for nine years and, he says, business news especially is very complex when writing it. However, despite the hardships of his position nowadays Yadi says the best thing about being a journalist is travelling. During his career, Yadi has been to the Solomon Islands, all around Papua New Guinea and several times to Australia — and also to Japan in 1993.

Many bad and tempting obstacles face journalists. Yadi once had his name written on a bullet which was shown to him. This was after taking a 'gunship' photograph of a Defence Force helicopter which was published on the front page of the *Post-Courier* on 3 June 1992 — and the national pilot nearly lost his job. Yadi's family were threatened while they were based in Rabaul during the Bougainville crisis.

Another incident happened when Yadi was in Buka taking photographs of soldiers. He was bashed on the back of his head with the end of a gun and had his camera confiscated. Nonetheless, Yadi has not given up hope.

At this stage of life, Yadi aims to become a business editor and is determined to achieve this position. He is very happy with his life.

'I still regard myself as grassroots and so I will work my way up the ranks. I know it takes time but I'm not in a hurry, things will fall in line, one at a time,' says Yadi.

When asked if he was interested in a journalism career in television, he chuckled: 'I don't. I cannot imagine seeing myself on the silver screen. It's definitely a no no! I'm better off being with a newspaper.'

□ *Sophie Kuasi is a first-year Diploma in Media Studies student at the University of PNG. She wrote this article for an assignment in May 1995. Since this article was written, Abby Yadi has joined the Saturday Independent as chief business writer.*