

Reviews

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Fanning the flames of PNG writing

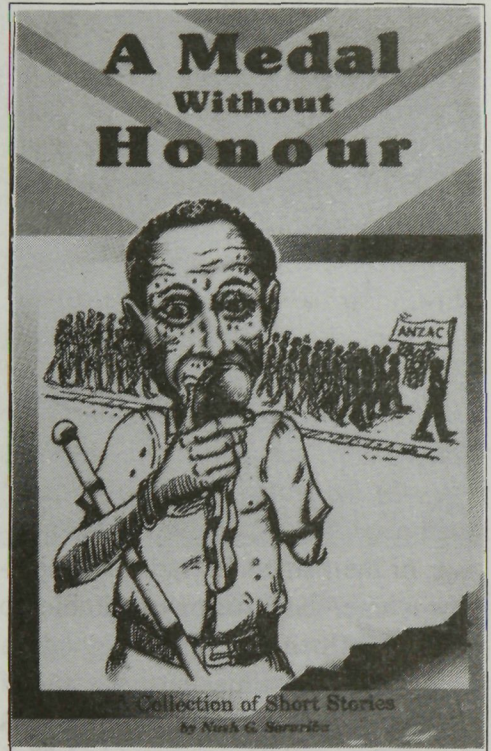
A Medal Without Honour, by Nash Gegera Sorariba. Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1997, 144 pp. K15. ISBN: 9980-84-060-9.

ONE of the biggest concerns about Papua New Guinean writing over the years has been the ability by prominent authors to have some form of consistency.

Prominent writers have emerged into the circles of brilliance with their unique and talented work, but over the years nothing has been made tangible by them to maintain some level of continuity.

Names like Russell Soaba, Regis Stella, Steven Winduo, Jack Lahui and Nora Brash Vagi have offered their contributions to PNG writing.

Yet, the question is are the works of these authors sufficient to meet the



readers' demand or not? The demise of the popular National Literature Competition, and the shelving of literary magazines like *Ondobondo*, *Bikmaus* and others are some of the major reasons for a decline in readership and authors.

However, there are a few authors, amid this negative scenario, who have laboured to ensure that the flames of PNG writing are still burning.

One such author is Sorariba Nash, journalist and broadcast journalism educator at the University of PNG.

In his latest collection, *A Medal Without Honour*, Sorariba brings some hope to Papua New Guinean writing. The book, published by the University of PNG Press, is a collection of short stories, some previously published as well as new ones.

Since the days when the lust for stories about the contemporary and traditional settings was in demand, this book offers a unique perspective to that general expectation.

There are three major attributes why Sorariba's collection is a book that should be good leisure reading material.

Sorariba introduces three time zones — the past where our ancestors were the subject of attention, either in their acceptance of colonial imperialists, or their status in traditional society where they were vulnerable to outside influences.

There is also his diary of some of the contemporary modern day issues that we have all taken for granted. This is perhaps not surprising, given his background as a journalist.

Social issues such as unemployment, adultery and environmental issues are given prominence in this book.

His registry of events is sufficient to measure how society in its quest for survival has its number one resource, the people, embark on anything to make ends meet.

He writes with such accuracy that a mere glance at the book is enough to make you sit through reading until the end.

Sorariba introduces three time zones — the traditional past, contemporary social issues, and the future

Sorariba also introduces his readers into the future. He predicts with such authority that his stories depict and create awareness of what is likely to occur with the way the trends of human behaviour headed.

According to Steven Winduo, a UPNG literature lecturer, Sorariba brings the different voices together with the diverse cultural and political discourses of Papua New Guinea.

Winduo, a gifted poet and short story writer, describes Sorariba as having an excellent craftsmanship of lively narrative construction.

'The collection is superb, featuring previously unpublished stories as well as Sorariba's new work. He builds up suspense that gradually leads to a resolution at the end of the story,' says Winduo.

Winduo concludes his comments on the book by inviting Papua New Guinean writers to come forth with their work. He is convinced that when writers start emphasising their talents, it is easy to embark on magazines and other literary journals that can have some of these works published.

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