



Papua New Guinea Villager's Miracle Find of American Soldier's Class Ring Reciprocated by New Jersey High School

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A visit to Alotau in Papua New Guinea by Princess Cruises' Golden Princess yesterday added the final chapter to the miracle find of a high school ring lost by an American soldier in World War Two.

Last year's emotional return of the ring, found by villager Liam Ngahan, overwhelmed the surviving family of Sgt Edward Dodds and his school Audubon High in New Jersey.

Together they decided to complete the circle by commissioning a unique Audubon High class ring for a special presentation to Liam timed for Golden Princess' visit.

When Golden Princess arrived in Alotau, Liam and his family were there to greet the ship and onboard guest lecturer John Hocknull, a former PNG patrol officer who had played a central role in the class ring's return.

"We are delighted to have played a part in completing the circle from the discovery of the ring to its return to Sgt Dodds' family and now the presentation of a replacement ring to Liam," Princess Cruises Vice President Australia & New Zealand Stuart Allison said.

"This has been an incredible journey that has struck an emotional chord with so many people and shone a light on the wartime history of the Milne Bay district, which is happily now best known for its scenery and fascinating culture."

For guest lecturer John Hocknull, the presentation of the ring to Liam was the culmination of a remarkable quest to identify the owner of the 1938 graduation ring that Liam had found buried in the ground near his village.

"It all started with a sightseeing tour of the district when we first met Liam. He showed me the ring and I could see that it was an American high school graduation ring and there was probably a wartime connection," Mr Hocknull said.

"Liam treasured the ring and it was noble of him to part with it so we could try to return it to the original owner's family in America. It was a fair assumption that the ring had been lost by an American soldier based at Alotau during the war. We contacted Audubon High School in New Jersey and the rest, as they say, is history."

Sgt Dodds' family and Audubon High School have effectively 'adopted' Liam and his family. In addition to the replacement ring, Liam was presented with textbooks, laptops and \$2900 raised by the school's Alumni Association.