

SKY PILOT NEWS Aug., 1965

Published monthly by the Sky Pilot Fellowship Ltd., Marella Mission Farm.

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Subscription 2/6 or 25 cents per annum.

Registered at G.P.O., Sydney, for transmission by post as a periodical

PROCRASTINATION: FROM THE SKY PILOT'S LOG, 2CH BROADCAST



Mr. and Mrs. George Onslow with a God-daughter
—from a snapshot.

This story come from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Quart Pot was one of Silas Palmer's best boys. How the native came to receive such an unusual name remains a mystery.

Possibly it was because of his likeness to a huge frog, especially when he was swimming, and the frogs that croak at the beginning of the wet season are supposed to chant over and over again the words "quart pot, quart pot" in a never-ending corroboree.

Quart Pot, unlike most Aborigines, took readily to agriculture. He worked in the peanut paddocks alongside Palmer and in time came to know a great deal about the growing of the peanut or ground nut. One day Palmer was talking with George and Joe when the boy was mentioned.

"Yes," Palmer affirmed, "Quart Pot is the best boy that I ever had working for me. He's very intelligent for a native and he takes a great interest in peanuts."

"Takes an interest in peanuts!" exclaimed George. "Well I can't say I'd take that as a sign of intelligence. Now if he was only interested in horses it would be different. He . . ."

"Horses! Don't you ever think of anything except horses, George?"

"Of course I do; I take an interest in cattle."

"Cattle and horses!" snorted Palmer. "Yes, that's about all you are interested in. Every time I see you, all you talk about is cattle or horses or both. You've been too long in this country without a holiday, that's about it. But I was talking about Quart Pot. He is as good as a white man on the peanut farm. He knows almost as much about it as I do. He can drive the tractor and all the machinery; he knows when to plant and when the crop is ripe. I don't think I could manage without him, in fact."

"Yes," George admitted, "he's a good boy all right; I ain't saying he isn't. It ain't his fault that you've got him interested in diggin' holes in the ground to plant peanuts instead of gripping a

good horse between his knees and musterin' wild cattle like a man. By the way, Silas, how's his chest? I'd forgotten about it till you mentioned him, but Smithy asked me to remind you to take him to the doctor next time you go to Darwin. Anyhow, what's the matter with Quart Pot's chest? It's the first time I've heard he was sick? It ain't T.B. is it?"

"No," said Joe, breaking in on the conversation, "he's got a bit of a growth and Smithy thought he ought to see a doctor about it. I thought you were going to take him to the doctor weeks ago, Palmer."

"So I was," Palmer admitted, "but I couldn't spare him at the time, we were so busy trying to get the peanuts planted. But he isn't sick. He's just got a bit of a lump on his chest. It's nothing to worry about. It isn't painful and it doesn't interfere with his work."

"It may be cancer or something," George suggested. "You ought to have it seen to, Palmer. Maybe it's like a swamp cancer in horses. If you notice it early you can cut it out, but if you leave it for any time the roots go real deep and it's too late to do anythin'."

"Yes" Palmer agreed, "I must take him in to the doctor, but I'm sure it's nothing serious. I've never heard of a blackfellow with cancer, and it certainly isn't swamp cancer—that's only a disease of horses."

"All the same," persisted Joe, "you ought to have it seen to. If there's nothing wrong, it will put your mind at rest and even if it is serious it's better to get it in time."

Palmer shook his head. "No," he said, "I'll have to wait till after the wet season; we're too busy just now and I can't spare the time. I'm sure there's nothing to worry about, really there isn't."

Time passed quickly on Silas Palmer's peanut farm. There was so much to do in preparation for the wet season: ploughing, planting peanuts, clearing new land and making drains. Then the wet came and passed and the men were busy with the harvesting. Quart Pot worked well and he showed no signs of sickness and made no complaints. The lump on his chest was a little larger, if anything, but it was not painful and it did not interfere with his work. However, when eventually Palmer made his postponed trip to Darwin he took Quart Pot with him.

I had to go to Darwin a few days later and I took Joe with me. We met Palmer almost as soon as we arrived and asked for news of Quart Pot.

"Quart Pot?" replied Palmer. "Yes, I took him down to the hospital today and the doctor promised to have a look at him. There's nothing

serious I'm sure, but it's just as well to be sure. As a matter of fact I'm expecting the doctor's report any time now."

"I'm glad" I said, "that you brought him in at last, but you know I told you about it a long time ago; you should have brought him in six months before."

"Well I intended to, but he didn't seem to be sick at all and—well you know how busy I was during the wet season. To be perfectly candid, I couldn't have spared him. He's my best boy, you know. What do you think of him George?"

"He's a good boy," agreed George. "I remember when he was born. He's only young you know, can't be more than about 25 or 26. He was born in my camp. Ha, ha, I never thought he would grow up to be a peanut farmer! He ought to have been a stock boy—his father was a good stock boy and so was his mother. She used to muster the cattle just the same as a man—better than most men. I hope there's nothing serious wrong with him."

"We'll soon know," said Palmer, "here comes the doctor now. Well doctor, what's the verdict?"

The doctor shook his head. "I have bad news for you, I'm afraid. I operated this morning but there's nothing we can do now. It was useless trying to cut the growth out; the roots have gone too deep. If you'd brought him in six months ago I could have saved him. No one could save him now."

"B-b-but that can't be right!" exclaimed Palmer. "Why, he never seemed to be sick and there was no pain—none at all. Oh, this is terrible. Are you sure you're not making a mistake?"

"No," said the doctor, "if there had been even a remote chance I would have done what I could. I'm perfectly satisfied that the case is hopeless."

"I never expected anything like this," wailed Palmer. "He is the best boy I've ever had, the very best. I don't know how I'm going to manage without him. Oh, hang it all, why didn't I bring him in before! I didn't realise it was serious. I-I've got fond of that boy. Quite apart from the work, I wouldn't have lost him for anything. It's all my fault."

"Would you care to see him?" asked the doctor. "I think you ought to. My car is here now; I can run you down, if you like."

"Thanks Doc. Yes, I'll come right away."

"Have you room for me too?" asked George. "I'd like to see that boy again."

"Plenty of room for you all. Come along."

We found Quart Pot looking surprisingly well under the circumstances. He shone glossy black against the white of the sheets and when he smiled his white even teeth showed as a flash of white.

"H-h-how do you feel now, Quart Pot?" asked Palmer. "I didn't know it was anything bad, truly I didn't. I'm awfully sorry. It's all my fault."

"Me all right Boss, can't feel nothin'. No more your fault. You properly good fellow boss belonga me."

"I'll stay in Darwin," said Palmer wildly, "and come and see you every day. You must find it lonely here."

"Too much work longa farm. Can't leave 'im peanuts. Me all right here. You go back longa farm. You good fellow boss."

* * *

In the bright sunshine we stood on the point which marked the landing place of Ross and Keith Smith on their flight from England. George was the first to speak.

"Don't take on about it, Silas," he said, "it ain't your fault. You did what you could."

"It is my fault. I should have brought him in as soon as I knew there was something wrong. I-I've killed that boy just as surely as if I'd taken a gun and shot him."

"No, don't say that," protested George. "You've done all you could for him. You've treated him well always."

"I killed him by just doing nothing. That's it. I'm nothing more than a murderer through procrastination."

* * *

Quart Pot didn't live long. Palmer was true to his promise and he stayed in Darwin till the end, heedless of the need for him at the farm. He never really got over the boy's death and in spite of all we said he continued to blame himself.

Procrastination is a fatal and yet very common fault. I'm quite sure that when we have to give an account of our works we will be most ashamed of those things that we meant to do but put off. That letter of sympathy we failed to write; that kindly or encouraging word that was never spoken; that little kindness that would not have cost us much but would have meant so much to some lonely or troubled soul; that decision we meant to make but put off—until it was too late. We pass through this world but once and our stay is short, and an opportunity for good that is missed now may never come again. In some churches we repeat Sunday by Sunday "we have left undone those things which we ought to have done." But it is not until we are faced with the results of those things that have been left undone that we realise the sins of omission.

And the final entry in today's log is taken from the 24th chapter of Acts: "Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; Felix trembled and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I

will call for thee."

THE DARK CHILDREN: At the time of writing we have a total of 28 children at Marella of school age or younger, and two dark girls on the staff. We are only able to accommodate them all by having several sleeping in the main Mission House. It is very necessary to extend the boys' Dormitory and add extra Staff Rooms. A wing has been planned which will be added to Onslow House and which will be at right angles to the main building. This will be about 60 feet by 20 feet and will give us about 12 squares of extra accommodation. Already we have had offers from voluntary Workers to supply and erect the brick piers and possibly cut out the frames when we are able to get the timber. This is under the direction of Mr. L. Maher, to whom we are already indebted for so much voluntary work.

We have a little group of "babies", as we call them, amongst the dark children. We would value your special prayers for these little ones. Their names for your prayer list are as follows: Simone aged 2; Arthur, 2; Sharon, 3; Deborah ("Debbie"), 4; Nyomi, 5. Simone, who is the youngest, is a very bright and happy little child. She has the habit of repeating whatever is said to her and so people have said to her: "You are a parrot!" But she repeats this too, and visitors are sometimes startled by being told by Simone: "You are a parr-ot!"

ONSLow HOUSE: The building where the children are quartered is named "Onslow House" in memory of one of our earliest and most faithful supporters, Mr. George Onslow. From the very beginning of the "Sky Pilot's Log" Mr. and Mrs. G. Onslow helped us in every way possible and this work owes more to them than to any other voluntary workers. After the Home Call of Mr. Onslow, which was our loss though Heaven's gain, Mrs. Onslow bravely put aside her personal sorrow and redoubled her efforts to help the work of Marella Mission Farm. Month by month, year by year, Mrs. Onslow relieves us of all sorting of clothes and other articles sent by friends. Clothing suitable for the use of our children is carefully put aside, articles for sale on the Street Stalls, or on the various Stalls at our Sale of Work, are sorted into boxes after being priced and marked ready for sale. She relieves Mrs. Langford-Smith of all the preparation for Street Stalls, etc. and we have no hesitation in saying that without her aid it would have been quite impossible for us to make, last year, the tremendous total of £2,494 from our Street Stalls and Sales of Work. But this is not all . . .

Mrs. Onslow is the driving force behind the Parkfield Stall at our Sales which has brought in hundreds of pounds for the Mission over the

years, together with her sister, Mrs. Cannon, and nephews and nieces. This stall has been an outstanding success financially and in every other way. When we speak of what the "Onslow family" has done for us we naturally include the sister, Mrs. Cannon and her family.

Because of her voluntary work at the Mission Farm it means that Mrs. Onslow spends days at a time staying with us at Marella. When the children's Prayer Time comes around every evening Mrs. Onslow takes over from the "Sky Pilot" and the way she conducts the little meeting with her flannelgraph and diagrams captivates the attention of the children. Much of what they have learned of spiritual things comes from Mrs. Onslow, who in past years had so much practical experience teaching Scripture in the schools.

This is the reason the Council of the Sky Pilot Fellowship unanimously decided to call the Children's Quarters "ONSLOW HOUSE".

KANGAROOS: We have a kangaroo and a wallaby in the run next to the two emus and they are very happy with plenty of room to move about; we would, however, be very glad to obtain a female kangaroo as a mate for the one we have. Sometimes shooters bring a joey home for a pet and when it is full grown there is not sufficient room for it in the suburbs. The kangaroo we have is a Red and the female of this species is known as the "Blue Flyer"; but we would be interested in any kangaroos or wallabies. As has been pointed out before, we are most interested in preserving the native birds and animals. The "Sky Pilot" is a life member of the Katoomba Wildlife Conservation Society and we want the Aboriginal children to learn to protect the native birds and animals. The artificial lake we have constructed on the property has encouraged many of the native waders and waterfowls to visit us and even, in the case of the Little Grebe and Moor-hens, to nest here.

DEPUTATION MEETINGS: Although there is so much to attend to on the Mission Farm it is most important to make the work more widely known. For this reason Mr. Langford-Smith has always made time for Deputation meetings and Preaching Engagements. For the past 12 years he has taken on an average of at least one meeting every week all the year round. We have kept a record of the approximate number of people at each meeting and when added up it reaches the rather large total of 60,000 people who have heard of the work in this way. Naturally some people have heard Mr. Langford-Smith speak more than once, but still it has meant a valuable

method of publicity.

The various books written by Mr. Langford-Smith (now, unfortunately, all out of print) have sold about 20,000 copies in Australia and in England (where two of them were re-published). Our little monthly leaflet, "SKY PILOT NEWS", reaches about 3,000 subscribers each issue and this number is steadily rising year by year.

However the best method of making the work known is for each of our friends to tell as many people as possible what we are attempting at Marella Mission Farm for God and for the dark children of our own country. In one week we were forced to turn away 14 needy dark children because of lack of accommodation, and this goes on month by month. Sometimes friends say: "Why not let the public know and they may be adopted by private families?" But these children are not out for adoption; nor, in most cases, do the parents want them to be taken into private families as foster children. They want them to come to Marella, knowing that they can take them back at any time by arrangement with us. Here, too, they mix not only with white children at school, but also with those of their own race. To bring up a dark child in virtual isolation from his own race and people sometimes produces psychological problems later—especially when the child reaches marriageable age—as many foster parents have found out too late.

SHELTERED WORKSHOPS: There are some children at present with us who will need special care and training after they leave school. It is our policy to encourage the young people to go out into the world and be independent as soon as they are ready for it. At the same time we do not want any teenage children to be forced into the competition of the world before they are ready for it. Some young people are ready to go to a position at 15 or 16; some develop later and we have kept them until they are ready to take up further training or to accept employment elsewhere. But there are a few children who are rather handicapped; they are slow learners and even though at High School they are unable to read properly or to understand what the lessons are about. For this reason we will have to introduce some extra training for these backward children, of the "Sheltered Workshop" type, where they can be assisted to use their limited ability to the best possible advantage. This problem has been discussed with experts in that particular field and it is being kept in mind by our Council. We would value your prayers in this regard.