

SKY PILOT NEWS

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DOREEN

THE FEUD: From the Sky Pilot's Log, 2CH Broadcast

The new doctor did not like the tropics. What accident of fate had sent him there no one knew; to all he was obviously out of place and would have been much better suited to the cool drawing rooms and consulting rooms of the South. He seemed to have a grudge against the world in general and among the little group of men gathered round the pub his voice sounded querulous.

"Why I ever came to the tropics," he complained, "I can't say. Of all the God-forsaken places this is the worst. The heat and the dust and the flies nearly drive me mad; and at night time the hum and stings of mosquitoes are unbearable. Where's my glass of beer? I suppose it's lukewarm as usual! Oh, hang it all, it's full of flies! Throw it out and give me a fresh one, somebody. And what do YOU want you . . . you disreputable old tramp? Stop poking me in the ribs, can't you?"

"Keep yer 'air on," ordered a bushman, who had appeared outside of the group. "You're the doctor ain't you? I can see by your 'ands you never done no real work."

"Curse your impertinence!" yelled the doctor, in a fury. "I tell you these hands have done more real work than those . . . those grimy paws of yours. Of course I'm the doctor."

"Well, as there's no other doctor available, I suppose you'll 'ave to do. I 'ave a sick mate down by the four-mile. I want you to come and 'ave a look at 'im."

"Hang it all!" exclaimed the doctor. "I'm not going down to the four-mile in all this heat. Bring him up to the surgery if you must; but it's out of consulting hours now. Wait till the cool of the afternoon."

"See 'ere, young fellow," the bushman growled. "I've carried me mate for close on eight miles on me back. 'e couldn't stand no more; that's why I left 'im. You're comin' right back with me now whether you like it or not."

"Don't talk to me like that!" The doctor was furious. "I'm not going to be dictated to by a dirty old bushman. Bring your mate to the surgery when it's cooler."

"You're comin' right now, Doc. If necessary I'll 'alf choke you and drag you by the 'eels; an' by cripes! if you don't fix up me mate good an' proper you'll never live to see another day. Now are you comin' quietly or do you want me to drag you? I ain't jokin'."

"Well, if you insist I suppose I'll have to go.

My car's out the back under a shady tree. You can ride in the back seat, I suppose. I can disinfect it later. Well, come on—what are you waiting for?"

"All right," said the bushman, "I'll come. If I was dyin' I'd crawl away into the bush rather than come to you; but as me mate needs you I'll see this thing through."

* * * *

We were camped near the end of the railway line that ran from Darwin to Mataranka in those days. The construction train had just gone through, for the railway was continuing to Birdum. Dan, a rugged old bushman, had arrived on the train with his mate who had been to the doctor for treatment. We had listened to his story and Joe and George murmured sympathy. Dan, wishing to be perfectly fair, added a rider to his account.

"Yes," he said, "that doctor is an absolute rotter. All the same, I must say he cured me mate. Of course I threatened I'd cut his throat if me mate died — I meant it too! — and that may of 'elped. What do you fellows think?"

"I don't like the man," said Joe, "but he's a good doctor. He operated on George a few weeks ago and he's all right now, aren't you, George?"

"Who? Me? Yep! I'm as fit as a fiddle," George assured him. "Would you like to see the scar? It's a humdinger!"

"I've seen it lots of times," Joe waved the offer aside, "and I'm sure Dan isn't interested. Don't bother to strip now."

"It's no bother," said George, "and I'm real proud of that scar. He cut me right open, he did, and cleaned all me inside and put everything back in its right place, so he must be a good doctor. But I can't stand a bar of him as a man. I often feel like twistin' his tail myself."

"It isn't Christian," Joe told them, "to run down a fellow who's cured you. I'm ashamed of you, George. The doctor may be a decent fellow at heart, but his manner is against him."

"I 'ate the sight of 'im," said Dan, frankly. "When me mate got well I thought I'd like to make the doctor a bit of a gift seein' as we couldn't afford to pay 'im. The only thing I had was me cattle dorg. I thought the world of that dorg, but I sent it to the doctor with me thanks."

"That was a Christian action," Joe applauded.

"I hope he appreciated it."

"Appreciate it! Wait till I tell you the rest! That — that murderin' swine shot the dorg, packed the body in a parcel and sent it back to me by registered post. You know what the mails are like out 'ere. Poor old Bluey was a bit ripe when I undone the parcel. I gave 'im a decent burial but I swore over the grave that if ever I met that doctor in the bush I'd cut his throat. I mean it, tool!"

"Don't talk like that, Dan," Joe begged. "I know it was a rotten thing to do; but two wrongs don't make a right. The doctor is in a bit of trouble himself now. He's been boozing up and I heard they threatened to strike his name off the roll. Anyhow, he's been replaced and the fellow who's taken his place is a real white man."

"He killed me dorg," Dan insisted, "and one day I'll kill him. You see if I don't."

We all hoped that Dan would not meet the doctor again; but by one of those strange coincidences they were thrown together in a most unexpected way. Dan went mustering with George down the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria. He had a fall from his horse and a mob of stampeding bullocks rushed over him. George sent a note to the mission by one of my homing pigeons to say that he thought every bone in Dan's body was broken, and could I come at once with the aeroplane. It was Joe who handed me the note.

"Poor old Dan," he said. "It looks like the end for him now. He's been a wild and wicked man in his time but . . . that's all the more reason for being sorry for him now. What will you do?"

"The doctor is at Mataranka. I think I'll collect him and fly him down to the coast."

"He probably won't go."

"Yes, he will. He may be a bit of a no-hoper but he's not a coward and whatever people say about his character he's a good doctor. He's ruining his own life and drinking himself to death; but he's never neglected a patient or failed in his professional duties. Somehow, I rather like him."

"Some people have queer tastes, I must say. Anyhow, what do you want me to do?"

"Take the utility down to the coast with the medical kit. You can do it before dark unless you have trouble. There is always the possibility that I may fail to get through; it's a single-engined machine and there isn't a possible

landing ground within 50 miles. If I don't turn up with the doctor do what you can to help George with him. Jim can look after things here."

"Right you are, Smithy. I'll race down to the mouth of the river."

* * * *

I found the doctor at Mataranka and he was reasonably sober, but when I told him what I wanted he hit the roof.

"Not a bit of it," he raved. "You can forget all about it, Smithy. I wouldn't cross the road to help a swine like old Dan. The world would be better off without him. Where's my bag? I don't know why the lubras can't leave things alone. Someone's moved it; I left it on this table. Expecting me to risk my life flying over this rough country. Anyhow, it's too hot. Come on! What are you waiting for? Where's the blessed aeroplane?"

* * * *

We crossed the rough country between the township and the coast without mishap and I managed to find the dried bank of a billabong on which to land the aeroplane. The doctor was out of the cockpit, his bag in his hand, almost before the plane had come to rest. He was complaining as usual.

"That's the last time," he announced to the world in general, "the very last time I'll ever travel in a tiny aeroplane in the tropics. Bumping about like a melon on the back of an empty truck! Come on! where's this silly old fool who walked under a mob of bullocks. Oh, here's George! I might have guessed you were at the bottom of this. Come on, where's the patient?"

"He's under a tent fly," said George, "about 50 yards away. He's in a bad way. It's pretty near 110 in the shade but he says he's cold."

Dan was lying on a ground-sheet with a couple of saddle-cloths covering him. He seemed rather far gone but when he saw the doctor he struggled to sit up and fell back exhausted.

"Take 'im away," he muttered, weakly. "I don't want that murderin' swine attendin' to me. I'd cut his throat if I was a bit stronger. He ain't fit to live. 'struth I'm cold. 'Aven't you got a blanket, George?"

"You won't need any blankets where you're going, Dan," said the doctor, callously. "Take off those rags, George, and let's have a look at him . . . So you'd like to cut my throat, would you, Dan? I'm afraid you won't have an opportunity . . . Humm! You are in a mess."

Dan lapsed into unconsciousness before the examination was over. Shortly after the doctor suggested a blood transfusion as the only way of saving him. We all volunteered in a body, but the doctor snorted in disgust.

"No, no, no," he said, waving our offer aside. "I don't know your blood groups and anyhow I wouldn't use your malarial infested blood on a sick man. Lucky I belong to the same blood group as Dan — I tested him at the hospital when his mate needed a transfusion. Get me some hot water — boiling water — get a move on while I'm getting ready, can't you?"

For almost a week we camped with George before Dan was fit to lift into the aeroplane for the trip to hospital. It was as much to his surprise as ours that he lived at all. But the doctor never left his side for three days and nights. Joe arrived on the second day; he had been delayed by a series of punctures. When Dan recovered from his delirium it was Joe who was with him.

Dan opened his eyes and looked about him in wonder. "So . . . so I am not dead after all?"

"No," said Joe, "and you're not going to die, thanks to the doctor. He's watched you day and night — even gave you a blood transfusion of his own blood."

"What? Is that murderer's blood in my veins? I'll shoot myself if I ever get over this — true as I'm lyin' 'ere; I'll shoot myself."

"And what's all this grizzling about?" demanded the doctor, coming along at that moment. "What's wrong with my blood, anyhow? It may be a trifle alcoholic, but it's done the trick. So, you still want to cut my throat, do you? It would almost be worthwhile letting you do it so that I'd be sure you'd be hung, as you should have been a long time ago. Now go to sleep and don't argue. You're not out of danger yet."

We got Dan safely to hospital and I picked up the doctor on the next trip. Dan recovered fully in time and though he and the doctor abused each other whenever they met, a strange friendship seemed to have grown up between them. Somebody spoke of the doctor as a drunken waster in Dan's hearing and the bushman rounded on him.

"Don't you say a thing like that behind a man's back," he thundered. "The doctor's a whiter man than you'll ever be and I'll cut your throat if you run him down. I mean it, too, so shut up!"

A few days later the doctor returned South.

Before leaving he gave me a cheque for fifty pounds to see Dan on his feet. I tried to thank him on Dan's behalf but he silenced me.

"No, no, don't go talking like that. I'm not doing it because I like the man — I hate the sight of him — but he'll need a spell and I'd only pour the money down my neck and get into more trouble. Let's get out of here. Oh, I hate the heat and the flies and everything."

Jesus said: A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise, and he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father.

SALE OF WORK: Our Spring Sale of Work, combined with our 26th Anniversary Rally, was held at the end of October. It was an outstanding success. God gave us a perfect day and we were very conscious of His love and providence all through the day. We would like to thank all those who contributed in any way to the success of this function.

Our expenses were less than at the May Sale and a number of Donations brought up our total for the day. We were about \$4,000.00 behind in our General Fund before the Sale because of the cost of living and wages and we were depending on the Sale to enable us to meet our commitments. Following is a list of Stall takings:

	\$		\$
Boat Rides	11.00	Books	53.35
Children's	170.67	Fancy Work, Baby	
Friends of Marella	293.50	Wear	149.84
Jumble	638.31	Jams and Pickles	41.54
Paulian	49.10	Parkfield	450.00
Plain Work	200.00	Pies	99.21
Pony Rides	25.60	Plants	132.85
Refreshments	165.70	Produce	479.57
Soft Drinks & Ice		Second Hand Toys	37.30
Cream	176.81	Stamps	131.20
Sweets	70.36	Vandykes	176.27
White Elephant	162.71	Youth Fellowship	514.89
Christmas Cards		Blue Mts. Auxiliary	200.00
(Profit)	8.00	Donations by Mail	509.66
Donations	2,490.02		

This gives a total of \$7,437.46, less expenses \$722.58, which leaves a net profit of \$6,714.88. This is \$1,968.45 more than the October, 1973, Sale, which was a record, so this is far and away the best result we have ever had. We do thank and praise God for this assurance of His continued blessing on our work.