

SKY PILOT NEWS

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THE DAM AT THE EDGE OF THE PICNIC GROUNDS.



The Rt. Rev. Bishop
Hilliard

With the passing of the Rt. Rev. Bishop W. G. Hilliard, M.A., the Sky Pilot Fellowship lost not only its beloved Patron, but a warm and sincere friend and supporter. The Sky Pilot himself looks back over an association with Bishop Hilliard lasting for almost fifty years. During this period, particularly during that period when

the Bishop was his headmaster, a natural gift for writing was encouraged, developed and disciplined by the able advice and assistance of a man who himself had outstanding literary ability. The books, short stories and radio broadcasts that eventuated through the "Sky Pilot" are in no small measure due to the boyhood training under Bishop Hilliard. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Hilliard, but we praise God for the life and work of our Patron and friend.

THESE FIVE YEARS. March 31 marks not only the end of our financial year, but

also the end of the first five-year period since this Mission was incorporated as a non-profit-making company. As we look back over this five-year period, we see much cause to praise God for the wonderful way He has blessed and guided this work. If ever the full story comes to be written, it should prove a help and inspiration to many, for the humanly impossible has been achieved, dreams have become reality, and already the effects of our work are evident in the happy, smiling faces of the little dark children who have been rescued, in many cases from tragic circumstances, and who now have a home, love and security for the future. The advance made has, under God, been possible by the sacrifice and devotion of our staff, the loyalty and hard work of our supporters and the co-operation of our Council, General Committee and the Parramatta and Katoomba Branches of our Women's Auxiliary.

Let us look back briefly over the five years. When the company was incorporated it started with a great handicap. The radio session had been discontinued, the Mission Farm was only a dream or vision, and finances were in a hopeless position.

DIFFICULT DAYS. Five years ago our liabilities greatly exceeded our assets. Our Auditor reported: "There is a deficiency of assets over liabilities of £1793, and it is doubtful if any of the assets would be worth very much if a sale of them had to be made. The Company has, therefore, taken over an insolvent organisation."

We had one child (Christine) as the nucleus of our proposed family of dark children, but very little in the way of furniture, accommodation or provision for others. But we believed that the work was of God, and He would supply our needs if we did our part. Mr. Langford-Smith offered the free use of his own home and farm for the work; the staff carried on, working long hours night and day, seven days a week — often going without wages so that the children might be fed and our debts paid off.

Brighter days were ahead, however. Our supporters rallied round, the Women's Auxiliary worked hard with Street Stalls and Sales of Work, and little by little the picture improved.

AFTER FIVE YEARS. And what is the position to-day? Our assets have been valued by a competent valuer, and they now exceed our liabilities by well over £2,000. We have four new rooms and a great deal more furniture and fittings. Our family of dark children has grown to twenty times the number we had five years ago. Our supporters have greatly increased in numbers, and last year alone over 5,000 people visited the Mission Farm. The huge

dam and swimming pool has become a reality, picnic grounds and sheds have been erected, fencing replaced, fruit trees planted, and so on. We have a registered store on the Farm, we have been recognised as a public charity and been granted exemption from sales tax, and donations to the work are deductible for income tax purposes. A great deal more is needed, of course, but with the successful conclusion of the first Five Year Plan we now look forward with confidence to the next five-year period.

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. And what are the plans for the second five-year period? First consideration will be to instal a septic tank and proper toilet facilities for both the dark children and visitors. The kitchen and dining rooms need to be fly-proofed. Then extra bathrooms and laundry to cope with our increased family have to be built. And of course we wish to add a further annexe to provide extra rooms for the needy dark children for whom at present there is no accommodation available.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE? Somewhat naturally we may wonder what would happen to this work in the event of the death of the Sky Pilot. The Farm itself is his private property, and has been so for over 20 years, though he has used it for the Mission, and has not derived any personal profit from it since the formation of the Mission. Our first thought was to build a new home, and quotes were obtained for one suitable for 30 to 40 children. We found, however, that the cost of building and furnishing such a home would be about £30,000. This was out of the question. Mr. Langford-Smith had already offered to donate two acres of land for the purpose of building a home for the dark children, and the Mission owns the newly-completed annexe which, by legal agreement, they could move to another site at will. After investigation, the Council accepted an offer whereby the Mission will have the use of Mr. Langford-Smith's home for a further five years, free of rent, and they have an option of purchase whereby they can take over the complete existing house at any time at not more than 75% of the then market value. This will mean a saving of many thousands of pounds, and it will enable the work to carry on without interruption.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR The next question is, who would direct this work after the death of the Sky Pilot? Unlike work for white children, there is need for special knowledge of the aborigines and their problems, as well as administrative ability. The Council has given a lot of thought to this important matter. All we can announce at the moment is that there is a man in view who has been closely associated

with this work for some time. He has had some experience with aborigines in the Northern Territory, as well as with natives in other countries. In the event of an emergency, he is willing to take over the direction of the work immediately; otherwise he would prefer another two years to gain further experience and a deeper knowledge of the particular problems associated with our work.

If the Sky Pilot is spared we look forward to the appointment of an Assistant Director within two years who will be able to relieve Mr. Langford-Smith of much of the routine administrative work, and thus leave him time for the important task of putting into print his experiences of 32 years' work amongst the aborigines and mixed bloods and the knowledge gained during this period.

A REVIEW OF THE PAST. We have mentioned the five-year period since the non-profit-making company was formed to direct the work of the Mission Farm. Prior to this, at a Rally at the Parramatta Town Hall, a recording was made of some of the speeches of Council members and the Patron (the late Bishop Hilliard), indicating what we planned to attempt. In view of what has been accomplished some extracts from these remarks might be of interest. Firstly, Mr. (now The Reverend) Dudley Foord, M.Sc., ex-Council member of the Sky Pilot Fellowship:

"I had the privilege," said Mr. Foord, "of spending a period of the University vacation working at Marella Mission Farm. Now I think there is one question that perhaps some people are asking, and that is, why should we have a Mission Farm? I believe that the Home for dark children and the Farm go hand in hand. It is essential to have a farm for two reasons: firstly, to provide for the daily needs of the dark children by supplying milk, eggs, vegetables, and so on; and secondly, as an avenue for training them in farm work so that when they grow up and leave the Home they will be able to take their place in rural work to which they are most suited by their background and ancestry.

"Now some people have said: How far have you got in realising this vision? Well, the idea of a Mission Farm was conceived some 18 months ago. Then it was a dream; today we see that dream gradually being realised. In order to get a clearer conception, let us turn the clock back. . . . For years the Mission Farm was not producing anything, fencing and buildings had fallen into disrepair, the farm lands and orchards had become a veritable wilderness, the machinery had rusted up. A picture that would make the most stout-hearted people faint. But the Sky Pilot and his staff, un-

daunted, believed that God had inspired the vision, and so they set about the task of rebuilding the farm and putting it back into productivity. What remains yet to be done? The answer is, of course, a tremendous amount. It can only be done gradually, for the reason that there is not sufficient finance to do it overnight as it were, and it will be several years before the farm is back in full productivity again.

"There are many problems to be faced; amongst these is the provision of water for irrigation. The farm has already been surveyed with the object of providing a store of water that could be used for irrigation, and of course it would also make a swimming pool for the dark children. Further machinery is needed, more stock is required, and more fences and buildings. All these things are going to take much hard work, sweat, toil, courage and faith, and last, but not least, finance.

"May I, in conclusion, commend this whole venture to you? I firmly believe that it is a God-inspired vision. Let us all pray that this vision shall be brought to a reality in the not too distant future."

When Mr. Foord gave the above address over five years ago the task seemed formidable indeed. Today the vision is becoming reality. The dam has been completed and 3,000,000 gallons of water are stored. The pump, with irrigating plant, has been installed. Buildings and fences have been repaired. Shearing and other machinery is in good working order. Above all, up to 20 happy dark children are in residence amongst pleasant country surroundings. Thank God for answered prayer, and for the courage and self-sacrifice of not only the staff, but the many friends and supporters who have made this possible.

THE LATE BISHOP HILLIARD. At the same meeting, over five years ago, our Patron and Chairman of the meeting, Bishop Hilliard, also spoke. We wish you all could hear again, as we did when playing over the recording, the Bishop's loved and familiar voice. Unfortunately, we can only repeat in print some of his remarks on that occasion prior to the launching of our first Five Year Plan.

"This is not to be an afternoon of undiluted pleasure," said the Bishop, "because the next item on the programme is 'Chairman's Remarks,' and you've got to sit and listen to them.

"It is a very great pleasure to me to be here this afternoon for two special reasons. One is because of my — I was going to say 'lifelong,' and it is lifelong as far as he is concerned — friendship for the Sky Pilot himself. My first acquaintance with him was as a very small and mischievous boy. It has been a great pride to watch him grow up and develop. I have

not only the warmest regard for him but the highest possible admiration. I admire greatly his steadfast faith, his unconquerable courage, his magnificent spirit of enterprise and, above all, of course, his consuming zeal for the cause of his Master.

"I think of how, when physical affliction fell upon this bright, vigorous, athletic young man, he did not sit down under it, he did not lose his faith under it, but dedicated his life to serve God in whatever way God would use him, and the story of how he has overcome that trial and done a great job is the most wonderful and fascinating reading. I do not know whether you have read 'Sky Pilot in Arnhem Land' — if you haven't, beg, borrow or steal it. It is a tremendous inspiration to anybody to read. I love his great sense of humour. I think of his enterprise; he goes to the Northern Territory for Missionary work and comes to the conclusion that an aeroplane would be a great help up there, so he learns to fly an aeroplane, and then he goes round and collects the money to buy a second-hand aeroplane. And so he goes to Arnhem Land and does a magnificent work there which earns for him the Fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society.

"He is a great citizen, as well as a great Christian. I think of his efforts with that outmoded and ought-to-have-been-superannuated Model T Ford car; starting it in the Northern Territory and driving it down here with a notice on the front: 'Don't stop this car — it took four hours to start.' And so on and so on. . . .

"Well, the personality of the Sky Pilot and my long and treasured friendship would bring me here this afternoon, if nothing else did. Then there is the magnificent work that also is an attraction in at least two directions that are profoundly important — the use of the modern device of getting to people over the air: the Sky Pilot's Log, those extremely interesting, fascinating and very original addresses that you hear over the air have been a delight to all who have heard them, and must have been of great help in the work of spreading the news of the Kingdom. The unorthodox, unconventional and infinitely original way in which these dialogues and stories are presented are a tribute to his enterprise and originality, as well as to his zeal and skill. It is no mean job to carry on this work daily, week after week, for 4½ years. Then for five months the broadcasts were discontinued, but at the urgent request of 5,000 people signing a petition, it is to be reinstated, and you will again hear these fascinating broadcasts from the Sky Pilot's Log.

"The other thing is this wonderful work

amongst the little dark children of the original inhabitants of this great Australian continent of ours. It is our solemn duty and to our great advantage to build them into the life of this Australian community, to give them the opportunity of bringing to the developing life of our nation the great contribution they have to bring. We cannot expect them all to be Harold Blairs or artists, but we are not all Harold Blairs or artists, either; and after all, it is the great body of the ordinary people who with diligence and conscientiousness bring their contribution that we depend on chiefly in the building of our nation.

"What I am getting at is this: if everybody in our community does his share, we can build a great nation by the grace of God. We have all got a contribution to bring, and these dear little dark children have a worthwhile contribution, and I think that the Sky Pilot is doing a magnificent job for Australia and for the Kingdom of God in making it possible for them to be able to take their place in the life of the community and to become a people — not segregated or isolated — but a very real part of this developing nation; helping us to make Australia a country which will be a glory to God and a blessing to the world.

"Thank you so much for listening to me so patiently, but it is my very great pleasure to be here this afternoon, and to be associated with this magnificent work which is being done by this courageous young man and his very charming and able and devoted wife."

Over five years have passed since the above speech was made. Our beloved Patron has gone to his reward after a lifetime of service to his Lord and Master. Difficulties and setbacks were anticipated even at that time, and we have certainly experienced them. The Sky Pilot has been back to Arnhem Land, travelling 9,000 miles alone by car and revisiting old friends and once familiar places in desert and jungle. Then he suffered the first coronary occlusion, and for a while we despaired of his life; but earnest prayer was made to God, for this work was not sufficiently advanced to manage without him. God answered our prayers and has spared him for a little longer.

These are busy days as we consolidate what has been commenced and launch out in faith to establish this work on a permanent footing. God has graciously blessed this work, and at last we can see our goal actually being reached. Will you continue to pray that this Mission Farm may continue as a Home and training centre for the dark children and that all may be to the glory of God and the extension of His Kingdom?