

SKY PILOT NEWS

APRIL,
1978

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

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 29, Castle Hill, N.S.W. 2154. Telephone 629-1555.

Director: K. Langford-Smith, A.M., Th.C., F.R.G.S. Secretary: Mrs. Norma K. Warwick, B.A., Th.C.

Residential Address: Acres Road, Kellyville.

Donations of \$2.00 and upwards are deductible for taxation purposes. Quote No. A.F. 1595C/SF3380.

Subscription: 25 cents per annum. Registered at GPO Sydney, for transmission by post as a periodical—Category A



The Sky Pilot to the Rescue, 1931

THE ENERGETIC MAN, PART 2: Sky Pilot's Log 2CH Broadcast.

Recently we told the story of Arthur, the energetic man who worked from daylight till dark and yet made time to help prepare a landing strip for the aeroplane. I don't think I have ever seen man work harder or more constantly than did Arthur. Not that he rushed things. He worked steadily and constantly and saved all unnecessary labour. He was building he said, for twenty years ahead and not for the present only. He hated temporary work. He would sooner take a little longer to make his work substantial enough to last for many years to come.

Everyone liked Arthur and admired the way he worked. I was anxious to see him get on, as he deserved to. It was a bit of a shock when George came to me one day with news that Arthur was ill.

"Yes," he said, "it's true enough; poor old Arthur is real crook, if you ask me. He says it is nothin' and he'll be all right again in a few days. I reckon he must have strained hisself liftin' them thunderin' big rocks. He was spittin' blood when I was there yesterday."

"What? Spitting blood? But that must come from his lungs!"

"I don't know about that, but it come from somewhere inside him. Quite a bit of blood too. I tell you it frightened me. I told him I'd come right away and get you."

"What did he say about that?" I asked.

"He made some joke about the landin' ground bein' used for him after all. But I think he must of strained hisself. He's as strong as a horse; it can't be his lungs that's crook."

"Is he alone now, George?" I asked.

"I left old Lefthand with him. That native is as gentle as a woman in sickness in spite of his six foot of height. But old Dr. Bloomfield is at Mataranka; couldn't you pick him up and bring him down? I reckon Arthur won't want to leave his farm and believe me, he's a case for a doctor all right."

"That's a good idea. The old doctor is a bit old fashioned in his methods, but he seems to know his work all right and I know he'll be willing enough to come. I'll tell you what: I'll go to Mataranka, pick up the doctor and bring him down. The trip won't take more than four or five hours—that is, of course, if I can find the doctor."

"Good," said George with satisfaction. "Well

I'll nick back to Arthur right away. Can you give me some slushy food for him? He lives pretty hard at his hut—mostly salt junk and damper and that ain't much of a tucker for an invalid. I'll tell him you'll be back by dark tomorrow."

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The return trip to Mataranka was uneventful. I had to fly high as the weather was bad and I didn't want the old doctor to be air-sick before we reached the patient. George and I waited outside while the doctor made his examination. We waited a long time and George began to fidget.

"I wonder what's holdin' up the old doctor?" he asked. "He's had time to go over a dozen men by now."

"He's very careful," I replied. "When he makes his report it'll be pretty accurate. If he doesn't know what the trouble is he won't beat about the bush, he'll tell us straight out."

"Poor old Arthur," said George, "I hope it ain't serious. He's worked so hard here it would break his heart if he had to go to hospital for a few weeks. I've never knowed a man to have so many schemes on the go at the one time. And he's got method, too. Bit by bit you can see all the plans for his farm fallin' into place like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. I thought at first it was mostly talk, like so many of the men who come to the tropics with big ideas. But he started right at bed rock and bit by bit he's carried out his ideas. He's got the water nearly laid on to his hut now. I reckon a few days more would have finished the job. He's got all the hollow logs laid ready to erect on forked logs."

"Yes," I replied, "he's a worker all right. But here comes the doctor now. You can't tell by his face what he's thinking. That beard of his hides all the expression; all the same, I don't fancy it is too good. Well, doctor, have you made your examination?"

"Yes," he said "I have."

"Well, what is the verdict? Can't you see we're almost out of our minds with anxiety? Can you give the complaint a name?"

"That's easy. Arthur is suffering from Bronchopneumonicphthisis. There's not a shadow of doubt about it."

"Good heavens! Are you sure of it? That's terrible, although it was that I was afraid of."

"Don't mind me, you fellows," complained George. "I'm only an unedicated stockman. You go right ahead and talk in some foreign language. What was it you called it? Bronco somethin' or other. I know a bronco is a horse, but what's that got to do with Arthur? He ain't been kicked by a horse, has he?"

"Sorry, George. I mean Arthur is suffering from galloping consumption."

"Gallop'ing . . . I knew it was somethin' to do with a 'orse. Gallopin' consumption? That's real serious, ain't it?"

"I'm afraid so. Death usually takes place in a few months from the onset." (This was 1931.) "I give him about three months. Maybe a little longer if he takes it easy. If he's the man you tell me he is I'd say it's more likely to be two months."

"Two or three months!" I exclaimed, "and Arthur has been building for 20 years ahead. Why, it would take years before all these schemes of his are operating. I can't believe it."

"Have you told him about . . . about how long he has to live?" asked George. "No, I can see you haven't. But someone will have to tell him. You'd better do it, Smithy; somehow I couldn't face the job."

"Why pick on me? I couldn't do it yet anyhow. Let's walk round a bit and think things out."

"You'd better go back and talk to him, Doc," suggested George, "in case he gets to worryin'. Tell him you have to make more tests or anythin' you like to keep him quiet. He'll cut up somethin' terrible when he knows. Come on Smithy, let's get away from the hut for a minute; I'm chokin'."

In silence we walked round the little farm that had been carved out of the bush with such labour. Everywhere was the sign of thoroughness and strength. The fence posts were like young telegraph poles, built to last for twenty years or more. Some of them had been drilled for wire but the wire was not yet available. I guessed Arthur intended buying it from the profits from his first harvest. With a jolt I remembered that now there would never be a harvest—unless someone else did the harvesting.

We saw the great slabs of rock that were laid neatly in position to form the base of the huge dam that Arthur intended to be the foundation of his irrigation scheme. In the thick lancewood scrub a small patch had already been cleared

and marked out for the house that would never now be needed.

George cleared his voice and said: "It's terrible tough for any man to be told out of the blue that he . . . that he's only got a few more months to live. But I guess it's worse in Arthur's case. He always looked so far ahead and hated temporary work. It don't get no easier by waitin'. I - I guess you'd better do the dirty work that the Doc. and I ain't game to do. I'll come with you."

Arthur was lying on the bed. There were no sheets, of course, but the bunk was solidly and neatly built and everything in the room spoke of strength and utility. I didn't know how to break the news. Arthur didn't look so very ill and I almost wondered if the doctor had made a mistake. I noticed his bright eyes and the colour in his cheeks; but the doctor caught my eye and shook his head. Still I couldn't speak and Arthur looked from one of us to the other. He wasn't slow on the uptake. When he spoke it was in a quiet, controlled voice.

"I see," he said. "It's worse than I thought. There's no need to beat about the bush. How long have I got?"

"Not very long, I'm afraid."

"Yes, but how long? A couple of weeks?"

"No," I replied, "longer than that. The doctor thinks it might be a matter of months. If you take things easy you might . . ."

"Yes," said Arthur, "but if I keep on working, how long will it be then?"

"Not more than a couple of months. But you'll get weaker and you won't be able to work like you used to."

"I realise that. All the same a couple of months ought to give me time to finish laying on the water and I'd like to get the foundation of the dam finished. I should be able to do it".

"But you won't . . ." I began and stopped.

"I won't need it now? Is that what you were going to say? No, I won't need it myself, but I'd like to get it finished. Someone else could carry on then and make a job of it."

"But you musn't even consider working any more, Arthur. You'll have to take things easy."

"Why? So that I could live another month or two? No, Smithy, I've worked all my life and I'd sooner go out that way. Death comes to everyone sooner or later. I thought I'd have time to finish the dam and get the house built, but . . . well, things didn't work out that way, that's all. I'm not complaining. Life hasn't been too bad

—while it lasted. I'm not going to start whining now. It's too late to start anything new, of course, but I'd like to get as much done as I can before I'm through. Thanks for all you fellows have done for me. Sorry I've given you all the bother."

"Don't talk like that, Arthur," I begged. "It's not too late to start something new. All your life you've been building for the future; you can go on doing it."

"I can't get much done in a couple of months," he said, "but I might finish a few jobs I've got in hand."

"I wasn't thinking of this kind of building," I told him, "I mean a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens".

Arthur smiled. "I've left it a bit late, haven't I?" he asked.

"Yes, but not too late. All your life you have missed the most important thing. In building for the future you took death to be the end and you planned only for old age. If you had looked a little bit further you would have commenced building for all eternity."

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Arthur managed to finish getting the water laid on to the hut but he was too weak to finish the foundations of his dam. The bushmen came in at George's call and they built the whole dam in a week or two, with the help of all the mission natives. We carried Arthur out to see it full of water and he smiled happily. He died in his sleep and we buried him beside the completed dam. But he was so happy right to the last that we couldn't think of him as dead. George put it into words:

"I guess he's still workin', wherever he is. So many lazy hypocrites try to crawl into heaven by a back door that I guess God was about fed up and He sent for Arthur to show 'em a real decent workman. Whatever he builds will stand the test of time".

And the final entry in today's log is taken from the 5th chapter of second Corinthians: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

M.A.F. FIELD DAY: The Missionary Aviation Fellowship held a Field Day at Camden on 25th February, 1978. All the Marella children, and staff, were invited for a free flight in

one of the Fellowship's aircraft. They thoroughly enjoyed this. One group was forced to stay up for about an hour, because of a heavy storm which made landing difficult, so this was good measure for them.

Mr. Langford-Smith, the "Sky Pilot of Arnhem Land", was the guest speaker. He recalled that his own missionary aviation work commenced in 1931 with the work of the "Sky Pilot" at Roper River under the Church Missionary Society. In 1948 he called a meeting in the Assembly Hall in Margaret Street, Sydney, to inaugurate the Missionary Aviation Fellowship in N.S.W.; Mr. Harry Hartwig, who had inaugurated the work in Victoria about a year earlier, was amongst those present on the platform with Canon Arrowsmith and the Rev. C. H. Nash (who gave the Bible Reading). Mrs. Norma Warwick, who has been Secretary to Marella Mission Farm for 28 years, was also present at that inaugural meeting.

Ten years later, in 1958, Mr. Langford-Smith was the guest speaker at the first M.A.F. rally held at Bankstown Aerodrome where the public were able to see something of the work being done by M.A.F. This month marks the end of 50 years service by Mr. Langford-Smith for the Aborigines and, though he has retired from all active flying, he has not yet retired from his work with the Aboriginal children at Marella.

MRS. NORMA WARWICK: About a year ago Mrs. Norma Warwick had a major operation followed by extensive ray-treatment. We are sorry that she has to enter hospital again for a further slight operation. We ask our readers to pray for her speedy recovery. We trust that her stay in hospital will be of short duration and that God will spare her from any further major operation in the future. Her bright Christian witness has been and will be an inspiration to us all and especially to those not so strong and mature in faith.

CONCLUSION: Our financial year ended on 31st March and was marred by a mail strike which cut off our income for several weeks. This will hold up the completion of the books as we wish to credit all donations posted BEFORE 31st March even if they were actually received later. God has been very good to us this year, as He has been in the past, and His continued presence and guiding hand has been very much in evidence. It is not easy to measure spiritual benefits but we feel that these heavily outweigh the material benefits, which are considerable.