

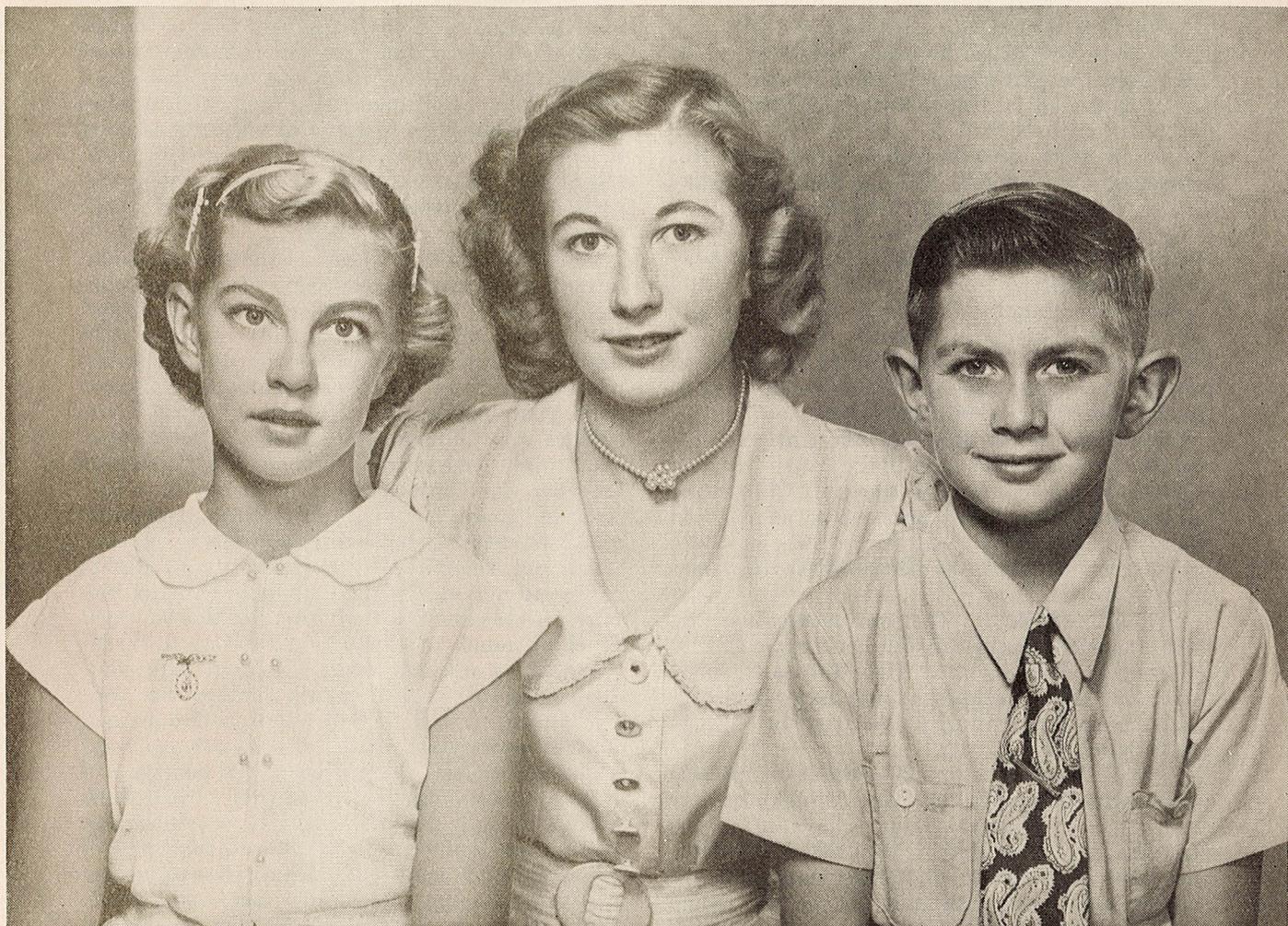
SKY PILOT NEWS

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The "Sky Pilot's" Children—Ruth, Margaret, Bruce.

THE SLEEPING DOLL: A Story from The Sky Pilot's Log (2CH Broadcast).

It was nearing Christmas, and Nora, the little half-caste, felt very much out of things on the Aboriginal Full-blood Mission. She had been brought up on a half-caste station, more like a white child, and she knew all about Christmas stockings and presents. Now she was worried, as she asked my assistant:

"Please, Sir, do you think Father Christmas will know that I am here and not with the other half-castes?"

"I think so, Nora," he told her. "Why do you want to know?"

"'Cos he leaves presents for half-caste children . . . real presents, not just things to eat, like he does for the blacks."

"All right," said Jack. "And what have you asked him for?"

"A sleeping doll," replied Nora. "I don't mind if I never have another present. Just a sleeping doll, that's all I want."

Jack was a bit surprised, as he answered doubtfully: "Well, I'm not so sure about a sleeping doll. They're hard to get in the bush. I don't know what Father Christmas can do about that."

"Well," said Nora, "I'll pray for it, and then he's sure to bring it. Father Christmas is the same as God, isn't he?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Jack. "What made you think that?"

"Because Christmas is Jesus' Birthday, and there'd be no Christmas if He had not been born. And God is Jesus' Father, He **must** be Father Christmas."

And in spite of all Jack's attempted explanations, Nora firmly believed that God was Father Christmas. She prayed about her sleeping doll, and was so sure that her prayer would be answered that she told the other children about it.

Jack asked me: "Can't we do something about Nora's sleeping doll, Smithy? She's not like a black child. She's lived with white people since she was born, and—well—can't we do something about it?"

"Couldn't we switch her thoughts on to something else?" I suggested.

"Not a hope," replied Jack. "And you know that child's faith puts me to shame. I heard her **thanking** God for answering her prayer last night when she was saying her prayers."

"Thanking Him? Do you mean just in faith that He would answer her prayer?"

"I do," said Jack. "I've not seen such faith, no, not in Israel. Look here, Smithy, can't you do something? What about flying to Darwin?"

"What! And use up 20 gallons of petrol that might be needed in case of sickness, or some such emergency? But I have to go to Mataranka at the end of the week. I could wire to Queensland, and they might have time to put a sleeping doll on the last boat before the monsoon."

"Splendid! That ought to do the trick."

And that's what I did. And a reply came to say that a sleeping doll would be on the boat due at the Mission a few days before Christmas. Jack and I were very happy to be able to play Father Christmas. Nora knew nothing about our scheming, but her faith in "Father God Christmas," as she insisted on calling him, never wavered. She had asked him for a sleeping doll, and that was all there was to it.

Just before Christmas we had word that the boat had sunk, with all our stores, and though she was salvaged and eventually arrived on Christmas Eve with our damaged stores, you

can imagine what three days under water had done to a sleeping doll. Jack and I looked at the shapeless mass and handful of unstuck hair without speaking. There was no possible hope of making repairs. Jack said: "The glass eyes aren't too bad, Smithy. All we need is a new doll around them."

There was nothing we could do about it. When at her prayers Nora thanked Father God Christmas for answering her prayer, both Jack and I felt rotten. I wondered what Nora would think had she seen us toss the useless sleeping doll into the river. Then one of my homing pigeons came in with a message to say that a woman was ill and needed urgent attention. I took the aeroplane away in such a hurry that I forgot all about the sleeping doll.

At Lancewood Station I found the sick woman was Nora's mother. I decided to fly her back to the Mission. It was risky moving her, but it was her only chance. All night I fought for her life. She had almost died when Nora was born, and—well, there were complications.

Nora was not able to see her mother, but that night she went to bed after asking "Father God Christmas" to make her Mummy well and bring her a sleeping doll. Jack said she was sleeping with a happy smile on her face, and though he's not what you might call sentimental, I think he had tears in his eyes. I was too busy fighting for the mother to think much of sleeping dolls, but towards morning it was all over. A baby boy had come into the world, and the mother was out of danger. I left Jack in charge and threw myself on my bunk as I was, thoroughly knocked up, and immediately fell asleep.

The sun was up when I awoke. Still half asleep, I made for the ward to see how the patient was. Just as I got there Jack opened the door and came out holding Nora by the hand. I looked at the child's face, and all the glory of heaven seemed to shine in it. When she saw me she ran over and threw her arms around my neck.

"Oh, Moningna," she cried. "Can you guess what? Father God Christmas has sent me a sleeping doll that's turned into a real live baby. And it's all mine. Mummy says she'll just help me to look after it. I knew my prayer would be answered, but I never expected a real one. I wish Father God Christmas was here. I—I'd like to kiss Him and say thank you."

From the Church outside came the sound of music, a Christmas carol. Once again it seemed as if the glory of the Lord shone down. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is

given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

We knelt to thank the Giver of all good gifts—and it was Christmas Day.

EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY RALLY. Our Rally and Sale of Work, which was held on 3rd November, clashed with a number of Sunday School picnics; many helpers, therefore, were unable to be present. That is always the risk at this time of the year. However, in spite of this, the Rally was a success in every way.

It was good to meet old friends, many of them listeners to the first session of The Sky Pilot's Log, over eight years ago. It must be remembered, of course, that it was not till some years later that we had accommodation for dark children. This branch of the work has only been in operation for two or three years, which is not very long to establish a work without the backing of any one Church or of wealthy friends. More than half our supporters are pensioners, most of the others are working men and their wives.

We do want to thank all those who shared in making the Sale of Work a success. There are our prayer partners; those who sent gifts or donations; our many helpers on the day; our honorary carriers; the drivers who brought the dark children in to the Town Hall from the Mission Farm.

The gross takings amounted to £335/14/5; the total expenses were £77/4/11, leaving a nett profit of £258/9/6. Under the circumstances, this was excellent. There were four Street Stalls since May, and a great deal of clothing, needlework, jam, etc., was provided and sold apart from what appeared on the Stalls at the Town Hall. The many workers, especially the members of our Women's Auxiliary, deserve our sincere thanks and congratulations.

CAR ACCIDENT. Unfortunately the day was marred somewhat by a nasty car accident in the morning. Two young friends from Auburn were kindly bringing the dark children to the Town Hall in a car and a utility. When negotiating what is known as "suicide corner" near Baulkham Hills, a car coming in the opposite direction, well over on the wrong side of the road, forced the utility from the sealed surface into the gravel, where it skidded and overturned four times, spilling the driver and passengers on to the road. In the utility, besides the driver, were Ruth Langford-Smith and her friend, Tessa, who were nursing

Christine and Rita. The other dark children were in the other car with Isabelle, and were not involved. The driver and Tessa suffered leg injuries and shock; Christine and Rita, extensive bruises and shock. All these were allowed to leave hospital after treatment. However, Ruth Langford-Smith had a fractured skull, besides other injuries. She was in hospital for several weeks. We praise God that, as this little paper goes to press, we are able to report that she is home again, and we have been assured that it is unlikely that she will be permanently affected, nor should her sight be impaired, as was at first feared. Please remember her in your prayers. Ruth, in seeking to protect the dark child she was nursing, took the full force of the shock. Well done, Ruth!

Our sympathy goes out to the young driver, Ray. He had put all his savings into the utility, which had been thoroughly overhauled and was only completed the day before the accident. The utility was not insured, and is now almost a total loss. It is difficult to understand why these things should happen to a young man trying to do a "good turn," but we praise God that no one was killed. Those who saw the accident did not expect any of the occupants to live through it.

DARK CHILDREN. Christine and Rita, who were very sick for a week following the accident, are now fully recovered. The other children sang at the Rally, as arranged, but they missed the two younger ones and Ruth, who trained them. Having seen the accident, it upset them, even though they were not involved themselves. They are now counting the days till Christmas, and there is the usual speculation as to what "Father Christmas" will bring.

STREET STALL. Following the Sale of Work, a Street Stall was held in Parramatta on November 21st. This was very successful indeed. Many workers turned up, and a total of £36 was made. Those who have had experience with the Stalls in Parramatta will realise that the Women's Auxiliary earn every penny they make. It usually takes them a day or two to recover from the strain of standing on the concrete all day, holding bargain hunters in check and watching the "light-fingered" who always attempt to get something for nothing.

STAFF. Mrs. Norma Warwick, the secretary, is spending a week or ten days at Canbelego with a friend. If you do not know where that is, we may mention that it is near Boppy Mountain. Any the wiser? Well, it

is out Cobar way, west of Nyngan. We trust that the rest will be of great benefit to Mrs. Warwick and her little daughter, Heather. We are so short of staff that the work mounts up during the absence of any member, and we hope that the sight of the pile of correspondence awaiting attention will not undo the good of the holiday.

MISSION FARM. No rain has fallen, and the paddocks which, a few months ago, were under water are now parched and dry. Even the weeds are dying. With water restrictions to contend with as well, all we can hope to do is to save what we can near the house. Not only is the first crop of plums a total failure, but many of the trees are dying, too. We do pray that there will be sufficient rain soon to save the rest of the trees and perhaps enable us to harvest some of the later varieties, which are already showing signs of going the same way as the Wilsons and Santa Rosas.

With regard to the livestock, things are much better. We have three cows milking now, and the children have unlimited supplies of milk and cream. We marketed 25 young pigs (under three months), and secured a very good price. It was encouraging to find a footnote on our docket from the auctioneer saying: "Your small pigs easily topped the market for their size."

We also marketed a few old turkey hens, which brought quite a good price. A very fine batch of American Bronze and White Holland turkey poults is going through the brooders now; we hope they will continue to grow and progress, as they show promise of doing.

A few lambs were born, rather late this year, but we found that the children's riding ponies were attacking them. Unfortunately, we lost three before we discovered this, and moved them to another paddock.

Two pigs were stolen the night before they were due to go to market. The thieving of poultry has been very prevalent this year, but we hardly expected that men would steal

pigs from a Mission that is finding it difficult enough to provide for the dark children as it is. We can pray that the thieves may be converted. It is difficult sometimes to "take joyfully the spoiling of your goods" (Hebrews 10:34).

"DRAKE'S DRUM." This book of stories from The Sky Pilot's Log is still in great demand. A friend recently passed round a copy while in hospital, and the patients enjoyed it thoroughly. Then we received a letter saying, "Some four years ago I sent a copy of 'Drake's Drum' to my mother in Western Australia, who was then recovering from a serious illness. She greatly enjoyed it. A few months later my dad had to go to hospital, and he took it with him and enjoyed it; also lent it to others in the hospital. Next it was given to a dear friend who had to spend several weeks in hospital. Recently we heard from her, and she mentioned she had lent the book to one of her friends who was ill . . . this copy has not gathered much dust."

It has been suggested that maybe some friends would like to donate a copy of this book to various hospitals, where the Gospel message would go the rounds, and the patients would be interested and amused by the stories of "Old George" and others. We would be glad to hear from any such friends. If you send 5/- and the name of any hospital you wish, we will do the rest. Or, if you prefer, you could buy the book and present it to the hospital of your choice personally. Now that Christmas is near, what about this little gift for the sick? And you would be helping the dark children at the same time, as all the profits go to the work.

CHRISTMAS. Christmas is very close now, and the next issue of this little paper will not be out till the end of December. May we take this opportunity, therefore, of wishing all our subscribers a very Happy Christmas and God's richest blessing in the year to follow.