

SKY PILOT NEWS

June, 1956

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The Sky Pilot to the rescue in Arnhem Land.

TINNED FOOD: A STORY FROM THE SKY PILOT'S LOG (2CH Broadcast).

Arnhem Land staggered before the blow of the north west monsoon. Trees moaned and bent almost double, as if trying to hide their faces from the ruthless wind that swept over sea and land. Grim cliffs that had seen a thousand years of storm raised their heads above the surging waters and sweeping spray

that drew lines of age and ploughed furrows of pain on their faces.

Giant breakers rolled across the Gulf of Carpentaria. When the hidden coral reefs tripped them up they fell in cascades of white, spilling thousands of tons of water back into the bosom of the ocean. No small boat could

possibly live in such a sea. Long since the pearling luggers and ketches had anchored in safe waters, and only the ocean liners ploughed on their way, north of the shallow waters of the Gulf, and heedless of the elements. During the lulls in the monsoon sea-gulls screamed over the beaches, but mysteriously they disappeared during the full force of the storm.

After the storm came a sudden peace and quiet on land; not so at sea. It would be long ere the waters of the Gulf returned to temporary calm to await the next storm. It is astonishing that the sea can be whipped to fury so quickly at the beginning of a storm and yet it takes so long for it to return to normal again.

The storms of human passion—hate, greed, war—likewise seem so easily aroused and yet leave in their wake years of misery, starvation and fear. Man proudly boasts to be the head of creation, yet when out of the will of God he has little to pride himself on.

From a tiny island, away in the Gulf of Carpentaria, a thin column of smoke ascended. It was not visible to me, but the blacks saw it, and reported. With the aid of field-glasses I, too, could see it. Presently an answering smoke was sent up from the mainland. One of my black trackers explained: "Somefellow blackfellow send'im smoke signals. By an' by we get message."

I watched carefully, but neither on the mainland or the island was there any break in the column of smoke—nothing like the morse code or the signals used by Red Indians. An old man sat cross-legged by the fire, bowed his head and appeared to go into a trance. For a long time he gave no sign of movement, then he roused himself and came over to us. I could not understand the Yukul language, but my tracker interpreted: "Blackfellow there, longa island," he said. "Him canoe bin break up. Him got 'im plenty of water but no more tucker. Him bin hurt 'im leg—can't walk. By an' by 'im die suppose 'im no more got 'im tucker."

"Well," I replied, "we can't get a lugger through this sea. I'm afraid he'll have to stay there for a while."

"We bin tell 'im you take tucker to-day," said the tracker.

"Today!" I exclaimed. "I can't possibly go to-day."

"You got 'im airy-plane," said the tracker.

"Yes, but what about the monsoon? The aeroplane is getting old now, and one of these days it'll fall to pieces in a monsoon. Besides, I can't land on that island to pick him up."

"You take tucker and drop 'im down. Whiteman always go."

After that confidence, I couldn't well refuse. I disliked flying in the monsoons—especially over the sea. But I managed to get through somehow, and I dropped a couple of dozen tins of bully beef within a few yards of the injured man. I thought he mightn't be able to manage the key on the tins, so I also dropped a hatchet to slice them open.

The air was rough and very bumpy. I didn't like to fly too low, but I circled round until I saw him crawl over and pick up one of the tins. Then I turned for home and got the "Sky Pilot" into the hangar as quickly as I could.

It was some time before we were able to get the lugger to the island. When we did we found the man weak and pitifully hungry. Around him was a stack of unopened bully beef tins. He had never seen tinned meat before and did not realise it was food. We managed to get him to the lugger, in spite of the surf, and back to the mission.

His leg was broken. A simple fracture, but badly swollen; it was some time before it could be set. Proper rest and good food soon made him fit again.

It was a lesson to me not to take things for granted. I had thought I was clever to think of dropping the hatchet in case the blackfellow did not know how to use the key to open the tins. Sometimes I think we Christian preachers are content to fly over the heads of starving crowds to toss out a few sealed tins of food, then pride ourselves on what we've done.

Our Lord's command was: "Feed My sheep." Have you ever fed a motherless lamb? It's not enough to put a bottle of milk alongside it. Often it means getting down on your knees and, with infinite patience, teaching it to drink.

The blackfellow could have starved to death surrounded by tins of bully beef. Thousands of people are starving to death, spiritually, while all the time there is a Bible in the house. They don't realise it is spiritual food;

or, if they do, they don't know how to open it. A code or cipher looks very silly till you find the key. The Gospel story seems foolish to those who perish. You could open a tin of meat in a dozen ways; but there's only one key to open the Bible—and that is the Holy Spirit of God. Without the Holy Spirit you could study the Bible for years. Taking it as history, or as literature, or as a guide to laws or morals you could learn a lot from it; but it would still be a closed book to you.

The psalmist prayed: "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." If you want spiritual food, you must do the same.

Sometimes we throw texts at people, or, as it were, bash them over the head with a Bible and it doesn't do any good unless the Holy Spirit is behind the action. In many cases I doubt if He is. Moses was asked to speak to the rock. Instead, he lost his temper and hit it. God sent the water just the same, but Moses was punished.

Our careless witness and ill-prepared sermon may be used of God to save souls. That doesn't mean that we have done well; it means that in spite of us the Holy Spirit has worked. Suppose we begin all over again in our Christian witness? We could scrap that clever sermon and use something simple instead. We could stop flying over people's heads and come down to earth, where we can get on our knees and gently and patiently teach them how to take the food they can digest. We could seek the Lord's glory and forget about our own petty ambitions. Then what a difference will be seen in the results of our work. And the final entry in today's log is taken from the 24th chapter of St. Luke. "They said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

SKY PILOT NEWS. The first issue of our little news sheet has been received exceptionally well and hundreds of subscriptions have come in, and they continue to come in by every mail. We trust that as time goes by the paper may be improved, and when sufficient subscribers are obtained it may be enlarged.

DAY FOR "SHUT-INS". For some years it has been the mission practice to hold an annual day on the Mission Farm for those friends who, through age or infirmity, are unable to travel by train and bus and yet

who are well enough to enjoy the day if brought here by car. This year it was the most successful day of its kind we have yet had, and about 70 friends, including the drivers and helpers, were able to be present. We would like to take this opportunity of thanking the helpers, and the drivers who so kindly put their cars at our disposal for the day, and who called for our guests and took them home again in the afternoon.

Members of the Women's Auxiliary provided luncheon (which included chicken sandwiches and fruit salad and cream) and morning and afternoon tea. It is a privilege to be able to do this each year for the aged and infirm, who are so often overlooked in these busy days.

THE DARK CHILDREN. Our little family of dark children continues to progress satisfactorily in health and happiness. Coral is very proud at being included in the basket ball team at the Castle Hill school. Sister Fleming, an inspector of the Aborigines' Welfare Board, visited the children recently, and was most impressed at their improvement.

STAFF. We are sometimes asked how many we have on our staff at the Mission Farm. Apart from Mr. Langford-Smith there is only the secretary of the Fellowship, Mrs. Norma Warwick, who attends to the office work, keeps the books, etc., and Miss Isabelle Thorne. Isabelle, who is now 19 years of age, is the first dark girl to be put on our permanent staff. She is very good with the children, and they are devoted to her. Mrs. Langford-Smith, though not on the paid staff, undertakes the whole of the responsibility for the children, does the cooking and (assisted by Isabelle) the washing, ironing, mending, etc. She is on the Council, takes an active part in the Women's Auxiliary, assists at Street Stalls and with the Sales of Work.

STORE. The Fellowship now has its own registered grocery store, and visitors to the farm and neighbours are able to purchase groceries if they wish. All profits go to help the mission work. Mrs. Warwick is in charge of the store.

RALLY AND SALE OF WORK. Our Sale of Work on May 19th was the most successful that we have had for some years. Many more people attended, and there was the customary happy, friendly atmosphere. At the General Meeting in the afternoon the Chair was taken by the Rev. A. Hayman (an ex-C.I.M. missionary), who gave an earnest and helpful

address. Mr. Paul Fernance, the soloist, was much appreciated, as was Mr. Ken Hodkin, the accompanist, who also gave a bracket of numbers on his piano-accordion. Coral, one of our dark children from the Mission Farm, sang very sweetly. The younger children, led by Ruth Langford-Smith, also sang several choruses.

The stalls took almost £400 on the day, and the final return, after all expenses were deducted, was well over £300.

STREET STALLS. This mission will be holding Stalls in the grounds of the Parramatta Town Hall (D.V.) on the following dates: Thursday, 19th July; Thursday, 23rd August; Tuesday, 16th October; Wednesday, 21st November; Wednesday, 12th December. We would appreciate gifts of good used clothing, fancy and plain work, jams, cakes, etc., for these stalls. Further particulars may be obtained from the President of the Auxiliary, Mrs. Hampson (LF9757), or the Mission Farm (YA2427).

HOME OFFERING BOXES. Supporters who have our Home Offering Boxes are asked to open them at the end of June (if they have not already done so) and forward the contents to the Secretary, Sky Pilot Fellowship, Marella Mission Farm, Kellyville, N.S.W. Other friends who would like to have Home Offering Boxes may obtain them on application to the Secretary.

AN ECHO FROM THE PAST. In 1933, following a crash landing of the aeroplane in Arnhem Land, Mr. Langford-Smith borrowed horses and rode 60 miles to the coast. In a native canoe (a hollowed tree trunk that leaked like a sieve) he crossed four miles of the Arafura Sea to Goulburn Island Mission. The following is an extract from his second book, "SKY PILOT'S LAST FLIGHT" (published by Angus & Robertson Ltd., 1936, now out of print):—

"The little black children soon adopted me, and, escorted by a group of little friends, I made tours of the beach and island. It was impossible for me to move without these little shadows, who had each to be attached to my person in some way. Often I had a little black hand clutching every finger, hands on my arms, and clinging to sleeves and coat tails; I found difficulty in walking without treading on the bare, black feet which pattered along beside me.

"I taught them how to make aeroplane propellers out of palm leaves; told stories until memory was exhausted and imagination had to be called into play. Searched the beach for shells, cats' eyes and seed pearls. Then I would sit on the warm sand while they speared tiny fish, dug for ground nuts, or searched the rocks for shell fish.

"Of course, I had to share in their meals; fires kindled on the sand cooked tiny fish, and doubtful morsels (which seemed to be inseparable from sand and ashes) were presented to me, and, what was worse, keen little eyes **watched** me eat. . . .

"When Goulburn Island is mentioned now, my memory conjures up a vision of gleaming sands and waving palm-trees; of golden sunlight shining on the deep blue of the Arafura Sea. Of confidence, love, and trust shining from the dark, bright eyes of little black children for whom Christ died. Of Mianica, Meedeck and Gwadbu saying softly: 'Tell us another story, Moningna: it's early yet'."

A gap of 23 years was bridged this month when Mianica came to visit the Mission Farm at Kellyville. Now grown to womanhood, Mianica has a fine 11-year-old son of her own. (She married a white missionary.) What a joy it was to meet her again and to see how the little, trusting child had grown into a fine Christian woman.