

# SKY PILOT NEWS June, 1972

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## THE BEST YEARS OF LIFE: From the Sky Pilot's Log

In these days of changing values it is well, sometimes, to pause to take stock: are we being stampeded into accepting propaganda for fact, or are we sure of our ground? "Everyone" tells us that this is the day of youth; and sometimes we see Youth Leaders bending over backwards to coax, beguile and flatter the teenagers into so-called Christian Clubs in an endeavour to "influence them for good". I am sure that few people would quarrel with the good intentions behind these endeavours, and we wish the Youth Leaders — be they laymen or ministers — every success; but, before we throw in our lot with them we are entitled to ask: just HOW is it intended to "influence them for good"?

It is true that any code of ethics is better than none; and that a good code of ethics is better than an indifferent one; but what are we trying to give these teenagers? Is it merely Jeremy Bentham's form of Hedonism or Utilitarianism, the "greatest good for the greatest number", thinly disguising the real aim of the "most pleasure at the cost of the least pain"? Or do we follow Socrates in the belief that virtue is knowledge and vice is ignorance; in which case all we need to do to help the young people is to "educate" them? Or on the other hand are we going to introduce them to a new source of power — power against "anti-social behaviour", bad ethics; or, if you prefer the old fashioned word that the Bible uses, just plain SIN?

In the desert country, a hundred miles from Alice Springs, an Aboriginal led me into his hut and showed me his most prized possession, a beautifully polished cabinet radiogram. He had been earning good wages and he had bought it at the township and brought it out in a taxi which had cost him almost as much as the radiogram. But watching the face of the Aboriginal, as he carefully removed the dust cover and polished an imaginary mark with his handkerchief, one could see how much that instrument meant to him, and whatever the seeming extravagance in such a setting my heart warmed to him. And then I woke up. It was not a transistor; there was no electrical power within 100 miles, and the power plug hung uselessly from the back of the instrument. I questioned him. "No", he admitted frankly, "there's no power yet, but if ever it comes this way . . ." I looked over the great sandhills where the drought had turned even the mulga to gaunt skeletons devoid of the power to survive and thought of those words: 'All power is given unto me in heaven and earth . . . without

me ye can do nothing." That's what the teenagers need, the **power** of the Holy Spirit — ethics will follow.

But when "everyone" tells us this is the day of youth, just what is meant? No one denies the value of youth but, apart from energy, the main value of youth is its potential. On this farm we value carrot or cabbage or lettuce seed only because of their potentials. Youth is valuable because of what it will be, or could be, rather than what it is in the teenager state. Sometimes we forget this, or it may be more correct to say the teenager forgets it.

Then at what age is a life more useful? Some people are quick to say that life begins at forty, but they are just as ready to agree that it ends about 60. But when, according to statistics and not popular opinion, is a man at his best? Some years ago this letter appeared in the Daily Mail, England:

"Sir — It is not good for the race to believe that a man's best days are over at sixty. It tends to break down man's energy, and prevents him from utilising the best that is within him — the best that has come from years of experience and work.

"There are figures to show that the greatest productivity of man's life lies in the decade between his sixtieth and seventieth year. The method adopted to learn the actual facts relating to man's working period was as follows:

"Some four hundred names of the most noted men in all times, from all lines of activity, were chosen. There were statesmen, painters, warriors, poets, and writers of fiction, history, and other prose works. Opposite to the name of each man was indicated his greatest work or achievement. This list was then submitted to critics, to learn their opinion of the greatest work of each man submitted. The names of their greatest works were accepted, or altered, until the list was one that could be finally accepted. After this was done the date at which the work was produced was placed after the name, and so the age was ascertained at which the individual was at his best. The list was then arranged according to decades.

"It was found that the decade of years between sixty and seventy contained thirty-five per cent. of the world's greatest achievements. Between the ages of seventy and eighty, twenty-three per cent. of the achievements fell; and in the years after the eightieth, six per cent.

"In other words, sixty-four per cent. of the great things of the world have been accomplished by men who had passed their sixtieth year; the greatest percentage, thirty-five, being in the seventh decade.

"The figures of the other periods of life are interesting. Between the fiftieth and sixtieth years are found twenty-five per cent., between forty and fifty, ten per cent. These, all totalled together, leave the almost negligible quantity of one per cent to be attributed to the period below the age of forty.

"Two great classes of work fall below the forty year limit. These are the deeds which require the extreme of physical power and vim, as the conquests of Alexander the Great; and the beautiful expression of the lyric poetry, which is typified by the nervous, super-sensitive temperament of such men as Shelley and Keats. But, taken as a whole, the figures prove conclusively that the period of the greatest achievement in a man's life comes, not when he is in his youth, but only with the years of mature manhood.

(Signed) Martin Sherwood."

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Henry Durbanville (George Henderson) published a splendid book some years ago called "The Best Is Yet To Be" (B. McCall Barbour, Scotland) in which the above letter was printed. This book is worthy of a place in any library. Personally, conscious of advancing years, I was most indignant when the book was presented to me about eight years ago; but I found it packed with sound common sense and encouragement.

To repeat, youth is valuable mainly for its possibilities as (if the quoted figures are correct) only one per cent. of the world's great achievements were made before the age of forty. There is no short-cut to experience, and experience alone will provide us with the practical material with which to make our greatest contribution to life. Do you think you are too old to serve our Lord and Master? People over eighty contributed six per cent. and those under forty, one per cent. to the quoted achievements. Rededicate your life to God and His Holy Spirit will show you where He wants you to work when you are over eighty — and even if you have not reached that age.

And the final entry in today's Log is taken from the 20th chapter of Matthew: "He went into the market-place about the **eleventh** hour and said, Go ye also into my vineyard."

**THE FUTURE OF MARELLA:** The years

have gone by and we have managed with the minimum of accommodation for the children and staff. In our leaflet published eight years ago the article you have just read appeared under the same title: "The Best Years of Life." We also mentioned the fact that we were overcrowded and had to have extra accommodation which included the building of extra staff quarters, especially a flat for the Secretary; a large dining room for the dark children; a laundry and ironing room for the children's washing; a wing for the boys' dormitory with separate staff quarters and a large playroom; besides a new roof for the main Mission House.

One by one these buildings were undertaken, including the Boys' Wing which cost over \$20,000.00 furnished; and today we can look back and thank God for His provision, for all of these have been completed and paid for and we are free of debt. But the work is expanding and the Mission Council is concerned with the future. There was some talk about re-zoning the land on which the Mission is built for residential purposes and our first thought was that we would be forced to move to another site. However we could not think of a better site than the one we have and we have been praying that God would reveal His will for us. It may be that we will be able to rebuild on the present site, but we are still waiting for Divine guidance.

If we rebuild on the present or some alternative site the Council is investigating the possibility of doing so on the "Cottage System", in which only six or eight children are in each cottage under the care of House Parents. We would, of course, still require Administrative Buildings and a general Meeting Hall, besides such facilities as would apply to all the cottages. It is a daring plan, but nothing is impossible to God, and we would ask all our friends to join us in praying for God's guidance and provision. A lot of work would be involved before any actual building commenced, but Mr. Keith Langford-Smith, as Founder and Permanent Director, would continue to direct this work as long as God gives him the health and strength; in fact, he feels that his life's work is just commencing, although he has already spent 44 years working amongst the Aborigines. Mrs. Langford-Smith has been wanting to retire as Matron and once the cottages were established the various House Parents would be responsible for the welfare of the children. Mrs. Langford-Smith well deserves a break.

Mrs. Norma Warwick, who has already served faithfully as Secretary and Treasurer for almost

23 years would continue, D.V., in this important position. The Farm Manager would be responsible for the agricultural and farm work and the maintenance of the property.

We expect that it may be several years before our suggested plans are actually operating, but, at the request of the Council, the Secretary and the Director have already visited a number of children's Homes in Sydney and Melbourne to gather information regarding the Cottage System in operation. This will be presented to the Council before we commence our real planning for the future; but one thing is certain — this work will continue, by the grace of God, as long as the need remains for caring for Aboriginal children. It should be pointed out that, as far as can be seen, there will always be a need for the short term accommodation of Aboriginal children, quite apart from the long term provision for those who remain with us for years. In the case of illness or some other family emergency it is a great help to a dark mother to know there is someone able and willing to care for her children until she is able to cater for them herself once more.

**SALE OF WORK:** The next Sale of Work is set down for 28th October, the last Saturday in the month. May we repeat again that these sales are always held on the FIRST Saturday in May and the LAST Saturday in October of each year.

We will be very grateful for gifts for the various stalls. Almost anything will suit some stall, as long as it is in good condition. Good used clothing is always in great demand. In company with other organisations we have noticed the steady decline in gifts of good used clothing. If you would like to help this work may we suggest that you turn out your wardrobe and send along those dresses and other articles that no longer fit you or are not really required now. Some friends may have put on weight and yet are reluctant to part with favourite garments; some, more fortunate, have lost weight and the baggy clothing could well be given as a thank offering to help the Aboriginal children.

Needlework and knitting is always most acceptable, especially well made aprons, of which we never seem able to supply the demand, and baby wear.

Plants for the Plant Stall are always required and those of our friends who are keen gardeners may yet have time to raise plants or strike cuttings that will be a help to us. In this way you may share in the support of the needy dark children at Marella.

Also required (but not for sale) are good, sturdy kitchen chairs or the like that can be used for the stall holders at the Sale; in fact we would be glad to hear of a number of chairs that may be for sale from a Church hall or other building. We could do with quite a number of these, provided they are strong and in good condition. The type of chairs we had in mind are those similar to the ones used in the Dr. Billy Graham Crusade. Particulars as to price, etc. could be phoned to the Secretary, Mrs. Warwick, 629-1555. As we are very short staffed it is a great help if gifts can be delivered to the Mission Farm, Acres Road, Kellyville; or railed to us in the care of Parramatta Railway Station. We realise that some older established organisations are able to send a truck to pick up parcels from the various homes and we are most grateful that so many friends contrive to send their gifts to us by rail or deliver them at the cost of some inconvenience but they may know that this is a way of doing something really worth while for the Aboriginal children.

**ROTARY CLUB OF CABRAMATTA:** Some time ago Mr. Bruce Langford-Smith spoke to the Rotary Club of Cabramatta. Following this the members of this Service Club undertook to provide us with any articles we might need up to a total of at least \$500.00. These articles were duly delivered and they consisted of bedsteads, inner-spring mattresses, saucepans, ironing boards, linen, a motor lawn mower, etc. There is also a floor polisher to follow. This was a tremendous help to us and we are most grateful to the members of this Club for all they have done for us. It is encouraging when friends like these come forward and help in a practical way. We have many problems in this work; the knowledge that we are not alone but others are standing by us makes it a lot easier.

**P.O.P.** The men in Parramatta gaol have an organisation known as P.O.P. and in this way they are able to use their skills and labour in bringing joy to the hearts of people in need. We have received a quantity of lovely warm blankets and many other gifts from them; they also send birthday presents to the dark children in our care. Besides this they repair broken toys, doing them up like new, and sending them to various children's organisations. We are deeply thankful for all that these men have done; they have brought joy into the hearts of our children and this will never be forgotten. It is touching the way our children remember them in prayer asking God's blessing on them for the good things they have done.