

SKY PILOT NEWS

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"THE NEW HUT IN POSITION"

THE KILLER. FROM THE SKY PILOT'S LOG, 2CH BROADCAST

In the far North of the Territory the stockmen thought a great deal of their cattle dogs. These dogs were bred and trained for one purpose only — to work the cattle. Their owners seldom petted them, though they praised them when they did well and scolded them soundly when they did wrong. To pet a working dog, say stockmen, is to ruin it for its duty in life. A stranger, not understanding dogs, who dared to take notice or pet a stockman's dog,

was only looking for trouble.

George's chief cattle dog, Pincher, was getting a bit old for hard work, and George bought a cattle pup from a friend and trained him to take Pincher's place. George was very proud of this pup. "You know," he said, "there ain't many pups in this country as will come up to that there new pup of mine. I only paid a quid for 'im, and he's the most promisin' dog I've ever trained — except Pincher, of course."

"He certainly looks intelligent," I agreed. "Have you tried him out with the cattle?"

"I have that. He works 'em like an old dog. Never barks unless I tell him to 'speak up'; jest works 'em quiet and steady. If a troublesome beast needs heelin', I've only got to snap me fingers and Bluey shoots in like a flash of lightnin' and fastens hold."

"But you don't want a dog to hold on like a bulldog, George."

"Give me a chance, I wasn't finished. Bluey streaks in and gives the beast a good hard nip and then drops to the ground as flat as a goanna, in case the beast kicks. He's got brains, that dog, believe me."

"Well, you've certainly taken a lot of trouble training him; he ought to turn out well. Has he any vices at all?"

"Not one. I've never knowed a dog to have such a good character. He ain't even savage, like a lot of blue cattle dogs is; not unless I sool 'im on, that is. No, he's about the best dog a man could ever hope to own — except Pincher, of course."

It certainly seemed as if George was speaking the truth. I watched Bluey walking through George's goat yard, and he never even looked at a young kid. The black piccaninnies could toddle up to him and pull his chain, and Bluey only seemed to smile at them with his big brown eyes. But when he was working a mob of wild cattle, Bluey was as relentless as death. Backwards and forwards he ran, silent, efficient, intelligent; then at a snap of George's fingers he would shoot in and heel a troublesome beast with deadly accuracy. Jim offered George a fiver for the pup, which was a lot of money in those days, but George wouldn't have sold the animal for twice the amount.

The far North is cattle country, and at the time of which I am speaking very few attempts had been made to run sheep; such attempts had always resulted in failure. When we heard that Mac was bringing a mob of sheep into the country George openly scoffed at the idea, and when they met he told Mac what he thought about it. "You're wasting your time and money," he said. "This country will never carry sheep."

"Well," Mac replied, "I hope to prove you wrong. There's no reason why sheep shouldn't do well here."

"What about grass seeds? I've heard they worked right through the hides of the sheep at Mataranka, and into the animals' hearts."

"They'll be all right," Mac insisted. "I've divided the place up into a few paddocks. I'll run cattle on the grass first, and then turn in the sheep. If I keep it well stocked I don't think the grass seeds will do much harm. Anyhow, I'm giving it a go."

George changed his argument. "I don't know," he complained, "what a man can see in runnin' sheep; not when he can run cattle, anyhow. Silly, crawlin' things they are; it must be like tryin' to run a herd of tortoises."

Mac laughed. "That's what all the cattlemen say; but there's money in sheep. It's only that you're used to cattle and have a prejudice against sheep."

"I don't care what you do on your own country," said George, magnanimously. "You can go in for possum farmin' if you like. So long as you don't let your sheep wander on to my country an' spoil the waterholes, I'm easy. There's plenty of room for sheep on your run. But what about the dingoes? Won't they touch up the sheep?"

"I hope not, but to tell you the truth, I'm a bit worried about dingoes. I can't afford to put up a dog-proof fence yet awhile, and if once the dingoes learn to kill sheep — well, things will be looking a bit serious."

"Well, I wish you luck, Mac. An' if them dingoes get botherin' your sheep you send a boy down, and maybe Smithy an' me will come along an' organise a dingo hunt. Well, so long, Mac."

Several months went by, and Mac was not troubled with dingoes or any other serious trouble. The sheep settled down very well, and even the hot weather didn't seem to affect them. Mac was busy putting up a shearing shed; though he had no machines, he was quite capable to manage the few sheep himself with hand shears. Then one morning George arrived at the Mission riding on his piebald ambler and carrying a rifle.

"Going hunting?" I asked.

"I am that, an' I hope you'll come with me. The dingoes have started on poor old Mac's sheep. They killed six last night, an' four the night before. He sent me a note to say he'll be ruined if we can't get the dingo."

"The dingo? There's only one doing the killing, then?"

"That's all at present. The black-trackers picked up his trail and followed it a mile into the scrub before they lost the tracks in the rocks."

Can you spare a day to come huntin'?"

"I think so. Joe will be all right here. I haven't had a day off for over a month, so I am due for a couple now. I'll be ready in half an hour. Make yourself a drink of tea; you know where everything is."

A couple of hours later we dismounted at Mac's station, and he came to meet us. He looked worried. "Hullo, you fellows," he said. "It was good of you to come right away. Once a dingo gets the taste of blood, it kills for the joy of killing. If we don't get it soon, I'll have no sheep left. My horse is tied up ready. How about a drink of tea?"

"No," said George, which was unusual for him. "We're right; let's get goin'. It may be a long chase. Have the trackers picked up the trail?"

"They're scouting round now. The tracks are clear to the first waterhole. We can meet them there."

And so began a long and trying hunt. We followed the dingo's track for miles, sometimes waiting for an hour or more for the trackers to pick up the elusive trail. We had a quick lunch in the bush, and by sundown were back near George's hut, where the natives lost the tracks again.

"George," Mac said, "the dingo must be paying your goat yard a visit. Have you lost any goats lately?"

"No, there ain't much chance of that. Pincher and Bluey are loose at night, an' they'll keep any dingo away."

Mac had an idea. "What about bringing one of your dogs to my place for the night," he suggested. "It might prevent the dingo doing any further damage tonight, and we'll have another go after him tomorrow. Sheep dogs are no good after dingoes, and I keep them tied up at night. How about Pincher?"

"That's a good idea. But Pincher is getting a bit old, so I'll bring Bluey. He's good for a long chase, an' if the dingo comes back Bluey won't let him get away once I set him at the tracks."

We camped at Mac's that night. He had the sheep in the yard a quarter of a mile from the house, and George left Bluey at the sheep-yard after instructing him to "Watch them sheep," as George put it. The intelligent dog squatted down obediently, and we left the sheep in his care. That evening it was only natural that the talk turned to dingo sheep killers. George knew more about sheep than we would have expected from a cattleman, and he held the floor.

"It ain't only dingoes," he said, "that you have to watch. Sometimes a sheep dog turns killer and sneaks back at night to kill the sheep

that he has guarded faithfully all day — jest for the sheer joy of killin'."

"Is there any way," I asked, "of curing a dog that has developed the killing habit?"

"Only a bullet," George replied. "That's the only cure. It comes hard on a sheep-man to have to kill a favourite dog, but it's the unwritten law. Once a dog has taken to killin' sheep the owner has to shoot it — or get someone else to do it for him. One dog can cause hundreds of pounds damage."

We were just thinking of turning in when George motioned for silence and stood listening intently. "It's the sheep!" he exclaimed. "Quick, grab your rifles; the dingo's back again. Smithy, you rouse the trackers and catch up as quick as you can. Come on, Mac, quick!"

It took me a little time to rouse the blacks, and when I hurried down to the sheep yard I found George and Mack standing by the bodies of three sheep whose throats had been torn out; they were still warm. There was no sign of Bluey.

"Come on, George," I cried. "It's no use standing here and letting the dingo get away. Bluey must be after him now. Come on."

George didn't speak, and I noticed that he looked white and drawn in the light of the paper-bark flares. Mac cleared his voice and spoke in little more than a whisper. "We found the tracks," he said, "but Bluey wouldn't follow them — not even when George sooled him on."

"Well, where is he now?"

"Don't you understand? Bluey sneaked off — he . . . he had blood on him."

"It couldn't be," I cried. "George, there's some mistake! He may have got the blood on him when he attacked the dingo."

George spoke huskily. "There's only one set of tracks. There's no doubt about it. *I know Bluey's tracks!*"

"I'm terribly sorry, George," said Mac. "Could we give Bluey another chance?"

"No, Mac, it's the law! But . . . I couldn't do it myself . . . you'll have to do it. Poor Bluey, poor old fellow!"

George looked ten years older as he walked away. I went back to the hut with him. Ten minutes later a shot rang out. I saw the old stockman flinch, as if the bullet had struck him. . . . Mac lost no more of his sheep.

Once a dog turns killer it means the death sentence. There's no second chance; it is the law. But with God there is a second chance. The wages of sin is death, and we are told that all have sinned. The death sentence has been passed on us. It is the law!

But Grace is stronger than the law. Christ died, not that the law might be broken, but to

enable us to obtain a righteousness that was impossible under the law. St. Paul says: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."

Yes, there is yet hope for us, even though the sentence of death has been passed on us by the law. When we were yet without strength, as Paul says, in due time Christ died for the ungodly — that is, for us.

And the final entry in today's Log is taken from the 8th Chapter of Romans: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

SALE OF WORK. Will you please remember the date of our next Sale of Work and Rally at the Mission Farm? It will be held (D.V.) on Saturday, 6th May. Our last Rally in October was the best we have ever held, but this Autumn we expect a greater number of friends to visit us. If you could arrange a car party amongst your own Church friends it would do much to make the day the success we anticipate.

THE NEW HUT. At long last the hut has arrived from Herne Bay and is in position on brick piers. It dwarfs the other buildings, being over 100 feet in length and 20 feet wide. This was a real answer to prayer, and it should resolve the acute shortage of accommodation for some time to come. Of course, there is a lot of work required before it can be used as sleeping quarters for the dark children; the present partitions must be removed and new ones inserted. Then light, power and water have to be connected and the whole building painted. Fortunately, we have had several tentative offers of help with the labour from Lions and Apex Clubs and other organisations who are willing to arrange working bees.

Our first need, of course, is for the finance to pay for the material needed. Much of the material at present in partitions can be used again, but a great deal more will be required. Paint is also an expensive item. Our present plan is to put one section of the building into use first, and the rest will be renovated as funds

permit. About £500 will be needed for this first section; but now we have the building actually in place, there is a greater incentive for us to work quickly to put it into use.

All the present children will be moved from their temporary quarters into the new building as soon as possible; then we will be able to consider accepting some of the more needy children who have had to be refused admission because of lack of accommodation. Week by week we receive pathetic requests from dark mothers to take their children for a few weeks or a few months — or permanently. Many of them are waiting anxiously for us to fit up the new building, and in the meantime the children are passed from one relative to another as circumstances demand. Children who are passed about like this, with no settled home or regular schooling, have little chance in life; it is up to us to do what we can to provide them with a home and love and proper food and attention as soon as possible.

HOME OFFERING BOXES. Those friends who hold Home Offering Boxes are asked to open them as soon as possible after the end of March and send the contents to the Secretary, Box 29, Post Office, Castle Hill. We would be glad to hear of other friends who would be willing to take a Home Offering Box. It is surprising how those odd coppers and small coins mount up, and they are a great help to this work for the dark children.

HELP ON THE STAFF. There is a vacancy here for a Christian girl or woman to help with the children and in the home. It is not easy work. There are many problems and difficulties associated with work amongst dark children, and only those with the true missionary spirit would be suitable. Further particulars may be obtained from the Director, to whom applications should be addressed.

RITA WENBERG. Some months ago Rita came to help Isabelle. We knew that she was only available temporarily, but when she left we were very sorry to see her go, as she had proved herself a very capable and thorough little worker. It is very difficult to obtain dark girls with character and background suitable for this work.