

SKY PILOT NEWS

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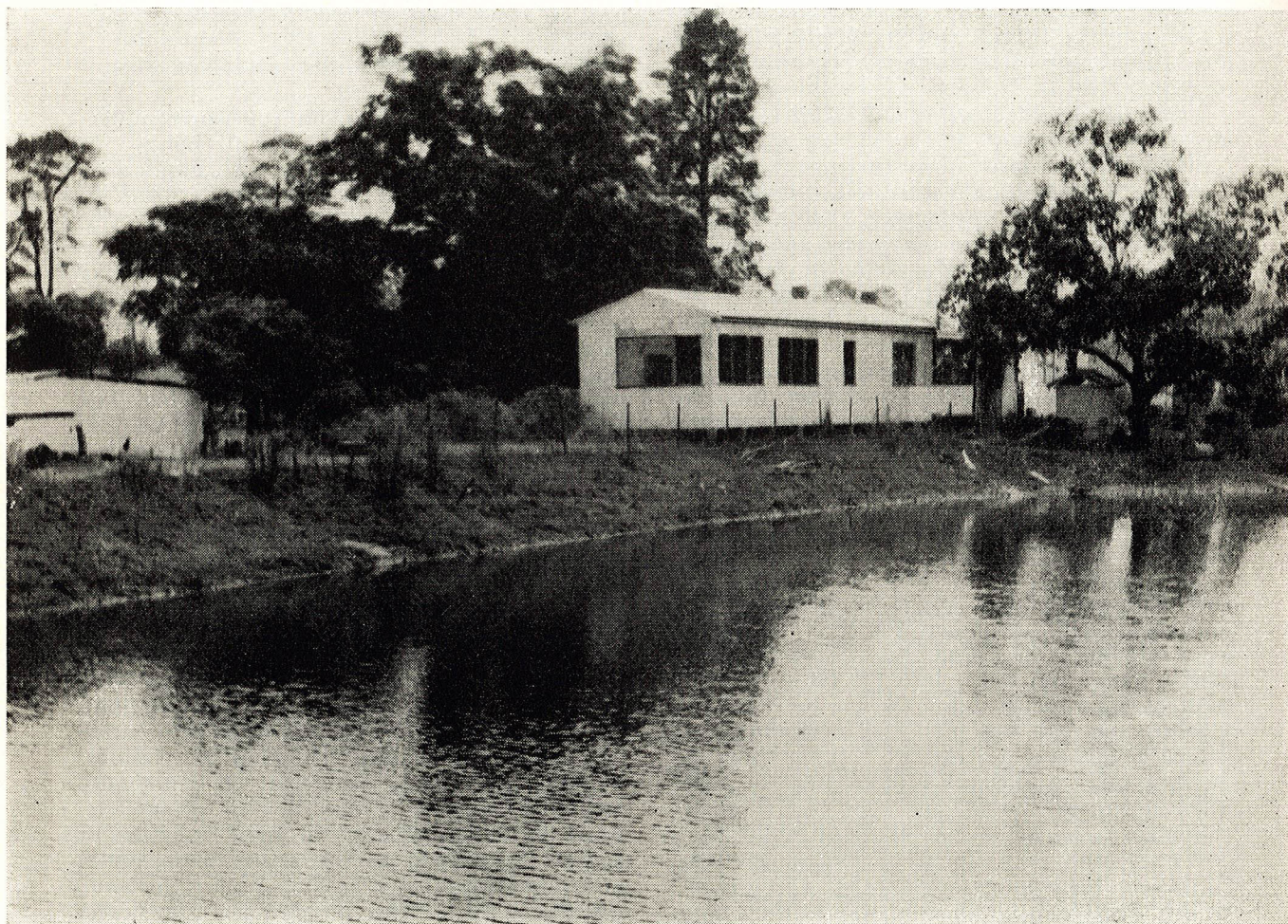
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"THE ANNEXE — BACK VIEW."

Joe, who had spent most of his life working for wages, had decided to set up in business on his own. The business, of course, was cattle raising, at that time the main industry in Arnhem Land. As with many others in a similar position, Joe had very pleasant dreams of the joy of "being his own boss"; he also had various half-formed ideas of improving working conditions for his native stock boys; visions of bringing prosperity and contentment to those whom he always thought had been exploited by the white man on the one hand, and by lazy, greedy, tribal relatives on the other.

Quart-pot was his first employee, his great experiment, and the good-natured, grinning native was as pleased as his new master at the prospect of the future. Joe never did things by halves; he dressed his stock boy in a new, expensive and complete rig-out. There was some difficulty in fitting the largest available elastic-side boots on Quart-pot's number eleven feet; the corduroy trousers had to be rolled up a little in the legs; but the striped shirt, the broad-rimmed hat and the red bandana were perfect. Joe even supplied a real leather belt with pouch for knife and matchbox, a greenhide stockwhip and a pair of spurs like young

harpoons. It took Quart-pot a little time to get used to the spurs; he had been accustomed to sitting on his heels, but the stiff boots and the long spurs soon taught him the advisability of exercising a little care in his seating arrangements.

When Quart-pot was finally dressed, Joe examined him with pride. "There you are," he said. "It's not every stock boy that has a turn-out like I've given you; mind you, look after it, and don't lose anything. I'm not made of money."

"Properly good-fellow," said Quart-pot. "Him altogether belong me?"

"Yes, it's all yours. Make sure you earn it."

For a few days, all was well. Quart-pot took a pride in his appearance; the clothes — even the spurs — were worn day and night; goanna-fat well rubbed in, kept the belt and boots soft and pliable — and odoriferous. Then something went wrong. First the bandana, then the treasured belt, then the boots, disappeared; and a furious Joe searched the camp-blacks and retrieved the lost articles one by one. He abused Quart-pot, who looked on sheepishly. "You fool," he stormed. "Why did you let those thieving scoundrels take your clothes? If they want clothes, they can work for 'em. I can't afford to replace things like that. If you lose anything more I'll tan the hide off you!"

For maybe a week Quart-pot retained his complete outfit; then piece by piece it disappeared again, and when Joe went to search the camp-blacks he found the wily natives had shifted camp and faded into the bush — with most of Quart-pot's outfit. When Joe went to George, the old bushman, for sympathy, he was met with laughter instead. "It's nothing to laugh about," wailed the injured Joe. "I paid a lot for those clothes, and now they've been stolen by a lazy lot of good-for-nothing blacks."

"They ain't been stolen," George suggested. "I reckon Quart-pot gave 'em away. I seen some of the blacks pass by on their way to the coast; all those wearin' Quart-pot's things were relations of his, either by blood or by marriage."

"Quart-pot wouldn't have given 'em away; he thought the world of 'em. I've never seen a native so proud of his clothes."

"Maybe it wasn't Quart-pot's fault; he HAD to give 'em away."

"You mean they threatened him, or bullied him into giving them things? Perhaps you're right."

"I didn't mean it that way," said George. "And you won't do any good blamin' Quart-pot; he doesn't understand."

"But he knows quite well that the clothes belong to him. I told him so when I gave them to him."

"Maybe that's the whole trouble; if you told

him the clothes were his, he thinks he has a right to give 'em away."

"But why would he want to give them away? He must have been bullied into it; unless he thinks I will give him more."

"No," said George, "I don't think he expected you to give him more; and he probably didn't *want* to give 'em away; but he wasn't bullied into it. He just *had* to part with 'em, that's all."

"What do you mean? I don't understand you!"

"I know that, Joe. And you don't understand the natives, neither; it's all bound up in their kinship laws. It's a bit complicated, and it's a long story, so let's have a drink o' tea and I'll spend the rest of the evenin' tryin' to explain."

George, who had lived amongst the blacks all his life, understood the reason for Quart-pot's action; but he was not very good at explaining, and after two or three hours' talk Joe was more bewildered than ever. Most white men, without a knowledge of Aboriginal law and custom, would be just as confused as Joe; and a great deal of misunderstanding has arisen in the past because of this ignorance of circumstances. It would take more space than is available here to explain fully; all we can hope to do is to outline a few basic principles that govern an Aboriginal's behaviour.

KINSHIP OBLIGATIONS: To the Aboriginal, kinship is the basis of all his social behaviour. He is related by blood or by marriage to every person in the tribe (in fact or by assumption), and he has obligations of a positive or negative nature to each relation, or group of relations. To take the negative ones first: he is not only forbidden to marry certain close or distant relations, he is not allowed to speak to some of them. A mother-in-law is specially taboo; under no circumstances must he ever speak to her, nor may she speak to him, or even see him. (The Aborigines have no mother-in-law troubles!). He may speak to some relations, but must not laugh or joke with them; he may speak with some, but not face them (if he sits with them, it must be with his back turned all the time). He is allowed to camp with or sit next to some, but not others, from whom he must be separated by a certain distance at all times. This briefly and somewhat inadequately explains some features of the Aboriginal's behaviour.

On the positive side, he also has obligations to certain relations, and he is expected by law and custom to make presents to them. There is usually an order of precedence, which varies slightly in different tribes; in one tribe, he must give to his father first, mother's brother second, wife's parents third, and so on. This custom

arises from the principle of reciprocity which runs through all native life; a man has received gifts in the past, and will receive gifts in the future from these relations, to whom he is required to make gifts. Then, gifts may also form payment for services rendered in regard to betrothal, marriage, or initiation. Gifts are made to the wife's parents, the wife's mother's brother, and other relations from the time of betrothal; those men who helped him through the various stages of initiation also have to be repaid by presents.

Amongst tribal natives, these presents usually take the form of spears and other articles made, or food secured by hunting; but the stock boy who works for the white man often has not the time or opportunity of fulfilling his obligations to his relations. However, when he is "paid" by the white man in cash, clothing, food or tobacco, he has the opportunity of paying his debts, and he does so, often giving away articles he greatly desires for himself. Unfortunately many white men, like Joe, without a knowledge of this tribal law, assume that the stock boy is being exploited by his relations, and this leads to trouble and misunderstanding. In order to "protect" the stock boy, some white men (even Government Officials and Missionaries) retain most of the boy's wages, which are banked in a trust account for the boy. This is desirable up to a point, as many Aborigines have little idea of the value of money or articles, but if it is overdone it means that the stock boy is unable to fulfil his tribal obligations by making presents, and there is a danger of upsetting the whole social organisation of the tribe. Though this does not apply to the "civilised" natives (who are already detribalised) to the same extent, the same urge is often in evidence, especially where the person concerned has been in contact with older natives. Though we may have every sympathy with the employer who provides the clothing, etc., and sees articles given away apparently without consideration or understanding of their actual worth, it is also necessary to understand the motive behind the gifts so that provision can be made for an Aboriginal to fulfil his obligations without denuding himself of essential clothing or other articles. It is a long, hard road to the understanding of the Australian Aborigines.

RALPH: Our little Dark Baby is back with us at the Mission Farm once again. After over three months in hospital, he was discharged this month, and we had the joy of bringing him home. We have much cause to praise God for answered prayer, and we will never forget the joy in his face at that homecoming. He was a general favourite in hospital, and the nurses were wonderfully good to him; and

it seemed as if the whole hospital staff was there to say good-bye to him. Many friends saw him on T/V during the heat-wave in the National News, together with other children at the hospital.

It almost broke his little heart to be left at the hospital at first. He didn't cry out loud, but he sat in his cot sobbing silently while the big tears ran down his dark face. After a few days he settled down, but there was a hurt look in his face every time we had to leave him after a visit. Even now he sometimes wakes at night, saying: "I want to see my Faver." As long as he can see the Sky Pilot, he is quite content to go back to sleep again. During the day he keeps his eye on Mrs. Langford-Smith; if she disappears for a time, he is terribly upset till he can find her again. He is not spoilt, and he doesn't need entertaining; he just wants to be sure that he will not lose those whom he has learned to love and trust.

Ralph is looking very well. He has grown and put on weight while in hospital. His lungs were not affected, only glands, and he was not infectious at any time, so there is no fear about his playing with the other children.

BUILDING: The four new rooms are now completed, ready for painting. One is already in use as a dining room for the Dark Children. As it adjoins the kitchen, it means a great saving of time and labour. In the past, all meals had to be carried some distance to the children's quarters, and in wet weather this was very inconvenient. These rooms will add considerably to our accommodation and make it very much easier to carry on our work. Previously the Mission office was a glassed-off end of the front verandah; in wet weather the rain damaged our books and papers, and during the hot weather the temperature was sometimes over 115 degrees in this room, making it almost impossible to work.

We were not able to secure enough voluntary labour to complete the rooms, and had to employ two carpenters to help us out. This, of course, added considerably to the cost, and it has left our Building Fund very much in debt. However, the Branches of our Women's Auxiliary are working very hard this year, as are our many friends and voluntary workers, and we are confident that the steady progress made will be maintained. The Katoomba Branch is providing the money for the new office; it is a wonderful effort for a young Branch, and we are all justly proud of what they have already done.

RALLY AND SALE OF WORK: The next Rally and Sale of Work will be held (D.V.) on Saturday, 7th May, 1960, at Marella Mission Farm. We hope, with the help of the Youth

Fellowship, to have extra room and shelter for this occasion, and it should be far more convenient than last time. We hope to be able to break the record set by our Rally in November last, when all expectations were exceeded. As we have Street Stalls from time to time and very shortly will be opening our little shop at the Mission Farm, we would be glad if friends would continue preparing articles for sale. Jams, pickles and sauce are always in demand; also needlework of any kind, good used clothing, books, new or second-hand, ornaments and pictures, old glassware, pottery, etc., for the White Elephant Stall.

BUILDING MATERIAL: With an extensive building programme in view, we are using a great deal of timber, iron, bricks, and other building material. Through the unselfish efforts of friends, we have been able to secure much of this material at little or no cost. Mr. Foley, the Assistant Director of the Youth Fellowship, managed to obtain over a thousand feet of really good corrugated iron for 1/- a foot. Mr. Maher, our Honorary Carrier, brought us three full loads of bricks and brick-bats, sufficient for the steps and piers of the new rooms and for concreting several shed floors; the bricks, the carriage and the labour were donated by him — a magnificent effort for the dark children. Mr. M. Porter has collected all the corrugated fibro for the barbecue kitchen, and also donated rabbit hutches, timber, etc.; he also built the piers for the extension of the kitchen, as well as helping in other ways. Mr. Tooke, another voluntary worker, put the whole of the roof on the four new rooms just completed, and he has offered guttering and labour for watering troughs to simplify the watering of the birds on the Mission Farm. Mr. Ray Mitchell and Mr. Ken Crossman set up the pumping plant and laid the suction piping for our irrigation system, which is now in operation. But it is impossible to mention by name our many willing voluntary workers who have done so much to lighten the burden of responsibility and cost from our shoulders; we can only say a very inadequate "thank you." Our Lord said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

THE SKY PILOT FELLOWSHIP: Just at the moment our thoughts and efforts largely concern Marella Mission Farm, the Home for Aboriginal Children. It is only right and proper that these little ones should have a home, love and security. In the five or six years since our first dark baby came to this Home much has been accomplished. (We had other dark children in our own private home before commencing with separate quarters for the dark children, of course.) But it must

not be thought that our sole aim is to care for a few dark children. Even if we are able to care for 20, or even 40 children, this is only a handful compared to the great number in need of such a Home; we hope that many similar Homes will be opened by other organisations in different districts. One very important branch of our work is to arouse public interest in the Aborigines and seek to divert it into the right channels.

UNDERSTANDING: So few people understand the background of the Aborigines or the nature of the problems confronting them. One of the purposes of this leaflet is to mention, as simply as possible, some customs and laws confusing to white people. By deputation meetings, books and radio we hope to extend this interest in the Aborigines. It is some years since the Sky Pilot's Log broadcasts ceased; and yet not a week passes without our coming in contact with previously unknown friends who were regular listeners to this session. At a recent meeting, the father of several children who had "grown-up" on the Sky Pilot's Log, presented us with a cheque for a large amount as a "thank-offering" for what the session had meant to his children. Almost every day we go shopping or visiting or to take meetings we meet someone who was a regular listener. Many children who listened to the Children's Session have now grown up and become regular supporters of Marella Mission Farm. We thank God for this evidence of His blessing on an unique session which has left such a mark.

SKY PILOT'S LOG: Constantly we are being asked: "When will the Sky Pilot's Log resume?" That is something we cannot say. But now the work at Marella is becoming established, it might soon be possible to consider at least an occasional radio broadcast. It has been suggested by many friends lately that we record several sessions with the same old George and the other characters, but dealing with the problems of the Aborigines. It seems possible that some radio stations would be willing to allow some time occasionally to be devoted entirely to the Aborigines. We do not mean sessions to advertise our own work (that is a different matter), but sessions that would be as interesting and entertaining as the stories from the old Sky Pilot's Log, but produced with the desire to help people to understand the Aborigines and to encourage them to assist in a sane and practical way all Aborigines in our community. This would, of course, bring an added strain to the Sky Pilot himself; but if it is of God, strength will be given for the need. If you are interested, we ask first that you will pray very definitely about it; and second, that you will write to us, giving your views.