

SKY PILOT NEWS

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Director: K. Langford-Smith, F.R.G.S.

Secretary: Norma K. Warwick.

Postal address: P.O. Box 29, Castle Hill, N.S.W.

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"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD."

GEORGE'S SON: 2CH Broadcast from THE SKY PILOT'S LOG

Arnhem Land, the most northern portion of the Northern Territory, was a very isolated place thirty years ago. Because of this, no doubt the few white men who lived there preferred to maintain their own ideas of law and justice without seeking the aid of the police, whose nearest representative might be hundreds of miles away. The justice of the bushmen was often rough and crude; they had their unwritten law, and the justice that was meted out to those

who broke the law of the bush was, according to their lights, fair, reasonable and inevitable.

Jake had a cattle station on the borders of Arnhem Land. He lived alone, depending on black stockboys to help him with the mustering, branding and other duties. He ruled his little kingdom with a rod of iron, though not without reasonable care for the natives who worked for him. His word was his bond. If he promised a native anything, he was scrupulous in keeping

his promise — no matter if it was a feed or a hiding. He was generous in feeding his native workers and their families; as far as finance permitted, he kept them supplied with clothing, blankets, tobacco and other simple commodities; but he never allowed them to take liberties, and he punished neglect of duty, laziness or theft, ruthlessly.

It was Joe who first brought word that everything was not well in Jake's little kingdom. "Do you know," he said, "things are only middling with Jake?"

"What's the matter with him?" asked Dick. "Is he sick, or something?"

"No," replied Joe. "He's not sick, but he's hopping mad. I've never seen him so worked up before."

George chuckled. "It's nothing very unusual for Jake to be hopping mad. He's one of the most impatient fellows I've ever met in the bush. Seems to have a chip on his shoulder most of the time."

"I know that," Joe admitted, "but this time I'm afraid there will be murder done; though Jake wouldn't call it that, of course. Someone has been thieving his stores, and so far he hasn't been able to catch him."

"Jake's a hard man," said George. "Not that he don't treat his blacks well, but he expects too much of them. He can't stand for theft. Most blacks will help themselves to a bit of tea and sugar, or a stick of tobacco, if they have the chance. Even Lefthand ain't perfect. I've had him since he was a lad, and he'd give his life for me, but all the same I wouldn't leave tobacco about and expect him not to help himself when he was short."

Dick looked surprised. "I thought Lefthand was as honest as the day," he remarked.

"So he is," said George. "So he is — in things that really matter. What you might say is that he steals within reason. Now, myself, I don't take no notice of it; but if one of Jake's blacks was so much as to take a half-smoked bumper, Jake would tan the hide off him."

"This time," Joe told us, "it's more serious than that. Someone has been breaking into his store and taking large quantities of stuff and re-selling it to the bush natives and hoboos camped on the creek. Jake reckons he's lost £50 worth of stores already."

George shook his head. "That don't sound like a blackfellow to me. More likely it's one of the bad whites, or a half-caste."

"Whoever it is," said Joe, "Jake's looking for him with a gun. He'll shoot him on sight if he catches him."

"But that would be murder!" Dick exclaimed. "He wouldn't do that, surely?"

"I wouldn't put it past him," George observed. "Jake is hot-headed, and he wouldn't call it murder; he would call it justice."

"But," asked Joe, "isn't there anything we can do about it? We might warn Jake that if he kills anyone, it will mean that he'll have to face trial for murder."

"That's only bluff," George replied. "The police are too far off to worry much. If Jake said he shot a blackfellow who was breaking into his store, he'd get off — same as you or I would if we shot a burglar breaking into our house. They might tell him he ought to have aimed a bit lower; that's about all. There's not a thing we can do about it. But I feel sorry for the poor fool who's trying to put one over Jake. He's sure running a risk."

Several weeks went by, and we heard nothing further of Jake. The mustering took us to the northern boundary, and on the way back with cattle we called in at Jake's hut. There was a lot of wailing and shouting in the blacks' camp, and Joe, who had ridden ahead to the hut, came galloping back. "Quick, you fellows," he gasped. "Come as quick as you can. Jake's got the thief and dragged him outside. Says he's going to shoot him. Come on!"

We raced Joe to the hut, where Jake was standing under a coolibah tree. Tied to the tree was a half-caste boy about sixteen years of age; surrounding him was a crowd of excited, wailing natives. George took charge. "Now, see here, Jake," he asked, "what's all this about?"

"None of your business," Jake growled. "You keep out of it."

"Well," said George, "I don't want to interfere in another man's business; but seeing I'm here as a witness, I want to know what you aim to do with that lad?"

Jake spoke with deadly calm; we could see with what effort he was keeping his temper under control. "I'm going to make an example of him," he told us. "I said I'd shoot the man who's been stealing my stores, and, by heaven, I'll do it. I ain't never broken my word yet. He's had warning; now he's for it." Jake turned to the wretched boy and raised his voice. "Come on, you, get ready! In one minute I'm going to blow out your brains. You know what it's for."

"Hold on, Jake," Joe called. "You can't do that! If you'd caught him in the act of breaking in and had shot him, you might have got away with it. If you shoot him in cold blood like this, you'll be tried for murder."

"That's right," Dick added. "Don't be a fool, Jake; there's enough witnesses here to have you hanged for this."

"Shut up!" yelled Jake. "I don't care if I have fifty witnesses. The more the better. I'm waiting for them to round up the rest of the blacks. I

want witnesses. I want them to know that I mean what I say. If I make an example of this thief, there won't be so many to follow his example. Come on, you! When I count ten, I'm going to shoot. One, two, three . . ."

"Stop it, Jake," Dick yelled. "You can't do it. I tell you . . ."

George pushed Dick aside, and whispered: "Leave this to me." He turned to Jake and raised his voice. "Just a minute, Jake!"

"Four, five, six . . ."

"Hold it, Jake!"

"Seven, eight, nine . . . Get away, George, you fool! Stand aside, or by heaven I'll shoot the two of you!"

"Look at George!" gasped Dick, grabbing Joe's arm. "He's stepped in front of the lad, and Jake's still pointing the gun! Will we rush him?"

"No, leave it to George," Joe advised. "We wouldn't have a hope. Jake knows how to use a gun, and he's not human when he's in a temper like this. Leave it to George."

George calmly turned his back on Jake and the pointed gun, and, stooping down, spoke to the weeping, terrified half-caste boy. "Say, lad, are you guilty or not? Don't be afraid of me; I'm here to help you, but I want the truth. Did you steal Jake's stores?"

"You eye!" came the trembling reply. "Me steal 'im tucker all right, but me sorry now."

"There you are," Jake yelled. "He's as guilty as hell. He admits it. Stand aside, George, and see justice done."

George whispered to the lad for a few moments, and a dawning look of wonder came into the terrified, haunted eyes. George calmly drew his knife and cut the cords that bound the boy to the tree. Still standing between the boy and Jake's gun, he turned to face the executioner.

"By heavens!" yelled Jake, in a fury. "You'll be sorry for this! I'm not going to let you interfere with justice. I swore I'd shoot that miserable wretch, and by heavens, I'll do it. You won't stop me!"

"Take it easy, Jake," said George, quietly. "Do you know anything about this half-caste boy? His name, I mean, and where he comes from?"

"His name's Freddie, and I picked him up the Katherine. I'm sorry I did. This is how he repaid my kindness. Well, he had his chance; now he's going to pay the price. Stand aside, George, it's no business of yours."

"It is my business. Now I'll tell you something that may surprise you. FREDDIE IS MY SON. Do you get that?"

There was absolute silence. Jake's jaw

dropped. "Your son!" he gasped. "That miserable half-caste is your son? You're kidding!"

"No, I ain't," said George. "Freddie is my son, and I'm going to be responsible for him, see! You say you never broke your word — well, neither did I. You'll have to kill me before you touch a hair on Freddie's head."

Jake broke into gusts of ribald laughter. "Ha, ha, ha! Your son! Saint George! So the skeleton's out of the cupboard at last! Ha, ha ha! I must say he don't do you much credit!"

"Maybe I've neglected my responsibilities," George told him quietly. "But I'm taking over now. I'll pay for everything Freddie's stolen, and I'll see he never goes wrong again. I'm taking him with me right now. He's guilty — there's no doubt about that — but I'm asking you to let him off for my sake. You won't lose by it!"

"Take him, and welcome!" Jake yelled. "Ha, ha, this is going to be the joke of the whole Northern Territory. You're a dark horse, George, I must say! All the same, you'd have been better rid of him. Ha, ha, ha, what a joke!"

George was careful to shield Freddie until he had ridden out of gunshot. We then left Jake and rode slowly back to the cattle. Dick was the first to speak. "If that don't beat the band!" he muttered. "Who would have thought George had a half-caste son? It's going to go against him when this story gets around. Isn't there a law against that sort of thing?"

"Yes," said Joe. "One hundred pounds fine or twelve months in gaol. All the same, I admire George for the way he acted. He might have been a bit late accepting responsibility, but when it came to the point, he did his duty. All the same, I wouldn't have believed it of George."

It was evening before I saw George alone. We were in the mustering camp, and Freddie was following George around like a faithful dog. George broke a rather long silence. "Well," he said, "I'll have to muster a lot more bullocks before the wet season. I'll need all the money I can get. This son of mine is going to cost me a pretty penny, but it's worth it. Poor little devil! He ain't had much chance."

"George," I said, "it's strange that Freddie has red hair. Not many half-castes have red hair in this district. YOUR hair isn't red."

"Shut up, will you!" said George, glancing hastily around to see if we were alone. "And keep your thoughts to yourself. He's my son now, and I'm going to look after him. I'm taking the responsibility, see! Poor little devil! It was a close go."

And the final entry in to-day's Log is taken from the First Chapter of St. John's Gospel: "He

came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

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NEXT SALE OF WORK. Please make a note of the date of our next Rally and Sale of Work, to be held at the Mission Farm, Kellyville, on Saturday, 29th October, 1960 (D.V.). Each year this function is growing larger, and as so much depends on it, we would be glad if friends would begin now to collect, or make the various articles for sale on the Stalls. There will be further reminders in this paper, but please make a note of the date NOW.

MONEY ORDERS AND POSTAL NOTES. We would like all our supporters to make a special note of the fact that our postal address is Box 29, Post Office, Castle Hill. All money orders and postal notes should be made payable at CASTLE HILL POST OFFICE, and not Kellyville. This would save us a great deal of time and inconvenience.

RECORD SALE OF WORK. The Sale of Work held at the Mission Farm on the 7th of this month was a great success, in spite of one of the most unpleasant, windy days we have ever experienced. A surprising number of supporters braved the weather, and, although it was difficult to count heads, as some people left early or came later, it was estimated that between 1,500 and 2,000 people were here during the day. Over £506 was taken on the day, and after expenses were taken out it left about £440 net profit, which is the best we have had for many years. We are deeply grateful to those who supplied goods for the various Stalls, those who helped as voluntary workers in various ways, and those who attended and made purchases. To see the steadily increasing financial results after each fete is most encouraging, and we have real cause to praise God for the evidence of His blessing, and the increasing number of supporters.

RUBBER BANDS. Our appeal for egg cartons brought immediate and generous response, and we are thankful to say these cartons are still coming in. We are, unfortunately, not in a position to be able to call at the various homes for them, but friends with cars have been very good in bringing them direct to the Mission Farm. If packed one inside another while open, they take up little space, and may be railed or left at Parramatta Railway Station, addressed to the Mission Farm. Another need is for small

rubber bands, such as are sometimes found around delivered newspapers. We use many thousands of these in a year, and if friends would save them for us, it would be of considerable help. They are light, and could be posted without much trouble or cost, but the saving in cost to us would amount to the support of a dark child for many days.

BUILDING, ETC. Although not very much time or money has been available for building, we have progressed slowly and steadily. Cupboards have been built in the kitchen and office; shelves have been erected for the store and library; an unfinished room in the main house has been lined and turned into a nursery for some of the little dark children for whom there is no room in the other sleeping quarters. In the enlarged kitchen, a double sink has been installed, cupboards built, and others are under construction.

The kitchen sink has been connected to a new drainage system, which will be continued, as finance is available, to connect the toilets with the proposed septic tank. As this all takes money, we have progressed slowly, but each addition is one step forward, and already our visitors are noticing the many improvements.

It was necessary for us to have a new office. Previously a glassed-in corner of the front verandah was used as an office. In winter time this was freezing cold, and the rain beat in and often damaged our papers and records; in the summer the temperature was frequently over 100 degrees, and sometimes went up to over 115 degrees. Besides this, the temporary office (which has been in use for about ten years) was too small to use for meetings, which had to be held in the dining room or lounge. One of the rooms in the newly-completed annexe has been set aside as the registered office of the Mission. It is a great comfort, and the Secretary is now able to work in summer or winter with a reasonable degree of comfort. In this room we are able to hold our Council, Committee and Prayer meetings, without having to disturb the rest of the household. This new office is the gift of the Blue Mountains Branch of the Sky Pilot Fellowship Women's Auxiliary. Although it has not yet been fully paid for, this young Branch has done a wonderful job, and their gift will be a great asset to the Mission as a whole, and it will be a permanent monument to the Blue Mountains Branch.

To God be the glory for all that has been done in the past, all that we are able to do now for His little dark children, and for what, by His help, we are able to do in the future.