

# SKY PILOT NEWS Aug., 1969

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Cedric

## THE MIRACLE: From the Sky Pilot's Log, 2CH Broadcast

Sometimes we ask God to work a miracle. The trouble is that often the miracle happens so easily and naturally that we forget it was God who worked it. Perhaps we are in desperate need and

we pray for help; and the help comes from the man next door. We are very grateful to him and forget it was God who sent him. And today's story is about a miracle.



This story was first written about 1935 and it concerns a place on the borders of Arnhem Land which in those days was very isolated from the outside world.

Little Belle, the boatsherd, needed sleepily and sat up with a jerk. It would never do to fall asleep while the goats were feeding on the sandridge. Any stragglers that wandered into the jungle would become the prey of prowling dingoes or bush blacks. The river was close, too, and Belle knew that crocodiles were lurking in the shallow water near the pandanus palms, just waiting for a thirsty goat to approach.

Belle rose to her feet and walked round the feeding goats, chasing the more venturesome kids back into the herd. Then she sat down again in the shade. Her clock — the sun — told her it wanted two full hours before it was time to take the goats back to the yard while she ate her dinner and had the afternoon siesta. And she felt so sleepy; the morning had never seemed so long.

Slowly the shadow crept round and Belle emptied from her lap a heap of bright red and black wild-bean seeds she had intended making into a necklace. She was too tired to work now. She was feeling cold, too, and she shivered a little; which was strange on such a hot tropical morning.

Suddenly, on hearing a droning sound in the air, Belle started to her feet and anxiously searched the sky. She thought for a moment it was the Mission aeroplane, the "Sky Pilot"; but it was only a brightly coloured Christmas beetle lazily flying by. During the last six months only one white visitor had called at the selection — the Mission pilot. She had been shy and half afraid of him at first, but soon they were fast friends. How wonderful it must be to fly above the soft white clouds and visit all the different parts of the country! He had told her stories of big cities; of boats that carried hundreds of people; of trains that travelled quicker than a horse could gallop — things Belle had only seen in pictures. She asked him many questions and he tried to answer them all and never laughed at her, as she was afraid he might.

But most of all she liked to hear about people — and children. She had never seen a white baby, only the little naked piccaninnies that played in the blacks' camp. He had told her, too, of five wonderful white babies — quintuplets he called them — who had been born in a country across the sea. How she would love to see those babies! The pilot had to leave the following day, but he had promised to return and tell her more

about the babies, and perhaps bring her a paper with their photos.

When the shadow became short, Belle knew that it was dinner time and she began driving the goats homeward. She noticed that "Blossom", one of the best milkers, kept breaking away from the herd and trying to return to the sandridge. Belle knew what that meant; she hunted round till she found the new-born kid hidden in a patch of cane-grass. When she picked it up "Blossom" bleated piteously at her feet; but Belle let the mother smell it and then, as she walked homewards, "Blossom" trotted beside her.

It was only two miles to the hut but Belle had to rest several times on the way. She was very tired. And she was not cold now but hot — burning hot. She did not feel hungry and the solid damper and dry salt junk nearly made her choke. She pretended to eat and hid the food in her lap. As soon as the meal was over she slipped away and lay down on her greenhide bunk. She was so sleepy . . .

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It was late afternoon. For the first time in years the goats were still shut in the yard though it was long past their feeding time. Mrs. Hodges turned from the feverish, tossing figure on the greenhide bunk and her anxious eyes met those of her husband. "Jack," she said, "I'm afraid it's malaria all right; and we split the last of the quinine."

"Malaria!" exclaimed Jack. "And no quinine within 50 miles. The next boat won't be here for three months."

"Perhaps you could borrow some from Jim?"

"Perhaps. But it means a hundred mile ride and two rivers to swim — say, four days at least. That would be too late. Besides Jim may be away mustering."

Mrs. Hodges broke down. "Oh, Jack, what shall we do? I can't face it. It's — it's terrible."

Jack Hodges went to the door and looked out with misty eyes. He loved this country. For fourteen years he had been struggling to make a home against tremendous odds; living hard, working hard. Now he was threatened with the loss of his only child. He looked up at the tropical sky beyond which, the preachers said, was God. To the west, hundreds of feet above the ground a kite-hawk hung motionless, as if waiting . . . He watched it idly. Suddenly he started and listened with straining ears. Then he rushed into the room. "Quick, Mary," he shouted. "Give me a cloth or a blanket. The aeroplane's coming!"

Without waiting for a reply, he snatched up



a coloured blanket and raced towards the peanut paddock. He spread the blanket on the ground as a signal. The aeroplane circled round and then swooped low over the paddock. Jack tore off his shirt and waved it frantically above his head. The engine roared out at full throttle and the plane shot away to the east . . . Oh, God! It was going away! No, it was only coming into wind. A few seconds later it side-slipped over the trees and pancaked onto the soft sand.

When the Mission pilot held a glass to her lips Belle didn't recognise him. Her mind was wandering and she murmured something about "Blossom", but she drank the quinine, bitter though it was. The pilot couldn't wait long; he was making for the Limmen River, 70 miles away, to attend a stockman who had broken his arm. But he promised to return the next day, and he left plenty of quinine.

It was afternoon when he returned. Belle was conscious. The fever had abated a little but she was dreadfully weak and took no interest in anything. The pilot tried to talk to her but she didn't open her eyes. He tried to interest her in the quintuplets. All she said was: "I'd like to have seen them. But . . . I'm so tired now."

Mrs. Hodges followed the pilot to the door. He looked down into the brave, haggard eyes and answered her unspoken question. "No, it's 500 miles to the hospital. It's the monsoon season and she couldn't stand up to the rough trip in a Gipsy Moth. Besides, she'd fret in a strange place. She seems to have lost the will to live. If by some miracle we could make her want to live there would be a chance. As it is . . ."

He left the sentence unfinished and began pacing up and down outside the hut. Mrs. Hodges returned to her post by the bedside. "A miracle!" she prayed. "Oh God, please work a miracle. I know I haven't prayed much before, but oh God don't hold that against me now. Please God, work a miracle for my little girlie."

Suddenly the pilot burst into the room. He was in his shirt sleeves and he carried something in his coat.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Hodges.

"The miracle," he exclaimed. "Five little motherless kids — our quintuplets. What are we going to do with them? Look, Belle, what do you think of them?"

Belle opened her eyes and became interested. "Aren't they big!" she exclaimed. "No wonder the mother died!"

"I suppose," said the pilot, "they'll die too. Poor little things!"

"Nonsense," said Belle. "I've raised lots and lots of motherless kids."

"But not quintuplets."

"There have often been twins . . . and once triplets. Please, will you move my pillow so I can see better."

"Let's try to make a record," suggested the pilot. "You tell me what to do and we'll see how they get on. We might be able to rear them."

Under Belle's instructions Mrs. Hodges produced a bottle with a cork. The pilot pierced the cork and inserted a piece of goose quill. In a few minutes the first of the orphans was sucking greedily, and Belle sank back on her pillow, weak, but intensely interested. The miracle was beginning to work.

In the morning Belle woke with a new feeling in her heart. Her first question was for the precious quintuplets. When she saw that they were doing well she smiled and lay back happily on her pillow. In two days she was out of danger and busy making plans for the housing of her lively family. The pilot had to return to his station, and Mrs. Hodges and her husband walked to the aeroplane with him. They paused for a moment and stood watching the goats feeding on the sandridge. Mrs. Hodges wiped her eyes with the back of her hand as she said simply: "We must thank the good Lord for His miracle."

The pilot did not reply for a time. He was watching a little group of nannies which kept breaking away from the feeding herd as if they were looking for something. "Yes, indeed," he said. "We must thank God for His goodness . . . and for those five nannies which contributed to the miracle. I had an awful job finding five kids exactly alike even in such a large herd . . . but you must never let Belle know."

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Yes, God works many a miracle by human agency, but we must remember to give Him the glory. It is a privilege to be allowed to work out His plans. We should all ask Him if there is some miracle He would work through us for the happiness and benefit of those around us. Of course God's greatest miracle was the sending of the Lord Jesus Christ to redeem us. Perfect God and perfect man sent to bring us back into holy fellowship with our creator.

How the angels would rush to do His bidding! But He wants to work through us, not through them. Are we willing to be used by Him? Are we listening for His voice? Or are we out of tune with Him so that His voice falls on deaf ears? Lord what wilt thou have me to do?



And the final entry in today's Log is taken from the 13th chapter of Matthew: "And Jesus did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

**THE DARK CHILDREN:** The children have been very well, taken all round, but we have had a few visits to hospital. Leslie and Ralph spent a couple of days in Hornsby Hospital when they had their adenoids removed but they got over it very quickly. Louis had a very slight attack of hepatitis and spent a little while in Prince Henry Hospital. He is over it now and should not have any further trouble. As a precaution all the children and staff had injections but no one else caught the complaint and the children were not kept back from school, even for a day.

Through the courtesy of Dural Rotary Club and Dr. Wingate all the children were given injections against Hong Kong 'flu without cost to us. This kindly action is much appreciated and we trust the children will be preserved from 'flu infection as a result.

Our children excel in sport, even if they are not so good at their school lessons. Two of our boys are in the under 6 Stone Rugby Union team at the Castle Hill Primary School. This team won the "Barney Orrock Shield" by defeating French's Forest 9 to nil. This is an annual knock-out competition, with eighteen metropolitan schools competing throughout the winter months this year. The results were as follows:

Round 1. Defeated Epping West	14-0
Round 2. Defeated Yates Avenue	3-0
Round 3. Defeated Beaumont Road	6-0
Round 4. Defeated French's Forest	9-0

It is remarkable that no points were scored against this team in any game. The Marella boys in the team were Mervyn King and Geoffrey Hill. After their win the boys were entertained at a barbecue at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Quinn in Roxborough Park Road.

**ROTORACT CLUB OF GRANVILLE:** The Rotoract Club of Granville organised a Walkathon from Granville to Marella Mission Farm in aid of this work. At the finish they had a barbecue at the Farm. In all they raised a total of \$290.00, which is much appreciated. Our thanks go out to these young people for their interest and support. Mr. Langford-Smith spoke at one of their meetings at which the cheque was presented to him.

**SCHOOL HOLIDAYS:** Unfortunately we had a good deal of rain during the School holidays and this meant that the children had to be cooped-up indoors for much of the time. How-

ever they had several outings, which they enjoyed very much. All the High School girls were entertained to a Chinese meal at Windsor, which they enjoyed very much. This meal was an hour later than their usual meal so the girls stocked up with sandwiches first. In spite of this they managed, in most cases, to put away a very substantial dinner as well!

Sharon, who left us to go back to her parents some time ago, has been very homesick for Marella and has begged to be allowed to return. We were able to arrange for her to spend a week or so of her holidays here and she was very much at home. It is nice to know that the children who have been here were so happy that they would want to return.

**MRS. LANGFORD-SMITH:** During the holidays Mrs. Langford-Smith was able to make a camping trip to the Flinders Ranges, near Port Augusta, in South Australia. She accompanied Ken and Ruth Langford-Smith and their family of four boys (and a dog!) They returned via Canberra and the Snowy River area. Unfortunately they had a lot of rain, hail and snow on the round trip which made camping out very uncomfortable; still, it was a most interesting trip and Mrs. Langford-Smith returned very much refreshed in mind and body. During her absence the Sub-matron, Mrs. Round, took charge of the children.

**HARVEST FESTIVAL GOODS:** We have received the gift, from time to time, of Harvest Festival goods from various Churches. These have been a great help to us and we are most grateful for the kindly thought that prompted those in charge to send the goods to us. At times we have been very short of fruit for the children. We like each child to have a piece of fruit for play-lunch every day; but this means over two dozen pieces of fruit every day. Sometimes orchardists have given us under-sized or slightly damaged fruit and this has been a great help, but it usually all comes at the one time. We have prayed for fruit at other times and our prayer always seems to be answered by the gift of Harvest Festival fruit. It is not very often that we have to buy fruit, though this does happen occasionally.

**CONCLUSION:** As the months go by this work has gone ahead steadily. Looking back over the years it is amazing to realise that we started with nothing but a lot of faith. God has honoured that faith and little by little has supplied our needs.