

# SKY PILOT NEWS

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*Marella Children on the Mission Lake*



**THE FUTURE OF MARELLA: By Keith Langford-Smith.**

**NEW COTTAGES:** For many years, as our readers will remember, we have been talking about group homes or the "cottage system" for Marella. Some years ago Mrs. Warwick and I visited such homes in Victoria and New South Wales to see how these group homes were working out. The result was that we felt this would be the best thing possible for our Aboriginal children. Of course we visualised them being built on the 10 acre block of land, attached to Marella, that my wife and I had donated for that purpose. However, no matter how hard we tried, the way was blocked time and again. We began to wonder if God was planning something different but no matter how much we prayed we were again led back to the belief that these group homes were the only answer. Now it appears that, though the idea was right, the location was not the one chosen of God.

Twenty years ago Marella was ideal for Aboriginal children. Most of them had been brought down from the country by the Aborigines Welfare Board or had come recently to the city from the bush. Marella property included 10 acres of bush and timber and a large artificial lake where there was fishing, swimming and boating. This was like home to the dark children and they revelled in the open air and the bush. However, times changed and the children coming to us recently were mostly born in the city, where concrete pavements were their habitat. They did not know the bush, while climbing trees, building mias mias and fishing were not an attraction to them; they wanted to watch television hour after hour or they had transistor radios glued to their ears. They seemed out of touch with nature and instead of roaming about the 30 acres of Marella they wanted to stay in the T/V room even on a bright, sunny day. Twenty years ago the children revelled in the open air, for the bush was their home rather than the crowded city streets. But of recent years children have often yearned to get back to the concrete jungle and the crowded streets of Redfern, Newtown and Mount Druitt. We wondered what was to be the future of Marella. By great sacrifice we had kept the large area of ground we possessed, but Kellyville was changing rapidly. New houses, some of them almost mansions, were going up everywhere. Expensive cars were driven along the bitumen streets that had replaced the gravel roads of former days. Aboriginal children no longer enjoyed the rural setting of the early Marella. Something had to be done; we were not sure what steps to take next.

My wife had open heart surgery and an artificial valve in her heart. Mrs. Warwick had a serious operation followed by extensive ray treat-

ment. I had a coronary occlusion from which I recovered fully, but then spinal trouble aggravated an old leg injury of 57 years standing and I have been confined to crutches and a wheel chair. This may be permanent and in any case I will be 72 shortly after this is published and it is obvious we could not carry on with the work of Marella as we have for so many decades. We needed reinforcements or the work would have to close down.

**CHURCH OF ENGLAND HOMES (Carlingford):** We approached the Church of England Homes and asked if they would relieve us of the responsibility of our present children and undertake the building of cottages or group homes or whatever was necessary for these needy Aboriginal children. We knew this would be an entirely new venture for those in charge of this work but we knew they would make it a matter of prayer and give it due consideration. Final details have not yet been settled but we are hoping that from January 1979 all our present children will be transferred temporarily to one of their homes at Carlingford pending more appropriate housing in the future. The ten acre block of land at Kellyville (at present part of Marella) is to be sold and the proceeds, together with most of our Building Fund, to be used for the purpose of building or securing suitable cottages in the city areas where the Aboriginal people are living at present; such buildings to be used for Aboriginal children and (in the future) for refuges for needy Aboriginal mothers with their children. This does not mean the closing of the work of the Sky Pilot Fellowship but it does mean that I will be relieved completely from the direct responsibility of the present or future Aboriginal children, from the necessity of selecting staff, and the burden of planning and building new housing on the cottage system for these children.

**OUR NEW RESPONSIBILITY:** We have undertaken to fund the children taken over by the Church of England Homes and also assist, if possible, in providing for other needy dark children and with the building of new cottages as they are needed. We know our many friends and supporters will rally round and help us with this new venture to the glory of God and the care and comfort of His Aboriginal children and their mothers. We must redouble our prayer effort for the One who said "the silver and the gold is mine" and "the cattle on a thousand hills" meant us to call on Him. Further details will be announced in the "Sky Pilot News" as they are determined; in the meantime we have cause to praise God for the dedicated, devoted, evangelical Christians who have come to our help at a time of crisis.



**INTERDENOMINATIONAL WORK:** Marella has always been an interdenominational work; we have worked side by side with members of all Christian Churches and we hope to have constant fellowship with our Christian friends from all the Churches. Originally the property now known as Marella was purchased with money borrowed from my own family. My wife and I worked day and night when this was a commercial farm to pay off the interest and the debt. As they grew up my children also did their share of the work and for the past 28 years Mrs. Norma Warwick has done a lion's share of the work. Though she is mainly an office worker she has helped with hay making, picking beans and peas and other farm work. In the early years my wife did much of the farm work, feeding poultry, washing and packing eggs, perching chickens and the many other jobs once so necessary on an old fashioned mixed farm.

It was always our intention that "our farm", as we called the property God had given to us, would some day be used entirely for His work, particularly for the Aborigines; though at one time we helped to train and settle "problem" boys and girls from white families.

**UNITING CHURCH.** At present the Parramatta Regional Mission of the Uniting Church is interested in securing a large portion of the property, either on lease or by purchase, for the rehabilitation of needy boys and girls. If this eventuates we will be delighted that the three other Churches which make up the Uniting Church will find a use for Marella Stud Farm, as it was originally called 40 years ago.

**THE BAPTIST CHURCH:** Over the years our friends from various Baptist Churches have done a tremendous amount for Marella. Not only have they supported us as individuals but they have taken our dark children under their wing. All the Marella children at present attend the Castle Hill Baptist Church Sunday School, to which they are taken by bus every Sunday morning. Some of our boys attend the AWANAS at Emmanuel Baptist Church at Kellyville and we are very grateful for the sound evangelical teaching they have received.

**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH:** Amongst our supporters are many members of the Roman Catholic Church and some of our finest Christian staff workers belong to this Church. For some years the Paulian Society stocked and conducted a stall at our Sales of Work. Fully realising that there are differences in our theological approach, they have nevertheless thrown themselves whole heartedly into our work for the Aboriginal children.

Brother Mark, of the Divine Word Missionaries, has been a constant friend and has helped

us with our dairy herd in a great many ways. He gave us a bull calf from one of their best cows and lent us a bull while the calf was growing up. He has also lent us a milking cow when our milk was in short supply.

Recently I was privileged to preach at the Kellyville Catholic Church and I was delighted to notice how much of God's Word was read at the service. My wife and Mrs. Warwick also attended the service and we were all conscious of the deep spiritual atmosphere and were glad to share in the worship of our Lord with these Christian friends. Over recent years God has been drawing His people together and what would have been impossible a few years ago is now being experienced by His children of many differing Churches.

**OUR OWN PLANS:** At this stage, when nothing has been finalised, it is difficult to say what the future of the Sky Fellowship will be. However, we will be carrying on the writing of the "Sky Pilot News" and the fund raising activities of the Mission to provide for more Aboriginal children and possibly more cottages conducted by the Church of England Homes. My three books are now out of print and I have been asked to write another linking my aeroplane work in Arnhem Land with Marella. If the Lord permits this may be done; Mrs. Warwick will, God willing, continue as Secretary.

**A NEW ADVANCE:** The work of Marella will be capably taken care of by the new body and the work of the Sky Pilot Fellowship, separated from the actual responsibility for Marella, will, with God's help, be "better than at the beginning". But we need your prayers and your continued support.

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**THE AUTUMN SALE OF WORK:** As our readers know, we have conducted a Sale of Work twice a year for many years, on the first Saturday in May and the last Saturday in October. However, please note that there will be NO SALE OF WORK IN MAY 1979. The Dr. Billy Graham Crusade will be on at this time and many of our workers and supporters will be deeply involved in this Crusade. Please pray that God will really touch the hearts and souls of all people at this Crusade. Our country is in a mess and only a real revival will halt the violence and the evil that is creeping into our everyday life in Sydney.

**PERSONAL NEWS:** God has been wonderfully good to all of us at Marella. The request for special prayer for our problems has been answered in a wonderful way. Many ministers had special prayers for us and countless supporters have joined privately in earnest prayer.



Mrs. Langford-Smith has improved steadily in spite of a set back by several attacks of a kidney infection. Since the illness of her husband she has accepted more responsibility than has been possible since her break down some time ago. When the children leave us in December-January it will be a further lessening of responsibility and we pray she may recover fully.

Mrs. Norma Warwick was booked into hospital to have a further operation on 23rd November but in answer to our prayers this has been averted. We thank God for this and pray that her health will continue to improve.

Mr. Langford-Smith now spends more time on crutches than in the wheel chair so kindly given by a family friend; he is thus more mobile, but the spine still presses on the sciatic nerve and the pain is very severe at times. He asks for prayer not just to be relieved from pain but that the lessons a loving Father is trying to teach him may be learned quickly.

Mrs. Margaret Hinton (nee Langford-Smith), with her youngest daughter, Wendy, came down from Inverell to be with her parents and to help over the Sale of Work. Her eldest son, Lloyd is working for Bruce Langford-Smith at Hungerford on the Queensland border; Barry, Richard and Linda are still at school in Inverell.

Mrs. Ruth Langford-Smith, the second daughter of the "Sky Pilot" (who married her cousin and therefore did not change her name) is still living in Perth where her husband, Ken, is House Master at Guildford (W.A.) Grammar School. Her eldest son, Peter, is now at the University; Timothy, Nigel and Geoffrey are still at school.

Bruce Langford-Smith and his wife, Margaret, with their two children, Kathy and David, came down to spend a few days with his parents recently. Bruce is managing two stations at present, one at Hungerford and the other at Coonamble.

Mrs. Heather Foley (nee Warwick) and her husband, Chris came down from the country, and are spending a short time with Mrs. Norma Warwick. They were a great help, as voluntary workers at the recent Sale of Work; as they had had experience at previous Sales they were able to help the new Farm Manager and so relieve Mr. Langford-Smith, who was out of action. Everyone has been captivated by little Luke Foley, now a year old, who has "stolen the show" at Marella. Chris has been working at Singleton and is away during the week days. Mrs. Warwick is a devoted grandmother and Luke, who is exceptionally good even though teething, is a credit to his parents.

**FORMER CHILDREN:** We have been deeply touched by the letters, phone calls and visits from former children who are deeply concerned about the health of Mr. Langford-Smith, or "Dad", as he is to them. Though there are many heartaches and disappointments in this work the loving devotion of so many of our former children helps to compensate.

**SALE OF WORK:** The Spring Sale of Work, which was the 30th Anniversary Rally, was held on 28th October and it was a great success. Unfortunately it was a very cold day and inclined to rain but this did not spoil our day. There was a good crowd, especially in the morning, and the stalls were well patronised. At the Public Meeting the Marella children, prepared by Mrs. Twible, sang very sweetly, even if a little out of tune! Mr. C. Bradford, one of our most valued Council Members, conducted the meeting and gave the address. The Bible Reading was taken by Mrs. Heather Foley (nee Warwick); Mrs. Margaret Hinton (nee Langford-Smith) thanked those present for their support over the years. Mr. Ken Hodkin provided the music as he has done over the past 30 years. Following are the takings from the various Stalls:

Books .....	\$ 101.60
Boomerangs etc .....	\$ 10.30
Cakes and Jams .....	\$ 250.42
Caringal .....	\$ 462.86
Children's .....	\$ 125.00
Christmas Cards .....	\$ 27.70
Fancy Work & Baby	
Wear .....	\$ 187.08
Jumble .....	\$ 670.64
Motor Boat Rides .....	\$ 4.00
Parkfield .....	\$ 685.61
Pies .....	\$ 127.28
Plain Work .....	\$ 260.35
Plants .....	\$ 94.31
Pony Rides .....	\$ 18.70
Produce .....	\$ 651.17
Refreshments .....	\$ 171.11
Secondhand Toys .....	\$ 138.67
Silkworms .....	\$ 5.17
Soft Drinks & Ice Cream .....	\$ 91.98
Stamps .....	\$ 406.00
Sweets .....	\$ 69.50
Vandykes .....	\$ 75.12
White Elephant .....	\$ 219.11
Donations .....	\$1465.15
Donations by Mail .....	\$ 383.05
Blue Mountains Auxiliary .....	\$ 400.00

This gives a total \$7,101.88, less expenses of \$814.56, which leaves a net profit of \$6,287.32 This is \$29.40 more than last October and \$296.33 more than last May (1978). We have much cause to thank God for His wonderful provision. This money will be a great help to us as we move on to further cottages for the dark children, perhaps in other areas, and the support of those who are at present our responsibility.