

SKY PILOT NEWS

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Ralph—Our First Infant Boy.

GEORGE'S CAMP IN 1957

(From The Sky Pilot's New Log Book)

In the last issue of this paper mention was made of the Sky Pilot's return to Arnhem Land. He travelled overland alone in his old Holden car. (Incidentally, he bought this car after it had been overturned and wrecked in an accident and a friend re-built it for him. The motor was practically worn out before he left and was blowing back in the cylinders in spite of the cord rings fitted. As it had been a Drive-yourself Hire Car originally one would have thought it was beyond such a trip of over 8,000 miles

through some of the worst country in Australia. As mentioned in our last leaflet the worn out motor was replaced by a second-hand one and the car is again in daily use).

It is hoped that eventually a full account of the Sky Pilot's trip may be published; in the meantime here are a few notes from his log book:

It was late at night when I reached Mataranka. I pulled up by the side of the road and slept in the car till daylight. Mataranka has not changed very much in spite of almost 30 years since I first arrived here. But I was not so interested in the township—I was looking for George.

He had left a message for me at the Post Office Store and I found him, as I had expected, in a cattle camp some miles from the railway. George has not altered much in the 30 years since I had first met him; not in appearance, anyhow. Maybe he looks a little older and his eyesight is failing, but he is still a good man in a mustering camp. The greeting was casual. "Hullo, George, here I am" I stated briefly.

George swung out of the saddle and walked to meet me. "Hullo, Smithy," he said. "About time you turned up. I've been waitin' a long time for you. Just on . . . let me see . . . yes, just on twenty-five years. Time gets away, don't it?"

"It can't be as long as that!" I protested.

"Near enough, anyway. Ha, ha, ha, you look much the same, but you've put on a bit of weight. There wasn't much of you when first we met; you looked more like a mosquito peg then. Now I reckon you'd go about one-hundred-and-sixty-five pounds on the hoof."

"George! Stop talking about me as if I was a fat beast ready for the butcher!"

"Take it easy, Smithy, I ain't findin' fault. You're just about the right weight for your height. But come and have a drink of tea. Where are you stayin' for the night?"

"Right here in your camp—if you'll have me."

George laughed. "I knew you would. That's why I got the blacks to hunt up a spare camp stretcher. Most of the boys reckoned you'd only sleep at some flash hotel now. They laughed

at me when I told them that me and you had slept on the ground in mustering camps more times than I could count. But I knew you'd come."

After the "drink o' tea" George had work to do. A lot of cattle were in the yard waiting to be branded. They included some "mickies" or young scrub bulls which had been driven out of the thick timber by George and his boys and they were now standing, sullen, wild-eyed and dangerous looking. George clambered over the rails and dropped into the yard like a cat, in spite of his age. He walked about as if he was amongst a herd of dairy cows. Whenever a bull pawed at the ground or made a sudden short run the stockboys sprang for the rails; George almost ignored them in spite of the calls from all sides: "Look out George! Mind that bull, Old Man!"

George wiped the sweat out of his eyes with —of all things—a red bandana. "I don't know what's comin' over the young fellows of to-day," he complained. "They'd jump from their own shadows! These bulls ain't bad; they're bluffing, that's all."

We had curry and rice for lunch, cooked in a camp oven over an open fire. When that was gone we fell back on the old standby, salt junk and damper with black tea in which the spoon would almost stand upright. When the work for the day was over we sat on a ground sheet under the stars and yarned about the past.

George broke a long silence. "When are you goin' to write another book, Smithy?" he asked. "I've still got a copy of the three you sent me. The covers are nearly worn off them by now; I've shared 'em with all the boys who knew you."

"Maybe one of these days I'll write another, George. But I've a suggestion to make. What about you writing an introduction for me?"

"Who? Me? Write in a book? You know I couldn't do that, Smithy; I can't write."

"You used to write me a note often enough when you were out mustering. Wrote them with a quill from a wild goose, I remember, and used homemade ink."

George chuckled. "About that ink. It was red ink, Smithy, made from berries gathered near my hut. I was proud of that ink."

"It seemed good stuff. Some of the notes you wrote lasted for years. I think I have some at home even now. It certainly lasted."

"That was the trouble," said George, "it didn't. I made a heap of it and kept it for months. One day the cork blew out of one of the bottles. I smelt it and it was like champagne. I tried it out on Left-hand and in next to no time he was shapin' up to an old pandanus

palm wantin' to fight it. Yes, it was good stuff all right. I gave up writin' notes after that; it seemed a shame to waste the ink."

"Why didn't you make some more?"

"I did. More than once. But we ran out of berries. I wish I had some now."

"George! I'm ashamed of you. But about your writing the introduction for my new book; I'll give you a packet of pencils. You can't come to much harm sucking a pencil."

"No, Smithy, I couldn't write. Anyhow I can't see well enough. I'm going blind fast."

"Well you tell me what to write and I'll put it down on paper. You can't complain about that."

"No, but maybe you would. I guess you wouldn't write all the stories I could tell about you in that blessed airyplane of yours."

"Perhaps I would have to edit them a bit. But what sort of stories do you mean?"

"Well," said George, "there was the time you crashed right here at Mataranka on your first trip."

"What about it?"

"Well I guess you never told nobody you mended the broken wing with a lump of 3 x 2, an old car spring and some fencing wire."

"Anyhow I got the old bus off the ground."

"Maybe you did. I saw you clear the trees and circle round once and then the blessed wing fell off and we thought you'd gone and killed yourself. Even the blacks started cryin' and they was terribly upset when you crawled out unhurt. By the way, who were those young fellows who came up from Melbourne and fixed the wing for you?"

"Arthur Butler and Mel. Woodfull. They made a wonderful job of it, too."

"That's it! I remember now. I seen young Butler when he flew over here on his way back from England in the smallest airyplane as ever I seen. What's happened to them now?"

"Mel. Woodfull is General Manager of the Government Aircraft Factory, Melbourne. Arthur Butler has built up one of the best airlines in Australia. I'll never forget what they did for the 'Sky Pilot.' What else would you put in your introduction to my book?"

George chuckled. "What about the time the buffalo trampled on you and injured your back and the nurses tried to keep you in hospital at Maranboy when you wanted to fly back to the mission."

"That wasn't fair. They hid most of my clothes while I was asleep. And they knew I wanted to take off at piccaninny daylight."

"I know all about that. Ted, the policeman

from here, married one of the nurses afterwards and she told him and he told me. Besides my old mate Jim was at the mission when you arrived without any pants."

"George, that's not true!"

"Well you didn't have MEN'S pants on."

"I had to get back, George, and the nurses had hidden mine."

"That's no excuse for robbing a nurse's wardrobe. And the frills and lace . . ."

"George! That's enough. It was a long time ago and I had forgotten about it."

"Well, Smithy, no one else has. Jim says you looked real cute sittin' there in the cockpit yellin' for Roy the half-caste to fetch you a pair of pants. And Jim says you threw a spanner at him because he only stared at you."

"He was very dumb."

"Not afterwards, he wasn't. If you knew how often he told . . ."

"That's enough, George. I'd rather forget all about it. I nearly died of cold crossing the ranges. It can be very cold at 6,000 feet."

"Then there was that time you landed in the main road at the Katherine and pulled up a few feet from the door of the butcher's shop. Old Jack didn't wait; he shot out the back door and went bush with his butcher's apron flapping like as if he had wings himself."

"He wasn't air-minded. Very few people were, a quarter of a century ago."

"Then what about the time you took mad Jack to the salt-pans and crashed nose-down in the salt. I was there myself and Jack looked like a dingo in a trap till he tore himself free of the belt and tumbled into the brine."

"He thought the old bus might catch fire. He was in a hurry."

"I'll say he was. But he wasn't in a hurry to go for another trip with you. No, Smithy, you write the book and I'll tell ALL the story around the camp fire. It's a lot safer for you, old Mate."

* * *

OUR COVER PHOTO: Ralph is the first infant boy to be cared for at the Mission Farm. (Previously several boys between the ages of four years and ten had been admitted). Ralph came to us in August. He was actually 13 months of age, but owing to malnutrition and neglect he was more like a child of 4 or 5 months. At first he was weak and very frightened, but as the weeks went by a great change came over him. Not only did he improve in health, but he became a fascinating child with

a most loving personality. In no time we felt as if he was our own child, and we are sure that he looks on this as home and on us as his own people. Ruth Langford-Smith, who had commenced work as a Chemist's assistant, stayed at home in order to help care for Ralph and the other children. (She returned to her position after three months, during which time her help was invaluable owing to the number of children at the Mission Farm and the shortage of staff).

GENERAL: The months of August and September were eventful as well as being a time of real testing of our faith. As mentioned in a late note to our last issue of this paper we were not only caring for a record number of children, but illness of the staff made things doubly difficult. Mrs. Langford-Smith unexpectedly had to undergo a major operation from which she recovered well. (Later she had to have a second operation and we are glad to report that she also made a good recovery once again). Mr. Langford-Smith suffered a coronary occlusion and was unable to do anything for three months. But in spite of it all God gave us the grace to carry on and these difficult times proved a time of spiritual refreshment and strengthening of our faith. Friends rallied round to help us in our need. Several women helped with washing and ironing. Two friends came and cleaned out the poultry pens. Banksia Free Church organised a Working Bee and helped to clean out thistles and other noxious weeds. Another friend came and sharpened and set the circular saw—and took other saws away for gulleting and sharpening. Other voluntary workers assisted in various ways and we are deeply grateful to them all and we praise God for this evidence of His provision.

GIFTS: The gifts received during August and September are too numerous and varied to mention in detail. There were cases of oranges and other fruit for the children. (A most welcomed addition to their diet). One friend brought along a couple of loads of corn stalks which made useful feed for cows and sheep, especially as there was little pasture owing to the dry season. Other gifts included: a pure bred Wimbleford breeding cockerel, two chrome-steel single beds, a pet sheep, good used clothing, etc.

VISITORS: In August we had a visit from children from the Lidcombe Church of Christ who brought gifts for the dark children which were most acceptable. Early in September Cronulla Baptist Church organised a car drive and 23 car loads of friends came loaded with groceries and other most useful gifts. Members of the Soroptimist Club of Parramatta gave a lovely party to the dark children who had a wonderful time.

IAN WATERHOUSE: In tragic circumstances little Ian Waterhouse passed away after an operation for the removal of his tonsils. His parents are both very active workers for the Mission and his mother is a member of the Women's Auxiliary of the Sky Pilot Fellowship.

A tribute was paid to his memory at the Anniversary Rally in the Sydney Town Hall last November. (This paper, though dated to follow on after the last issue, was actually written much later). We are sure that those who have not heard of the Home Call of Ian will remember his parents at the Throne of Grace. Mr. and Mrs. Waterhouse have given and endowed a bed to the memory of Ian. In this way we believe that many a little dark child will receive help and comfort in his need and Ian will not be forgotten in the years to come. We thank God for this unselfish action and for the faith and trust of the bereaved parents.

THE DARK CHILDREN: During September all the dark children were taken to Parramatta Hospital by Mrs. Langford-Smith and Mrs. Norma Warwick in order to have Mantoux tests and chest X-rays. Our Honorary Doctors and the Hospital authorities have al-

ways been wonderfully good to our aboriginal children who have every care and provision that any white child could have. But to see the 19 children being shepherded through the streets of Parramatta was an event to remember. The children were counted at frequent intervals and all arrived safely back at the Mission Farm.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE? (This note is written in April, 1958): This work is growing fast. So fast that we are at present unable to cope with all we desire. Three new rooms and a small verandah have been added to the Mission House and still there is not room. We need a larger kitchen to cater for our ever growing family. We need more bedrooms for children and a store. This month, work is expected to begin on a two-and-a-half million gallon dam to irrigate the Mission Farm.

NEEDY CHILDREN ARE STILL BEING TURNED AWAY EVERY MONTH. Why? Because of lack of accommodation, shortage of staff and finance. This need not continue, it must not continue, it **WILL NOT** continue. But we need your prayers, your interest and your support.

SKY PILOT FELLOWSHIP Marella Mission Farm

RALLY and SALE of WORK

to be held (D.V.) in the

SYDNEY TOWN HALL

(Lower Hall).

SATURDAY, 10th MAY, 1958

DOORS OPEN 10.30 a.m.

PUBLIC MEETING, 2 p.m.

Our responsibilities include: Christian Radio Broadcasts, Mission Farm and Home for Neglected Aboriginal Children, etc.

**REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE ALL DAY • COME, BRING A FRIEND, AND SUPPORT
THIS WORK FOR THE DARK CHILDREN.**

Gifts for stalls should be mailed to the "Sky Pilot", Parramatta Railway Station, or brought to the Town Hall on the day of the Rally. For further particulars, please phone Marella Mission Farm, YA2427.