

SKY PILOT NEWS

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1985

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Christine — the first Aboriginal child to come to Marella.

JIM'S SNAKS By Keith Langford-Smith Sky Pilot's Log, 2CH Broadcast

George and I were sitting in squatters' chairs at the Roper River Mission one evening in 1929, when a hail came from the other side of the river. We paused to listen. The call came again, and George chuckled.

'Ha, ha, ha. I'd know that yell anywhere. It's Jim. I wonder what's the matter now? Maybe he's come back for another driving lesson. Ha, Ha.'

I smiled, remembering the unfortunate episode behind that remark. 'I doubt if it's that, George. But it must be something urgent or Jim wouldn't want to come across the river in the dark. You know how he hates crocodiles.'

'Well, I ain't too keen on 'em meself, if it comes to that,' George remarked wryly. 'I see one of the boys has taken a canoe across for him. Maybe we'd better take a stroll down to the bank to meet him.'

When we reached the river bank, Jim was just stepping out of the rather insecure canoe. One of the natives was holding the canoe and another had extended an arm to help Jim ashore.

Jim was obviously agitated about something. 'Steady now, steady. What do you think I am? I can't step over two yards of water and a yard of mud. pull the canoe a bit closer, can't you Hey, look out! You'll have me in the river in a minute. Ah, that's better. Hello, Smithy. Hello George. I don't know why you don't get a decent ferry, Smithy. It ain't safe crossin' the river at night in this beastly canoe. I've been sittin' in about six inches of water all the way.'

'Never mind, you got here safely,' I said unfeelingly. 'This ferry service has been conducted by the Aborigines for a hundred years or so and as far as I know they haven't lost a passenger yet.'

George added his bit. 'Come along, Jim and quit whinging. It's a free service an' you can't expect much for that. What's the trouble now? Has the tail wheel of your car broke up on you again?'

'The car's in the harness shed and what's more it's stoppin' there till I get someone to drive it for me. No, I didn't come here about the car; it's about the snakes.'

'Been seein' snakes again, have you, Jim?' George laughed. 'Ha, ha, didn't I tell you to keep away from the township?'

'I ain't been to the township,' Jim protested, 'and I ain't seen no snakes — leastways, the snakes I seen were real ones.'

George was not convinced. 'Ha, ha, they always say that, Jim. They seem real enough.'

Jim was becoming impatient. 'Oh, don't try to be funny, George; this is serious. I'm havin'

real snake trouble back at me humpy. The place is fair crawlin' with 'em. Never seen so many snakes at one time in my life. They've driven me out of me home, that's what they've done. Smithy, can you come back with me and help clean up a few snakes?'

I realised that Jim was serious. 'It's as bad as that, is it? You're not joking?'

'Now look here, do I look as if I was jokin'? It ain't no joke coin' across that river in the dark in a hollowed tree trunk, not even to take a rise out of you and George. No, Smithy, them snakes is real bad and I need your help.'

'Right you are, Jim,' I replied readily enough. 'I'll come right away. George will give us a hand.'

George gave a start. 'Who, me I ain't aimin' on huntin' snakes in the dark for Jim or anyone else. Oh, I'll come with you all right, but only to watch, mind. I ain't doin' no huntin'.'

'You won't need to, George,' Jim assured him. 'The snakes'll do the huntin'. They're that savage they'd chase a man out of his bed in the middle of the night.'

We crossed the river and rode down to Jim's hut. He had built it right on the edge of the hills, and his garden was irrigated by means of hollow tree trunks which carried the water from a natural spring half way down the side of the hills. The garden was a riot of growth. Paw paws and bananas grew strongly in the fertile soil, and vegetables of all sorts abounded. We could not see much in the dark, though I had brought a torch and the others had hurricane lamps. We searched the humpy thoroughly as soon as we entered, but could find no snakes other than the bodies of five that Jim had killed and thrown on an ants' nest near the hut. George sighed with relief as he lowered himself into a squatter's chair.

'Well, Jim, it looks as if you've killed the whole tribe of 'em. Not a snake to be seen anywhere. They must all be from the one brood.'

'You couldn't have looked at 'em close, George,' Jim replied. 'There was two black snakes, a death adder, a copperhead and two of them snakes that Smithy reckons are harmless. They never came out of the one brood! No, it was like this afore: nice an' quiet, and then I seen a snake wriggle under the chair you're sittin' in now.'

George left the chair with a haste that made the canvas creak, and found himself another seat at the other side of the room.

Jim laughed. 'It ain't there now, George. I killed it.'

George was cautious. 'I'll take your word for it, but all the same I ain't sittin' there

Maybe snakes can smell the other snakes' tracks. Anyway, I ain't riskin' it.'

For some time we sat there in the flickering light of the kerosene lanterns. Then I saw a shadow move in a corner of the room. I watched carefully. It moved again. I picked up a piece of wood a couple of feet long, pinned the snake's head to the ground and, grasping it by the back of the neck, picked it up. Its tail whipped round my arm, and it was only then that the others saw what it was.

'Look out, Smithy,' Jim yelled. 'Look out, it's alive. Oh, my heavens, what did you want to pick it up for? I told you snakes was thick in this house.'

George was just as worried. 'Don't come near me with that beastly snake, Smithy. It makes my blood run cold to see you with its tail coiling round your arm. Is it a poisonous one, Smithy?'

'Yes, George. It's only young, but it's a deadly snake all right. We call it the North Australian Brown Snake. It's more deadly than a death adder. There are not too many good specimens about and I was anxious not to damage it. But there's no need to get excited, it can't bite me the way I'm holding it. Hold this bag for me, will you, Jim, while I slip the snake in.'

Jim showed a strange reluctance to help. 'What's that? Hold the bag. Not on your life, I won't! Hold its tail out while I kill it, Smithy, but for heaven's sake don't let go the head!'

George took pity on me, though not with much enthusiasm. 'I'll hold the bag for you Smithy,' he volunteered, 'till you let the snake go. Then I'm letting go too, so you be ready to grab.'

'Thanks, George,' I said gratefully. 'That's right! Now I've got it. You can let go.'

'I hate snakes, Smithy,' George remarked, rather unnecessarily. 'Especially in the dark! Give me a good stick and a snake out in the open and I can deal with it. Say, Jim, this hut of yours seems to be haunted with snakes. Where are they all coming from?'

Jim thought for a moment. 'I reckon they're comin' down from the hills at the back of the hut. There's been a lot of frogs about lately. I think they come down for the water in the open logs the water flows through. I heard it was a bad place for snakes and I've killed a lot before, but never like this. The place is alive with 'em.'

'What about bringing the hurricane lamps,' I suggested, 'and we'll have a look round the house. It's reasonably clear near the house and it's far better to get them before they gain the shelter'.

Jim agreed. 'Right you are. Here's a lamp for you, George, but you'd better get a decent stick — somethin' that will bend when you hit

the snake. Come on, Smithy, no use messin' about.'

'I hate huntin' snakes in the dark,' George complained. 'But maybe it's better than havin' 'em in the house. Look out, Jim! There's another of 'em in that corner. I saw it move.'

Jim grinned. 'That's only a cat, George, I've got seventeen of 'em about the place, but they don't seem to do anythin' about killin' the snakes. Come on, let's get outside.'

We walked out and began to circle the hut. In spite of the hurricane lamps, it was difficult to see clearly. A friendly black cat walked noiselessly behind Jim and rubbed its tail affectionately against his leg. Jim let out a yell and shot up into the air; the cat got a reception that surprised it.

George laughed. 'Ha, ha, ha, did you see the way Jim rose then, Smithy? Like a bloomin' sky rocket! Not that I blame you, Jim. I'd of done the same.'

'What happened to the cat?' I asked.

George chuckled again. 'It's gorn bush, Smithy. It's lucky cats have nine lives. Ha, ha, I reckon that one still has eight to go. Is that a shadow over there or a stick, or what, Smithy? Put your torch on it. By cripes, it's another snake. Quick, let's get a hit at it!'

'That's seven,' Jim remarked. 'Not bad for one night's huntin', is it? I reckon I'll be movin' my hut after this. There ain't room for snakes an' me in the same hut.'

'There must be a reason for them coming in like this, Jim,' I said. 'We'll have a look as soon as it's daylight. Well, I can't see any more outside. Let's go in and wait for daylight.'

'I'll never sleep in your hut again, Jim, not if you give me a hundred quid,' George said with feeling. 'Ugh! Every time I shut me eyes I can see the beastly things crawlin' and wrigglin'. Wow! Somethin' bit me on the leg. Quick, where's your torch, Smithy? Hurry up, can't you? I'll be dead before we treat it.'

Jim tried to reassure him. 'I didn't see no snake, George, and I was watchin' where you was standin'.'

I turned the torch on to George's legs. 'It's only a bindy-eye slipped into your elastic-sided bcot, George. No need to panic!'

'Phew!' exclaimed George in relief. 'I can't stand much more of this. I'm breakin' out in a cold sweat.'

'Well now,' said Jim with some satisfaction, 'You fellows know why I rode to the mission and crossed the river in a leaky canoe in the dark. I was here on me own. That's worse than havin' a couple of fellows about in case of accidents. But let's get into the hut.'

We sat up waiting for dawn. Jim killed one

more snake and George swore he saw one, but it got away. Anyhow, none of us had any sleep. We were so jumpy by dawn that the slightest rustle, the thump of a frog as it hopped on the floor or the touch of some flying insect attracted by the lamp was enough to lift us out of our chairs. The hours dragged by and it was with sighs of relief that we welcomed the dawn. Somehow things did not look so bad in the daylight.

Jim had come to a decision. 'That settles it, Smithy. I'm not sleepin' here another night. I'll pull down me hut and move it away from here.'

'There's no need for that, Jim,' I told him. 'You can get rid of the snakes easily enough if you get rid of the undergrowth that harbours them.'

George agreed. 'That's it, Jim. You've got too much stuff growin' near the house. Cut down those bananas, for instance, and you'll be able to see clearly.'

'Don't say that, George,' Jim protested. 'I'm terrible fond of bananas and I had a job to get them ones established. There's nothing wrong with a few bananas growin' near the hut.'

I did not agree. 'Bananas and paw paws are all right in the proper place, Jim, but you've got them too near the hut. And all that riot of green stuff ought to be cleared away.'

'But those are my sweet potatoes!'

'Well, Jim, you can take your choice. If you want to get rid of the snakes, clear away these trees and creepers and shrubs. Move your garden to where it will not interfere with your safety. You know, there are a lot of things in life like your garden, Jim: things that are not harmful in themselves, but which have been allowed to creep into the wrong position till they take charge. Hobbies are good, even necessary, but they mustn't be allowed to interfere with our work. Above all, the harmless pleasures of the world which can be very good as recreation must not crowd God out of our lives. Have a general clean up, Jim, and you'll find there'll be no more trouble with snakes.'

And the final entry in today's log is found in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews: 'Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.'

THE ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

The Annual Report of Care Force says, 'The Marella Aboriginal [Project] offers group home care at Marrickville and an Aboriginal foster care service. In 1984, sixty Aboriginal children were cared for in group homes, thirty-two children were looked after in temporary foster care and thirteen children were placed in long term fostering.'

As we send out regular contributions of \$3000 every two months to sponsor this work, we acknowledge again our gratitude to all those friends whose gifts make such support possible.

Many of our readers will remember Christine, who came to us many years ago at the age of six weeks as the first Aboriginal child to be cared for at the old Marella. Christine has been far from well and was badly in need of assistance. Her three little girls are now being cared for in one of the Marella cottages, so that their mother knows they will receive Christian love and care until her new baby arrives and she is in a position to have them home with her again. This is not the first time a second generation has been helped by Marella in time of need, and we thank God that He has given us this opportunity of service.

It was a delight recently to receive a visit from Dora, who was on a visit south from Queensland with her husband and daughter. We also heard good news of Kevin, who is taking his place in the community as a responsible adult; and Victor, who wanted to tell us that he had committed his life to Christ. As one of our supporters wrote in recent days, 'It is good to know that the work among the Aborigines does bear good fruit when handled by Christian people; and I do feel that in the long run they will come up on top.'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our thanks to the following donors, who have not received an acknowledgement of their gifts by post. The receipts are held in our office and may be had at any time on request.

9/5/85	A.B., Schofields	\$10
13/5/85	E.J., Padstow Heights	\$10
22/5/85	P.S., Kingsgrove	\$15
23/5/85	B.B., Pennant Hills	\$20
6/6/85	E.J., Padstow Heights	\$10
17/6/85	J.G., Concord	\$20
18/7/85	E.J., Padstow Heights	\$10

NEWS SNIPPETS

Former staff at our Mini Fete in May included Mrs. Barbara Greentree and Mrs. Hazel Dean, both of whom provided a ministry to the interior at the old Marella with their marvelous talent for cooking. It was good to see them.

Our Annual General Meeting was held in May and proved a time of warm fellowship. Mr Jim Collison of Care Force gave committee members the latest news of the children being cared for under the Marella Project.

New goods for our street stalls and for Gwenny's Market, to be held in Parramatta later in the year, would be greatly appreciated, as would materials for aprons, cushion covers and the like.

A Reunion of former children and staff (in fact, anyone who has had an interest in any of the children from the old Marella) will be held in Parramatta Park, near the O'Connell Street gate, on Monday, 7th October (Labour Day holiday). 'Mum' and 'Auntie Norma' will be there from 11 a.m. till 2.30 p.m. and will be looking forward to renewing old ties. Bring a picnic lunch and stay for as long or as short a time as you like. If wet, we will wait in the shelter shed near this same gate until about 1.30 p.m.

Lack of space prevents the inclusion of the **Blaiklock** article and the popular **From Our Mailbag** column this issue, also news of **Vision Videos** and our regular **Book Review**. Look for these next time.

THE SECRETARY REPORTS

by Norma K. Warwick

I am very grateful to all who made it possible for me to go on seven weeks long service recently. Mrs. Jenny Glisson, together with her family and friends, always does a splendid job of wrapping the Sky Pilot News, but this time we had a tight schedule and they all cheerfully helped us meet the deadline. Mrs. Glad Gardiner took Mrs. Gwen Hammond's place in helping me bundle them ready for posting, and the paper went out right on time.

It was a weight off my mind to know that things were running smoothly while I was away, and I am thankful to all the friends who kept the wheels of Marella turning. In fact, I was afraid it would be found that they could manage without me! Besides the regular voluntary workers who carried on with their usual tasks, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Cairns did a splendid job in seeing to the office routine. I am deeply grateful to them for their diligence and efficiency. In spite of a bout of 'flu suffered by Wilga in the middle of it all, everything was in apple-pie order for me on my return. Mrs. Gwen Langford-Smith also helped by attending to matters which arose when Gordon and Wilga could not be here; fortunately, she was in good health and able to cope for the whole period.

I thank God that I was able to spend my leave in Britain and Ireland in company with my friends, Rev. Carl and Mrs. Gwen Hammond. We travelled almost 5,000 miles (it was good to have 'real' measurements again!) in England, Scotland, Wales, Eire and Northern Ireland, and revelled in the northern spring with its breathtaking variety of trees, shrubs and flowers in colours deeper than we know here. We had some glorious weather **some** of the time, but the elements were not always kind. In fact, June was at its wettest and coldest for many years; but that did not deter us from absorbing and enjoying the atmosphere of those

beautiful lands, so full of history and tradition.

We were glad to renew acquaintance with a dear friend in Leicestershire, with whom we spent several days. We learned that stories and articles from the **Sky Pilot News** were used in various groups there and are greatly appreciated. We spent some time in the beautiful Cotswolds with a Hammond relative, who welcomed me warmly though I was previously unknown (I did wonder whether the welcome would have been so warm had she known me before!).

I hope to write a few words about Ireland for our next issue, but the overwhelming impression Scotland left on me was the generosity and hospitality of its people. The Welsh language baffled me, but the splendour of the hills and streams made me realise why Welsh people are such good singers—they have something to sing about.

I was surprised to see the miles of open space between the towns and villages in England, and wondered where they squeezed in their vast population—until I saw the industrial cities. The villages were beautiful; I was impressed most by the church spires. As we drove along, the first glimpse of a village was of the spire in its centre, pointing up to heaven. I reflected on how God should be at the centre of all our being, and our gaze should always be upward—to Him. Perhaps if the church's message of salvation were still the focal point of every town and village in England, that country would be in a happier state today.

In Madingly, just outside Cambridge, we stood in the beautiful American War Cemetery and saw 'amid the beauty of smooth lawns and marble walls, the serried crosses of the multitudinous dead, the silent host who died for our liberty. An inscription round the base of a great bronze hemisphere which held the flagpole read: TO YOU FROM FAILING HANDS WE THROW THE TORCH. BE YOURS TO HOLD IT HIGH.' The quote is from the epilogue of Professor Blaiklock's Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. As I stood there, I thought of my last phone conversation with the Professor. He was speaking of the video tapes he had just completed, only two weeks before his death, and said: 'It is strange that this video ministry is opening up just as I'm going.' 'No,' I assured him. 'It is your legacy to the world.' Let me finish the quote from his book:

'The dead in Christ of all the embattled centuries cry to you, young men and women of our church. You will not, I know, fail your generation. Those of us who, through this . . . century, 'mid noise of war and the world's tumult, have sought to carry the torch, fling it blazing on to you—BE YOURS TO HOLD IT HIGH.'

MARELLA MISSION FARM LTD.**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR
THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1985****INCOME**

Donations — General	22,442.00
Bank and Other Interest and Dividends	11,916.17
Blaklock Memory	120.00
Donations — Children's Shoes	120.00
Donations — in Memory	120.00
Donations — Deputation	40.00
Home Offering Boxes	552.56
Legacies	2,259.50
Sale of Books	1,826.13
Sales of Work—Stalls, etc. ..	3,834.65
Subscription to News	70.54
Sundries	7.47
Sale of Records	8.00
Sale of Cassettes	285.35
	<u>43,602.41</u>

LESS EXPENDITURE:

Books Purchased	1,286.99
Church of England Homes— Donations	18,120.00
Depreciation	1,010.00
Electricity	121.70
Government Fees	62.30
Insurances	411.20
Postage	2,308.71
Printing and Stationery	2,538.75
Repairs	7.92
Rent	3,380.00
Records Purchased	5.44
Salaries and Wages	14,599.22
Cassettes Purchased	256.03
Stalls and Sales of Work Expenses	77.80
Sundry Expenses	327.75
Telephone	238.12
Vehicle Expenses	664.80
	<u>45,416.73</u>

Excess of Expenditure over Income for the Year ended 31/3/1985 transferred to Accumulated Funds	1,814.32
	<u>43,602.41</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st MARCH, 1985**ACCUMULATED FUNDS**

Balance 31/3/1984	48,201.57
ADD Excess of Expenditure over Income for the Year	(1,814.32)
	<u>46,387.25</u>

BUILDING FUND

Balance 31/3/1984	
General Reserve	64,258.08
	<u>64,258.08</u>

SURPLUS AND RESERVES

110,645.33

Represented by:**FIXED ASSETS (At Cost)**

Office Equipment Less Accumulated Depreciation	2,815.69
Van Less Accumulated Depreciation	1,605.00
Furnishings and Fittings Less Accumulated Depreciation	694.80
	<u>5,015.49</u>

INVESTMENTS:

Shares (at Cost)	5,539.40
Australian Savings Bonds	63,000.00
Interest Bearing Deposit (Account Long Service Leave) St. George Building Society	20,000.00
United Permanent Building Society	10,249.70
	<u>108,039.10</u>

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash on Hand	40.00
Stock on Hand (at the lower of cost and net realisable value)	1,700.05
	<u>1,740.05</u>

TOTAL ASSETS	114,794.64
LESS LIABILITIES	
Deposit Fund	3,250.00
Commonwealth Trading Bank, Castle Hill Current A/c	899.31
	<u>4,149.31</u>
	<u>\$110,645.33</u>

Audited by McKee Cherry Pearce & Co. Blacktown, N.S.W.

GARAGE SALE**MARELLA MISSION**

17 YORK ROAD, KELLYVILLE

Saturday, 7th September,

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tons of clothing — men's, women's, children's. Shoes. Books. Toys

All sorts of odds and ends.