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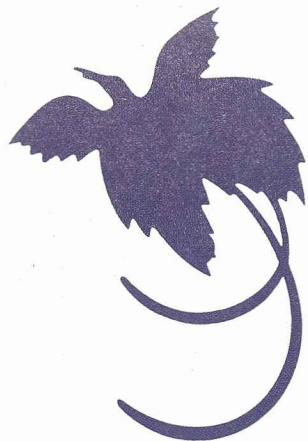




Cacharel

Anais Anais





# paradise

**No 61 March 1987**

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Welcome aboard,

As the recently appointed General Manager it is my pleasure to welcome you on board our Bird of Paradise service.

This special Highlands Edition features the Huli and other tribesmen, their cultures and traditions and the importance placed upon them. Another feature is the transfer of six cuscus, the friendly marsupials, to the Perth Zoo.

You will envy guests at the new tourist resort, Ambua Lodge, high in the Tari mountains. They have the unique opportunity to view Birds of Paradise and rare orchids in natural surrounds.

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Dieter Seefeld  
General Manager



Dieter Seefeld  
General Manager

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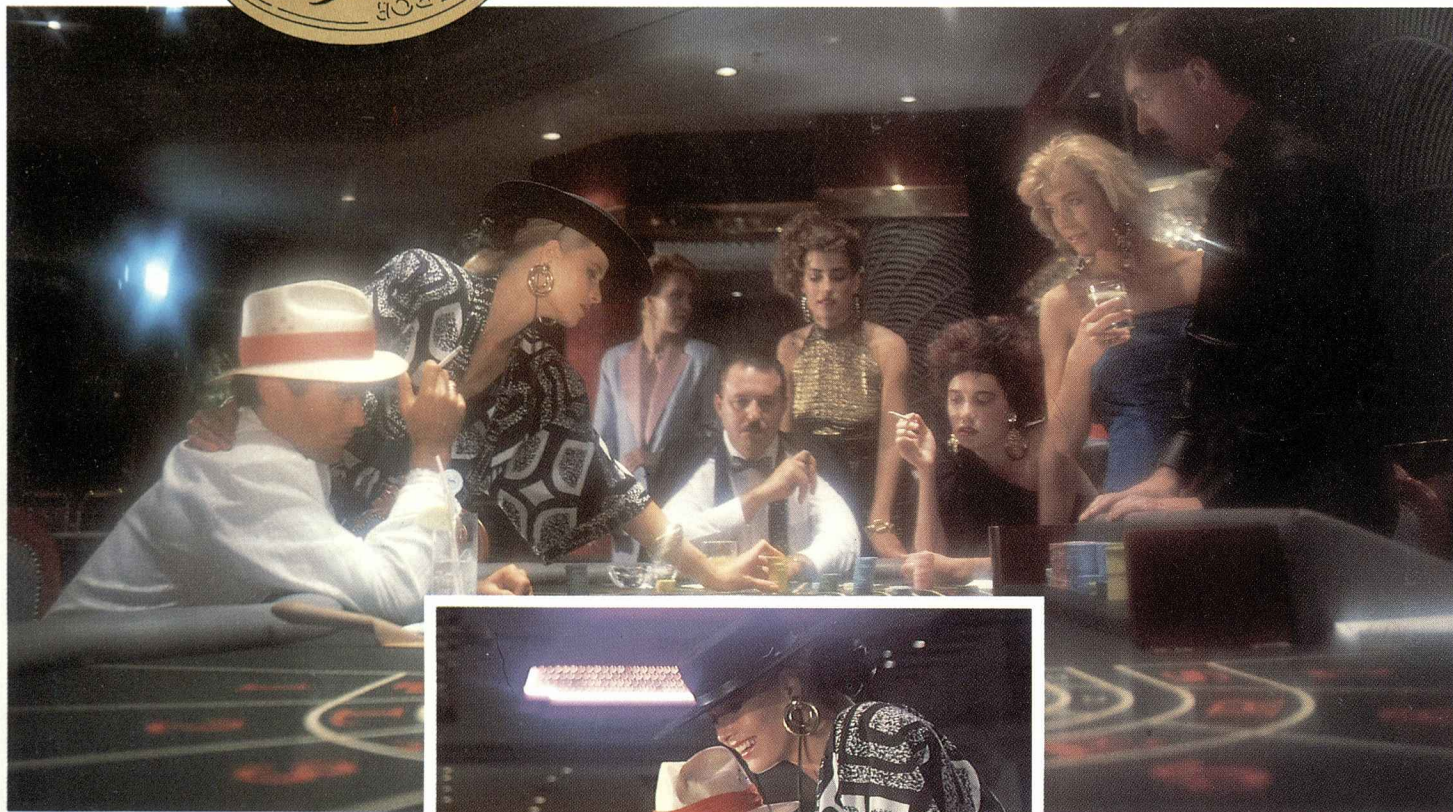
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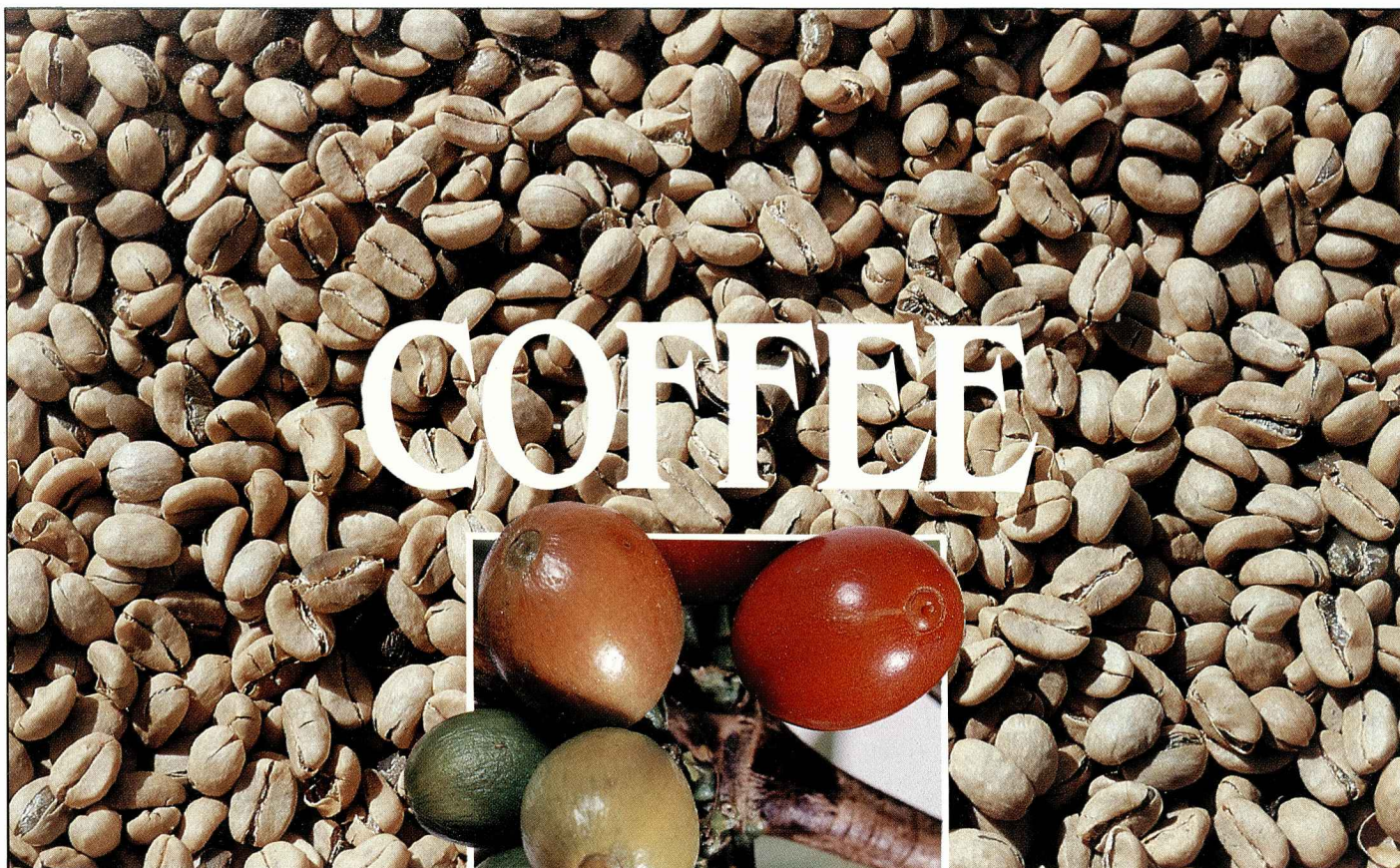
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# COFFEE

**C**offee is big business in Papua New Guinea. Production of around 50,000 tonnes of quality coffee annually has contributed more than K1 billion in export earnings over the past decade. Strangely enough, however, coffee has not caught on as a popular beverage among Papua New Guineans. Internal consumption is less than one per cent of production. And most of that is consumed by the non-citizen population.

From humble and tentative beginnings in the mid-1940s when early Australian pioneers into the Goroka Valley first began experimenting with coffee seedlings, the industry has grown to become the dominant rural enterprise in the country, second to only copper and gold in export earnings. Almost 300,000 rural households are now involved in coffee growing.

Coffee growing is concentrated in the Highlands region with the three provinces of Western Highlands, Eastern Highlands and Simbu alone accounting for 85 per cent of the nation's crop. The East and West Sepik produce the bulk of



## -the billion kina crop

**Story by Craig McConaghy**

the lowlands robusta crop while Morobe Province is expanding its plantings of arabica coffee in the upper altitudes around Wau and Menyamya.

Coffee trees start bearing two to three years after field planting and production rises for several years thereafter. The economic life of a tree is dependent on a number of factors, but 20 to 25 years is probably typical although many plantation trees are now more than 35 years old and still going strong.

Coffee beans, which are contained in a small fruit termed a 'cherry', are the economic produce of coffee trees. After harvest, the

outer skin of the cherry is removed mechanically or by hand and the beans are washed and fermented in a factory or in small containers. This product is termed 'parchment' coffee. Another skin is removed in a factory to produce 'green beans' which are the export product. The coffee beans sold in retail stores have been blended and roasted to suit the particular market and consumer tastes.

Although the crop is harvested year round under PNG's ideal growing conditions, production is concentrated in the months of May to September. The peak of the harvest is known as the 'coffee flush'.

Coffee is very well suited to Highlands social systems as it yields under a wide range of management levels. Returns per unit labor input have generally been higher than for alternative export crops. It is perhaps the only agricultural export commodity in PNG to provide returns to labor of village producers comparable with, or higher than, the rural minimum wage at all prices over the past 10 years.

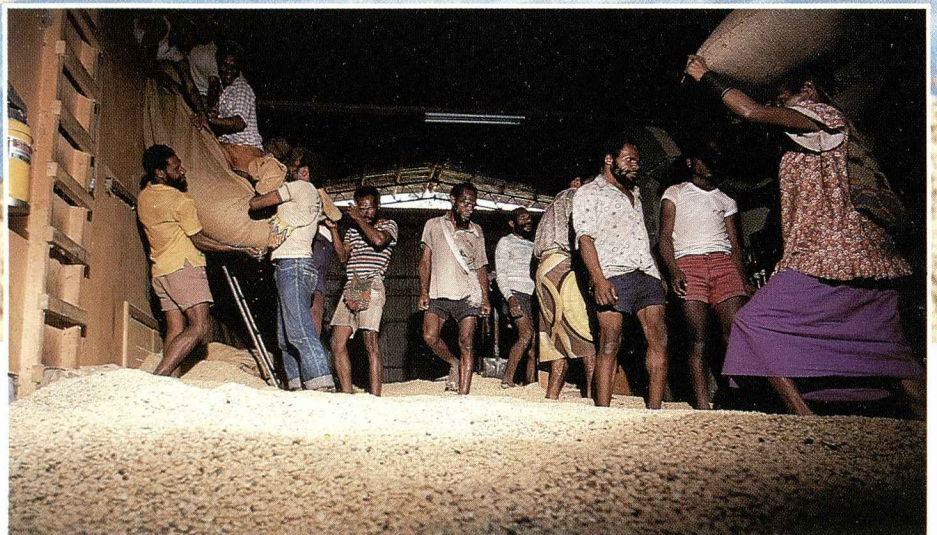
In total, it is estimated that between 40,000 and 50,000





hectares of land are under coffee. Production by smallholders contributes about 70 per cent towards total PNG production.

For most Highlands villagers, coffee is the source of much or most of their cash income: from the sale of their own coffee; from long-term wage labor on coffee plantations; and from short-term wage labor during the coffee season. The average smallholder's plot would probably comprise 600 trees covering about 0.15 of an hectare in area; a manageable amount for a family unit. During 1986 production from that smallholder plot would return the grower between K350 and K400 in income remembering that the smallholder operates on a philosophy of low input/low output. Clearly some would be less



and many would be much more. The important factor is that coffee income is a major contributor to per capita income in Papua New Guinea which now stands at around K700 a year.

According to a report published by the National Institute for Development Studies, Australian National University, money from coffee has provided major impetus to improvements in Highlands village living standards and has been an important source of funds for investment expenditure in the region and other parts of PNG. While there has been a great deal



*Coffee beans go through several processes after harvest. Drying in the sun **top**, being husked, washed and fermented in vats, dried again and graded by hand before being bagged for export.*





of comment on some of the more visible social and economic effects of coffee expenditure, such as alcohol consumption and road accidents, there have been widespread benefits.

Coffee income has paid for a large proportion of the education costs for village children. People are now able to buy food that is high in protein and concentrated kilojoules such as tinned fish, rice and food cooked in animal fat whereas traditional Highlands

villagers' diets were low in protein and concentrated energy.

Plantations, on the other hand, which produce just over 30 per cent of total production, operate with highly structured management systems. The use of greater labor and technical inputs is rewarded with much higher yields averaging 2.5 tonnes per hectare and more.

Plantations generally range between 20 to 100 hectares in area, the largest being the totally Papua New Guinean owned Gumanch plantation controlled by the Piplika Development Corporation of Mt Hagen which is more than 450 hectares in area. Where there are no major land constraints a

number of plantations are being extended or developed to several hundred hectares spurred on by the benefits of economies of scale and size. Plantation coffee, for reasons of higher quality control, fetches premium prices on world markets.

Over the past decade, since Independence, ownership of coffee plantations has changed from the expatriate developer/settler to the local business group usually comprising descendants of the former land owners. Of the 175 coffee plantations almost 95 per cent are owned by PNG businesses. A remarkable achievement considering the short period of commercial exposure and participation by village groups in the Highlands. To this end the Government can be justifiably





proud of its policies to transfer wealth through enterprise to Papua New Guineans particularly to those in the rural sector.

Recent drought in Brazil has forced up the retail price of all coffee. The worldwide shortage, the cause of the price hike, has been a bonus for PNG. Exports in 1986 reached about K200 million in value, accounting for perhaps 20 per cent in value of all exports from the country during the year.

The bulk of PNG's coffee is shipped to West Germany and Australia. Efficient exporters are constantly searching for new market opportunities.

High prices now will assist in the fight against coffee leaf rust. Coffee leaf rust (*Hemileia vastatrix*) is one of the worst diseases of coffee and has caused tremendous economic losses in some coffee-growing countries. Since an outbreak was confirmed in the Baiyer River area on April 30, 1986 the spread of the disease has been rapid and widespread.

*PNG coffee ready for export top is highly prized overseas. Cash for instant payment to Highland smallholders is kept on hand by factory buyers like this one in Goroka.*

The first symptoms are faint yellow spots on the undersurface of the coffee leaves. Within one or two days of the appearance of the spots, yellowish-orange powder (the spores of the fungus) is produced on the spots on the undersurface of the leaves. The area of leaf affected by a single infection is at first only a few millimetres in diameter, but each spot quickly increases in size to over two centimetres in diameter. In heavy infections many spots may occur on each leaf and in severe infections the spots may coalesce until the whole leaf is covered. The upper surface of the leaf shows a yellow area in the region of the infection, but no spores are produced on the upper surface. Leaf tissue in the centre of each infection eventually dies and becomes brown. Millions of spores are borne on each heavily infected leaf, so that an enormous number

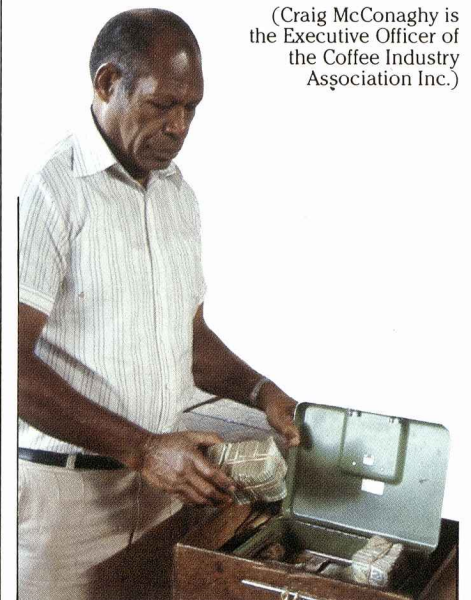
of spores is produced on all the leaves of all infected coffee bushes.

PNG is one of the last countries to suffer from the ravages of coffee leaf rust. Through learning from the experiences of other countries which have coped with the menace, it is hoped that production levels can be held reasonably steady during the period when new management techniques will have to be introduced. There is however no magic formula to combat rust short of hard work, vigilance and appropriate husbandry techniques, the key ingredients which have often been overlooked and ignored in the past.

The disease does not affect the growing cherry unless the healthy leaf tissue becomes so damaged that nutrients are no longer supplied to the fruit. The disease can be controlled by use of chemical fungicides but their proper application and control is still being researched for PNG conditions.

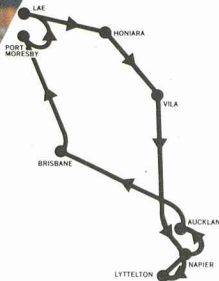
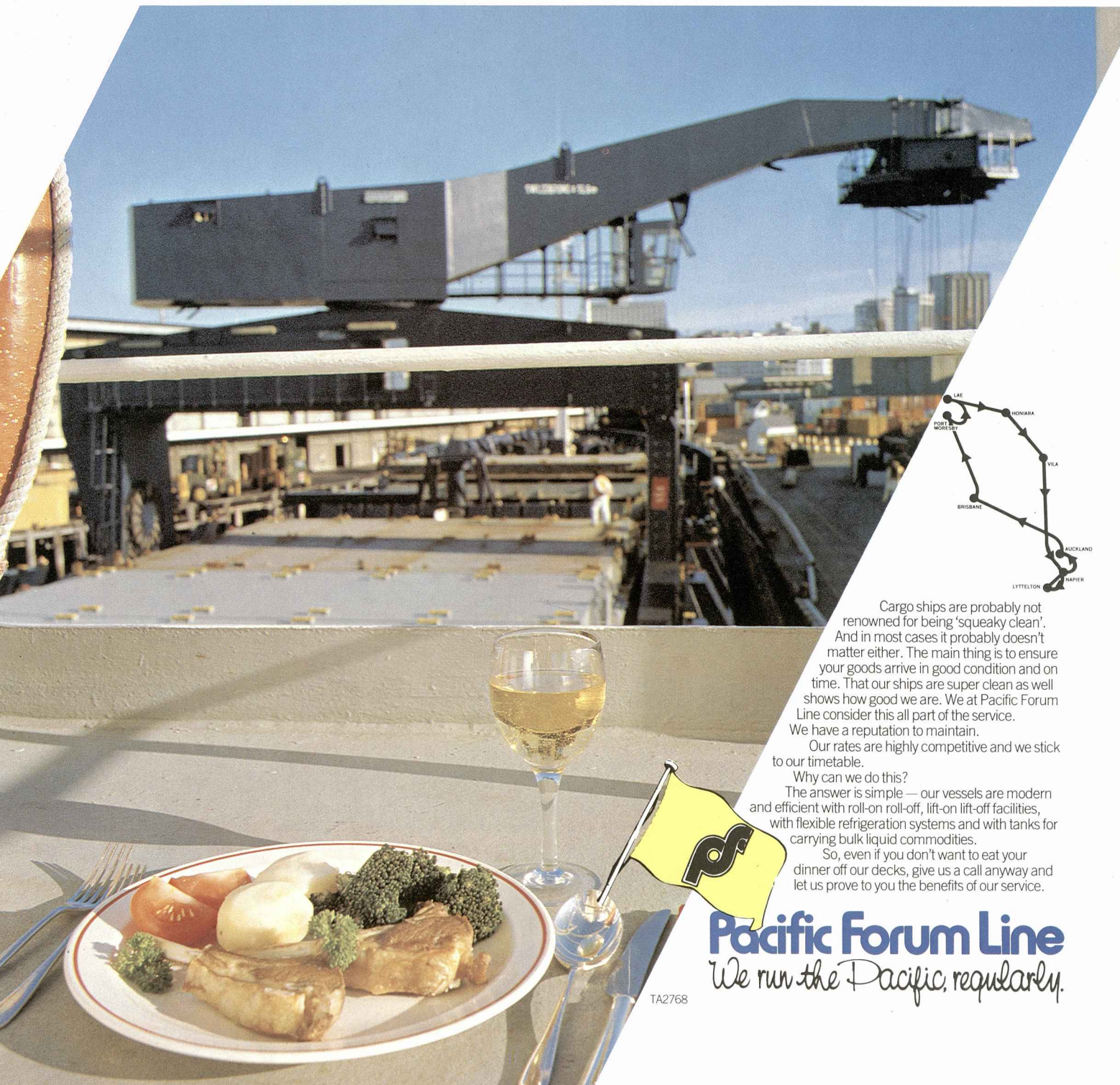
PNG will continue to produce fine quality coffees. The efforts of Government and industry are being directed towards assisting growers to improve their management techniques and husbandry so that coffee can continue to play the important role of contributing to the nation's wealth and prosperity. Who knows, growers may even begin to drink the stuff!

(Craig McConaghy is the Executive Officer of the Coffee Industry Association Inc.)





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# BODY DECORATION

Story and photographs by Liz Thompson

**B**ody decoration in Papua New Guinea is rich and varied and uses a different language from that associated with the body decoration of European culture. It is a language with which Europeans are unfamiliar, often having a symbolic or mythical quality, with some elements derived from the idiosyncrasies of certain birds and animals. It is similar to the body decoration of western culture however in its use, and obvious power, as a form of group identity.

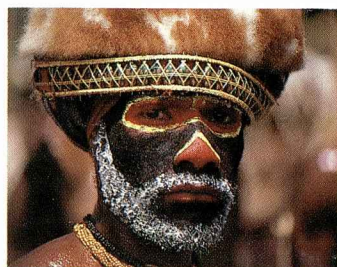
The best opportunity for seeing the stunning displays of makeup, costume and design is at the Highlands Shows which started in the 1950s as annual events at which clans and tribes could come together. They are an attempt to maintain cultural contact and tribal relations in the face of increasing modernisation. To that end deviation from tradition is penalised by the judges who preside over the competitions.

But change is inevitable and inexorable as the trappings of a modern society begin to make inroads. Many singing groups see no incongruity in drinking soft

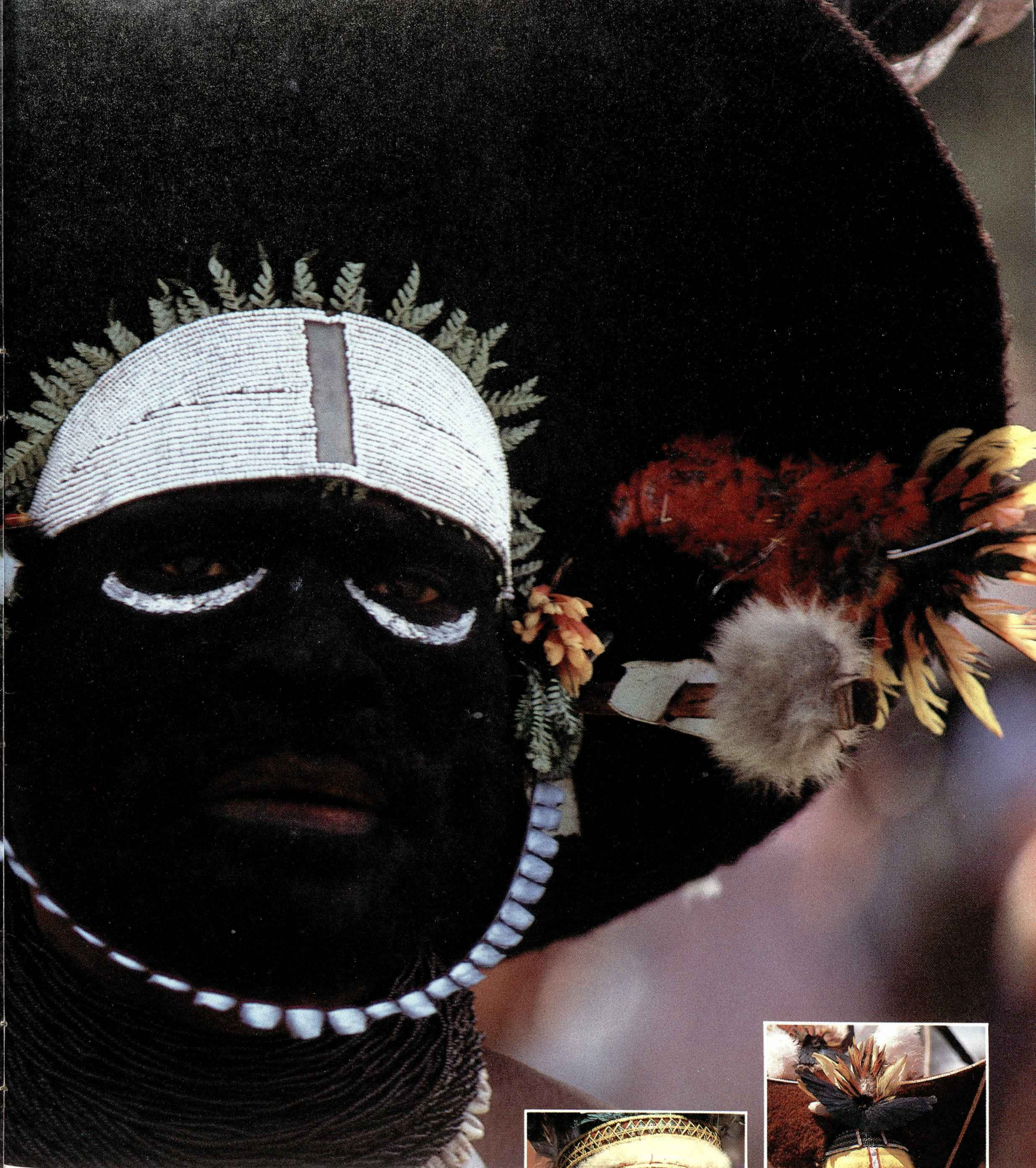
drinks from bottles and sweet foods from paper packets, the colors and textures of Twentieth Century packaged food industries juxtaposed against the iridescent blue of birds of paradise feathers and the earth tones of cuscus fur. Occasionally bottle tops, aluminium can rings, ball-point pen barrels and even film holders will be seen hanging from ear lobes and strings in place of shells.

Though body decoration has altered through contact with the outside world, traditional ways are maintained in the way materials are collected and used. Paints and powders are derived from plants and clays. The 'earth paints', browns, blues and yellows come from clay found usually around rivers. Blacks are made from charcoal and white from lime and chalk. One of the scarcest colors is red ochre, made from rusty brown clay which is baked in leaves in an open fire. Colors are applied to the skin with brushes made from twigs, especially hibiscus, one end of which forms a soft swab.

Some colors, such as charcoal black and rusty red, can be mixed with vegetable oil or animal grease to create a brilliant, shiny effect. They





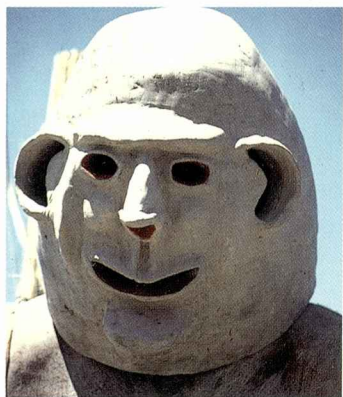


The artistry and inventiveness of the Highlanders is captured in the brilliantly colored designs and patterns of their self-decoration. Each style is peculiar to a particular

clan or tribe. Many involve spectacular plumes from birds of paradise, sea shells traded from the coasts and wigs with bases of woven human hair.







are particularly impressive when caught and animated by sunlight.

Oils have several sources but in the Highlands it is taken mainly from a tree found near Lake Kutubu in the Southern Highlands Province. This oil is collected and transported in long bamboo tubes and stored in gourds to be used in important ceremonies. The Southern Highlanders take advantage of this natural resource and use it as part of an exchange process to areas where oil is not so readily available.

An alternative source is the oil obtained by squeezing the red and yellow pandanus fruits. Pig fat or grease is used when available and is taken from the pork after it has been lifted from the earth ovens or 'mumus' in which it is baked.

Both sexes and small children use makeup with great pride. They use it to some extent to perpetuate gender stereotypes just as is done in the western cultural environment. PNG women use it to enhance femininity, the men to enhance their masculinity. Males will wear a black base on their skin and impose designs to accentuate facial features. Men use color much more sparingly than women, generally on their cheeks, chin and forehead. Frequently men will use only black and white, rare in female adornment.

Male children, until initiated or of beard growing age, adopt female designs. Though men's decoration represents greater authority and aggressiveness they do not com-



pletely escape the objectification commonly associated with women. Mt Hagen men for example wear the red flower of the kila tree, a bright blossom which attracts insects and birds and is thought to have a similar effect on women.

During ceremonial courting men and women mix 'love magic' potions into their makeup of pigments and grease. Women paint themselves with bright reds, yellows and blues which are seen as representing friendship, exchange, fertility and sexual appeal.

Some forms of decoration are exclusively male or female, often spectacularly so in the case of males such as the wig men of the Southern Highlands. The yellow of their faces can be dazzling, set off against the dark towers of human hair that make up their head-dresses. The hair that goes into the wigs must come from a child or a man and is never taken from a woman's head. Children are often seen with small tails of hair hanging from an otherwise bare head. This is maintained in the





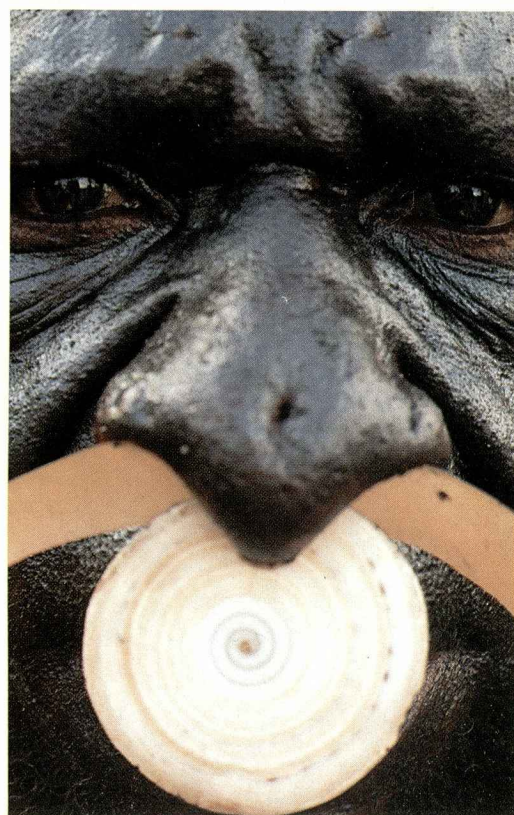
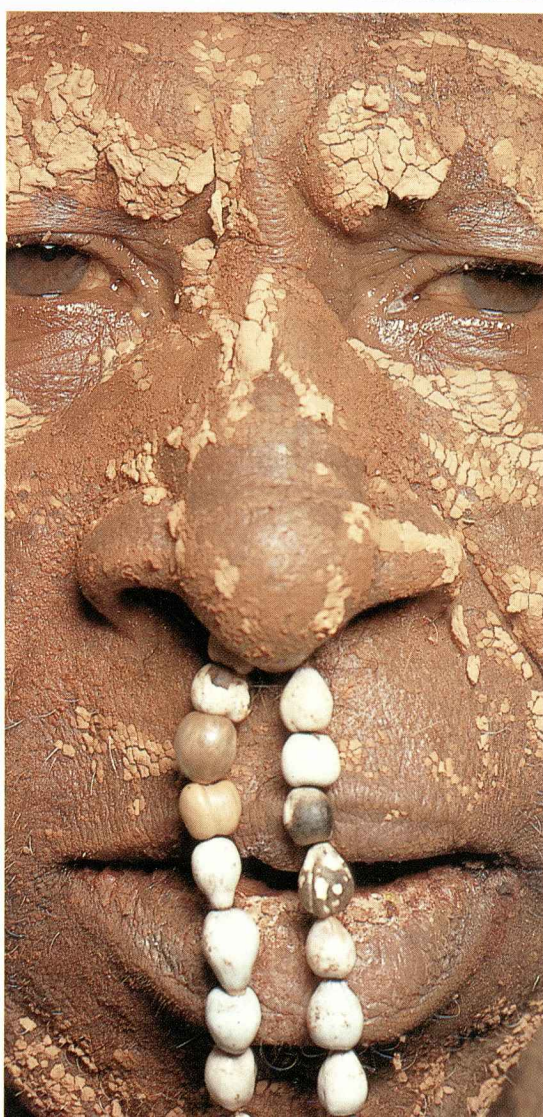
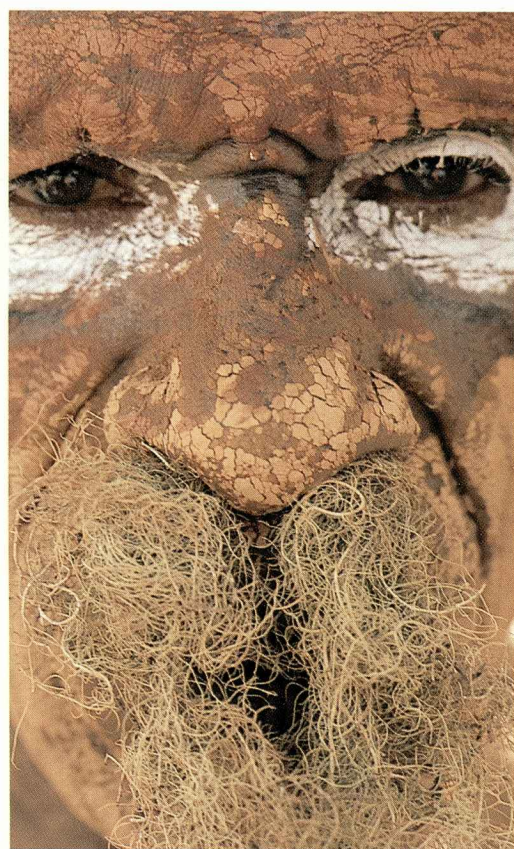
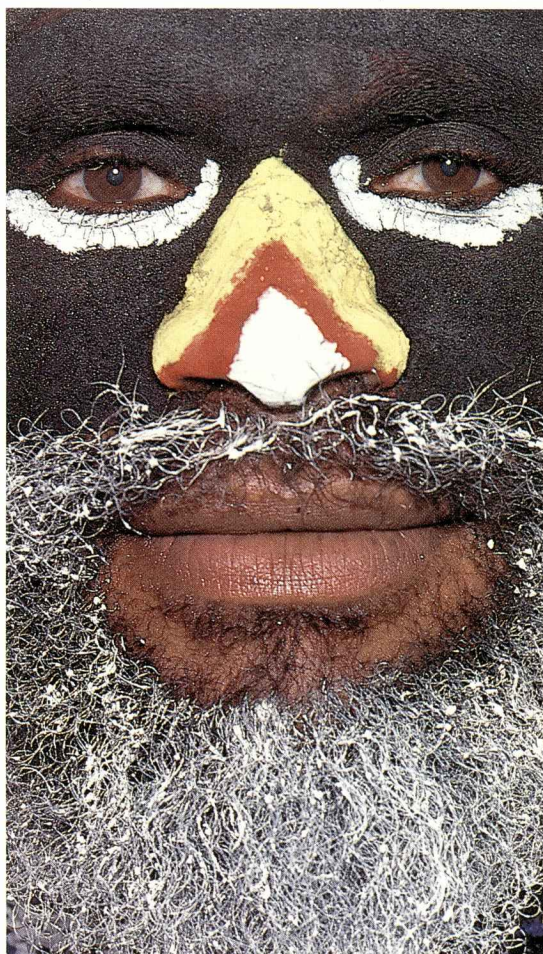
belief that ghosts or spirits can enter through it while the child is asleep.

Large, decorated wigs are seen as enhancing masculinity and there are many styles in the Highlands. In Mendi they take on a Napoleonic slant, the wig rising on either side. In Enga the shape is usually large and rounded. The Hulis of the Tari basin wear a crescent-shaped wig with thick lower ends. In Mt Hagen and Chimbu an open-topped, hood-like wig, hanging straight to the shoulders, is popular.

Experts make them, following established customs. One criterion is that wig makers abstain from sexual intercourse during construction. Contact with women before or during sacred festivals is thought undesirable. Occasionally pigs are sacrificed before work starts on a wig.

The intricate process involves a vine and cane framework which forms the base across which bark is stretched. Lengths of hair are fixed on to this surface with glue or sewn in place with the bone of flying fox. Some skilled artisans induce certain types of spiders to weave dense webs on to the frame to add a lightweight extra dimension. Wax is dripped on to the hair and smoothed out to hold it and set it. The final stage involves rubbing it with grease and adding decoration. The wigs are believed to provide the ancestral ghosts a permanent place in which to reside.

Another particularly symbolic style of dress and one found only in the Mendi region is that based on the wearing of Job's tears (coix lachryma). This custom is adopted only by women and is practised throughout any mourning period. The Job's tears are actually strands of blue-grey seeds which are hung around the neck. These may weigh up to 12 kilograms and one strand is removed each day subsequent to death. Not until the final



*The faces of the Highlands take on haunting and startling appearances when ornamented with paints, feathers, seeds, plants and clay. Most decoration is symbolic or has mythical significance.*





strand is taken off can the mourning process be considered over.

Skin also is smeared with mud, clay and ashes for mourning, making it dry and flaky, unlike the beautiful shining effect attained when the body is rubbed with oil. The original use of clay and ash is thought to have originated from warriors whose masked dances, as a prelude to war, included smearing their bodies with these substances. This form of body decoration is taken to an extreme by the Asaro mud men of the Highlands.

Aside from the materials which are put directly on to the skin, much decoration is known as 'bilas'. These are ornaments made of shell, leaves, dogs' teeth, pig tusks, woven straw, feathers and any number of other objects.

'Bilas' are often used to denote the wealth of the wearer. A common sight is strands of cowrie shells which are woven on to string or threaded on to wire and worn around the neck. The thin, black spines of cassowary feathers are also worn in this fashion. Kina shell and pearl shell crescents make spectacular ornamentation while 'mis', small red shells cut into small circles and threaded on to string are used as forms of decoration and exchange.

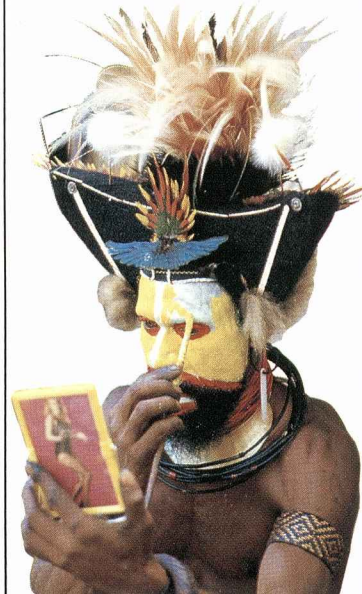
Highlands men will wear a strip of short bamboo slats which hangs from the neck,

each strip representing a number of gold-lipped pearl oyster shells which have been given away. The longer the length, the greater the wealth. This form of identity is exclusive to males who possess and distribute the wealth. One's wealth is measured by how much one can afford to give away, the exchange festivals known as 'making moka' being vivid displays of wealth.

Snake skins are worn as headbands, the mottled blue leather coming from the 'lepage' ground snake. Cuscus fur often forms the base of headdresses, or is fashioned into hats and arm bands. Cuscus skins can also be seen on women as decorative aprons hung from the shoulders or neck.

Traditional body decorations are used in many different ways and on diverse occasions by Highlanders, being the daily dress of some villagers. The most elaborate getups are reserved in the main for special events where the ancient symbolism is maintained in the face of contact with western Twentieth Century influences.

*Body decoration in PNG can be little more than mud, clay and ashes as for mourning **left**, or involve the most stunning and elaborate ornamentation **insets**.*







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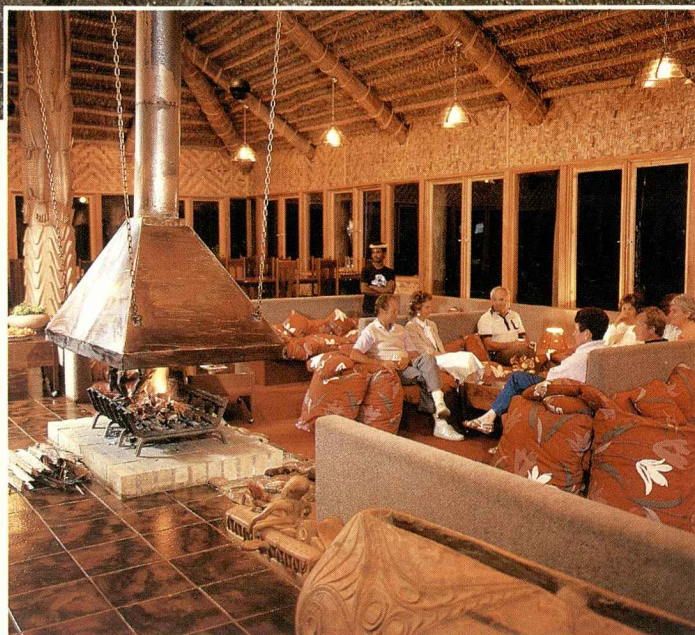
# FILLING —the— GAP

Story by Michael McGovern

**F**ly north through the mountain gap that leads to the fabulous Tàri basin and a remarkable sight reveals itself below. A thatched lodge and 20 circular cabins nestle on the mountainside at 2,100 metres (7,000ft).

This incongruous haven of luxury is Ambua Lodge, a tourist retreat that is establishing an international reputation as a destination unlike any other in the world. Ambua is the name given to the Tàri Gap by the Huli people who have dwelt in the basin for thousands of years.

But who would choose to build a lodge just below its



*Ambua Lodge's 20 private chalets have magnificent views from their 2,100-metre elevation **top**. Guests gather to share experiences in the main lodge **above**.*

crest, far from any source of supplies or services, and expect to fill it regularly with visitors from home and overseas? The answer is Bob Bates, who with his wife Pam and his brother John, runs Trans Nuigini Tours, based in Mt Hagen.

"The Tàri basin, with its Huli culture, is one of the most unusual and interesting places in the world," said Mr Bates. "It has been fascinating outsiders ever since the Europeans originally explored the region in the 1930s. Our company first began taking visitors into the area by four-wheel-drive vehicles and they either camped



under canvas or stayed in the villages. Then four or five years ago a road was pushed through to Tari and we could see the potential for a lodge. John chose the site which had the virtues of a magnificent view and a water supply."

Mr Bates travelled to Kenya and Zimbabwe in 1984, staying at some of the famous lodges in the great game reserves and national parks. He saw how Tree Tops and The Ark were built to take advantage of their setting. "The idea was basically to learn what not to do, to take advantage of what they had learned through their mistakes," he said. "In addition we had to take into account things like the much higher rainfall in Papua New Guinea."

Work on Ambua started in early 1985 with the clearing of the site which was covered with pitpit grass four metres high. The grass, plaited by local workers, is now in the walls of the lodge, and the roofs of the buildings are thatched with kunai grass. Local forest products were used wherever possible, the interior walls being lined with New Guinea cedar. Columns and rafters are of New Guinea beech. The dining room furniture is made from quilla, a coastal hardwood.

Less ingenious men than Bob Bates may have thought no further than a diesel generator for the electrical power supply. Ambua Lodge has such a generator but it is for emergency use only. The main source of supply is a hydro electric plant in a nearby ravine. He hid the plant near the base of a beautiful waterfall, powering it by a downfall from a small diversion upriver. The energy source is so efficient that after the essential needs of the lodge are met there is a surplus which heats the dining room via under-floor water pipes.

The need for heat is at night because the temperature falls dramatically with



A Huli wig man greets visitors to his stockaded home and garden **top left**. A diversion above this waterfall powers the lodge's hydro-electric generator **top right**. Mountain flowers flourish at Ambua **above**.

the setting of the sun behind the surrounding mountains. Guests at the lodge are warmed in the main room by an open log fire and have electric blankets on the beds in the cabins. A heated spa similar to a Japanese bathhouse also takes the chill out of tired bodies at the end of a day's trekking.

Bob Bates had the qualifications to create the lodge in the wilderness, his first profession being that of civil engineer. "I came to PNG in 1964, straight after I graduated from the University of New South Wales," he said. "I worked for the Government for six years then in the private sector, building roads, air strips, bridges, pipelines - things a developing country needs.

"The transition into the tourism industry was gradual,

starting from operating passenger vehicles. Then I bought 20 per cent of Bensbach, a wildlife lodge on the Bensbach River close to the Indonesian border in Western Province." He bought Karawari Lodge, on a tributary of the Sepik River in 1978 and it quickly became internationally renowned. Its success and the growth of his travel and tour business led to the planning of Ambua.

Guests at Ambua sitting in the comfort of the main lodge have an unimpeded view of the vast basin which is the home of a unique human culture and rare animals, birds and flowers. All became adapted to an environment which, because of the forbidding ring of cloud-shrouded mountain chains, virtually was cut off from outside influence.

Ambua itself is home to the ribbon-tailed astrapia, the last discovered of the birds of paradise which are synonymous with PNG. This species lives only at Mt Hagen and Ambua, the lowest altitude at which it is found. It shares the mountainsides with at least 10 other species, the crested bird of paradise, Loria's bird of paradise, the black sicklebill, the brown sicklebill, the short-tailed paradigalla, the superb bird of paradise, Lawes' parotia, King of Saxony bird of paradise and the blue bird of paradise. Ambua is also the habitat of the rare Archibold's bowerbird and Macgregor's bowerbird. Orchids proliferate on the trees around the lodge and the forests in the area are the domain of Boelen's python, the only snake protected by law in PNG.

All these wonders are on the doorstep for Ambua's guests even before they venture further afield into the basin where village life adheres to age-old traditions. Walking tours and four-wheel-drive vehicles can take the adventurous into the trackless wilds in comfort and safety, passing through a photographer's paradise of color and fascination.

Always there is the inviting lodge at the end of the day, now under the managership of Peter and Joy Caine. Their two chefs are Highlanders who turn out meals of a high standard demanded by seasoned international travellers.

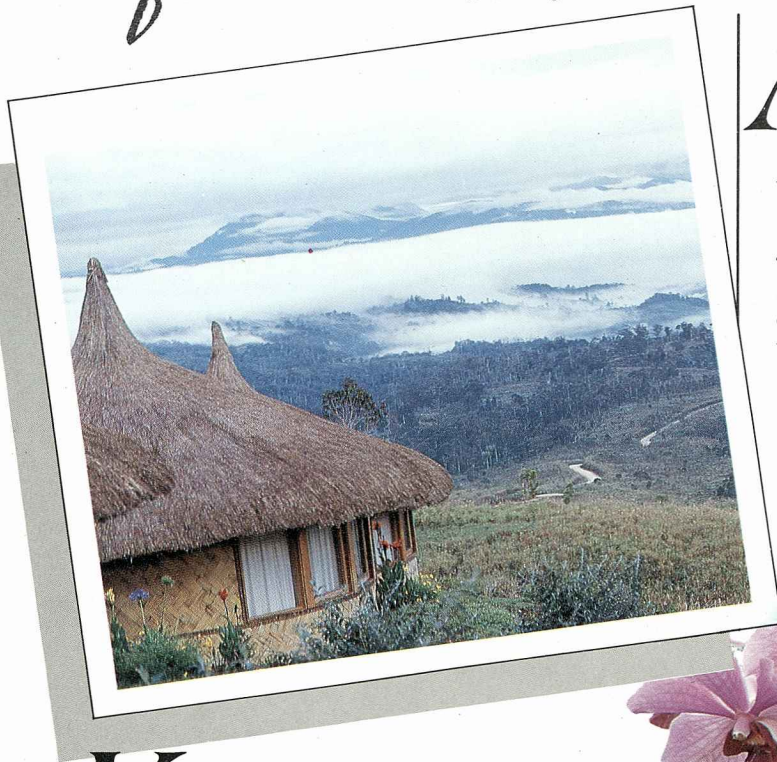
Bob Bates admits the venture was a gamble but opening night, New Year's Eve 1985, was a good omen for the 40-bed lodge. "We had 48 guests that night," he said.

*Air Niugini operates regular air services to Tari from Port Moresby and other centres.*



# Two Great Lodges

## *-for the traveller extraordinaire*



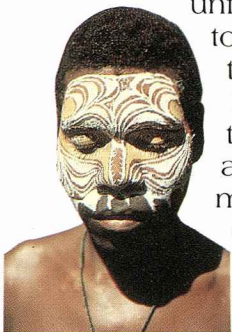
**A**mbua Lodge, at 7000 feet, has its head in the clouds and looks down on a valley that first saw Europeans less than 50 years ago. Completed in 1985 the lodge has 20 spacious cabins with private modern bathrooms and huge picture windows that look out over the Tari basin. This is home to the Huli people whose body decoration is still a part of everyday custom - bold,



dignified and quite startling. The surrounding mountains are frequented by 13 species of the Bird of Paradise and these can be seen in the orchid studded forests behind Ambua Lodge. Send for our brochure "Papua New Guinea - tomorrow it won't be the same"

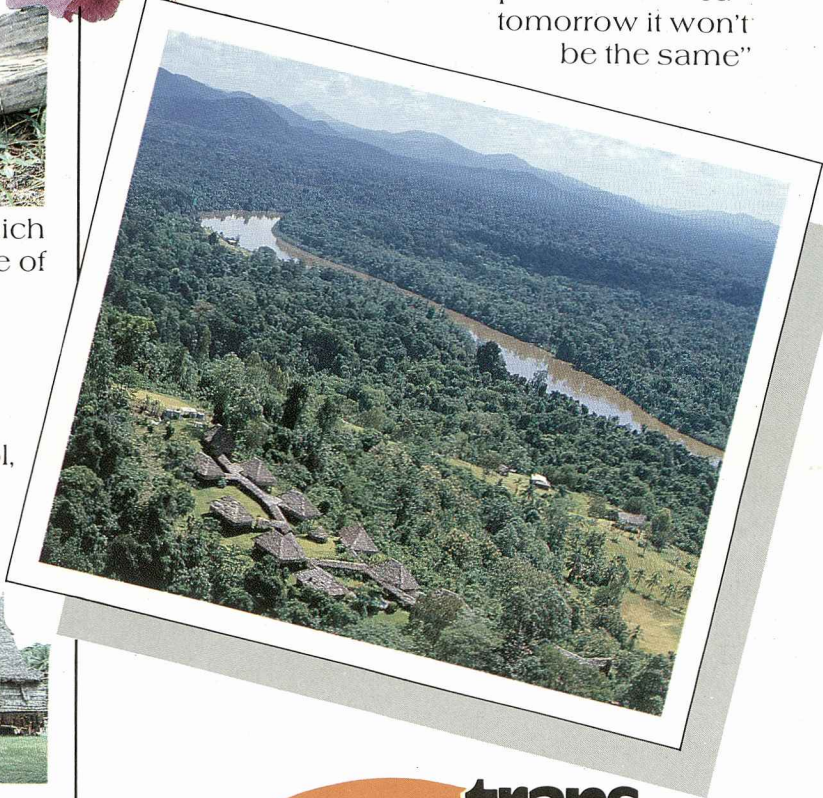


**K**arawari Lodge takes its name from a tributary of the legendary Sepik River. It is renowned the world over as a luxurious base occupying an



unforgettable setting from which to explore the unique culture of the Sepik basin. The main lodge is designed as a traditional haus tambaran and guests enjoy all the modern comforts of bar, dining and swimming pool, etc. amid stunning examples of Sepik sculpture and folk law.

Karawari is built on a ridge, high above the river, the view goes on forever. Each of the 20 guest rooms have private bathrooms and verandahs - the ideal place for early morning tea with fresh cinnamon rolls. The river is your roadway to villages and people who delight to show you their culture and skills - a glimpse of life generations from the 20th century.



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Kiunga

Ok Tedi Mine

Tari PORT MORESBY  
Mendi

Mt Hagen

Kundiawa  
Vanimo

Goroka

Kamantuu

Popondetta

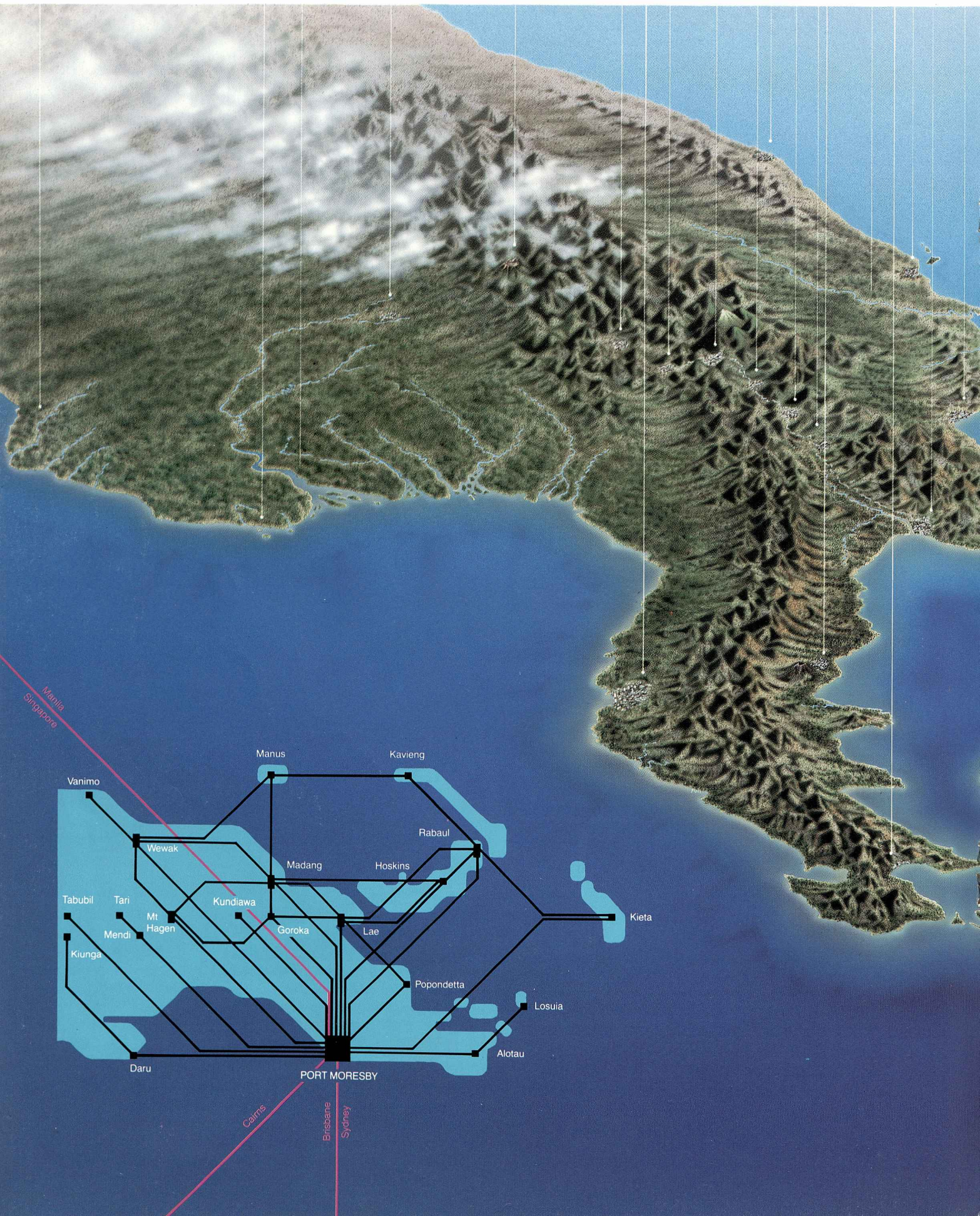
SEPIK RIVER

Alotau

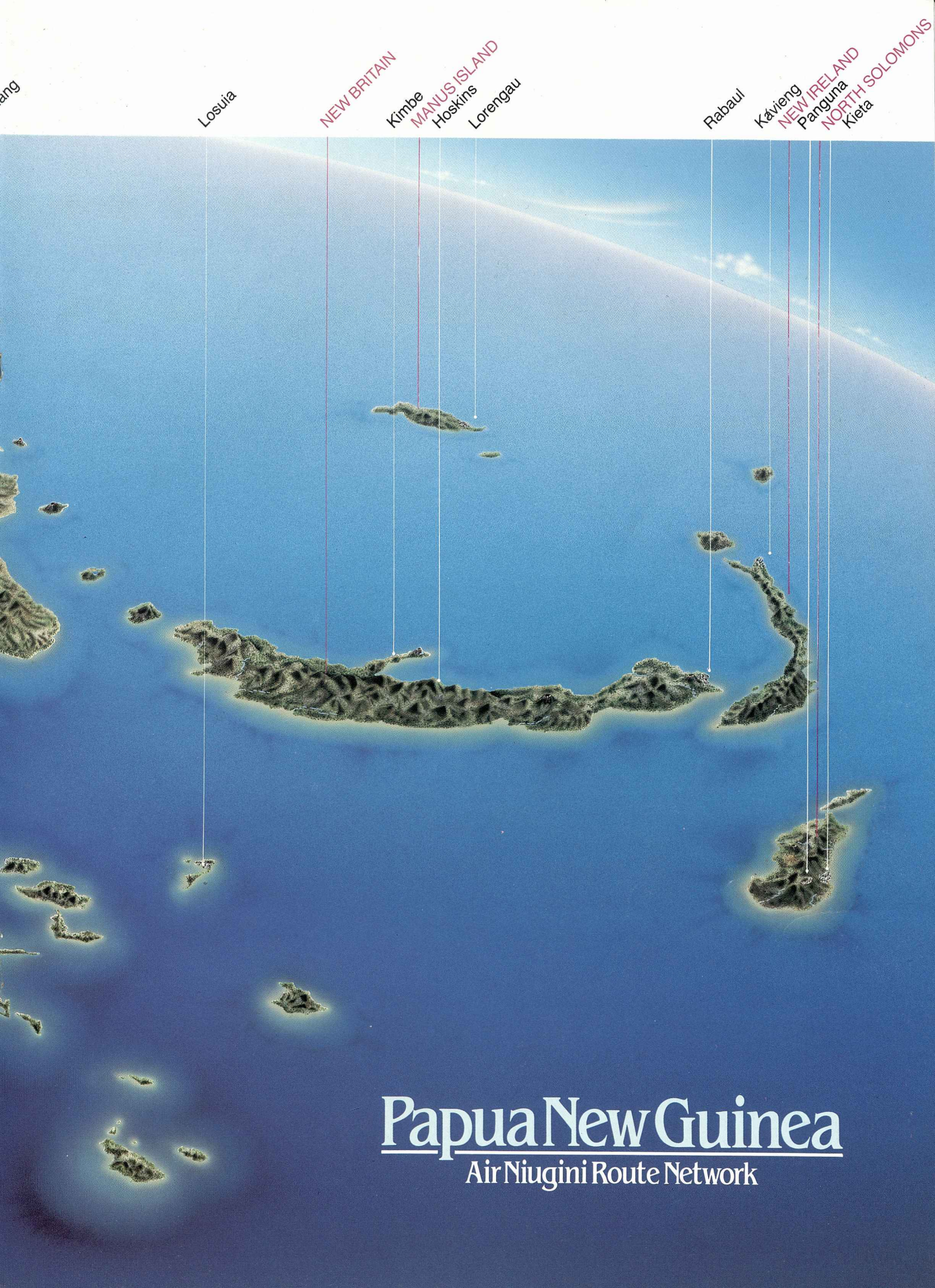
Wewak

Lae

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ang

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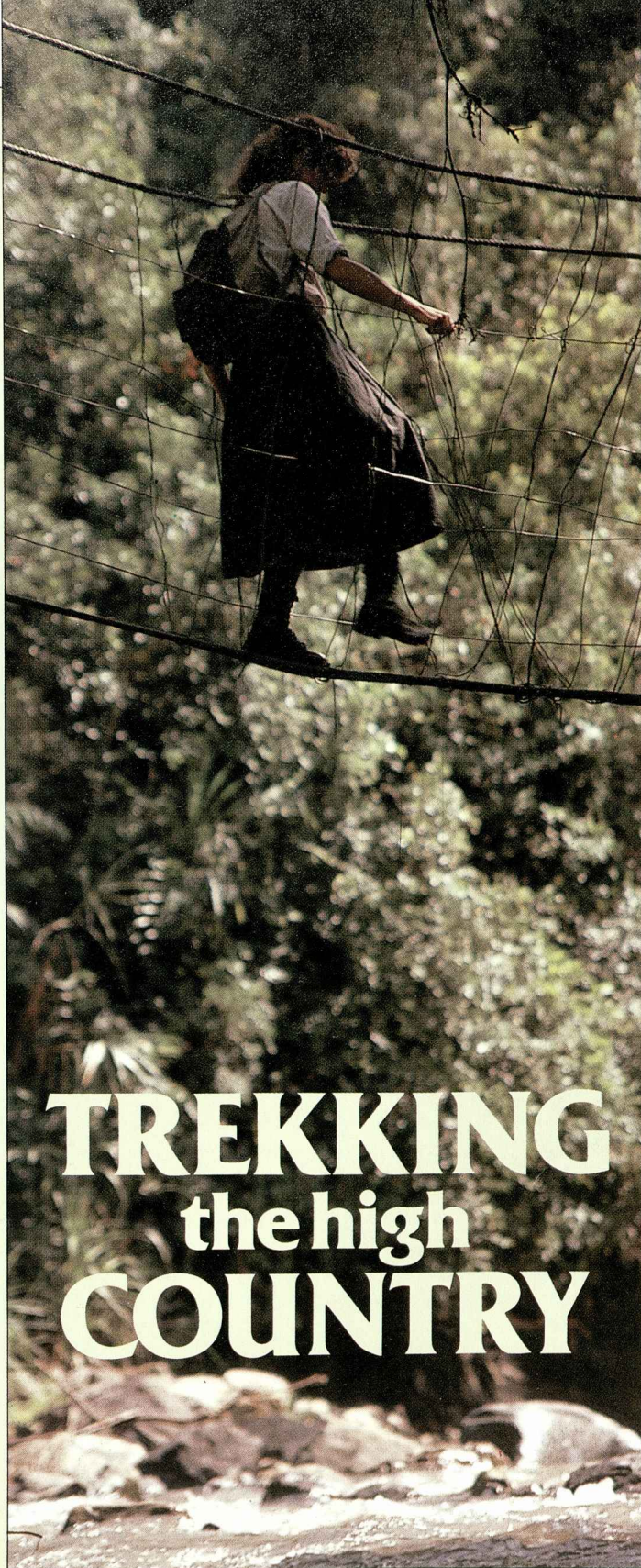
**F**our-and-a-half rain-soaked days after leaving Tabulil on our trek across the mountains of Papua New Guinea, we stumbled out of a low-hanging mist and vine-clogged jungle on to the lonely looking airstrip at Golgubip. Incongruously standing in the middle of the makeshift runway was a white man wearing a baseball cap and a Bora Bora Club Med tee-shirt. We had been told that no foreigners lived in Golgubip and he obviously had not seen many strangers walking out of the bush.

"Good morning," we greeted one another as we shook hands, each wondering to himself what on earth the other was doing at this particular spot at this particular time. And each too polite to ask the obvious question.

He glanced at the small Union Jack badge on my shirt and remarked, "I'm a Brit as well. You people must be hungry. Do come and stay for lunch. Jane will be delighted to meet you all."

We were a party of four; myself, Victoria Gaze, Paul Hewitt and Philip Townsend, Britons in search of adventure.

Our hosts were Tony and Jane Williams, volunteers working with the nationals in the Golgubip area, trying to establish some sort of economic base which could produce revenue for the people so they could avoid leaving their homeplace to work in the mines. This



# TREKking the high COUNTRY

Story and photographs by Anthony Willoughby



Victoria Gaze crossing a rope bridge over one of many rivers **top**. On the ground, sharp rocks cut the author's boots **inset**.

migration was breaking up the ancient ways of the people and the Williams' plan to establish a vegetable market to provide enough cash to allow the villagers to stay at home was slowly making progress.

Their house was set on a hilltop overlooking the village which consisted of 40 huts on either side of a small ravine. Gazing down on the little town we saw the PNG flag fluttering from a pole in the middle of the compound; children were playing a ragtag game, their own version of soccer, at the lower end of the runway.

Later that afternoon, a plane came skittering through the mist. How the pilot could see the strip through the thick fog was beyond me.

The pilot obviously had heard of us. "You must be the mad Poms (English) trekking gaily through the forest," he said with some astonishment. "What do you know about the sink holes? Haven't you heard about the backpacker who took off his pack, put it down and it vanished down a sink hole so deep he never heard it land?" I admitted we knew very little about sink holes, but assured him we would follow our guide closely.

"Good luck going over the wall," he said in a serious tone. "It's very dangerous in the rainy season." I think the sudden shiver that went through me was due to the cold and damp, not fear.

The Hindenberg Wall is a



Villagers made the trekkers a raft **right** so they could meet their pick-up boat in style at journey's end **below**.



massive limestone cliff which runs for about 22 kilometres along western PNG and posed a virtually impenetrable barrier for earlier explorers. One of the few breaks in the wall is just north of Golgubip where there is a steep track which leads nearly 1,000 metres vertically to the top of the ridge. From there, we were told, it was downhill all the way to the Telefomin.

I peered closely at our map. Suddenly I found reason to believe that this cheerful prognosis was not completely in line. The trip, we were assured, would take no longer than two days.

Extract from my diary: "Now sitting under a vast rock overhang which protects me from the incessant, driving rain. We'll be spending the night here. I imagine people have been sleeping under this rock since history began."

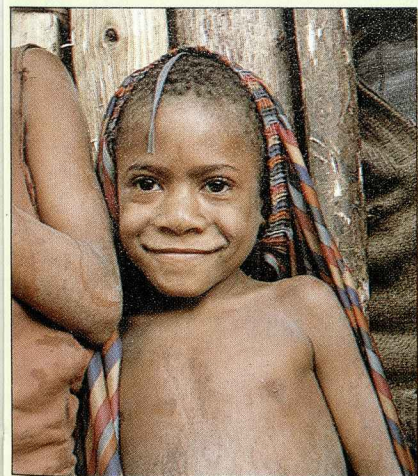
"We had another excellent dinner prepared by Victoria and Paul, kau-kau in peanut-butter sauce with rice. Their culinary ability to improvise is amazing."

My contentment was rudely interrupted in the middle of the night when the drizzle turned into a downpour and the overhang began to leak, creating little frigid streams which ran under our sleeping bags.

I was awakened at first light by the oldest of our carriers returning from a pre-dawn hunting excursion. He brought in two cuscuses for breakfast. They are mam-







Everywhere they travelled the party received friendship and hospitality from the Highlanders they met along the way **left**.



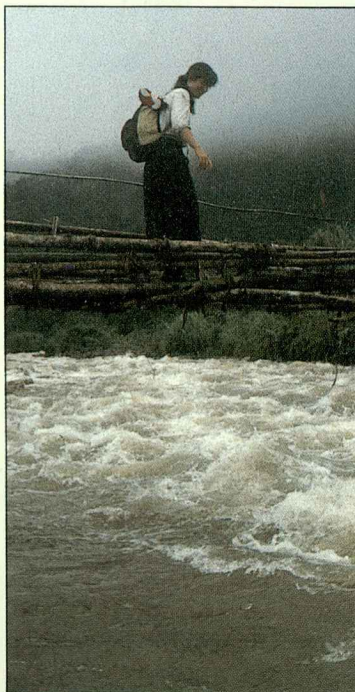
mals, about the size of a large domestic cat. They live in trees and have attractive little faces and enormous, pleading eyes. The porters found them delicious but I could think of them suitable only as pets, not a meal.

The rain miraculously had stopped by the time we shoved off. The psychological effect on us all was tremendous. Our first three hours saw us descending to the Nor River basin, then a steep climb on to a ridge from which we hoped to be able to see Telefomin.

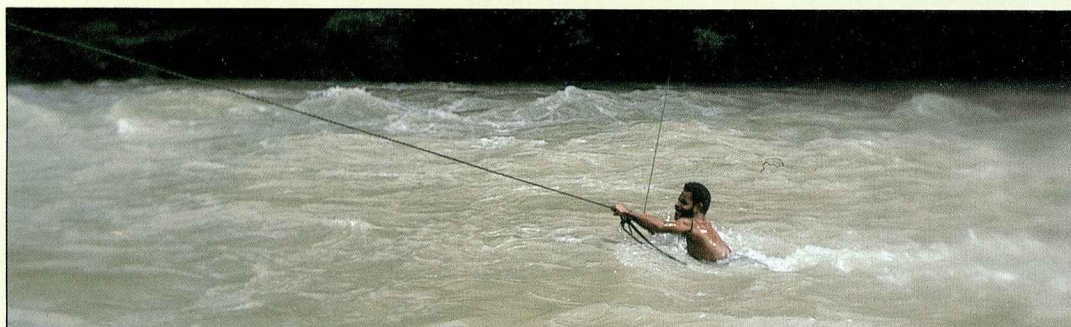
The view was everything we had hoped, and more. After crossing the 2,500-metre-high ridge, we came to a clearing from which we saw the magnificent Sepik River basin. On the opposite bank nestled Telefomin, at the base of a range of hills. Sunshine! To the left, mountaintop after mountaintop extended into the distance, range upon range of tree-covered mountains vanishing into the purple distance. Directly in front of us, below, open grassland through which the river had cut an impressive 100-metre deep gorge. It took us another five hours trudge to reach Telefomin whereupon we congratulated one another heartily. We picked our way over a rickety handmade bridge to the Sepik, an important leg of our trip now behind us.

Putting a slight damper on our euphoria was the thought that the remainder of our trek would be more remote, hillier and more inaccessible until





Vine and bamboo bridges spanned rushing rivers **above**. Rain made shelter welcome **top right** and made some river crossings dangerous **right**. Sand in boots was hard on feet **bottom**.



we reached the river where it curls into the sea. But we felt as if we were really making some progress.

Our first task the following day was to live up to our promise and arrange the 15-minute flight back to Golgubip for our carriers. Two of them decided to keep the flight money and walk back. The pilot was the same chap we had seen days earlier back at Golgubip. "So you made it!" he exclaimed. He seemed genuinely glad to see us. It's always nice when Australians show some modicum of concern for Poms.

After a day's rest we plunged back into the jungle with our new helpers, again fording fast rivers as we had in the first days of the trek. There were some scary crossings, fraught with danger, but somehow we always managed to get to the other side.

Excerpts from my diary: "Not sure exactly where we are. The name of this place is surely not on my map. Maybe not on anyone's map ... yesterday far and away the toughest of the trip. We

walked for nine hours; I was aware of maybe seven of them. Up very steep hills, down one equally steep ravine. The only flat part turned out to be a bog of knee-deep mud. Positive thought: At least, the mud doesn't smell."

The next morning the walk was downhill for about four hours, whereupon we reached a tributary which we assumed to be the Hak River. This we followed till we reached a wide spot in the forest and a tiny hut. No orange juice. No cream biscuits. No beer! But a little kau-kau.

It was revealed, along with the news that the next village was another hour's walk, that our remaining carriers were leaving. The uplifting examples of the beauty of the human spirit kept our own morale high in spite of the difficulties, for midway through a stream three young men came bounding over the submerged boulders with amazing alacrity and grace to take our packs off our backs and offer helping hands. Our new porters had arrived, and found us just when we needed help the most.

And so it went for yet another week of trudging, slipping, falling, sinking in streams and enduring considerable hardships until we reached our destination at New Unamo, the Frieda River.

I wrote in my diary on the 18th day: "Sitting on the porch of my hut—no real sense of elation or of true accomplishment. Odd. No

more mud, no more hills, no more tree trunks. We bathed in a small crystal-clear stream at the base of the last hill. I washed my hair. Marvellous!"

We sat on the bank of the Frieda River waiting for our boat, the walking over. Was it worth it? Yes! Would I do it again? Sure!



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I first became interested in the cuscuses of Papua New Guinea way back in 1975. I was curator of the Perth Zoo at the time and the zoo had been contacted by Perth zoologist Dr Peter Lindren who had been based in Port Moresby for some years. "Would the zoo like six tame spotted cuscuses?" we were asked. We had none in Western Australia and knew of only four in other zoos in Australia. A quick check showed several overseas zoos such as West Berlin and the Bronx, New York, had kept

# COLORFUL CUSCUS

Story and photographs by Roy Fairfax

them in the past. None had attempted to set up breeding groups or pools of individuals from which breeding pairs might emerge. With our new Nocturnal House already under construction we did not hesitate. "Yes please, we certainly would like the

cuscuses," was our cabled reply.

Though the zoo staff was familiar with the more common species of possums, we knew very little about cuscuses except that they were big possums of sorts. Unlike the ubiquitous fast-moving,

highly athletic brush-tailed possum which bounds across suburban roofs in all the major Australian cities, cuscuses, we were aware, tended to be large, relatively placid, slow-moving animals, rarely seen during the day-time. The spotted cuscus actually occurs in Australia, on the Cape York Peninsula just across the water from PNG, but it is very rare there and is highly protected.

Eventually, after some months, our six cuscuses arrived having made the journey by air first to Bris-

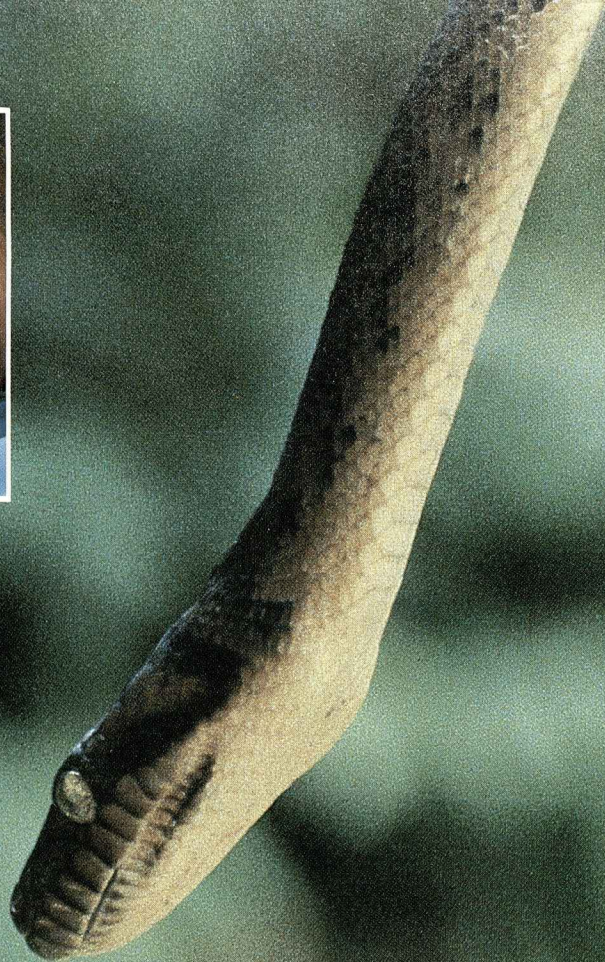




bane then across from one side of Australia to the other. I recall that they seemed to be accompanied by their own weight in paper: health certificates, quarantine permits, wildlife permits, customs entry and exit permits, transit permits and diet sheets. There were also biographical details for each one from Dr and Mrs Lindren. The large grey-colored female, called Grey Girl, we were pleased to learn had been the model for the image on the new 10-toea coin which had just been struck along with other denominations to coincide with PNG's Independence. Another of the group, a young brownish male called Rusty was particularly friendly and was an easy target for the photographers from the local papers. Initially, all the cuscuses were kept in a heated, humidified building in an 'off-limits' quarantine part of the zoo while the staff got to know them. Staff who lived on the premises were surprised to hear them wailing and calling at night-time – sounds which were quite unlike the hoarse, hissing noises made by common

Australian possums. Their diet, too, was somewhat different from possums. Fruit and gum or fig leaves were preferred, bread was acceptable but insects and other animal material were hardly touched.

Since visiting PNG I have had the opportunity of seeing not only spotted cuscuses in their natural environment but several other species of cuscus. A short-haired grey one, *Phalanger orientalis*, not unlike some of the ring-tailed possums of Southern Aus-



*Cuscus come in many colors from black through grey and brown to snowy white and make interesting and friendly pets. Some possums insets 1 and 2 look and act like cuscus.*







tralia, is widespread on the PNG mainland at lower altitudes. Two thick-furred, black or black-and-white forms, *Phalanger vestitus* and *Phalanger carmelitae*, occur in the Highlands. Brown and ginger-striped young of *Phalanger orientalis* are, alas, occasionally caught and offered for sale in the Goroka market. Some very rare species are restricted to Woodlark and other islands. All of these cuscuses differ, not only in appearance but in other characteristics, in-

cluding temperament. Like some of their human counterparts the tough, muscular Highlands versions, for instance, are not the sort with which one takes liberties!

My favourite kind of cuscus, I think perhaps because it soon becomes genuinely friendly (rather than just docile), is the sort that I remember from years ago in Perth – the spotted cuscus. The description 'spotted', incidentally, is a bit of a misnomer. True, some of the males do have large blotches

or spots of one color or another. Many do not. The females are usually only one color. Pure, snowy white is a common variation. One female which I kept for a while earned the name Snowball because of her appearance. Though wild-caught, she became very tame and was free to come and go as she pleased. She used to sleep during the day in a large gum tree in the garden but she would always make an appearance about 7.30 pm in a guava tree near the back door



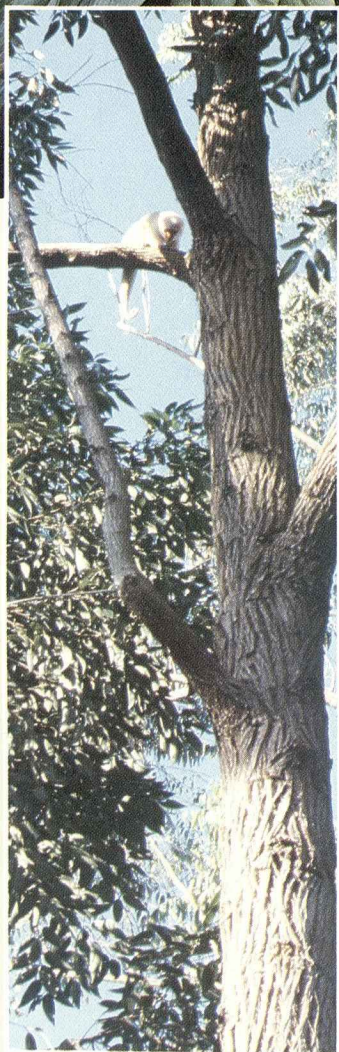
*Snowball, the author's pet, makes the acquaintance of an amethystine python left. Grey girl was model for the 10-toea coin above.*

where she could sample the fruit while waiting for someone to provide supper.

Snowball incidentally, was very apprehensive at first about a medium-sized amethystine python which used to keep the rats under control around my house, but eventually these two animals came to terms and ignored each other. Man, of course, is an important predator now a-days and cuscuses are caught for their decorative skins and for food. Perhaps because he is a comparative newcomer on the scene by evolutionary standards or because his hunting techniques and impact on habitat are not selective the percentage of white, piebald or other color in the population, it seems, is not obviously affected by man.

There are lots of other things about cuscuses which I find interesting. Like most other marsupials the females have pouches in which the newborn young spends its early life. Later, when the baby is strong enough, it rides on its mother's back. She invariably keeps her balance, though, even when climbing along narrow branches or changing from one tree to the next. Cuscuses rarely leap from branch to branch; they tend to move purposefully, always clutching with hand, foot or tail wherever possible. There are five digits on each limb. The thumb and, to some extent, the next finger, is opposable so that the hand can grasp. The hind foot has a small, nail-less 'big' toe which is





also opposable. The second and third toes are partly fused together (as in kangaroos) and are used for grooming the fur as well as combining with the other toes for grasping. The tail is hairless underneath and can wrap itself around a branch. It is easily strong enough to support the animal's weight if necessary though caution is the cuscus's byword and it prefers to hang on with at least one hind foot as well if possible.

The range of color in *Phalanger maculatus* – the spotted cuscus – is one of nature's minor mysteries. Although sexual and age dimorphism is common in many animals (in other words the males of a species differ in shape or color or size from the females, or the adults are different from juveniles) it is not usual for many different colors to be found in a population of one species of a wild animal. Just as all giant pandas are normally black and white, all African elephants are usually grey and adult green tree pythons are green it would be expected that each species of cuscus would have its own color pattern. In fact each species does apart from

*Phalanger maculatus*! Some are white, others yellow or orange, others still are dark brown. Some are combinations of any or all of these. Now, while it is true that we know of many domestic animals which have such variations, for example, dogs, there is always an artificial man-made element in their

*Snowball left was a white specimen of spotted cuscus. Some spotted cuscus become decorative skins on dancers above.*

breeding and development. This does not, of course, apply in the case of the spotted cuscuses living in the wilds of PNG. Occasionally, melanistic (excessively dark pigmented) animals are found in nature. Black leopards come to mind, while albino (lacking dark pigment) animals are not too rare. White lions, tigers and elephants are known in the wild, but rarely survive long enough to breed, perhaps because they show up too well to their enemies or to their prey. Perhaps being different, they are not treated too kindly by their fellows.

So what is different about the spotted cuscus – why do so many color forms occur in the wild? I am not sure what the answer is but there seems to be two factors worth considering. One is the genetic constitution of the species – somehow or other the different genes for color variation have arisen in the first place and have become widespread throughout the population. Such genes do not seem to be linked in any particular way to other char-

acteristics except the males are often spotty. The other factor is the general lack of 'selection pressure'. The animals themselves do not seem to have any marked preferences for color. For every gentleman cuscus who prefers blondes there is presumably one who finds brunette or piebald lady cuscuses at least as attractive. More to the point, nature in general does not seem to have any preference. The cuscuses are not predators – the fruit and leaves on which they feed do not see them coming, and they are active in the dark anyway. And they have no traditional enemies either. There are few large natural predators in PNG particularly in the lower humid forests where spotted cuscuses occur. Harpy eagles are said to catch the odd cuscus in a high tree in daylight but this is probably a fairly rare event. Large pythons may take small cuscuses too but they track by scent and body heat as much as by sight.

Like all marsupials, cuscuses are given special protection under the Washington Convention (the convention on international trade in endangered species). Very few indeed have been sent overseas from PNG (or from Northern Australia or Irian Jaya where some species also occur.)

PNG is certainly the only place where these attractive animals can be seen with reliability. None of the mainland species appears to be seriously endangered at present. Let us hope that the situation remains so.



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# Travelling with the Huli

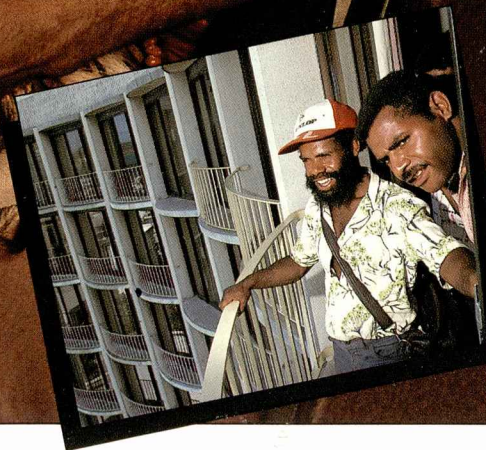
Story and photographs  
by Rob Walls/Rapport

**I**n a world becoming increasingly homogenised by communications and the sheer effortlessness of modern travel, it often comes as a surprise to those of us more privileged, to realise that there are still people who have never seen a city or flown in an aircraft. In Papua New Guinea however, this is often the case.

Having just spent a tranquil week at Ambua Lodge, a luxurious new tourist resort, in the Southern Highlands, I was waiting for a plane at Tari to take me back to Port Moresby. The twice weekly Air Niugini Dash 7 was due and as is still the custom at Tari, the locals were flocking to the airport in their hundreds to watch it land.

The people of this region are far from shy when it comes to the use of color in their dress and the precincts of the airstrip soon took on the appearance of a large flower-bed. Amongst the throng, apparently preparing to board the aircraft, was a tall well-built man dressed in the manner of the typical Huli warrior. The Huli, the largest ethnic grouping in the Southern Highlands are famous for their lurid yellow and red face paint and their human hair wigs which they decor-

Simon Langa, resplendent in singing costume, ready for his first flight **above**. Simon, still high above the ground at the Travelodge Hotel, Port Moresby **inset**.





ate with everlasting daisies.

Curious about his destination and mode of dress, I struck up a conversation and found out that his name was Kapa Dilini. He came from Lake Kopiago and was the Clerk of the Magistrates Court in Tari. He was on his way to the annual Port Moresby show with a group representing the Southern Highlands.

Articulate and well-spoken, he introduced two companions, Simon Langa and John Tengers who were similarly attired. John, recently graduated from year 10 at high school and Simon, a businessman and aspiring politician, were also on their way to the show. Although the others had been to the capital before, for Simon, who had contested the last parliamentary elections in the Koroba/Kopiago district, it was not only his first visit, but also his first flight. Like Kapa they were both wearing their finest 'bilas' (traditional dress).

As we boarded the plane, this superb trio in their wigs and plumes drew gasps of admiration from the tourists on board. They handled this attention with aplomb. Seat belts fastened, Kapa and John kept a watchful eye on Simon as the plane taxied for take-off. The Dash 7 roared down the runway gathering speed. Eyes glowing with excitement, Simon let out that high, soft cry of amazement characteristic of the Highlanders of PNG. "Aiee-eeee!" His friends grinned and chuckled at his inexperience.

Within minutes he had settled down like a veteran traveller and opened his 'bilum' (the all-purpose, string carry bag used by men and women alike, throughout PNG). From it, he took a truck rear-vision mirror and an old school exercise book. Carefully pressed between the pages, was a kaleidoscopic collection of bird of paradise feathers. He handed them

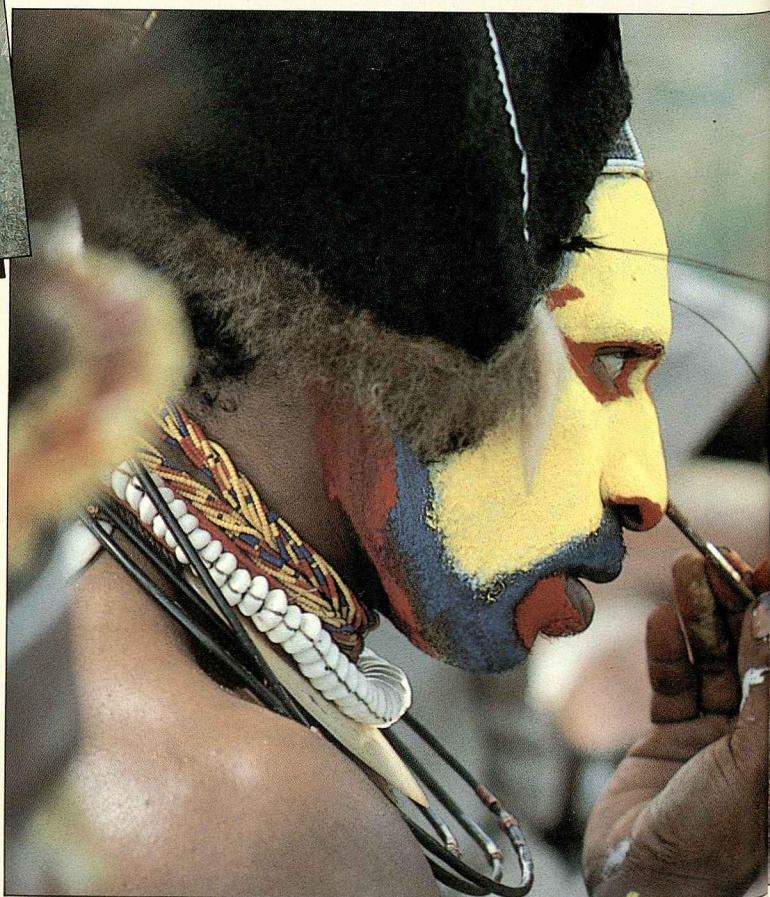
and all three began putting the finishing touches to their wigs in preparation for arrival in the capital. Passing the mirror around they scrutinised their appearance with all the care of ambassadors preparing to present their credentials at the Court of St James.

Resolving to attend the show with them so that I could record their efforts in the singing which culminates in a grand massed display on the afternoon of the final day, we arranged to meet at the house where they were staying so that I could photograph them preparing for the big event. That Monday, I got up early and took a taxi to the address they had given me near the Port Moresby showground. I located the small house with some difficulty, but it was unoccupied. There was evi-



ence that they had been there, however. Traces of the face paint they use to decorate themselves, were scattered around on the palm leaves they had been using as palettes.

A four-wheel-drive vehicle drew up at the gate and turned out to be driven by one of the organisers of the team. He told me that they had moved in the night to a place where they could adorn themselves without interference from curious locals. He offered to drive me there and soon we reached a quiet glade in deep kunai grass







near the showground. About 20 men were sitting around in the shade in various stages of preparation and although it was obvious that strangers were not welcome, after a brief discussion, they agreed to allow me to stay.

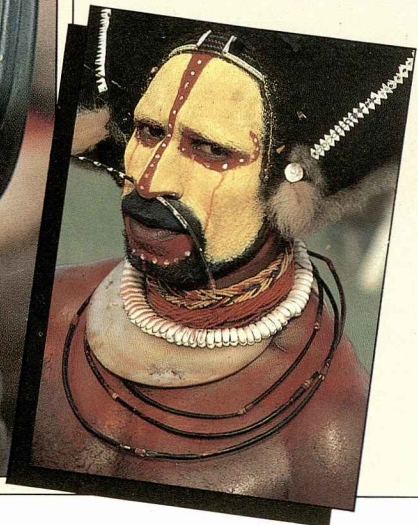
I asked about their nocturnal move and was promptly given three different versions of the story. One, it was custom. Two, they did not want their competitors to

know where they were, so that sorcery could not be worked against them to cause their defeat. The third reason was even more curious. They had been returning home late the night before, when they were offered a lift by a white man with shoulder length hair tied in a ponytail. He appeared to have little English but spoke fluent Pidgin. After their benefactor had left they sat around the fire and talked about this unusual event. Since it was unlikely that a European would pick up strangers on the road at night, some of the older men believed that he must have been a ghost. Fearing that he would return to do them harm, the elders

convinced the others to gather up their belongings and in the early hours of the morning they had secretly moved to the place where I found them. They had spent a fitful night sleeping under a large tree. Kapa, the sophisticated, derided them but for the peace of mind of the group had gone along with them. He laughed at their superstitions but his laughter was not entirely convincing.

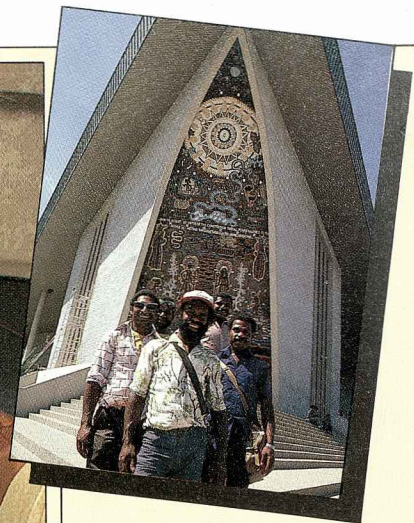
As if to reinforce their fear of outside interference, a roaring grass fire sprang up in the kunai to the west. Fanned by the strong coastal winds it bore down rapidly on the party who were still engrossed in getting ready. Clutching their wigs, bilums and painting materials the Huli raced before the fire to a clearing, where after catching their breath they completed their preparations.

At a word from Kapa they headed for the main road and



Face paint goes on carefully **centre** before the Hulis perform in a hot breeze **above**. Kapa Dilini shows the strain **inset** but the contest was won by the Rigo girl **inset, far left** and her group.



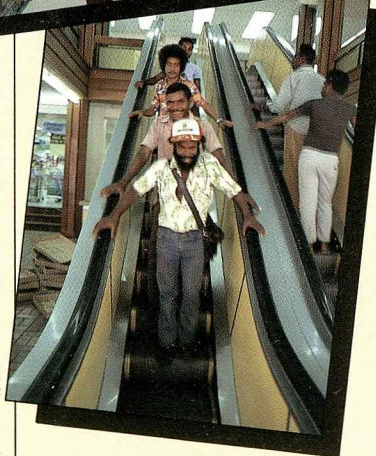
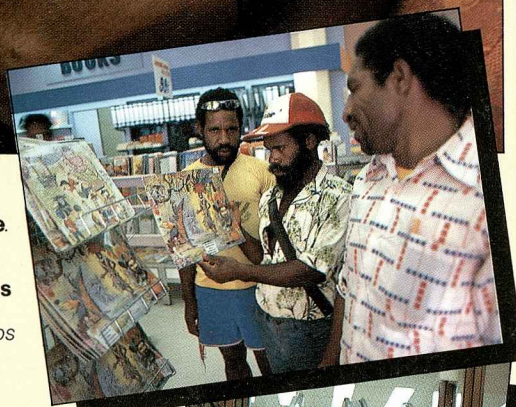


halting the traffic formed up on the road in two lines facing each other. They looked magnificent and they knew it. Another signal and drumming and dancing vigorously they headed for the showground gates. The drivers of the cars, buses and trucks, which were now banked up for half a mile and mostly heading for the show would just have to be patient; the Huli were coming.

Once in the arena they danced like men possessed. Unlike the coastal people with their grass skirts and langorous swaying, the dancing of the Huli is a vibrant performance of martial precision. It proceeds in synchronised bursts of vertical leaping accompanied by high yodelling yells and exciting percussion interspersed with brief pauses that allow the dancers to gather the energy to continue. These breaks are

*Simon Langa's last-minute adjustments before landing above. After the show the Hulis explore the national capital insets including Parliament House and Steamships department store.*

essential if they are going to keep up the performance, as once started they will dance until they drop. And dance they did. Red and yellow paint mixed with perspiration, streaked their faces in the unaccustomed heat of the lowlands. They began dancing in the full heat of mid-morning and were still going at 5 pm when the winners of the competition were announced. The news was not good. The Huli had taken third place with first going to a group from Rigo. The bare-breasted beautiful women of Rigo had swayed their way into the hearts of the judges



yet again. The disappointment in the faces of the Huli was unmistakeable, despite their heavy paint. I left Simon, John and Kapa to their misery and arranged to meet them

at my hotel the following morning.

They turned up wearing regular street clothes and not even the blandishments of a hotel breakfast could raise their spirits. I questioned them about their reaction to the judges' decision. They were adamant that because of the differing dance styles, Highlanders should not compete with coastal people.

To console them, I proposed a tour of the capital. They accepted readily and Kapa promptly adopted the role of experienced guide for his less travelled companions.

The experience of spending a few brief days with these proud people was one of the most enlightening and rewarding experiences of all my many visits to this beautiful country and I had learnt much about the lives of the Huli. The time came for me to leave for the airport. They were in high spirits once again and were now making plans to win the singing competition at the coming Highlands Show which was to be held in Goroka. I was there and can tell you; they did!



# The New Islander Hotel

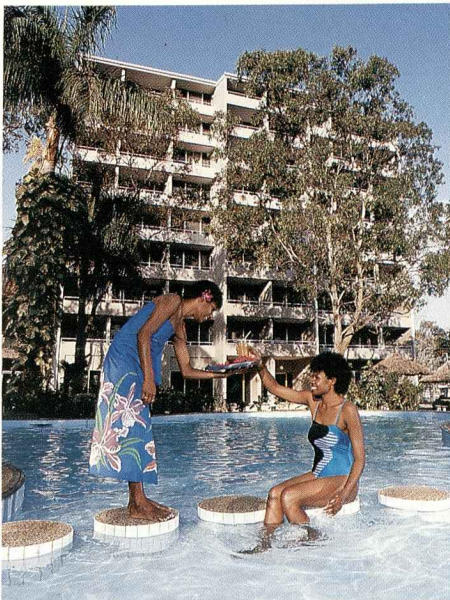
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