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Welcome aboard!

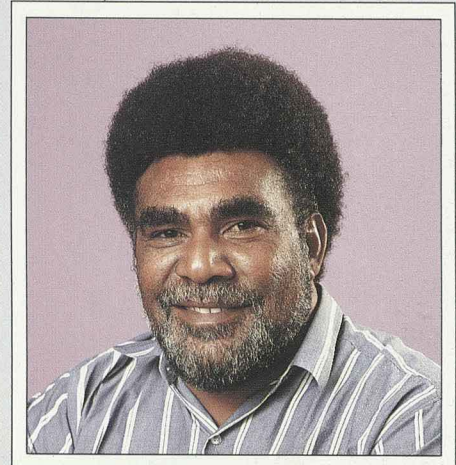
Not many health services in the world use hovercraft as ambulances. Their use in the Balimo district of Western Province, where swamps and floods are prevalent, epitomises the difficulties in bringing medical services to many parts of Papua New Guinea.

Regular contributor Liz Thompson covers a tree planting occasion in England, when William Takaku, Director of the Papua New Guinea Theatre Company, explained to a group of school children the importance of protecting the world's trees.

In other articles we follow the activities of divers, artists and anthropologists and we visit Australia's second largest city.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Paradise and have a pleasant flight.

Sir Mekere Morauta
Chairman
National Airline Commission



Sir Mekere Morauta
Chairman
National Airline Commission

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Photograph by Wing Commander Gordon Goodman.

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Kalalaka

Story and
photographs
by Georgie
and Ron McKie





In a small workshop, hidden behind large trees opposite the Rabaul fire station, three talented young men have turned a personal disaster into a thriving business.

In 1989, Alois Tobir was managing a video library in the township of Arawa on troubled Bougainville. Two of his friends, Lesley Walaun and Kubil Beno, were working as day laborers. All were a long way from home. As problems escalated on Bougainville, these young men fled to their homes in Kabatirai Village on the Duke of York Islands, off Rabaul.

In May 1990, Alois found his previous employer, John Beagley, now in Rabaul, and suggested to him that they ought to set up a business painting t-shirts. Studio Kalakala opened in June, 1990. While John manages the day-to-day operation of the business, the painters are left free to create their own gorgeous clothing.

None of the young men had formal lessons in art and what has resulted is a

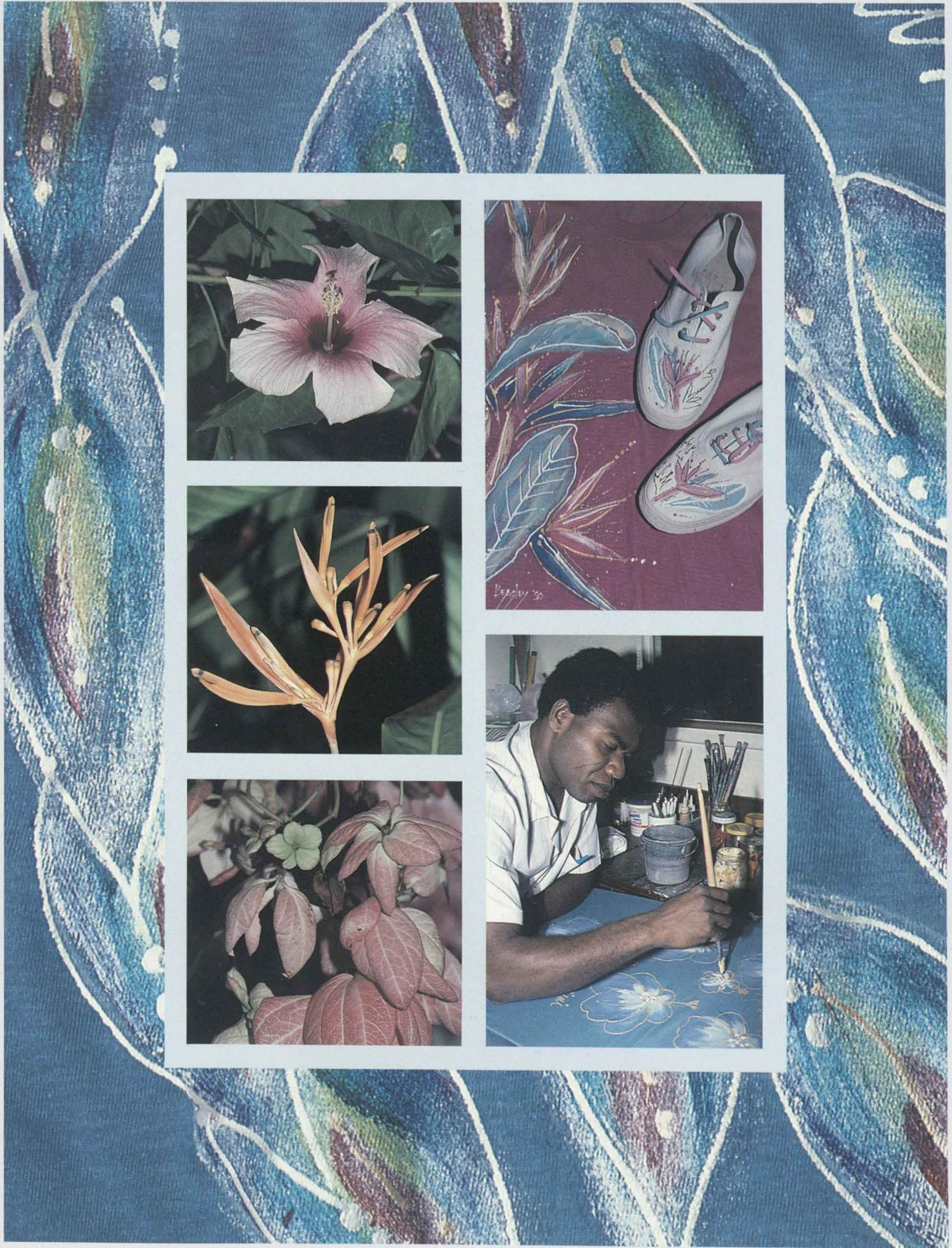
freshness of approach that is uninhibited and unfettered by rules and formal techniques. Each garment is hand painted with fabric inks, applied with brush and fingers. Every design is unique, as it is hand painted.

They constantly experiment with techniques which add variety to the garments they offer for sale.

The name of the business is most appropriate, as kalakala means colors in Melanesian pidgin. In the display room, the eyes are assaulted by a mass of vibrant colors and flamboyant images. Designs appear on t-shirts and laplaps, hats and neck ties, blouses and calico bags, wallhangings, scarves, handkerchiefs, tablecloths, curtains, pillow cases, and even sneakers, to match a t-shirt. Local customers bring in readymade clothes for the finishing touch to be added, converting an off-the-rack garment into a unique designer piece.

The artists take their inspiration from Rabaul's natural attractions. Flowers, sea creatures, insects, and birds all shimmer in their

This page and other pages Backgrounds on each page are the unique, hand-painted designs the Studio Kalakala artists have created for clothing.



Above, insets on left Rabaul flowers provide the artists' inspiration for their designs. inset, top right Sneakers painted to match t-shirt. inset, bottom right Artist Alois Tobir decorates a t-shirt.

beauty, providing a typical tropical island flavor. Some of these striking designs may soon appear in the resort boutiques of North Queensland. One visitor to the studio has arranged for a selection of t-shirts to be sent to Kuranda and Cairns. It may be that these young artists will soon be earning valuable export kina for Papua New Guinea. With regular stopovers in Rabaul, cruise ship tourists are attracted to the t-shirts as souvenirs and gifts, and the garments have been seen worn as far afield as Israel and New York. Visitors are always made welcome and can watch the artists creating their masterpieces, but few would realise just how hard these men have worked to turn their personal losses of 1989 into a successful business today.



Insets, above *Kalakala* clothing is striking and original.

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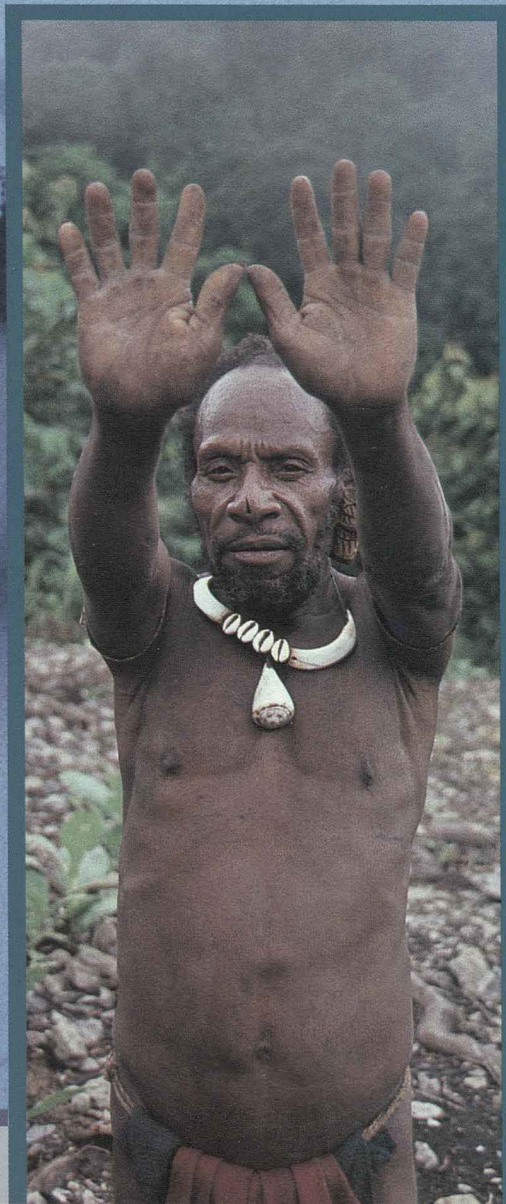
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Background Beautiful vista of Hewa country is a mix of jungle, mountain, mist and cloud. **bottom** Hewa man raised his arms and chanted when photographed by the author.

My search for adventure led me to the last part of the country to be opened up – the Southern Highlands Province. While travelling between Tari and Lake Kopyago I gathered information on the Hewa people to the north. Almost nobody knew of them – those that did described them as ‘still living in the stone age’. My imagination soared at the prospect of the unknown, the unexplored. Since early school days the exploration of Papua New Guinea has fascinated me. The exploration of the Highlands in 1930 by Michael Leahy and Michael Dwyer must rank as a great epic of modern exploration – something that can never happen again. However, pockets of antiquity remain, where people have only a vague notion of the outside world.

STONE AGE MYTH

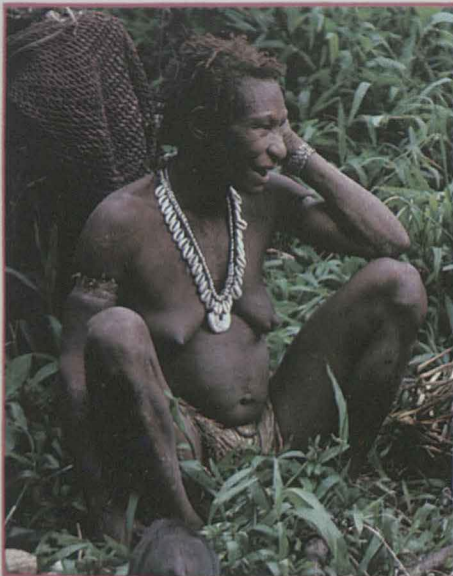
Story and photographs
by John Ross



After three days of walking from Lake Kopiago I came to the mighty Lagaip – a river too wide and too frequently flooded to be bridged. The locals make dangerous crossings in small rafts. Traversing that river transported me back in time. The last government patrol to have come this way was back in 1972. I was reminded of Joseph Conrad's African novel 'Heart of Darkness' – "you thought yourself bewitched and cut off forever from everything you had known once – somewhere – far away – in another existence perhaps".

The semi-nomadic Hewa, who number less than 2,000, are thinly spread through the rugged jungle clad mountains of the north-west Southern Highlands and Enga Provinces. They occupy relatively low altitudes, 800-1200 metres, which allows a variety of tropical crops such as pawpaw, cooking bananas and sugar cane, in addition to the staple sweet potato.

The Hewa exceeded my expectations – they wore traditional clothes – grass skirts supported by cane belts, bamboo and shell ornamentation, and they lived in basic windowless huts.



The only reminders of the 20th Century were steel axe blades and a few rags. What surprised me most was the low population density. There is no such thing as a village – the wild terrain limits settlement to small hamlets – a family or two per valley.

As I travelled through this daunting wilderness over the following weeks I began to understand how the Highlands could have remained hidden until more than 400 years after the discovery of New Guinea by European explorers. There can be few places on earth, of a similar size, so difficult to penetrate.

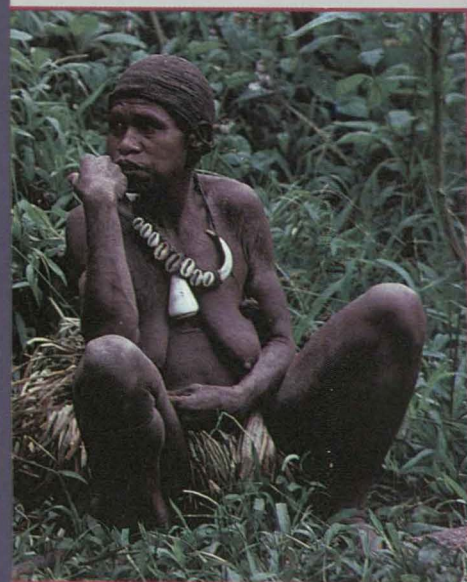
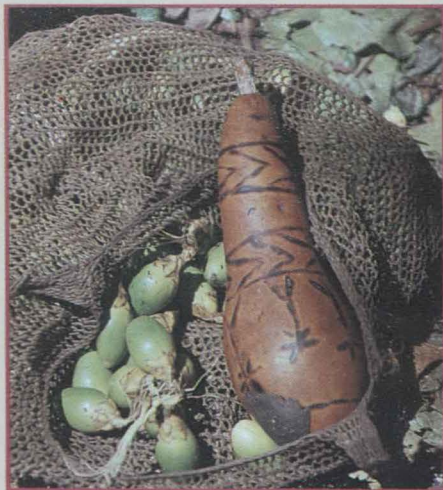
The Hewas' lifestyle is so basic that it is tempting to think of them as living in a Stone Age time warp. I realise now that reading

had preconditioned me to think like that. The early literature on New Guinea established stereotypes that continue to be evoked in modern publications.

Bottom left Hewa woman's shell necklace is evidence of trade from the faraway coast. **centre, below** Classic Hewa raised dwelling, incorporating tree-stump supports, with a pig pen underneath.



Below Hewa day kit of bilum (woven string bag) with betel nut and gourd containing lime to neutralise acidic nut juice. **right** Young girl, typical of Hewa children, displays mixture of curiosity and shyness. **bottom right** Hewa woman wears traditional Highlands woven cap and shell necklace with boar's tusk.



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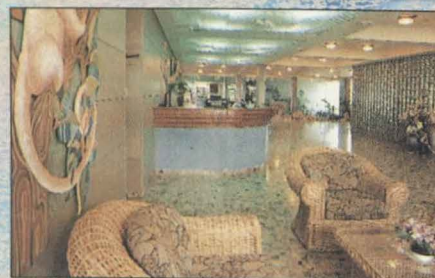
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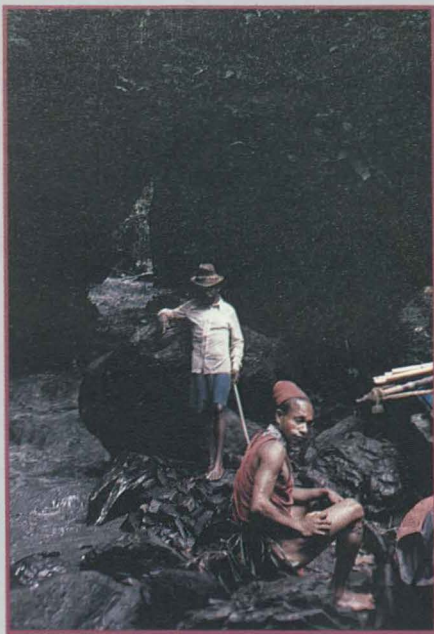
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Above Guides Nabot and Welo rest beside a creek in Hewa country. **below** Hewa couple accompanied author and guides for a day's journey. **bottom right** Hewa man combines traditional dress with Western jacket.

For example, the 1989 book chronicling Jacques Cousteau's recent scientific expedition to PNG describes the Highlands culture encountered by Leahy in 1930 as "not profoundly changed since the Stone Age". Today's society is seen to have progressed "from primordial times to the space age in the span of a single generation".

The fact that the Hewa are capable agriculturalists not only makes nonsense of the Stone Age comparison, but the great antiquity of farming in PNG places the Highlanders amongst the first agriculturalists in the world. The evidence comes from Kuk, a swampland in the upper Waghi Valley near Mount Hagen where agricultural drainage systems date back between 9,000 and 10,000 years.

This suggests that while the inhabitants of Britain, Germany and other northern European countries were still foraging and hunting woolly mammoths, the Highlanders of PNG were already

growing crops – most likely taro. More importantly, that early date means Papua New Guineans were growing crops before grain was being cultivated in the Middle East's 'fertile crescent' – traditionally considered the birthplace of agriculture.

The importance of sweet potato, the staple food of the Highlands cannot be overstated, and yet the plant is a recent import.

The story behind its introduction destroys the myths of a completely isolated and static Highlands culture.

The quest for riches and new lands by the 16th Century European powers led to the discovery of the New World and with it a host of new plants including tobacco, corn, and potatoes. The Portuguese and Spaniards brought the sweet potato to South-east Asia from South America and from there Malay traders used it to barter in Irian Jaya.



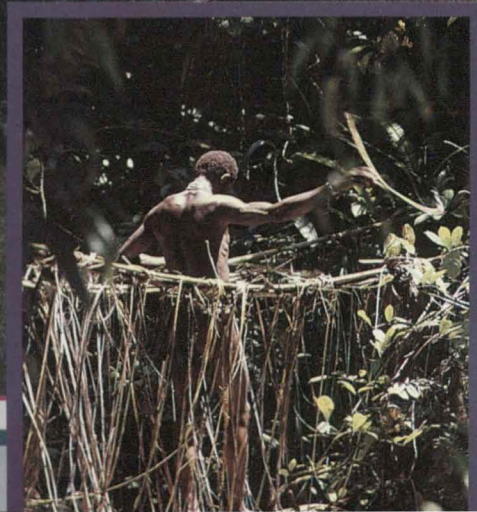
Within a few hundred years it had spread eastward to the remotest valleys and Highlands culture was transformed forever. The sweet potato's tolerance to cold and poor soils allowed colonisation of much higher altitudes. Its high yield caused an explosion in pig numbers and a massive increase in population.

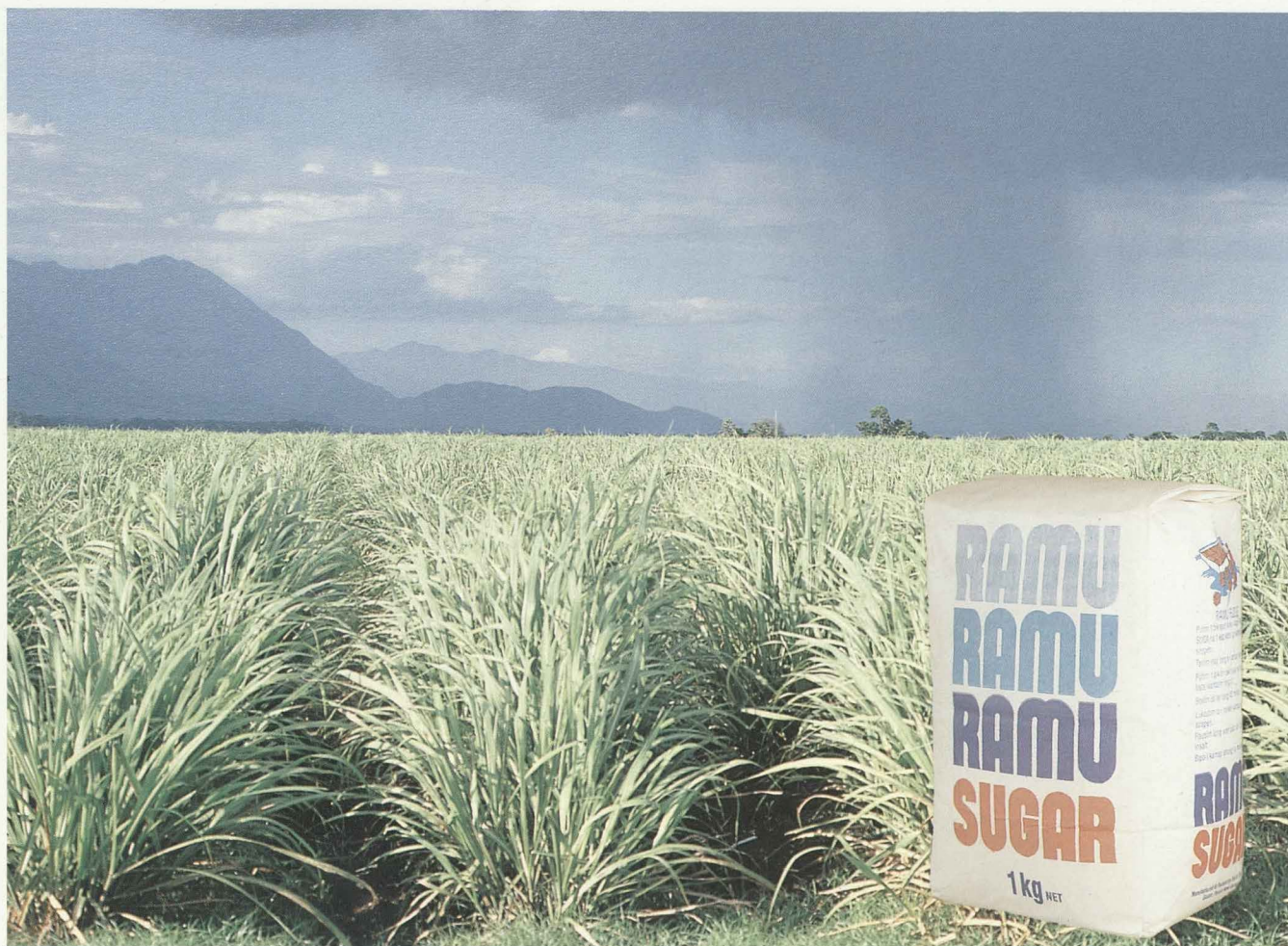
In a society where pigs represented wealth and status the explosion in their numbers had a massive impact on customs such as big men, bride-price, and feasting.

So far from being static, the Hewa and societies like them have undergone considerable change, and the pace of this interaction and change will increase in the future. Calls from well-meaning outsiders, for these peoples to be left alone, are based on incorrect assumptions about their independence, isolation and history.



Above Hewa traditional attire includes grass skirt and cane belt. **below** Welo the guide outside his house high in the mountains. **bottom left** Hewa villager maintains a cane bridge.





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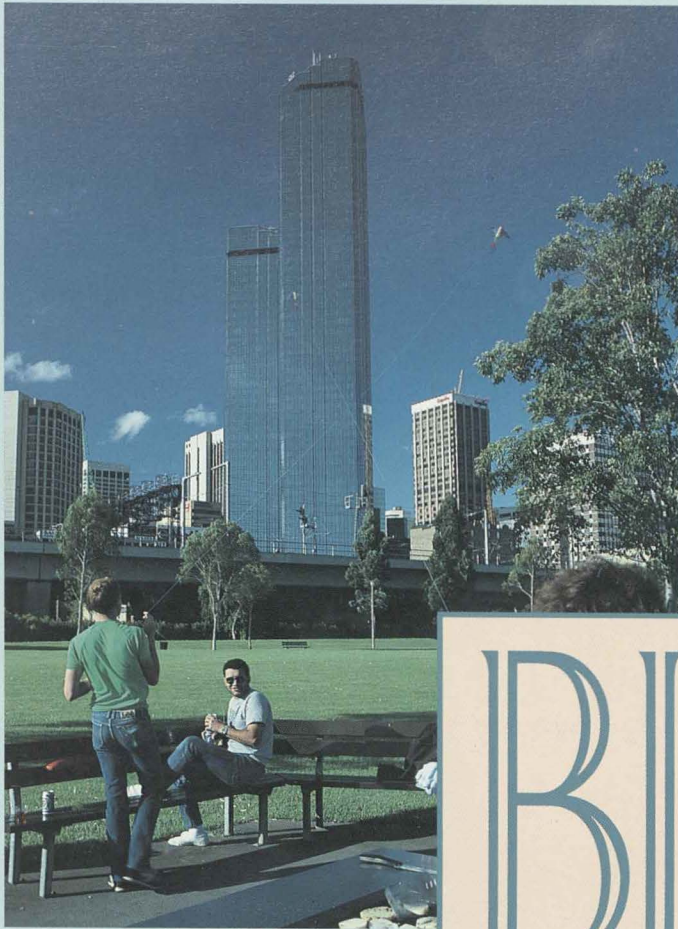




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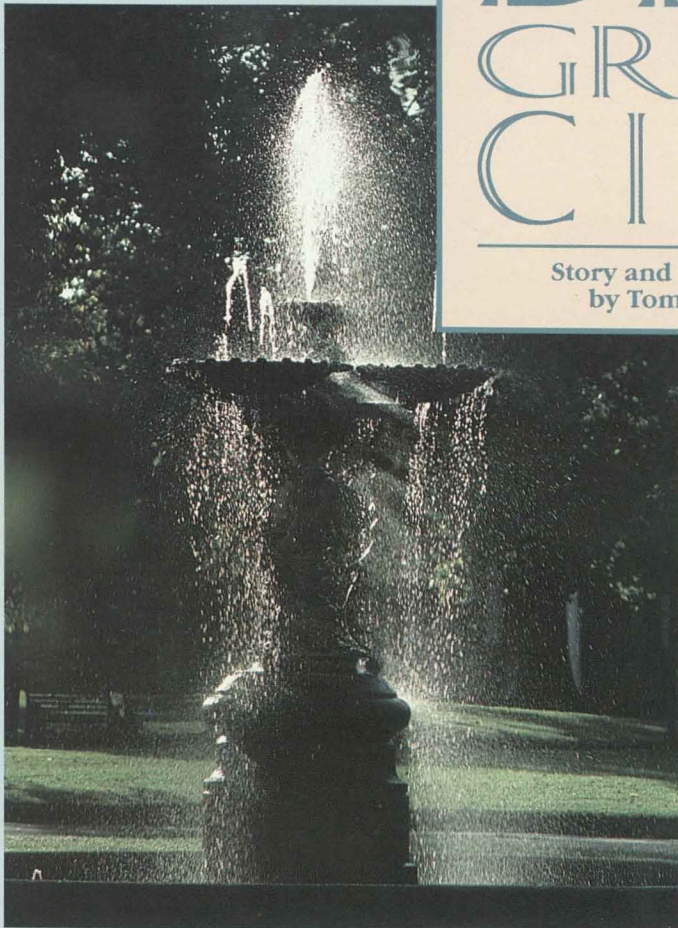
Batman Park and Rialto tower.



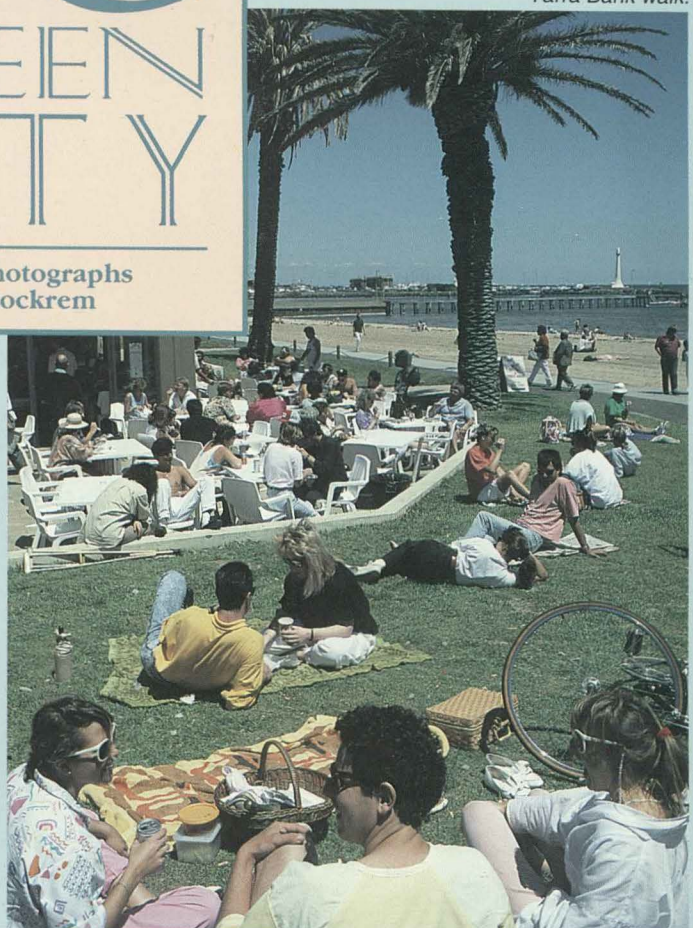
Yarra Bank walk.

BIG GREEN CITY

Story and photographs
by Tom Cockrem



Exhibition Gardens fountain.



St Kilda Beach.

On a crisp Sunday morning in Melbourne, little bands of party-goers are off to the banks of the Yarra River, or to any of many city parks. The early birds have already started cooking on the 'barbies' and have put 'eskies' on picnic tables. 'Snags' are sizzling, champagne bottles popping, and 'stubbies' fizzing. The parties have begun.

For the uninitiated, 'barbies' are barbecues, 'eskies' are insulated containers, 'snags' are sausages, and 'stubbies' are half-sized bottles of beer.

This is how Melburnians celebrate in a city big and green, where there is space enough for everyone to share.

Visitors to Melbourne straight away notice the open expanses. Melburnians live mainly in suburbs that stretch more than 80km east to west and 48km across. To

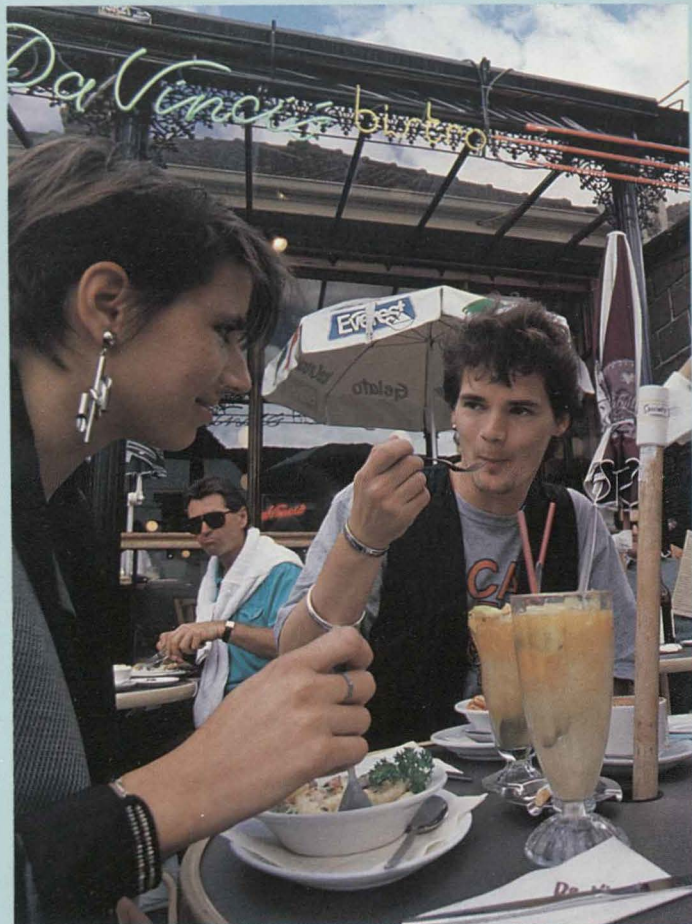
the east, the suburbs spread in green undulations as far as one can see.

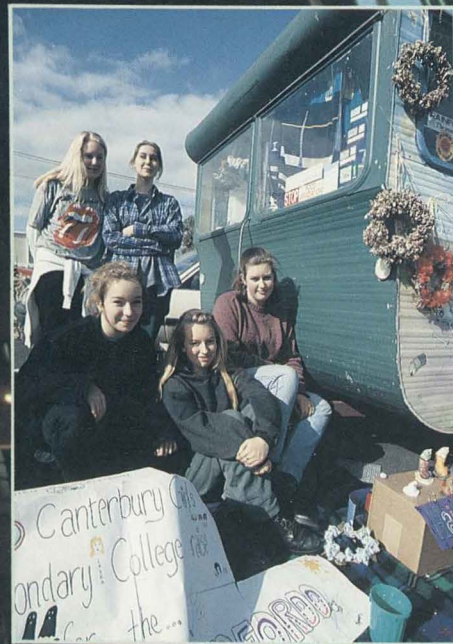
Closer to the centre, the suburbs begin to get an inner-city look, with double-storey terraces and shops with lattice-work verandahs. But trees still line the streets and the local park is never far away.

The city centre, surrounded by a swelling sea of leafy suburbs, is a compact area of high-rise buildings, forming a dramatic sky-line. The centre is a grid of neat rectangles.

Bottom Women's eight-oar crew trains on the Yarra River. **right** Sunday cricket at Albert Park. **right** Street cafe, Toorak.







Melbourne is Australia's capital of sport, with plenty of room for everyone to play. Golf courses, playing fields and tennis courts abound. Melburnians are great participators. The catch-cry here is 'have a go!' and that is what they do. They are cricketers or baseballers, hockey players or netballers, cyclists or joggers, walkers, picnickers, or feeders of the swans in the botanic gardens.

They go to beaches too – St Kilda, Middle Park or Elwood. They go boating on the Yarra River which divides the city, yachting on Albert Park Lake or promenading in their chosen parkland.

Australian Rules football has its roots in Melbourne, a game that requires a huge ground on which to play. The Melbourne Cricket Ground is one of the world's great stadiums and on Grand Final day in September it hosts a crowd of around 100,000 avid fans.

Melbourne is a town that sparkles day and night. The restaurants reflect the cosmopolitan nature of the city and Melburnians' love of dining out. The choice is overwhelming.

Drive to the top of the Dandenong Ranges east of town to the lookout there. More than 40km of greenery away the high-rise office towers gleam in the distance. In between – a huge expanse of green – and beyond, is all Melbourne.



Left Bourke Street in the city centre. **inset left** Suburban flea market, Camberwell. **right** Southbank on the Yarra River near city centre.

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ISUZU

My hosts, Meli and Tabo, brought me to Pasa's house in the village of Lakurafanga on the Boluminski Highway about 60km from Kavieng. Pasa rose feebly from his bed; he is about 90 years old and blind now but he was able to recall that when he was a teenager a white man travelled along Boluminski's road ridiculously collecting things like snakes and butterflies.

The white man was Edgar Waite, director of the South Australian Museum, and the year was 1918. Waite, assisted by A.C. Davis, also collected birds and bats, marine animals and cultural material. Among the latter were a large number of very fine figures and masks associated with malangan funeral rituals. So great was his interest in these carvings that he was soon nicknamed 'Masta bilong faiawud' (master belong firewood) because normally the malangan carvings were burnt after the rituals were completed.

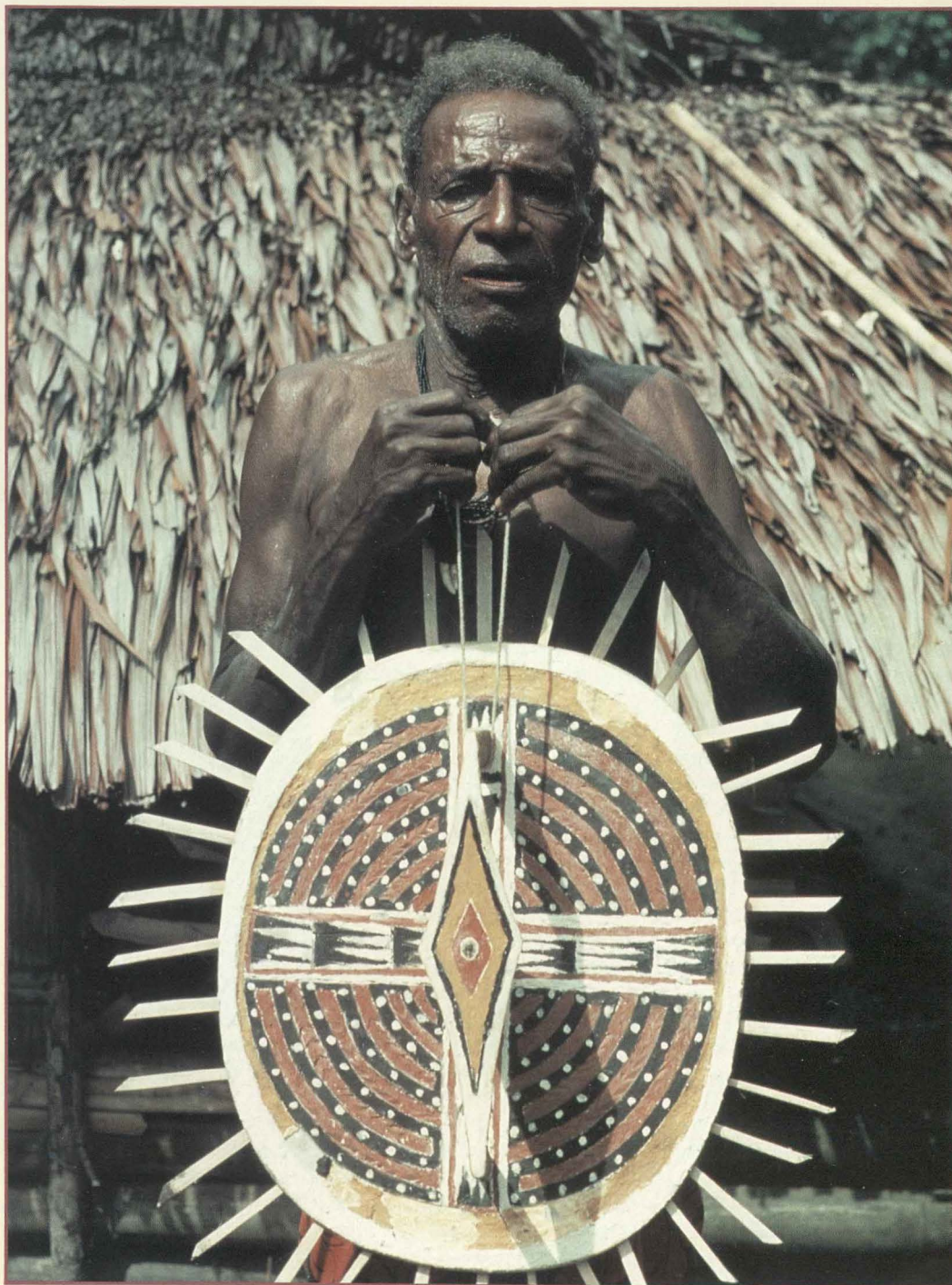
I had come to New Ireland to invite two men to attend an international symposium of Pacific arts in Adelaide in 1993. They would explain and would dance the masks associated with malangan rituals to an audience of distinguished professors, scholars and students and examine first-hand the material collected by Waite back in 1918.

In the course of pursuing this objective, I followed in Waite's footsteps and was able to throw light on some puzzling references in his diary. As it turned out, Pasa was the only person who could recall seeing Waite, although a few others who were infants in 1918 had been told stories of the man's collecting activities.

Waite spent several days at Lakurafanga Plantation, a guest of the manager, Mr

Masta Bilong Faiawud

Story and photographs by Barry Craig



Above Joel Pitsia, Tatau Island, with malangan carving 'mataling' (eye of the fire).

Ostram. With Ostram's place as his base he explored caves nearby to collect bats and narrowly escaped death when he slipped into a small hole in the roof of a deeper cave.

Waite walked across the island to Lasmusmus on the south-west coast where Mr Hetreich, a sailor and marine artist, had a small plantation. Hetreich gave Waite a friction-drum (lunet) for the collections. These are still being carved and used today. The lunet is held between the legs, and the moistened palms of the player's hands are rubbed towards the body over the 'tongues' of the drum to create a shrill vibrating sound. These are played by men only, in connection with funeral rituals, so it is hardly surprising that when Waite tried to get a girl to demonstrate its use for a photograph, she declined.

Back at Lakurafanga, Waite bought shark-calling equipment. This consists of a rope noose with a propeller-shaped float attached. The shark is 'called' by rattling a rattan ring of coconut shells and the noose is slipped over the shark's head as it surfaces next to the caller's canoe. When the noose tightens and the shark submerges, the propeller is dragged down and exhausts the shark. It is then pulled to the canoe and clubbed to death. A film, *Shark Callers of Kontu*, was made by Chris Owen of the Institute of PNG Studies, showing how sharks are caught this way.

From Lakurafanga, Waite and his assistant Davis sailed to the Tabar Islands on a pinnace owned by Van der Ghyinste, manager of Kopo Plantation at Maragat Bay on the island of Tatau. Van der Ghyinste was nicknamed 'Masta Sak-sak' and his pinnace was christened the 'Sak-sak'.

This was because, whenever all other food supplies ran out, he had his laborers go into the bush and prepare sak-sak (sago) to feed himself and the plantation workers. Waite and Davis used the plantation house as a base to explore the islands and add to the already large collections.

I made my base at Tatau village on the north-west corner of Tatau Island, in the house of Noah Lurang, the provincial Cultural Officer, and he introduced me to the best carver in the traditional style, Edward Salle. These were the two men who would be invited to the conference in Adelaide.

After a short while, Waite decided to visit Simberi Island, the northern-most of the three major islands of Tabar. Masta Sak-sak took him and Davis across the passage between Simberi and Tatau, the sea so rough that they almost turned back. They landed at Simberi village and walked north along the west coast past Willie Pettersson's plantation to his brother Carl Pettersson's plantation at Maragon Bay. My guides were able to take me to Willie's grave, marked by cordyline plants, in a grove of coconuts and wild ginger undergrowth.

Carl was known as Charles among the Europeans in New Ireland, as Sali among the Tabar Islanders, and as 'The King of Tabar' in Swedish newspapers. He had a common law wife named Shindu from Tiripats on the island of Tabar. When Waite arrived, she had just had her sixth child by Sali. I was able to trace the histories of each of the children and I met Uto, an elderly woman who had been the wife of Sali's third child, Hans (called Anis by the villagers). I was shown the site of Sali's house; nothing

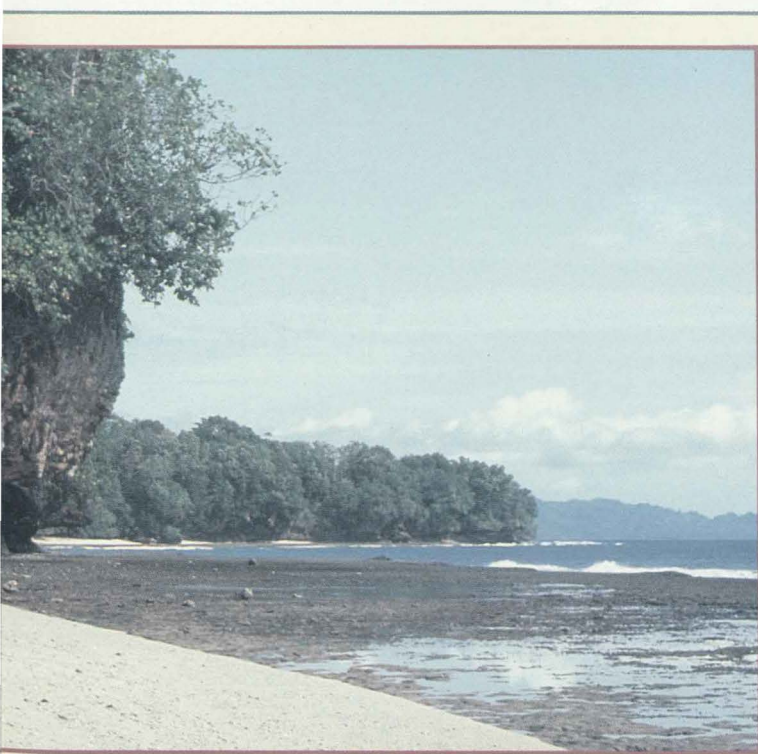


but an old gnarled fruit tree remained from those times, everything else being completely obliterated by decay and forest regrowth.

Waite and his host took the opportunity to investigate a turtle-breeding ground on tiny Marwui Island off the west coast of Simberi. They discovered a nest and counted 155 eggs in it. Waite then set out to walk around the northern

half of the island to Pigibut where Meyer, a German plantation manager, lived. Following Waite's trail, we were overtaken by darkness and slept the night at Lava. Next day, at Munun, I met Sialis, one of the last of the shark callers on Tabar Islands.

We walked on to Pigibut and there we saw Meyer's house. The outside walls had been renewed but the



Top Eastern shoreline, Tabar island. **left** Sago making, Tatau island. **above, centre** Author's companions at Willie Pettersson's grave, Simberi Island. **above, left** Sialis, a Simberi shark caller, with tools of trade. **above, right** Edward Salle with malangan carving called 'walk binsor', now on display at South Australian Museum.

concrete stumps, the timber frame and floor were all original. The house had been obtained by Kennecott Mining Company to provide a base for gold exploration and they had added a large kitchen, mess hall, bunkhouses, workshop and separate office to the old building. Although the Company had been gone for only a couple of years, the motorbikes, tractors and other vehicles were rusted through, looking as though they had been there for decades.

Waite stayed overnight and reported: "I paid G. Meyer 13 shillings for Bird of Paradise coins: five, two and one mark." A number of malangan carvings on display at the South Australian Museum are labelled 'Pigibut'.

Waite was supposed to be picked up at Pigibut by Masta Sak-Sak but the seas were too rough. The boat retreated to a safe anchorage at Katatar on the south coast and Waite continued walking, circling the island.

Returning to Van der Ghynste's plantation, Waite decided to go by outrigger canoe and on foot to Klett's plantation at Tamalabat, overlooking the narrow passage between Tatau and Tabar to the south. On the way, he collected marine animals among the mangroves and visited Anoos Rock.

Anoos Rock is not marked on the maps and I assumed it was a mountain inland from Maragat Bay. However, I was able not only to locate it on the southern tip of Maragat Bay but also recorded the story of an old man named Lome who had been insulted by his wife and who in protest went into seclusion on the coral limestone rock. Every day he was seen sitting in the sun on a rock wall he had built and he ignored the

pleading of the villagers for him to return. He refused to eat, wasted away and eventually died. His bones and the wall he built remain to this day.

I hired a boat to follow Waite's path along the west coast of Tatau. We called in at Maragat Bay and visited the site of Kopo Plantation but there was no sign that there had ever been a house there. I was taken to Anoos Rock and shown the bones of Lome.

Further south, we came ashore again and slipped and slid along a very muddy track to get to the old site of Marai village on a ridge-top. Waite records: "At a village, Marai, on the summit, I had a 'cooler' (juice of the kulau or green coconut), the boy climbing the coconut tree without the usual ankle strap." The site now is completely unrecognisable as having been a village. Although in the late 1970s cement grave markers had been erected there, these were already overgrown.

The night before I was due to return to New Ireland, I arranged to record a series of songs appropriate to the masks to be danced in Adelaide at the Symposium. Dancing a mask without the rhythm of the garamut and the appropriate songs would be an absurdity. After a few trials, with the elderly Pitsia as lead singer, and a master drummer to beat the slit-drum, the group provided an hour of fine singing that I thoroughly enjoyed hearing. They asked me to play the recording back to them to ensure it was satisfactory.



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Right William Takaku, director of Papua New Guinea's National Theatre Company.

In a small school playground in Bury St Edmunds, in the heart of the English countryside, an unusual event is taking place. A large group of primary school children are watching William Takaku, a Bougainvillian man, plant a young tree. After placing it in the ground he reaches his arms up towards the grey English sky and chants in his language. The children look on, their mouths open wide with fascination.

William explains that he was asking the gods to bless their tree with rain and for them to keep it protected. Slowly each of the children comes forward and adds a spade of soil to surround the roots of their new tree. As they do so, William continues to talk, telling them of his country and its beautiful rainforests and of how important it is to protect the world's trees.

William Takaku is director of Papua New Guinea's National Theatre Company and is passionately concerned with the protection of the environment. As well as staging environmental awareness theatre, Takaku also talks to people, children, adults, landowners, everybody, about the environmental issues which come hand in hand with development.

As his skills and his message have become more widely appreciated he has been asked to appear, to teach and perform

Nature and Culture

Story and photographs by Liz Thompson

Left William Takaku, of Bougainville, plants a tree in Suffolk, England. bottom left Attentive PNG audience hear William Takaku's stories. below Weaving his spells, with help, in Suffolk.



internationally. This tree planting was a result of his collaboration with two Englishmen, Richard Edmunds and Nigel Hughes of Greenlight Productions, a theatre company concerned with environmental protection. Takaku was involved with them a few years ago when they took Raun Isi travelling theatre to Gahom, a village at the base of the Hunstein Ranges and put on an environmental awareness play called *Pikinini Forest*. This journey was followed up with a book called *Trees of Paradise*, and the collaboration between Takaku and Greenlight has continued.

Edmunds and Hughes returned to England and to complement their global rainforest work they launched a local project which was a commitment to buy small parcels of land in England and plant new woodlands for the benefit of future generations. Takaku, in England to run workshops with them, planted the tree which symbolised the beginning of this project. While there he worked in English schools, running theatre workshops and teaching children stories and legends of Papua New Guinea.

Takaku is a proponent of traditional teaching methods and ways of life. He feels a great sadness at the breakdown of tradition in the face of development. With development, he feels, comes a diminished respect



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Left, from top William Takaku, conservationist, enjoying Suffolk ruins and gardens as he spreads his message to receptive British listeners.



for the environment. Nature and culture he insists are integrally bound. The stories Takaku tells children in PNG and around the world draw on his traditional learning in Bougainville. He talks of the way in which elders used stories about natural phenomenon and the behavior patterns of animals to teach children how to behave.

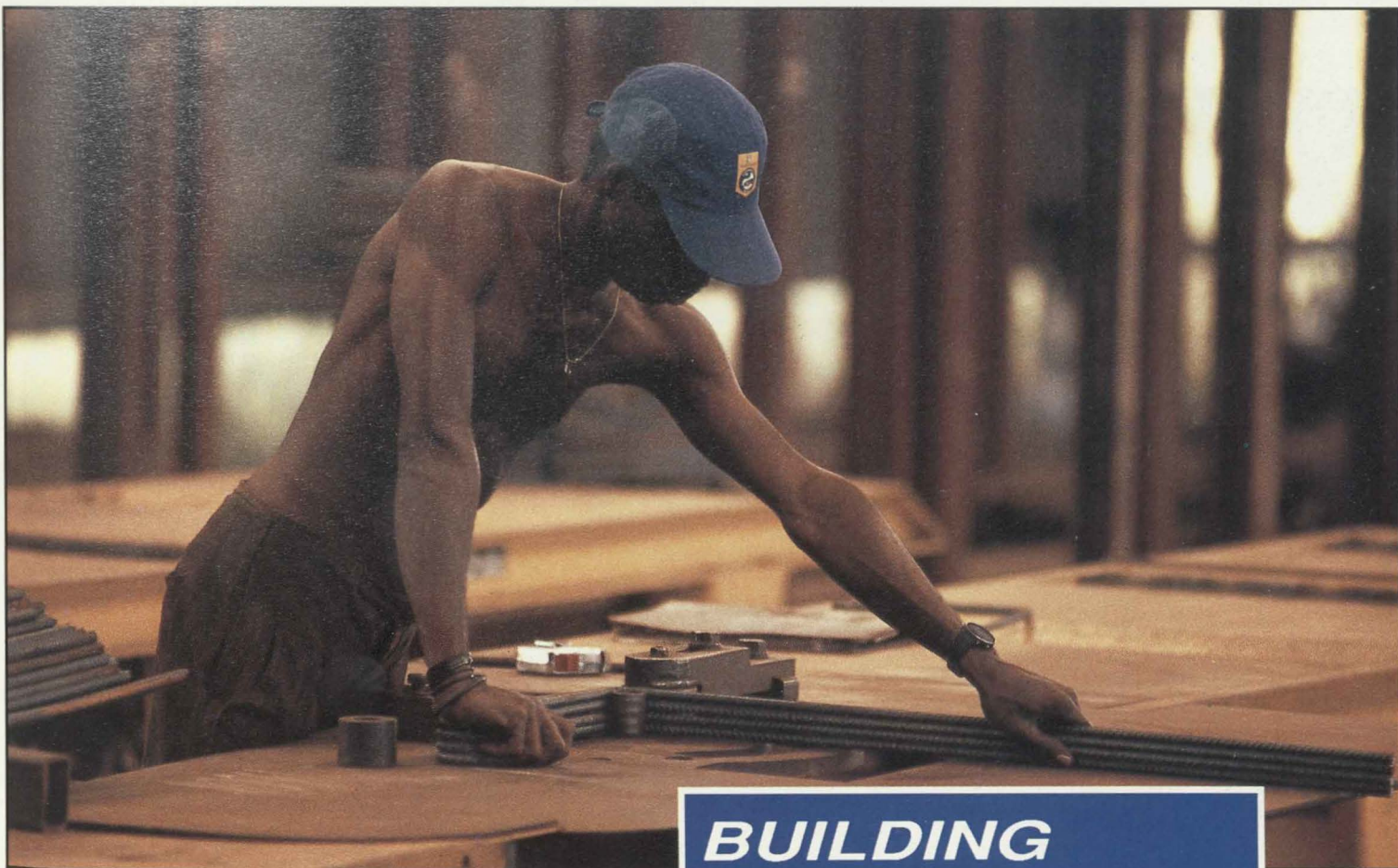
Small children listen as he tells the parable about the sino palm, which unlike other palms flowers from the top down and not from the bottom up. The elders taught that during the time of creation sino was not listening to what was being discussed and the instructions on flowering. The sino palm, says Takaku, ignored the instructions telling the other plants to go ahead and flower, he would flower later, when he felt like it. As a result he backfired. The moral, says Takaku, is that you must listen attentively when elders give advice on any aspect of life or you will hear and do things back to front like the Sino palm.



As the elders used this natural phenomenon to teach they would show the children this palm as an example. In England the children looked amazed as he told them stories of animals and trees, just as he tells them to his own small children and to school children around PNG. Currently writing many of these stories and parables and painting and drawing a series of beautiful illustrations, Takaku hopes to publish a book.



Concerned that with the process of development and the breakdown of traditional teaching methods many of these stories may get lost, he hopes to preserve them in a form that can be utilised and enjoyed not just by his own people but by people around the world.



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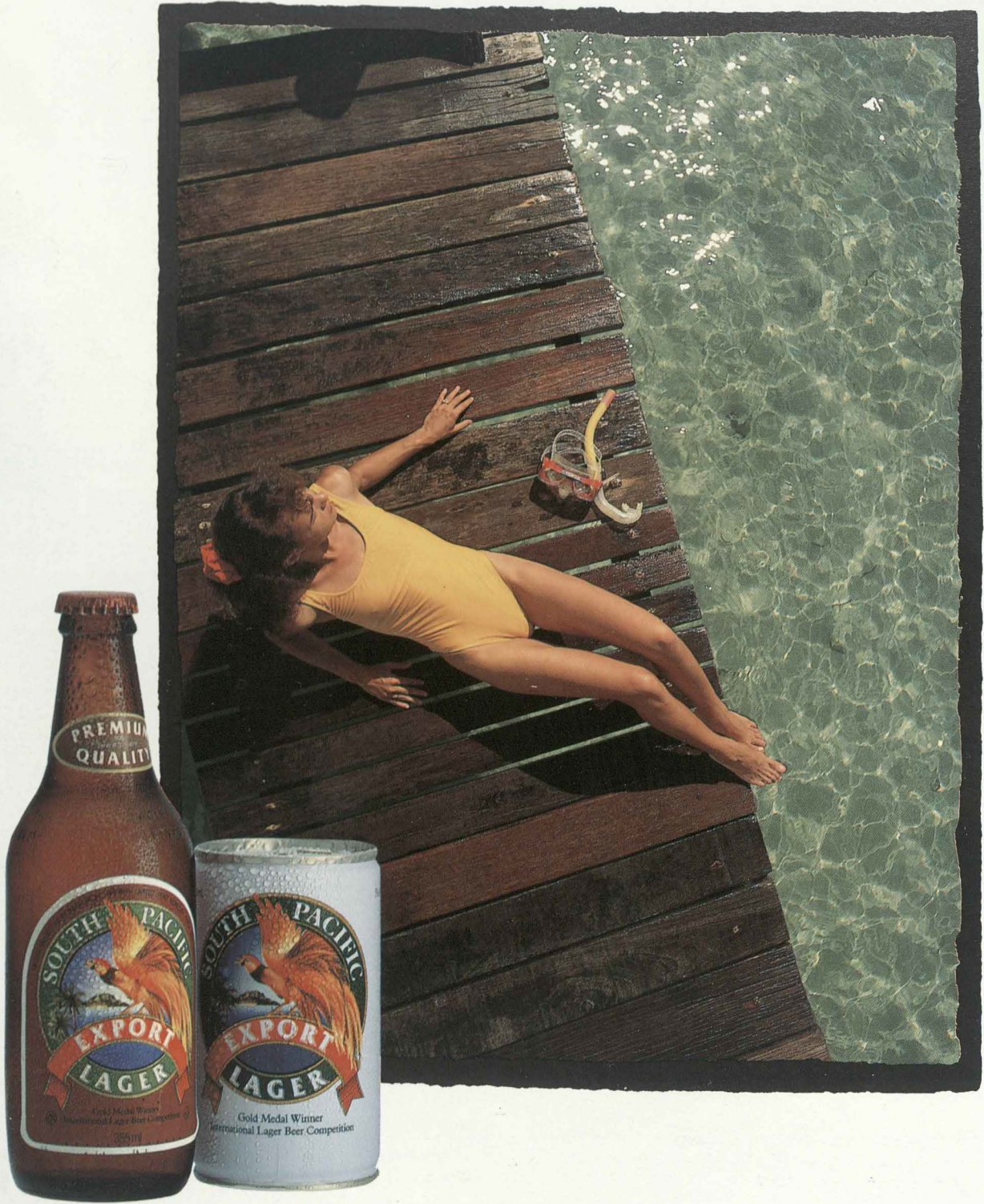
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Below Medical emergency hovercraft easily handles the floodplain. *inset, right* Unloading assembled hovercraft from river freighter.



Hover Doctors

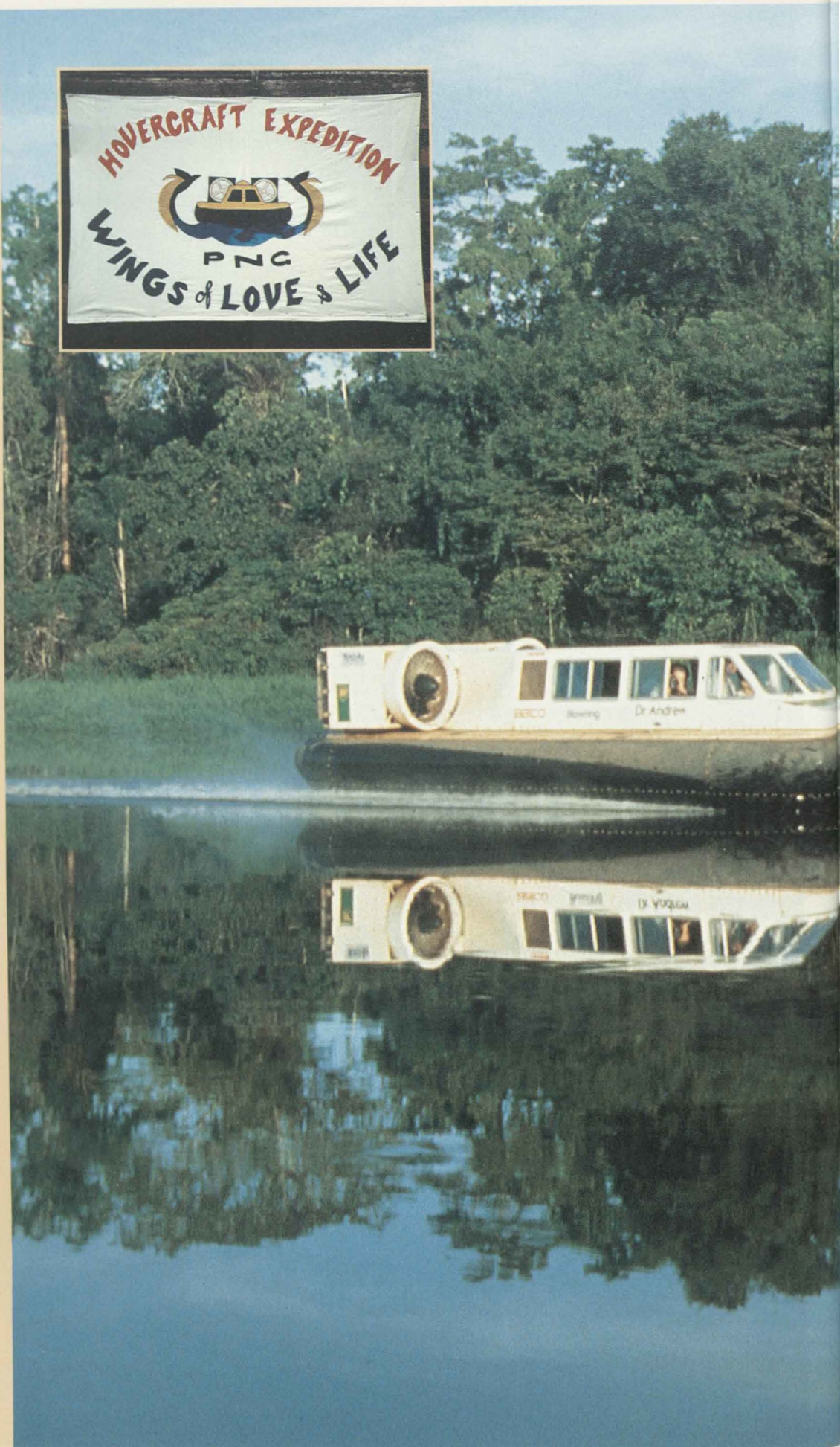
Story and photographs by Wing Commander Gordon J Goodman RAF

Maidame Kukupi was brought to the hospital having been bitten by a snake. Three of the world's 10 deadliest snakes live in Western Province, Papua New Guinea, and snake bites are common. However, the canoe journey for Maidame to Balimo took too long and he died. A hovercraft could have saved him.

The aim of the Hovercraft Expedition to PNG was to establish two specially-built hovercraft as high-speed ambulances for the Balimo Health Centre on the edge of a large very beautiful lagoon. The lagoon is filled and emptied by the Aramia River running east-west parallel to the Fly River which is said to pour 50 litres of water into the sea daily for every person on earth. The Fly River has a fall of 1 in 800,000 from where the rains pour off the mountains to flow across 52,000 square kilometres of swamp and jungle.

It is only by flying over PNG that one realises the size of the country. PNG forms half of the second largest island in the world with a central spine of mountains rising to Mount Wilhelm (4,508 metres) to the north of Balimo. With rainfall over seven metres a year, the water rises and falls in the Aramia and Balimo lagoon through a range of about nine metres. In the dry season, roughly June to December, there is little but dried mud in the lagoon. We went there in February 1993 when the water was on the rise.

The expedition to PNG was the fourth of a series of expeditions with the same type of eight-seater hovercraft built by HoverAid – a charity working in Southampton, England. Squadron Leader Mike Cole had led the first three: to Nepal and Peru in 1978 and



Left High speed hovercraft ambulance hugs river bank for best performance. below Aramia River villager.



1982 respectively and to the source of the Yangtze in 1990. The craft are ideal for remote operations, built simply of aluminium and fibreglass for easy maintenance and powered by a standard Volkswagen 6-cylinder diesel engine.

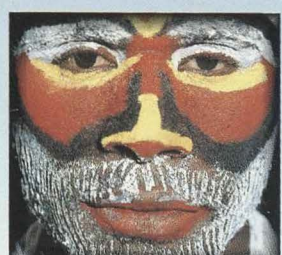
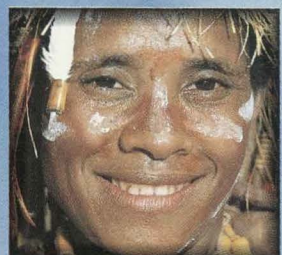
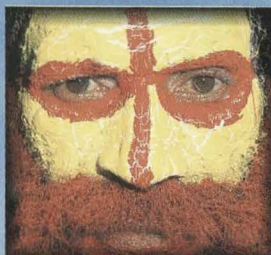
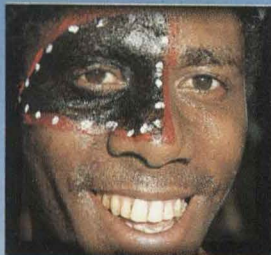
Mike had shared his concern for PNG and gathered 25 people aged 19 to 65, from all walks of life including engineers, doctors, farmers and me. I had been commanding the Air Navigation School at Royal Air Force Finningley in Yorkshire, England.

The team came together from 22 different churches joined by a common bond – our Christian faith. Our first task was to raise the money to buy two hovercraft costing 60,000 kina each as well as enough for travel costs for the containers and ourselves. In a time of world recession, sponsorship was limited; most of the money came from individuals and churches. However, major firms gave in kind rather than cash. British Petroleum (PNG) supplied the diesel for the hovercraft, Shell (PNG) the premix for our support craft outboard motor, and Air Niugini flew the team to Australia for half-fare. That sort of help was invaluable and enabled us in less than a year to raise the budget of 225,000 kina.

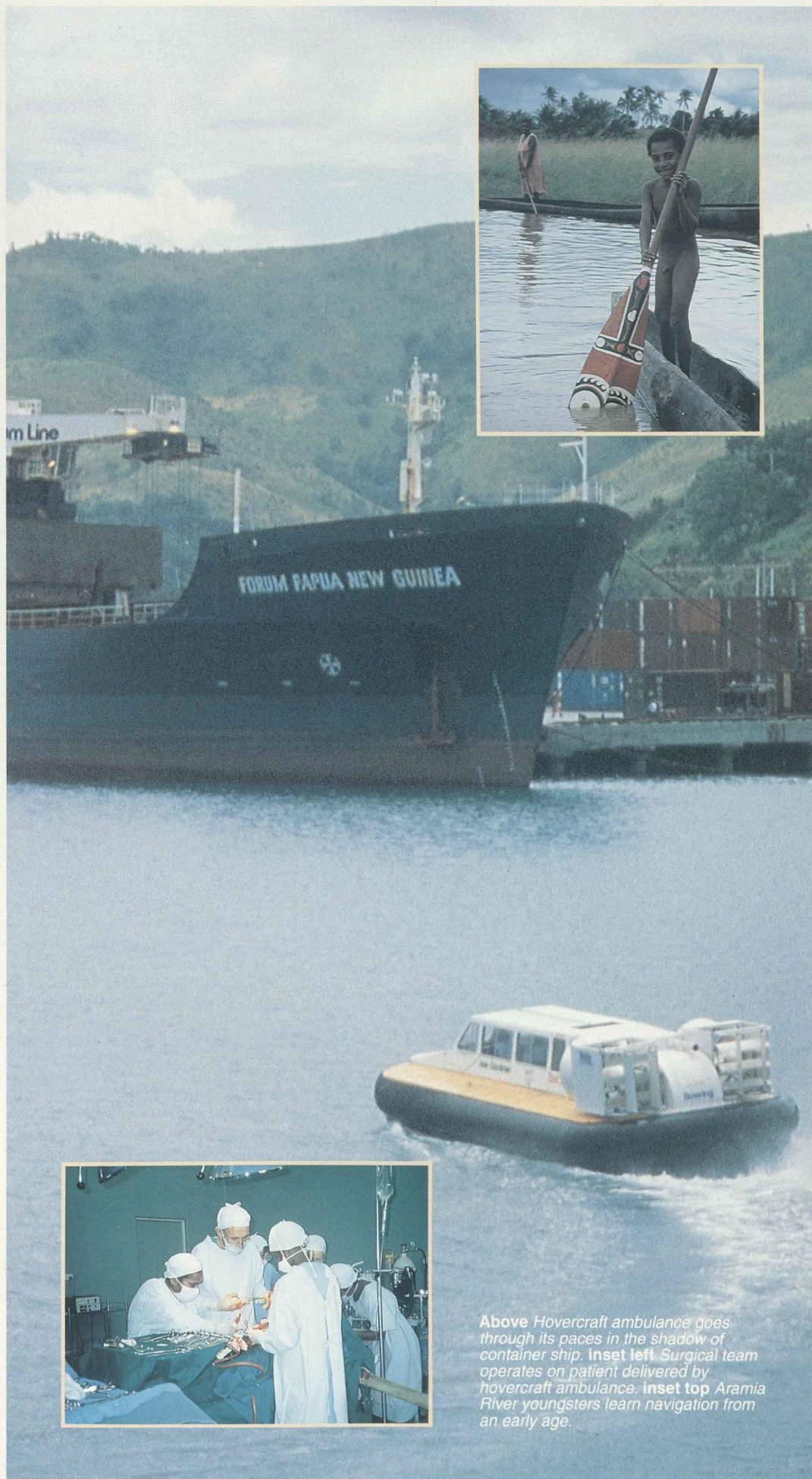
Our four-fold aim on the expedition was to re-build and optimise the hovercraft for the conditions, build a garage, train the national drivers, and to explore the newfound reach of possible hospital patrols with the hovercraft.

The hovercraft had been shipped in containers from England to Port Moresby with sponsorship from Bank Line and from P&O. Laurabada Shipping carried all our stores from Port Moresby to Balimo free. The

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first container was delivered to Kawito which was 11km by air from Balimo but far longer by river and through the tortuous channels of the lagoon. Our white skins sizzled in temperatures of over 40 degrees in the blazing sun as the team reconstructed the hovercraft.

Flying Officer Graeme Bencke was half-way through his RAF pilot training and devised the lesson scheme for both ground-school and practical training for the four chosen national drivers. He had not driven the hovercraft before reaching PNG but some of the prospective drivers had not even driven a car or tractor – there are only five vehicles at Balimo. Nevertheless, in only a few weeks of training, the national drivers gave the demonstration trips to the Minister of Health and British High Commissioner when the hovercraft were handed to the hospital on 5 May, 1993.

There was still one task to complete, to reach the villages along the Fly River that had no health-care. We had tried to get through by attempting to cross the low lying swamps that cover the area between the Aramia and the Fly but found the jungle too thick to penetrate. Now we decided to tackle the dangerously wide waters of the Bamu Delta.

Our hovercraft was not designed for wide open, windswept areas or to compete with the man-eating crocodiles. The hovercraft is like an aircraft in that a 30-knot top speed into a 25-knot headwind means little forward progress. We found we could use the other advantage of the hovercraft. Although a water surface is excellent, mud flats are even better. At the edges of the river, the water and mud merged and we were able

Above Hovercraft ambulance goes through its paces in the shadow of container ship. *inset left* Surgical team operates on patient delivered by hovercraft ambulance. *inset top* Aramia River youngsters learn navigation from an early age.

Inset right Hoveraid team beside Royal Australian Air Force Hercules transporter. **below** Typical Aramia River country, **inset, bottom** Launching one of the hovercraft ambulances.



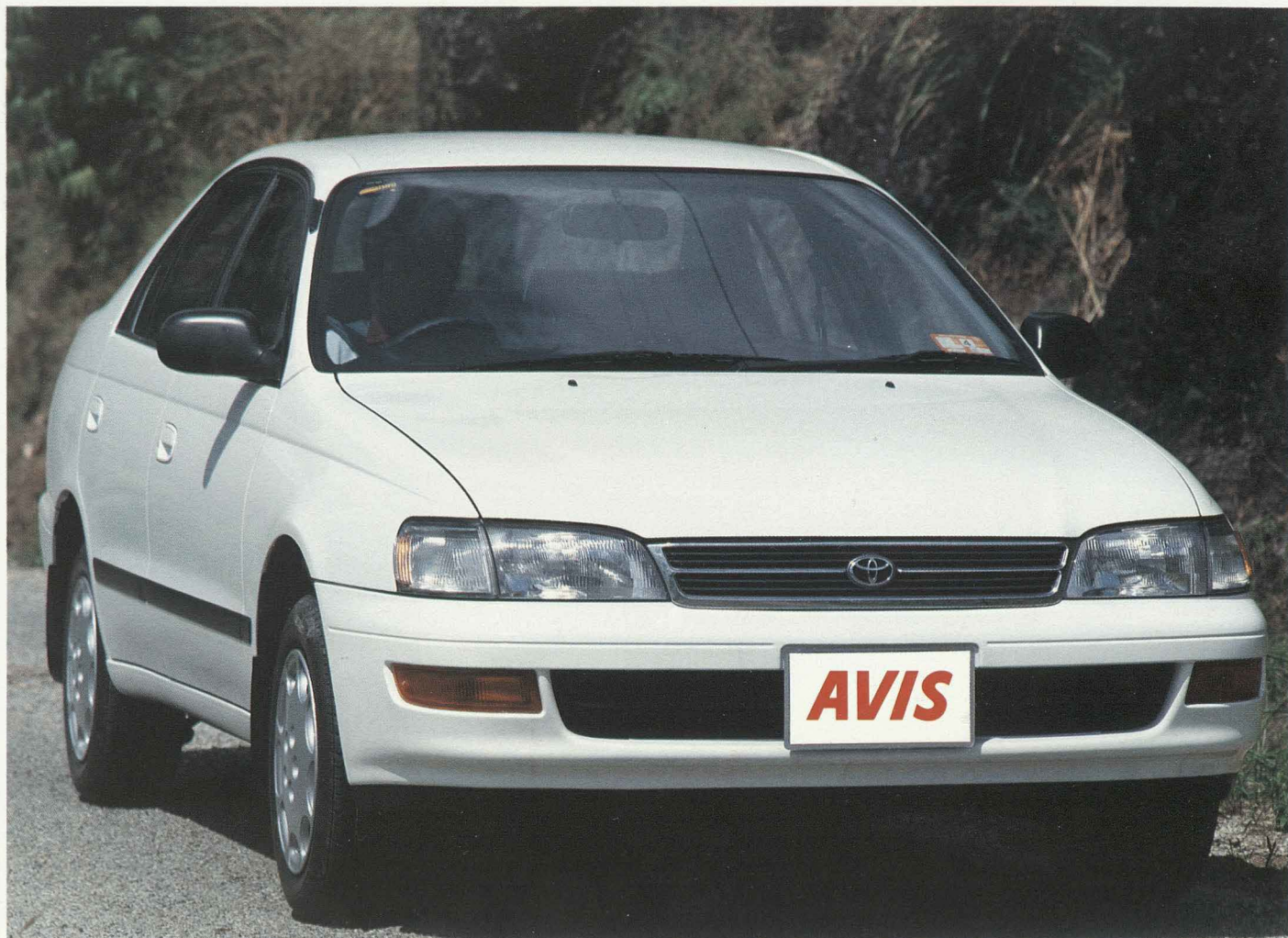
to tuck into the jungle on either side and find the dead-wind area regardless of wind direction. By this means, we could creep up one bank until directly upwind of where we wanted to go and then cross the waves downwind maintaining 25 knots. We reached the Fly River and opened up the area to the possibilities of a regular medical patrol for the first time.

Shortly before we left, a radio call came from Saiwasi, some two and a half hours away by canoe and outboard engine. A 25-year old man, Kubili, had been bitten by a Papuan death adder and there was no anti-venom available. One of our four doctors on the team, Graham Zerk, quickly packed his bag and rushed for the hovercraft. With Dekame, a national driver, they made a record breaking run in one hour, three minutes. Kubili was in a bad way, unable to swallow or open his eyes and barely able to breathe. Gradually, the anti-venom worked and within two hours he was well on his way to recovery. Maidame Kukupi had died - Kubili had lived.

Mission accomplished, the team returned home; Cecil Pearse to write the book, *Beyond the Lagoon*, published by Hodder Headline, and the rest of us to await the television documentary *Hoverdoctors*, expected to be shown early in 1994.



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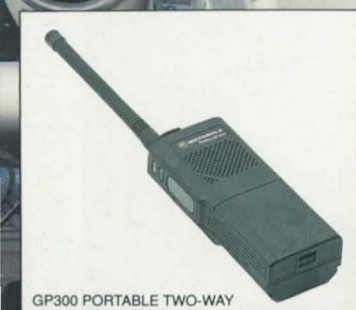
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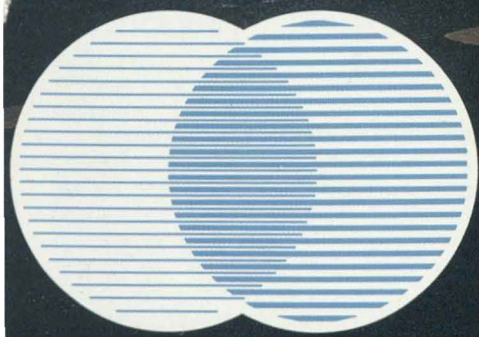


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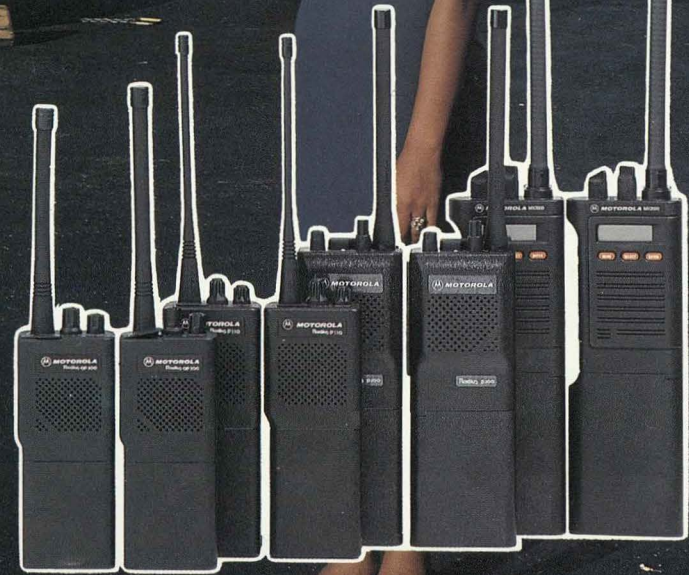


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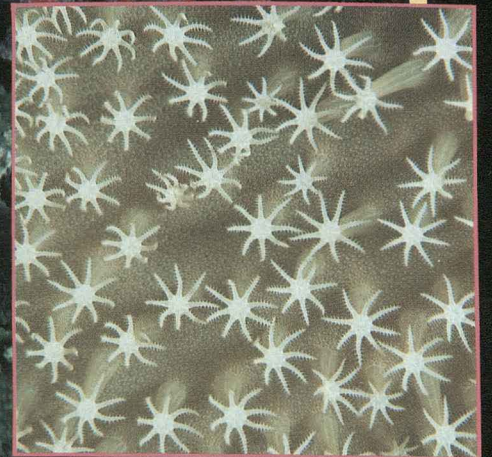
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Kaavieng Diving



Left Soft corals at Albatross Passage. far left Goby, coral reef resident. centre Nudibranch, a colorful, shell-less mollusc. right A starburst of coral polyps.

**Story by Danielle Amyot
Photographs by Pat Manly**



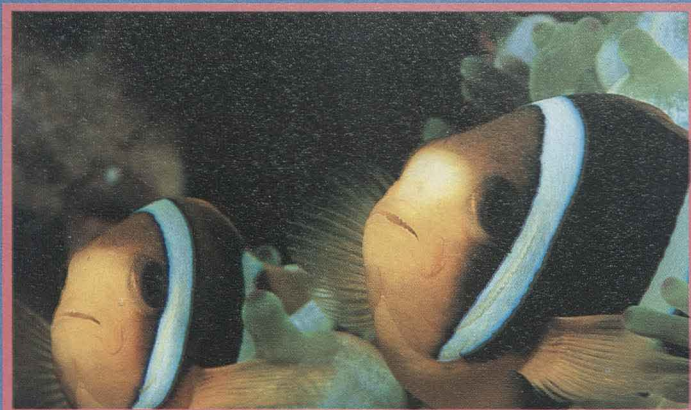
New Ireland is known for the malangan culture, the shark callers of Kontu and the atmosphere in Kavieng, described as 'a typical Somerset Maughan south sea island port'. But the best-kept secret, previously revealed only to a few devoted Papua New Guinea divers, is the wealth and variety of marine life in the balmy waters. The first clue that this is a prime diving location is the myriad of islands dotting the waters between Kavieng and New Hanover to the north. Nearly every island is fringed with reefs lining a network of currents that bring in nutrients for the filter feeders clinging to the walls and slopes.

Drawn to the Kavieng waters like sharks to their Kontu callers, we wanted to see for ourselves its inhabitants. We had a particular interest on this trip in photographing the large pelagic (open water) and reef fishes. This interest was fuelled by Rob Padfield's descriptions of the hammerheads and tiger sharks he has seen here. Rob, a former divemaster and instructor of Walindi Plantation Resort in Kimbe Bay, New Britain, now runs a Kavieng-based operation.

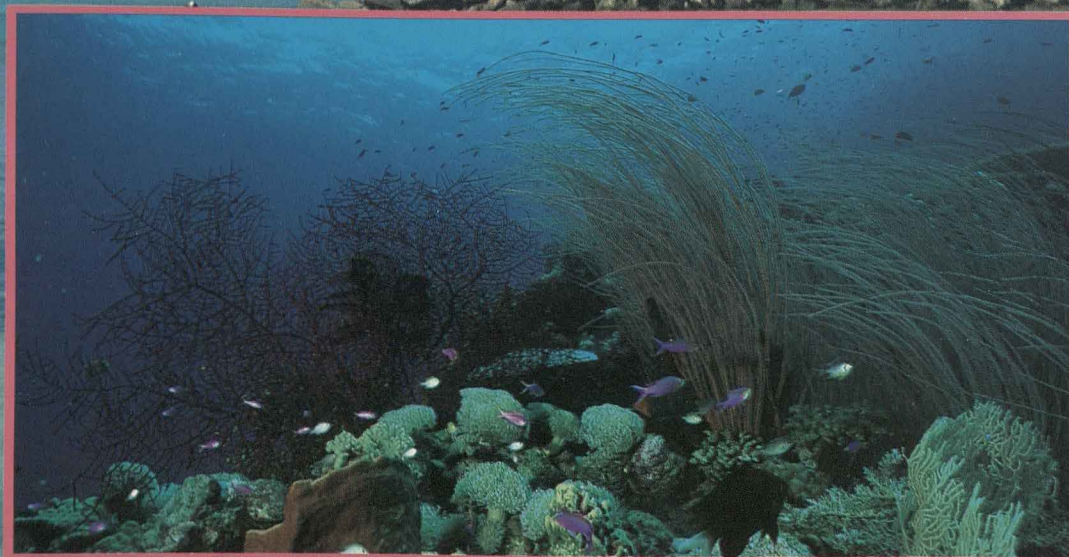
When Pat dived in 1992, several silvertip sharks allowed him to swim side by side with them for several minutes.

Returning to Albatross Passage this year, eight grey reef sharks greeted us during the course of the dive. They were friendly enough, but not willing to have their portraits taken. So we tried elsewhere. The boat weaved a course to Stephan's Strait between islands of all sizes and topography. Some were covered in lush jungles of every green hue. Others were sandy spits fringed with coconut palms. Vast mangrove forests lined the shoreline of narrower channels.

Within seconds of entering the water at Nautilus Reef, a large sting-ray sailed past us. Massive walls of trevally and barracuda, surgeonfish and fusiliers surrounded us. A school of rainbow runners sailed by, some with chunks of flesh missing from their bodies, which were now



healed over. Their escape from some predator's dinner plate had not seemed to affect their swimming ability. A 350kg Queensland grouper slowly edged along the drop-off, surrounded by attendant unicornfish. The giant grouper are the largest of the Indo-Pacific reef fish, and are considered rare on a global scale. I lost count of the number of silvertip and blacktip sharks that cruised by. A few



Top Clown anemonefish. **centre left** Photographing gorgonian sea fans. **centre right** School of trevally. **bottom** Coral gardens are home to many fish and plant species. **far right** Malagan Lodge at Kavieng Harbor.





Above Dive boat heads out towards open water reefs. **left** Open air market on Kavieng foreshore. **bottom** Kavieng couple arriving at market.



Back on the surface, an occasional tuna leaped two metres into the air off the bow of the boat.

Another site, Nautilus Reef, was particularly rich in anemones and their resident anemonefishes. I watched a group of tiny clown anemonefish living in a gigantic anemone next door to a pair of monster-sized orange-fins in a magnificent anemone.

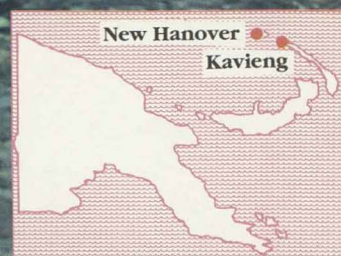
Gobies, perched jauntily in the sand or on rocky ledges, were a challenge to identify. There are 1600 species of goby in the world, and we counted over a dozen, without a hope of identifying them. Some share burrows with alpheid shrimp.

Rob has discovered dozens of dive sites such as Kaplaman Reef and Echuca Patch. Much of the area is unexplored and new dive sites are continually being discovered.

humphead wrasse also joined the endless parade.

Towards the end of the dive, the tight pack of barracuda began to elongate. The fish at the front, as if frightened of being on their own, quickly caught up to their companions, and a perfect orb schooled overhead.

Exquisite gorgonia fans decorated the wall at Albatross Passage. Their hues were soft pastels, delicate pinks, apricot and lavender. A small swim-through was lined with soft corals and small gorgonia, while tiny cardinalfish filled the spaces in between. A large white hydroid guarded the entrance to the passage. A red firefish slowly pirouetted, broad membranes from the rays spread out like a pleated skirt. At the base of the wall, a dozen small white rays with dark protruding eyes lay motionless on the sandy seafloor. Rob told us they were blue lagoon eagle rays.



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