

Paradise

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in-flight with Air Niugini

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paradise

No. 15 January 1979

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IN THIS ISSUE

- 5. Boats by hand
- 8. Polocrosse
- 11. Back to base
- 17. Gone fishin'
- 23. Live and let live
- 28. Orchid safari
- 31. Dressing Up
- 33. Outback



Zero at Rabaul

Welcome aboard,

As we fly into 1979 our dreams become reality. Late last year we completed a very successful round of negotiations with the U.S.A. government who approved our application for landing rights in Honolulu. While we await the blessing of the Papua New Guinea government (which owns 89% of our shares) the management of Air Niugini is hopeful that our direct Port Moresby/Honolulu service will be inaugurated in the second half of this year.

A warm welcome awaits our American visitors in Papua New Guinea for a holiday, or stop over on the way to Hong Kong, Manila, Japan or Australia. I believe that Papua New Guinea is the most fascinating country to be opened for tourism in recent years. With more than 740 languages, each representing a different set of cultural values, an idyllic climate and life style, the variety of landscapes from tropical islands to cold mountain tops, visitors the world over leave our shores with the desire to return. In this issue of Paradise the story of the Bell Airacobra, used by the United States Army Air Corps in World War Two, may cause many American ex-servicemen to reminisce.

Two more F28 jets will be added to our fleet early this year for domestic and short haul international flights. (Remember the old battlefields of the Pacific — Buna, Milne Bay, Rabaul, Lae, Wewak, Bougainville and Guadalcanal? They are just a short flight away from Port Moresby.) Soon such fascinations will be just eight hours away from Honolulu.

C.B. Grey
General Manager

PHOTO CREDITS

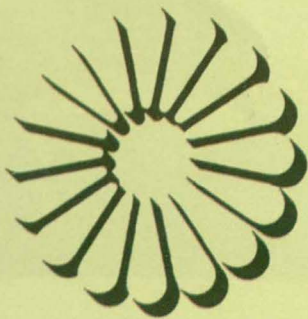
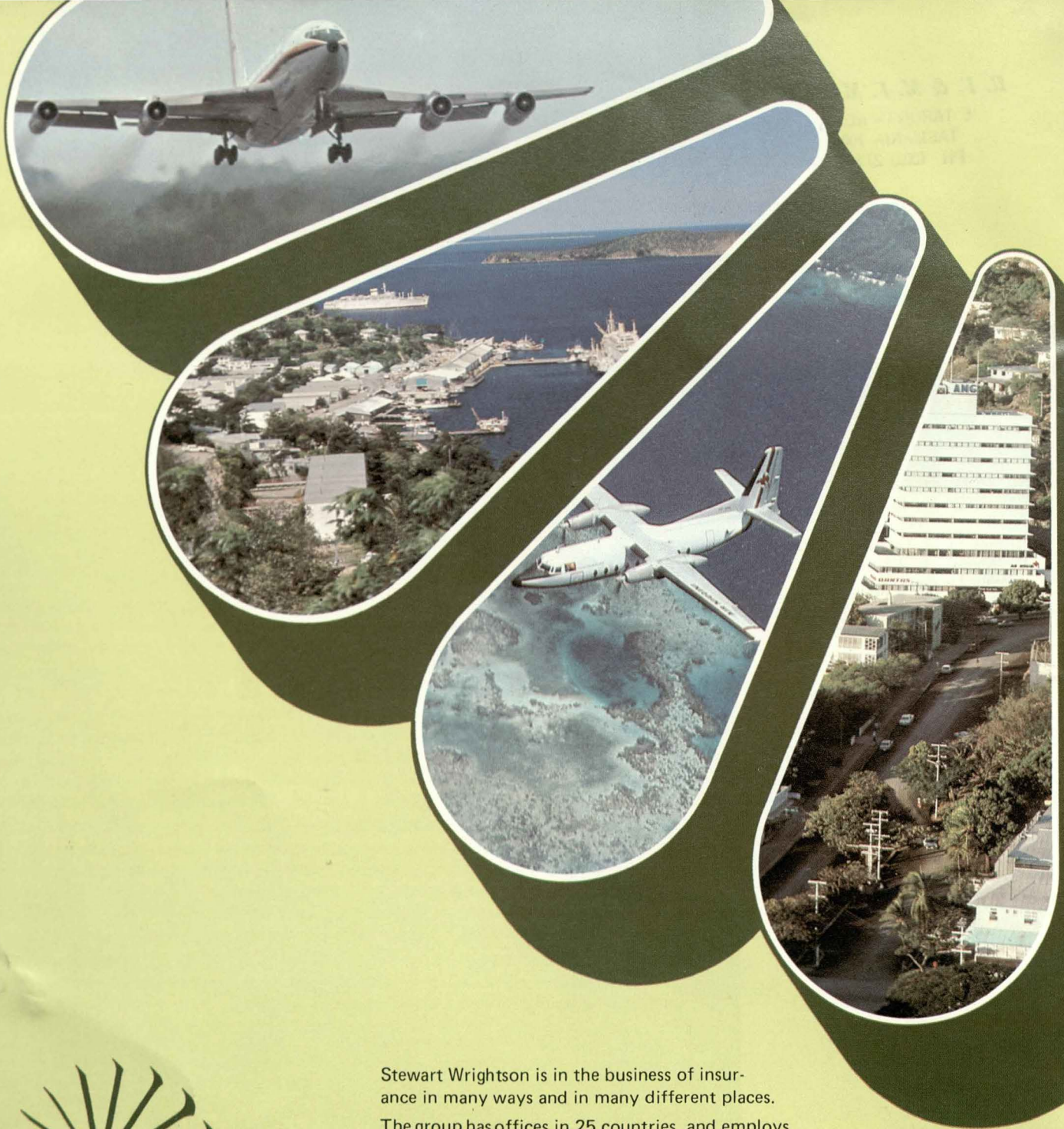
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COVER

The Vanda Ruby Prince orchid decorating our cover was shot by Rob Kysely, assistant artist of Paradise magazine, at the National Capital District Botanical Gardens in Port Moresby. His equipment was a Leicaflex SL2 with a 60mm macro lens. More of Rob's masterpieces will appear in a future issue.



Quality in Air Transport



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BOATS BY HAND

Story and Pictures: William S. Peckover

MAINGEN
CO-OPERATION
SHIP BUILDING
ULOLOU EMIRA
NEW IRELAND PROVINCE



Maingen Silau pictures in his mind the design of his next boat. Then, without using working plans or drawings, a keel is laid. One by one the ribs rise above it and slowly, timber by timber, plank by plank, a boat is built.

Maingen's boats are cargo carrying vessels some 14 metres long and with a beam of 4½ metres. His

fourth, featured on these pages, will be fitted with a 6KD Yamaha diesel engine. The boat will ply between the islands of the New Ireland Province. It will carry copra to Kavieng, and return with village and plantation supplies.

Each boat is built using only hand tools — saws, planes, axes and brace and bit. The keel, ribs and planking are cut from medium sized hardwood trees in the few remaining areas of forest on the 14 kilometre long Emira Island of the St. Matthias Group, New Ireland.

A suitable tree is felled, cut into lengths and man-handled on to a pit-sawing scaffold nearby. Pit-sawing teams of six men take turns,

two at a time, to push and pull the long heavy pit-saw to cut planks to the required thicknesses. Further processing of the planks is done by hand.

Maingen builds his boats at Ulolou, a village of 76 people, and one of seven on Emira Island, which has a population of only 500. Cash income is from copra. It has replaced the sale of the war-time scrap metals abandoned by the War Surplus Disposals Commission.

In 1942 when the invading Japanese forces came to Emira, the people were quick to point out that rain was the only source of fresh water on the island. So the Japanese command post for these islands was



Plank by plank a boat is built; far left: legacy of war; left: Nicobar Pigeon

established on nearby Mussau Island and the Emira people were not troubled by the invaders.

At the end of 1943, when the fortunes of war had started to turn, the Americans selected Emira Island as a base to launch their attack on the Japanese. The U.S. forces took over the island early in 1944. By the time the war finished, and the U.S. servicemen departed late in 1944, the forests of this small island had been well and truly fragmented. Two huge airstrips with a maze of taxiways had been constructed at one end of the island, wide criss-crossing roads interconnected the airstrips and the Navy base at Hamburg Bay (re-christened by the Americans as Hamburger Bay).

Many large camp sites, equipment, storage areas, hospital and ammunition dumps occupied what were formerly forests or subsistence gardens. The forests of Emira can probably never recover their former glory.

The Emira people gained from the war a small income for a few years from the sale of scrap metals, a number of useful water tanks for their homes, the road that now inter-connects their villages and a white elephant airstrip complex. The cost? The loss forever of their only natural land resource — their forest and their best subsistence garden lands.

The decking of Maingen's boat is softwood, pit-sawn by men from

Tench Island, 71 kilometres due east of Emira. Tench Island, population 48, is a tiny dot in the Pacific Ocean, barely 300 metres long and 200 metres wide. In contrast to Emira it teems with both land and sea birds.

Tench is famous for its Nicobar Pigeons. Thousands of these handsome, large, and succulent ground pigeons flock the tiny island every July to build their nests and breed. The islanders take a portion of each year's crop of new birds just before they are ready to fly, fatten them on coconut kernel, and sell them to the people living on other islands.

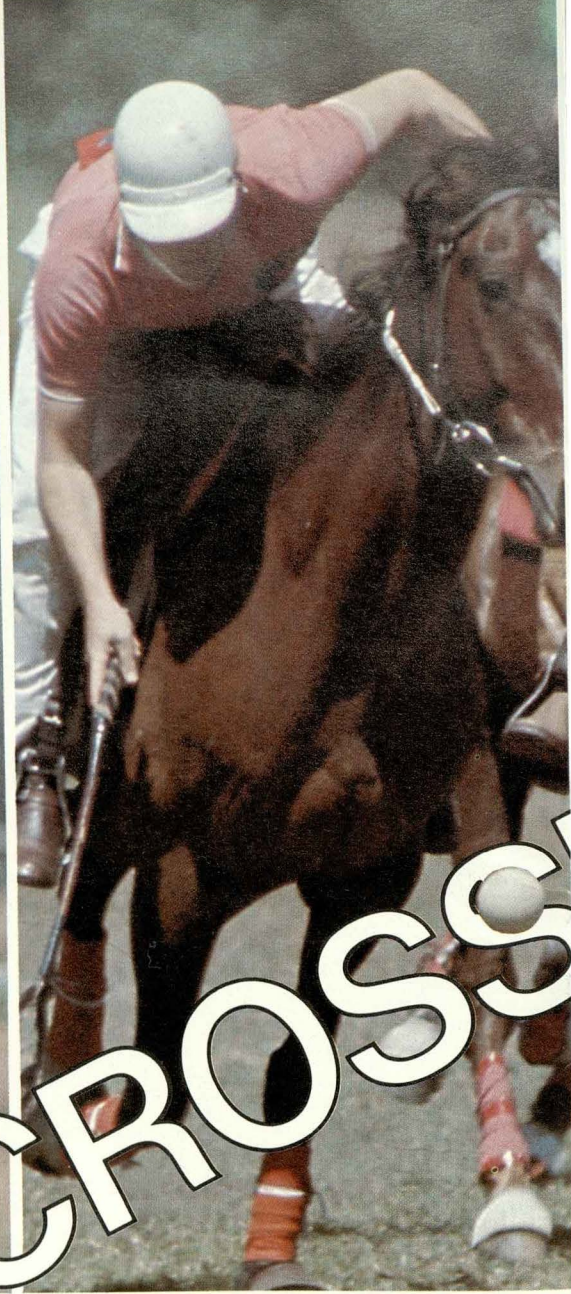
Although Emira is the nearest land to Tench, their people do not have the same origins. Nor do the Tench islanders originate from the people of New Ireland or New Hanover. The language and customs at Tench are very different from those at Emira.



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POLO CROSSE

Story: Barbara Jephcott

For the uninitiated, polocrosse is a game played on horses which is very popular in Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and several other countries. It was first developed in Australia in 1939 but, with the war intervening, it did not become really popular until the late forties and fifties.

The game and its rules were derived from polo, la crosse and netball. Each player is allowed only one horse for a match or carnival. As many people, even in towns and cities, can manage to afford to keep one horse, it is played by people from all walks of life.

Polocrosse is played with a stick with a cane shaft to which is attached a squash racquet head with a loose twisted-thread net. The ball is

sponge rubber and is carried in the net or thrown from it.

Each team consists of six players, of whom three are on the field at any one time playing a 'chukka' six to eight minutes long. The other three members rest themselves and their horses before going into the next chukka. A full match can be eight chukkas of eight minutes, each player playing four chukkas, but usually preliminary matches in a carnival are shorter, perhaps of only four chukkas.

The playing field is 146.5 by 55 metres and has a goal scoring area at each end. In these areas only the No 1 (goal thrower) and opposing No 3 (defence) can play. All six players can move in centre field.

Polocrosse in Papua New Guinea has been played intermittently in

various centres since the fifties. The game is now enjoying its biggest boom, particularly in the region from Lae, through Gusap and Dumpu, to Goroka. From Easter to September each year three clubs — Lae, Ramu and Goroka — hold carnivals at Lae, Dumpu and Goroka, and then come the national titles carnival which is rotated among the clubs. In 1978 it was held in Goroka.

A few players from Madang, Mount Hagen and Port Moresby have also joined in the carnivals. At the national titles for two years in succession, at Dumpu in 1977 and Goroka last year, 11 teams (66 players), have competed for the A, B and C grade trophies. At Goroka there was a team from Australia's Northern Territory and in 1977 Port Moresby sent a team to the national titles. Visiting players borrow horses from the area in which the titles matches are played.



Papua New Guineans' enthusiasm for polocrosse has played a major role in the present revival of the game. Most Papua New Guinean players are stockmen employed on cattle stations or with the Department of Primary Industry (DPI). But they also include arts students and cattle project owners.

The Papua New Guinean Polocrosse Association maintains close liaison with Australia and other nations and is a member of the International Polocrosse Association which was formed at the Australian national titles at the Gold Coast, Queensland, in 1976. A PNG team consisting of Bruce Jephcott, Dan Leahy, Noel Challis, Mata, Kimao and Sandy Kosi, visited Australia for these titles and the first three represented PNG at the inaugural meeting of the International Polocrosse Association.

Polocrosse was first played in Papua New Guinea at Koitaki on

the Sogeri Plateau just outside Port Moresby. Col Sefton, then manager of Koitaki plantation, started a polocrosse club. Players included Jo and Steve Pedersen, Bruce Bond, Mick O'Brien, Alec McGregor and Jack Grimmer who was the first chief umpire.

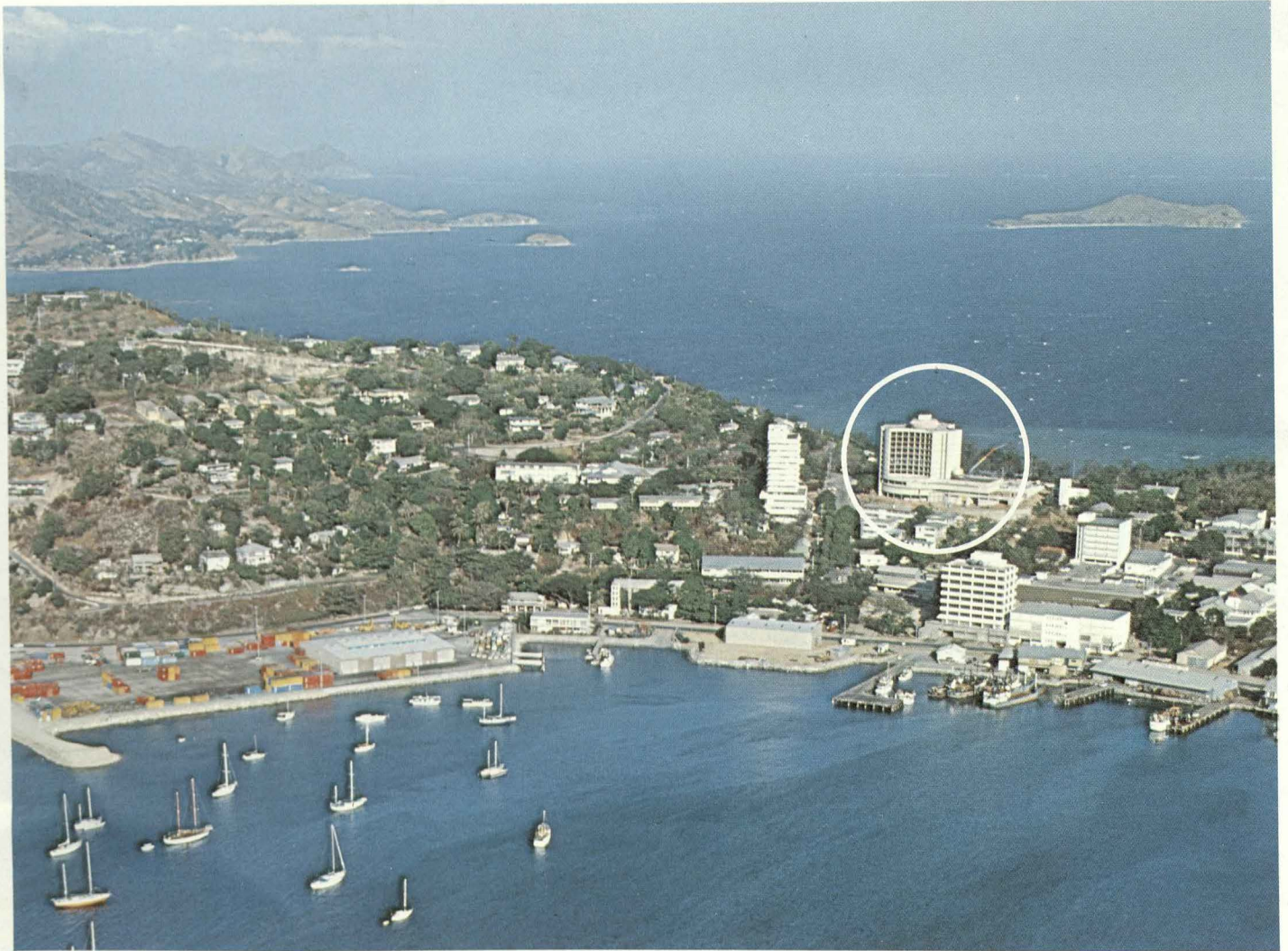
Another club was started at Tiaba, the leading players were Ray Catford, Tom Stewartson and the Collins brothers. Others were Dan Leahy, Neil Latimer, Mick Meade. Teams from either side of the country flew across to play competitions once or twice a year. Kainantu and the Western Highlands also played polocrosse in the early sixties.

The sport went into recess for about eight years until it was revived with social games at Dumpu and Arona in December 1973. Soon a nucleus of experienced players — Bruce Jephcott, Dan Leahy and former Australian players Bob Simmons and Phil Best — were

teaching others the fundamentals of the game. Colonel A.L. Rose from Alice Springs presented a cup for which there has been keen competition over the past five years.

Polocrosse in Papua New Guinea has become the national sport for horse lovers. Its future now seems assured because it is a family game. Women and juniors play as keenly as the men, and 10 junior players, aged from eight to 14, who played throughout last season, provide hope for a sound future for the game in Papua New Guinea. — Mrs Barbara Japhcott, a veterinarian of Dumpu, in Madang Province, is wife of PNG's former Minister of Transport, Bruce Jephcott.

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BACK TO BASE

This is the story of a World War II aircraft lost in 1942 which returned to base 30 years later. The aircraft — a Bell Airacobra fighter — was the first American aircraft to fight in Papua New Guinea.

In April 1942 the Allies in Papua New Guinea were trying desperately to stem the tide of the advancing Imperial Japanese Army. Only four months earlier, in a state of 'Pearl Harbour' shock, the United States had entered the war. Australia had become a giant staging post for its new-found allies as they headed to meet the common enemy in the Pacific War zone.

In Papua New Guinea the Allies had surrounded a large Japanese force at Buna Mission on the north coast. Port Moresby was under daily attack from Japanese aircraft and the heavily outnumbered Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) squadrons were in desperate need of reinforcement.

Townsville, in north Queensland, was the closest Australian city to the combat area. At newly-constructed air bases at Black Weir and Ant Hill Plains, the United States 35th and 36th Army Air Corps squadrons made final preparations before heading for Port Moresby. The crews had

Story: Terry Gwynn-Jones

received their briefing for the long flight to Port Moresby — a flight that was to take them over hundreds of kilometres of uninhabited rain forest and bush to their final jumping off point on Horn Island. The meteorological briefing officer had warned of scattered monsoonal storm activity over Cape York. The order finally came: 'Pilots, man your planes . . .' Thirty-five men climbed into the cockpits of their waiting P39 Bell Airacobra pursuit fighters. The hills around Townsville echoed to the reverberating roar of 35 12-cylinder Allison engines. Once airborne, they joined the 'mother ship', a B17 Flying Fortress, and disappeared over the northern horizon. Six pilots remained in Townsville, their aircraft still being serviced. They were scheduled to follow the next morning.

The ferry flight was uneventful to the first refuelling point. But, after leaving Cooktown, the huge formation was forced to climb above ever-increasing cloud build-ups. Instead of the forecast cumulus cloud, the frontal system was sending up huge thunderheads. Eventually the

B17 had to enter cloud and heavy rain. Within minutes, instead of breaking out into the clear, visibility and turbulence became so bad that the outer formation lost contact with the 'mother'. One by one, as their fuel neared exhaustion, pilots sought permission to descend below the cloud to find a landing place. When they finally broke into the clear they were a perilous 30 metres above ground and totally lost. Unable to find an airstrip, 11 P39s crash-landed. Of the 24 which reached Port Moresby, four were lost in action the following day.

Back in Townsville the stragglers were preparing to rejoin the group. Their formation leader, Lieutenant Charles Falletta, one of the group's most experienced pilots — having logged 1500 hours as a civilian pilot — had flown the route before. Falletta and his P39 had already been to war. Some weeks earlier, with five other American pilots, he had been on temporary attachment to the RAAF's 75th Fighter Squadron commanded by Squadron Leader 'Old John' Jackson DFC of Saint George, Queensland. The Kittyhawk fighters of the 'Fighting 75th' were all but decimated in their outnumbered defence of Port

Moresby. Day after day the ill-equipped band of Australians had been taking off to face the never-ending swarm of Japanese Zero fighters and 'Betty' bombers.

The six American fighters were the first US support for the beleaguered Australian defenders. Falletta's '6951' was the first American aircraft to land in Papua New Guinea after the US's entry to the war.

Though there only to 'observe combat tactics', the Americans were soon in the thick of it. Falletta was credited with his first kill when he shot down a Zero. His aircraft, in the hands of another pilot, also destroyed a Japanese bomber. The six, after this brief but furious 'blooding', returned to Townsville.

On the morning of May 1, 1942, Falletta led his small formation into the air over Townsville and headed back into the fray. In the classroom of a small school overlooking the Black Weir airstrip, a group of children probably heard the distinctive note of the six Allison engines. One young scholar always found it hard to concentrate on his work. Syd Beck thrilled at the sight and sound of the RAAF Wirraways and Spitfires taking off. He often dream-

ed of one day owning his own sleek fighter.

Over the lush rainforest and blue waters of the peninsula the six droned on towards Cooktown. There they refuelled and at 1300 hours took off on the next leg to Horn Island. Three hours later they were approaching their destination but, just short of the island, they met a solid line of intense tropical storms. From the black base of the towering clouds a seemingly solid wall of rain cut them off from the airfield. They made several attempts to cut through the storms but each time they were beaten back. Once they got within sighting distance of the airfield only to see another torrential downpour block their path.

Running low on fuel and long past the point of no return, Falletta decided to search for a 'wide hard beach to land on'. Still dogged by low cloud and rain, the P39s were forced down to 60 metres above the bush as they headed south for the coast. At this height and with teeming rain, visibility was restricted to a couple of kilometres, making their task even harder. Their fuel gauges were hovering close to empty when Falletta sighted a wide open

area among the scrub. It appeared to be a smooth, solid tract, capable of safely supporting the weight of an aircraft. 'I decided to attempt a landing with the gear down. If the surface was suitable the others could follow me down and we could weather out the storm,' Falletta recalled years later. 'It was a perfect landing but, just as the aircraft was coming to a stop, the left wheel hit a small hidden gully and snapped off.'

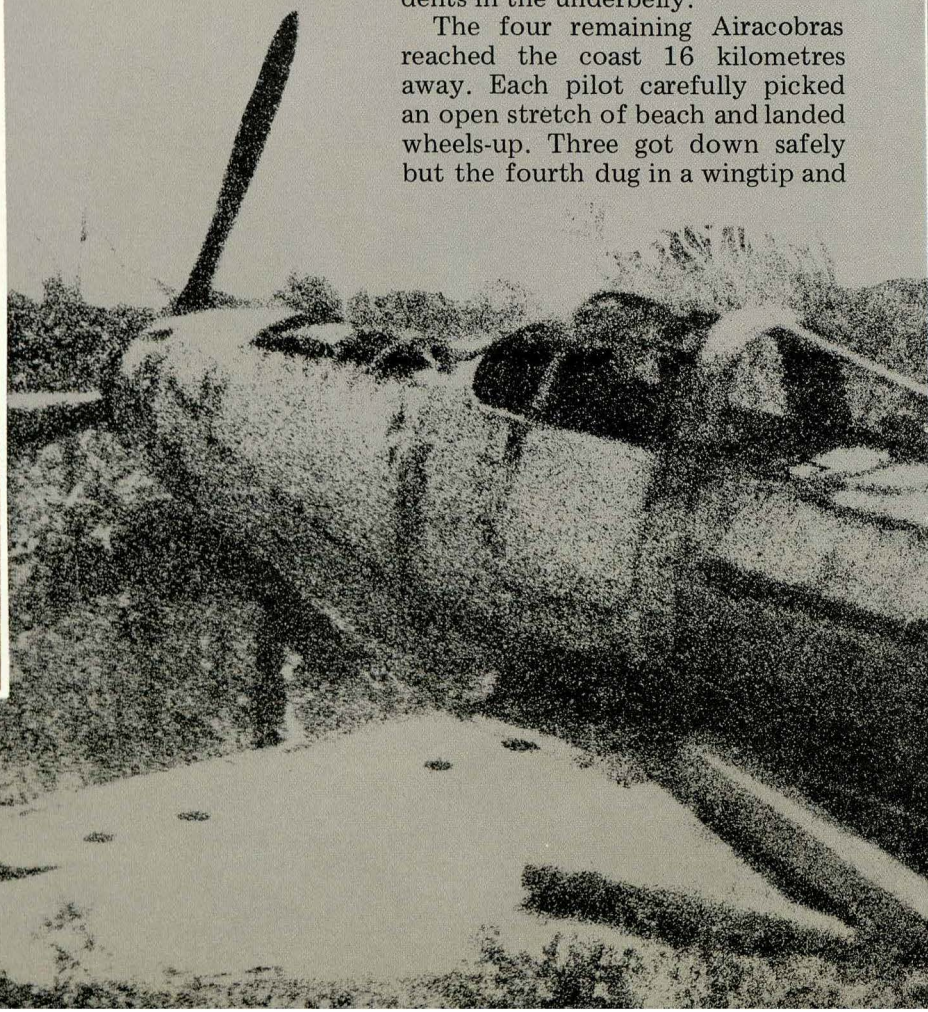
P39 '6951' slewed to a halt, sitting like some giant lame bird on its remaining wheels and the port wing tip. Falletta leaned forward to cut the fuel and magneto switches and closed down the engine forever. Over the radio he passed word that the ground was not safe for landing and that they were to head for the coast and land on the beach.

Four pilots acknowledged his instructions and set off individually for the coast, but Lieutenant Walter Harvey, his fuel gauges reading empty, elected to land alongside his crippled leader. Now aware of the likelihood of a wheel snapping off, Harvey came in to land with his undercarriage tucked safely up. The still rotating propellor blades bit the ground and twisted back as the P39 slid to a halt on the mud. There was no other damage apart from a few dents in the underbelly.

The four remaining Airacobras reached the coast 16 kilometres away. Each pilot carefully picked an open stretch of beach and landed wheels-up. Three got down safely but the fourth dug in a wingtip and



Colonel Charles Falletta USAF



cartwheeled, killing its pilot, Lieutenant Robert Love.

Harvey and Falletta stayed with their aircraft for the rest of that day and through the night. Next morning, with no sign of search aircraft in the area, they decided to set out for the coast. Before leaving Harvey made a final entry in his flight log. 'Mission U5 . . . Took off Cooktown 1300 hrs. Force landed 1630 hrs. Hit bad weather. Ran out of gas. Aircraft cracked up. 1st May 1942.'

It took them two agonising days to cover the 16 kilometres of tangled bush between the crash site and the coast. When they finally reached the beach their exhausted bodies were a mass of insect bites, cuts, scratches and bruises.

The first day on the beach they were spotted by a searching RAAF Sunderland flying boat. They marked out in the sand a huge message saying 'Please drop food and water'. The Sunderland, which made five abortive attempts to land on the rough seas and dangerous reefs, finally flew low over the men and dropped a message: 'Do you blokes think we are a flying restaurant?'

Wagging its wings, it turned and headed north in the direction of Horn Island. The exhausted men began their wait. Harvey later wrote: 'We stayed two days and nights on the beach without food and water. I will never forget how hot it was during the day and how cold it would get at night. It rained continually on both nights and we finally had to dig trenches and cover ourselves with sand to keep from

freezing. Falletta recalled that after the second night up to his neck in sand he was so weak that he was hardly able to dig himself out the next morning.

That was the day the rescue launch from Thursday Island picked up the two exhausted flyers. The launch *Wongabel*, the island's quarantine boat, travelled slowly down the coast. It also picked up the other three pilots. One was found sitting on a reef feasting on oysters he had prised off with a sheath knife. On their way back to Horn Island they had their first meal in four days — a mountain of bacon and eggs cooked by the 15-year-old son of the boat's master.

Two days later they were reunited with their squadrons in Port Moresby. They were given anti-malarial shots on arrival. Within hours they had been allocated new aircraft and were airborne against the Japanese. The same day Falletta was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for shooting down two enemy aircraft.

The two aircraft abandoned in the bush lay untouched for 21 years. At war's end, with the United States servicemen going home, they were forgotten. Slowly, commercial and

private flying began again over the Cape. Reports were received of two military aircraft being sighted in rough country near the Escape River. They were the P39s. In the early sixties, a US Air Force photo-rece aircraft took a series of pictures of them. Then, on the Queen's Birthday weekend of 1963, three men set out from Thursday Island for the crash site.

Over the previous three years the trio had made eight unsuccessful attempts to reach the aircraft. They had been turned back by breakdown, dense bush and lack of time. On this occasion they had built a special shallow draft motor boat affectionately called the *Matchbox*. Their route took them over 50 kilometres of open sea, then 168 kilometres up the Jardine River. Then they had two days of nightmarish slogging overland through dense bush. Guided by a light aircraft, they eventually reached the downed aircraft.

Ian Mullins, a department of transport flight service officer recalled the overland section: 'When we set out on foot the vegetation was so thick that within two minutes it was impossible to tell a sizeable water course lay behind us. Half an hour



and the strain was beginning to tell. Hands and faces were cut by whipping scrub. The tangle underfoot made it imperative to lift each foot high before it could be put forward. Acres and acres of turkey scrub. We could not even see where we had come from let alone where we were going.'

They found Falletta's aircraft first. It was in a remarkably good state of preservation. But 21 years of merciless Queensland sun had bleached its olive drab camouflage a bilious yellow. However, the words 'US Army' and the American star insignia were still clearly visible on the undersides of the wings. Only the fabric covering of the control surfaces was missing. It had rotted away.

A shapeless rotting mass sitting on the wing turned out to be the remains of a canvas flight bag. Still identifiable inside were shoes, shirts, socks and a sleeping bag. On some stained and yellow papers they could just make out the name 'Falletta'.

Later that day they found the second aircraft. In the cockpit door pocket was the log book with Harvey's final flight report. There was no trace of survival rations. It was obvious that the pilots had survived the landings and had walked away to try to find civilisation. Had they made it? Or were their bleached skeletons crumbling away somewhere in the bush? The question was

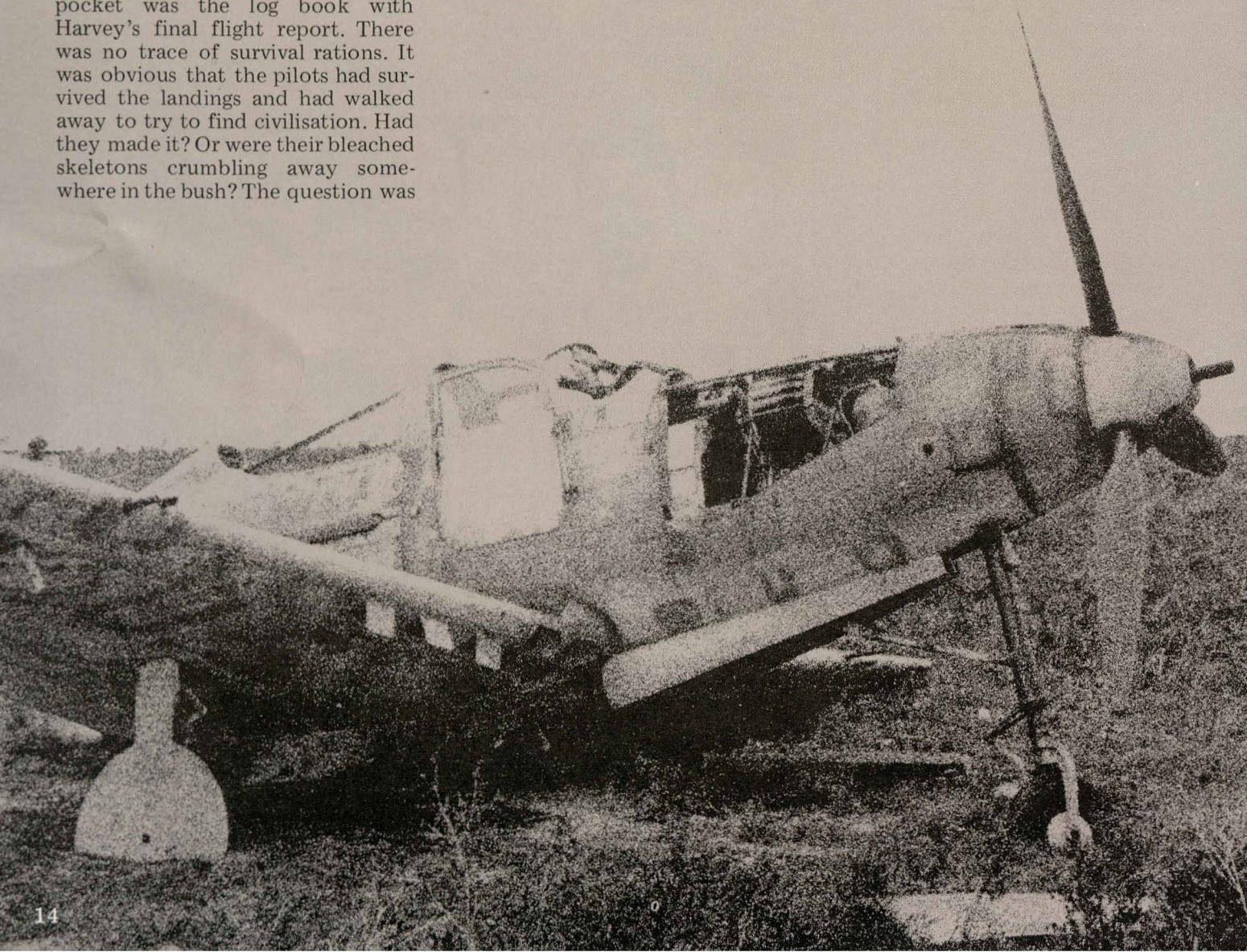
not to be answered for 10 years. The trio left the site that afternoon. The two Airacobras were alone again.

In 1968 Syd Beck, the aviation-mad schoolboy of wartime Townsville, heard about the Airacobras. Now a farmer, married with three children, Syd had never lost his great love of aircraft. His Bohle River farm bulged with bits and pieces of old aircraft. He was planning to start an aviation museum. After one unsuccessful attempt to get to the site he finally made it overland in 1972. Using a converted World War II 'blitz' wagon and with the help of a small group of enthusiasts, the two aircraft were recovered, one going to a Cairns group, Syd taking the other to his Townsville home. He finally had his own fighter aircraft — a bit worse for wear but restorable. Thirty years after take-off, Falletta's Airacobra had returned to base.

Through the USAF, the pilots of both aircraft were finally traced. Falletta, who had recently retired from the Air Force, was excited to hear that his ship had been recovered and was being restored. He wrote to

Syd Beck: 'I am not necessarily proud as the pilot to have crashed the ship, but under the circumstances it could not have been avoided.' He also told of the unique Papua New Guinea involvement.

In 1975 Colonel Charles Falletta, USAF, returned to Townsville to visit Syd Beck and '6951'. He walked slowly along a line of aircraft outside the farmhouse — and into the past as he neared his Airacobra. He climbed aboard the P39 and looked again into the once-familiar cockpit. His mind went back 32 years to the day he had closed the throttle, placed the mixture in idle cut-off, and turned off the magneto switches that shut down the roaring Allison engine for the last time. — *Condensed from True Australian Air Stories by Terry Gwynn-Jones, published in Australia by Rigby.*





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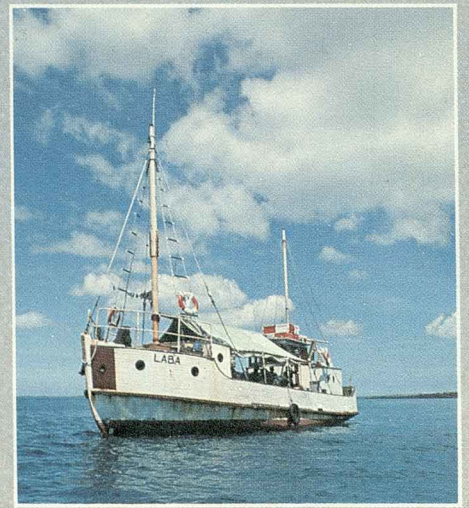
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Gone Fishin'

Fishermen the world over tell fishy stories — especially about the ‘big one that got away’. Then about the day the fishing was so good the distressed angler had to hide behind a tree to bait his hooks. Sydney based film producer, Peter Witchurch, is one keen fisherman known to have spun his share of yarns. Here he tells Paradise of finding the fisherman’s dream — right here in Papua New Guinea. This time he provided pictures to back his story. But what he discovered is something we knew all the time. Papua New Guinea is a fisherman’s dream . . .



Traditional fishing; clockwise from above: Samarai; for the beach barbecue; Laba; Ashore on the Trobriand Islands; feasting afloat

I promised my friends at the local golf club that the next time I returned to Papua New Guinea I would find out where one could expect to catch some fish. My mates were interested in bottom fishing using rods and lines. That type of fishing is difficult in Australia and takes a good deal of local knowledge.

Soon I returned to make a film for the Papua New Guinea Government titled *Getting Through*. My research took me to every part of the country and wherever I went I asked about fishing. I returned to Sydney and recommended Kavieng or the waters of Milne Bay. With the added attraction of the Trobriand Islands, they chose Milne Bay and wasted no time getting there.

From all accounts they had an





exciting time. They did not cast without getting a strike but landed few fish because their tackle — Sydney rock fishing gear — was too light. In the first day of their two week holiday all their lines were destroyed. With borrowed gear they soldiered on. Their stories included being towed around the ocean in a canoe by a shark. They had plenty of slides to show the fish they'd caught. They wouldn't rest until they set the date for a return.

Soon I was on my way to Papua New Guinea to shoot a film that would include a story of the traditional methods of fishing before the barbed hook was introduced into the country.

I shot the Kokopo basket fishing at Rabaul and later the spiders web method. This was particularly interesting. Village fishermen collected very tacky spiders web on the end of a stick and suspended it from a kite made from pandanus leaf so that the bait skipped on the surface. When the bait touched a surface fish it stuck immediately. Needless to say that flying the kite and manoeuvring the canoe took a good deal of skill.

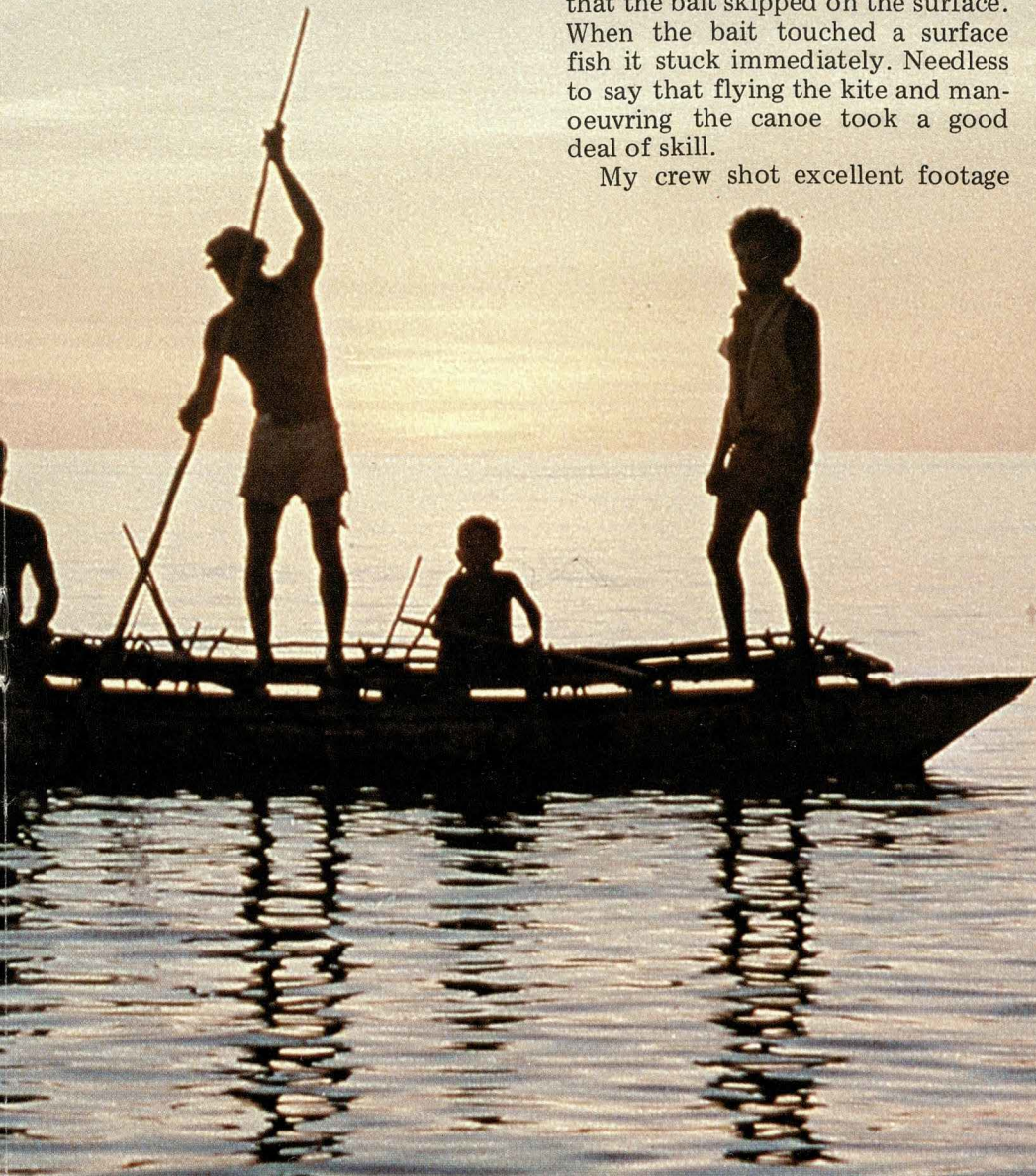
My crew shot excellent footage

at New Ireland of shark calling, which involves luring a shark to the side of a frail canoe by rattling coconut shells under the water.

Returning to Sydney I showed some of my still photographs to friends at the golf club, all keen fishermen, and it was agreed that we would take a fishing holiday in Papua New Guinea. We pooled our cash and returned to Milne Bay where we chartered the boat *Laba*.

Our skipper, Ernie Evennett, plotted a course that would take us away for three weeks. The route took us from the island of Samarai to East Cape, then the strait between Fergusson and Normanby Islands to the Trobriand Islands, out to Woodlark Island and down to the Louisiade Archipelago and back to Samarai.

We caught a lot of fish trolling. Frequently we'd call 'stop' and the engine would slow to idle while we hauled in fish, to the point of bore-



dom with the numbers we caught and the frequency of strikes.

At night we would anchor on a reef and pull in more fish. After two or three days cruising and fishing our appetites for the sport were so satisfied that we began to wonder if we were not murdering fish unnecessarily. We wondered what would happen to all the fish we caught and if we were wasting our effort. We soon learned the answer. Each day we stopped near a small island and the crew took an abundance of fish ashore and gave them to the village people, who received them with roars of applause.

We often joined the feasts, barbecuing fish on campfires and eating them with fresh fruit. Many of the islands have volcanic springs which made excellent baths. We made many friends with the people who were very happy to greet us everywhere we went. We believed they were among the happiest people in the world along with the fact that they lived on some of the world's most beautiful real estate. No money, no telephones, no cars, no worries, and everything idyllic.

We trolled as we cruised to islands to buy clay pots and artifacts, catching more fish as we went.

We went sightseeing on the Trobriand Islands. Some days we selected a small island and went ashore for a picnic of barbecued fish, tropical fruits and a swim in crystal clear water lapping a sandy beach.

We caught more fish on our way to the Louisiade Archipelago without knowing we were destined to find the ultimate fisherman's dream.



Above the reefs of the Louisiade Archipelago we caught an incredible variety of fish in a range of shapes, sizes and colours. There's not another place like it in the world for fishing. In no time at all the holds of the boat were filled and we were forced to head for home.

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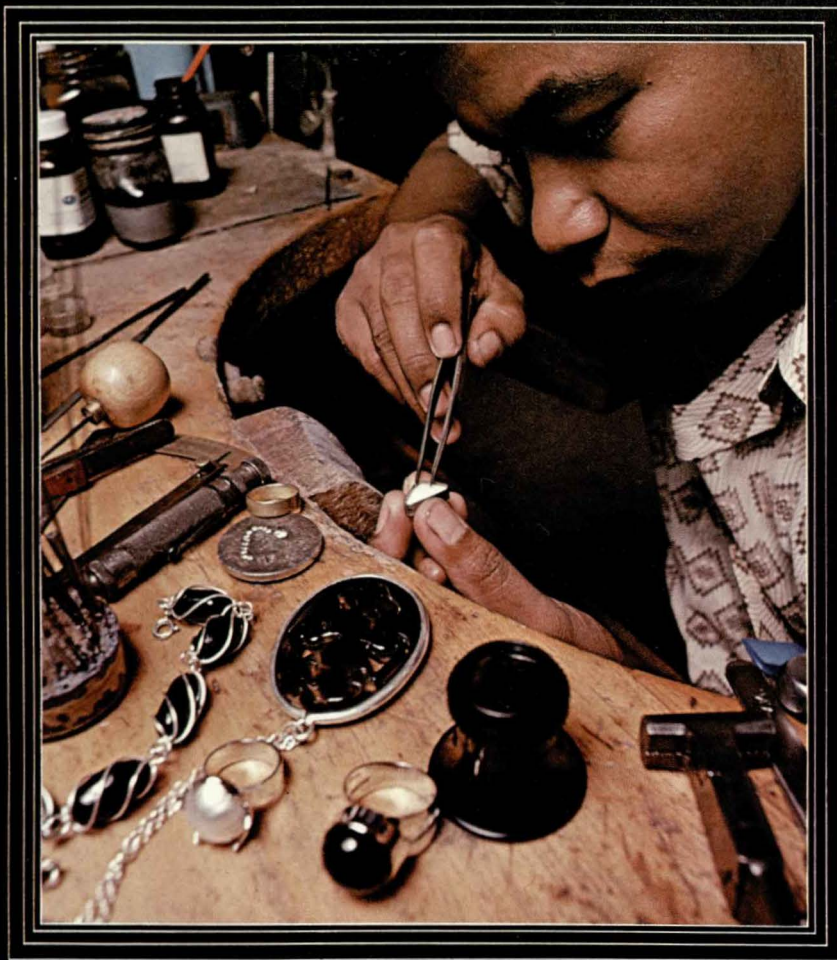
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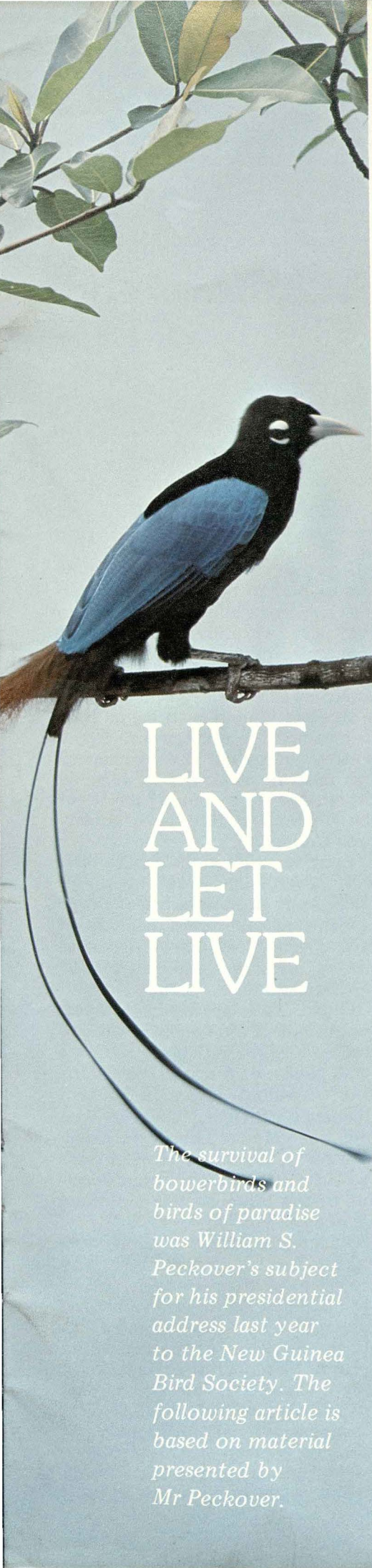
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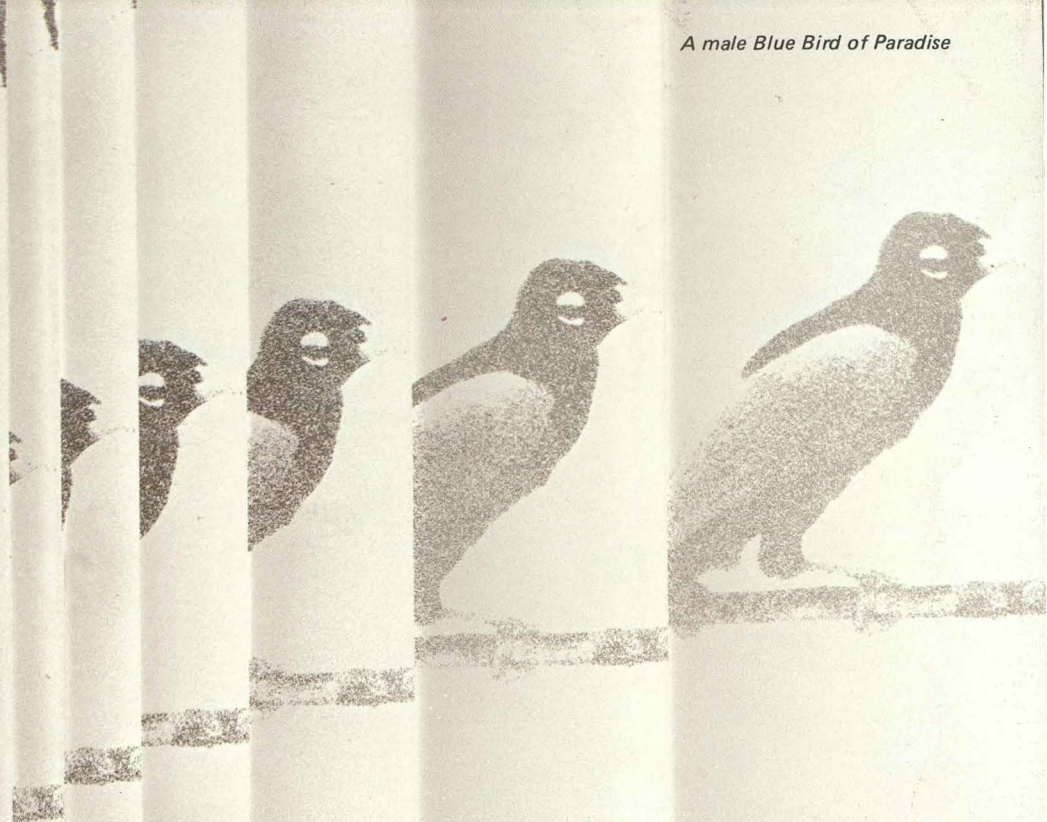
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LIVE AND LET LIVE

The survival of bowerbirds and birds of paradise was William S. Peckover's subject for his presidential address last year to the New Guinea Bird Society. The following article is based on material presented by Mr Peckover.



Papua New Guinea has from 45 to 47 of the total 62 different species in the bird of paradise/bowerbird family. Many of these species will survive indefinitely; some species are under threat; four species may be doomed to extinction irrespective of how much effort is made to preserve them.

The threatened four are the Tomba bowerbird (*Archboldia sanfordi*), the Ribbontail astrapia (*Astrapia mayeri*), the Black sicklebill (*Epimachus fastuosus*), and the Blue bird of paradise (*Paradisaea rudolphi*). The Tomba bowerbird is endangered because the two small areas where it occurs are being exploited for timber; the Ribbontail astrapia is falling victim to a more plentiful and aggressive near-relative, the Stephanie astrapia; the Blue bird of paradise and the Black sicklebill are falling victim to increasing human pressures for additional garden land.

The Papua New Guinea Government is pledged to ensure the longterm survival of all species of birds of paradise and the national public expenditure programme to 1981 includes funds to 'encourage rural people to manage and protect wildlife in their areas'.

Papua New Guinean clans, like other societies, have their specialist hunters, men skilled in the ways of their quarries and with a keen sense of the need for conservation. Before the white man came there were recognised trade routes over which plumes were carried from areas where sought-after species occurred

to areas where they were used but did not occur.

In the early seventies villagers were puzzled at the reduction in number of birds of paradise and other wildlife in their areas. They were practising their age-old conservation methods and the export of plumes from Papua New Guinea was almost non-existent. Yet the numbers continued to dwindle. What was, and remains, the cause? What can be done about it? The first question is much more easily answered than the second: the changes in land usage that have occurred since the end of the Pacific war are to blame. The need for economic development to improve the lot of the people in Papua New Guinea and the growing demands of a growing population, meant more land coming under human use, less being left in an acceptable state not just for the bird of paradise/bowerbird family but for many other members of the animal world such as cassowaries and tree-kangaroos.

The danger of timber extraction is that the change in the forest structure changes the structure of the wildlife that inhabits the forest. Each commercial tree extracted adds to the 'opening up' of the forest. Nearby trees are damaged. The networks of timber roads necessary for extraction all militate against regeneration of the original forest species. When the forest starts its new growth the botanical composition is different; different wildlife niche opportunities are established.

'Here,' says Bill Peckover, 'is

Tomba Bowerbird



where the real challenge lies — how can all bird of paradise and bowerbird species be allowed to survive in the wild without restricting the economic exploitation of Papua New Guinea's natural forest, mineral and other economic resources? Such a problem is unique to Papua New Guinea and the few other countries where man has not already changed the face of the earth to such an extent that many (most?) species of the original wildlife have already been eliminated.'

Long term solutions can lie only with government decisions to set aside from exploitation and development, natural forest habitats of each species that are sufficient in size to maintain genetically viable populations.

Of the four species threatened, the outlook of the Tomba bowerbird is most bleak. These birds occupy a small pocket of forest in the Tomba area of Mount Hagen in Western Highlands Province. They are also found on Mount Giluwe in neighbouring Southern Highlands Province, but the extent and location of the birds on this mountain are not known.

Such is the extent of timber getting at Tomba, it seems that any project to save a reasonable area of the Tomba bowerbird's natural habitat will have to be centred on Mount Giluwe. To do this would mean a ban on the extraction of timber which could involve compensation payments to landowners in the area who are at present in receipt of royalties.

The rescue programme would involve an immediate cessation of

timber extraction above 2500 metres on Mount Giluwe. Royalties in part could be replaced by allowing the former recipients to collect controlled numbers of living common species of birds of paradise for overseas zoos, the earnings from these going mainly to the people. Any difference between timber royalties and earnings from birds of paradise would have to be made up by the government.

On the cessation of timber extraction it would be necessary to ascertain the areas where the males build their bowers and, when these are known, to declare a 'wilderness' or 'national park' area big enough to allow a viable population of Tomba bowerbirds to exist naturally. Meanwhile, back at Tomba, Mount Hagen, the exploited land should be allowed to regenerate and be declared a national park or wilderness area.

Not in so much immediate danger is the ribbontail *Astrapia*. But a natural solution doesn't seem likely because if it is a question of competition with a near relative there is no practical way of separating the two in their natural state. Breeding programmes in zoos may be the only answer.

The Blue bird of paradise and the Black sicklebill are not under so much pressure. In their cases, priority should be given to finding out more about the ecology of each species. Again, overseas zoos could provide positive help by establishing breeding programmes.

The two most heavily harvested species, the Raggiana and Lesser birds of paradise, are not threaten-

ed. In many areas they are downright common. But what is known about the four most threatened species and of the two most heavily harvested species, says Bill Peckover, provides a practical basis for formulating a logical strategy for the long term survival of all bird of paradise and bowerbird species.

He listed five conditions for such a 'survival strategy' to be successful:

The co-operation of the rural community is vital;

In the long term rural people must receive at least the same cash return from land they agree to set aside for the birds as they would receive were it exploited for some other purpose such as timber-getting or agriculture;

Cash-cropping of birds can be achieved only by selling live wild birds to overseas zoos;

Immediate action must be taken where there is positive evidence that a particular species is threatened;

Studies of habitat behaviour and ecology should be concentrated on species known to be threatened.

Mr Peckover ended with an appeal. He told a story of an event in another country. One day there was a sign on the edge of a forest saying there was to be 'no collecting of any thing therein'; the next day the forest was clear-cut. 'It is to be hoped,' said Mr Peckover, 'that Papua New Guinea will not continue to follow the course of action that inevitably leads to situations like the one quoted. A change of direction is needed now. Action is needed now.'



Ribbontail Astrapia Bird of Paradise

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Orchid Safari

Story: Andree Millar

Everything in Papua New Guinea that is well loved has a name. Such a place is Kaiap. It doesn't appear on any map. But it's there — high in the misty mountains of Enga Province. From its lofty position, isolated hamlets on the valley floor far below are mere specks. And all around it are the psychedelia of incredible orchids, glorious rhododendrons and a multitude of birds.

Age-old hunting tracks criss-cross the mountains. Occasionally a woman passes, on her way to the food garden. A man, bow and arrows in hand, may stop to pass the time of day, or seek a light for his cigarette or clay pipe.

At lovely Kaiap we have built an orchid safari camp. It is in old-time

patrol style — all conveniences but no mod cons. It is very comfortable. In years gone by, when we spent a lot of time on patrol, a time when we had to walk to most places, we became quite adept at providing ourselves with a variety of unlikely home comforts. We've done the same again at Kaiap.

There are bush material houses built in traditional style, good beds, plenty of blankets, hot water all day for baths, tea or coffee, and an aromatic wood fire at night to sit around and discuss the day's orchids, or birds, or butterflies, or everything — and heaven too.

There's a lot yet to be done but already we have had several groups up there, among them scientists, tourists and plant collectors. And everyone has had a great time.



Right: *Dendrobium spectabile*



As well as orchids, the camp has much to offer: scenery in the high mountains that sends photographers into a delirium; rhododendrons and a host of glorious alpine plants; and the Princess Stephanie bird of paradise. We are determined to keep the camp in as natural a state as possible.

Kaiap is in the mountains above Wabag, administrative centre of Enga Province, at an altitude of 2400 metres. You can get to the camp by taking a scenic three hour drive from Mount Hagen, capital of Western Highlands Province, or fly in to Wabag and go up by vehicle. The four-wheel-drive road trip takes from about half-an-hour, maybe more if you meet pigs on a corner or children, so delighted to see you, they bring your vehicle to a halt. The

road is a bit hairy but we haven't lost a tourist yet — and, more important, we haven't bruised an orchid.

This is new orchid country in which little has been done. I know plenty about Papua New Guinea's orchids but there's still a lot for me to learn about the orchids of this region. I'm just hoping it will be my good luck to find new specimens.

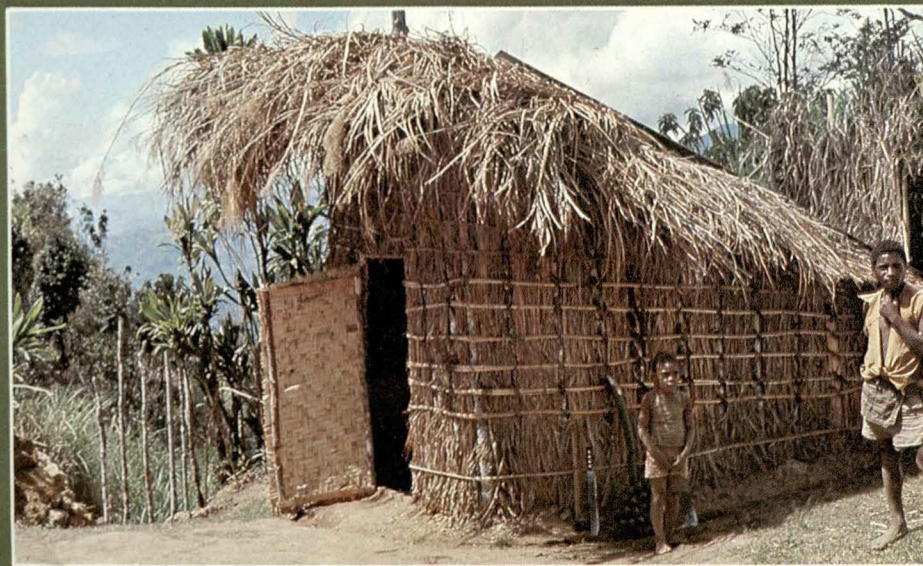
The Kaiap orchid safari camp came into being because of one outstanding young man who cared about the fate of the teenagers of his clan. Peter Piaoen had the good fortune to go on from primary school education, finally graduating as a carpenter from technical college. His first posting was to Boys Town, Wewak, in the East Sepik Province, where he taught his trade to young lawbreakers. This job started Peter

thinking — about the children in his own village who would soon feel the urge to see Western civilisation as it has come to the urban centres of Papua New Guinea. He could see them heading off to the bright lights, unskilled, with no money. Even if they found work their money would probably go on beer. And that would mean drunkenness — and trouble with the police. Peter tossed in his job and went home to his village.

Soon he had the youngsters cultivating a vegetable farm. They grew cabbages and cauliflowers, tomatoes and lettuce, and other vegetables, and sold them in Mount Hagen. They built a village for themselves with sleeping dormitories, a kitchen and dining hall and finally a recreation hut. The government's village development fund helped with a cash



Kaiap, Papua New Guinea's first orchid safari camp is high in the mountains above Wabag, administrative centre of Enga Province



Above: Haus kuk, the camp kitchen, specialises in 'stoop' which satisfies the heartiest appetite; below: freycinetia, a climbing member of the pandanus group



grant and so the 'Kalen farming group' got wheels — a utility vehicle — and started a trade store.

It was then that I asked them if they would like to earn something extra. I sent a photograph of a beautiful dendrobium of the Latourea section and said if they found 100 plants up to my given standard the Port Moresby-based Orchid Industry would buy them at K1 each.

Not long afterward I got a telephone call from Peter who was in Wabag. They had not 100 but 500. I was stunned. I hopped on a plane and went up to see for myself. It was time for their first lesson in conservation. I paid them K100 for 100 plants and then made them put the rest back into the utility. We drove back into the mountains and replanted them on casuarina trees. The boys thought I was mad — there's thousands and thousands of that particular variety in the area. Who cared about a few hundred? I did. Out of that incident grew the idea of the orchid safari camp.

With the enthusiasm of Peter Piaoen and his clan, the first guest house was built. So were conveniences and the *haus-kuk* (kitchen). We were in business.

The cooks show endless patience when a party is in. They happily make cups of tea and coffee at any time of day. The main meals are adequate: breakfast is the breakfast you get anywhere in the world; lunch is usually soup and salads; dinner a traditional 'stoop' — plenty of meat, vegetables and liquid. The result is neither soup or stew but 'stoop' — too thin to walk on, too thick to swim in. It's flavoured with a variety of spicy local herbs.

I've hardly started telling you about Kaiap. There's so much more to see. Nothefangus trees dripping with orchids and the Princess Stephanie bird of paradise are commonplace. But the prospects are limitless. You might even meet a MacGregor bower bird, proudly dancing before its bower. — *Andree Millar, OBE, is the Director of the National Capital Botanical Gardens.*

Dressing Up

Story and Pictures: Geoffrey Heard

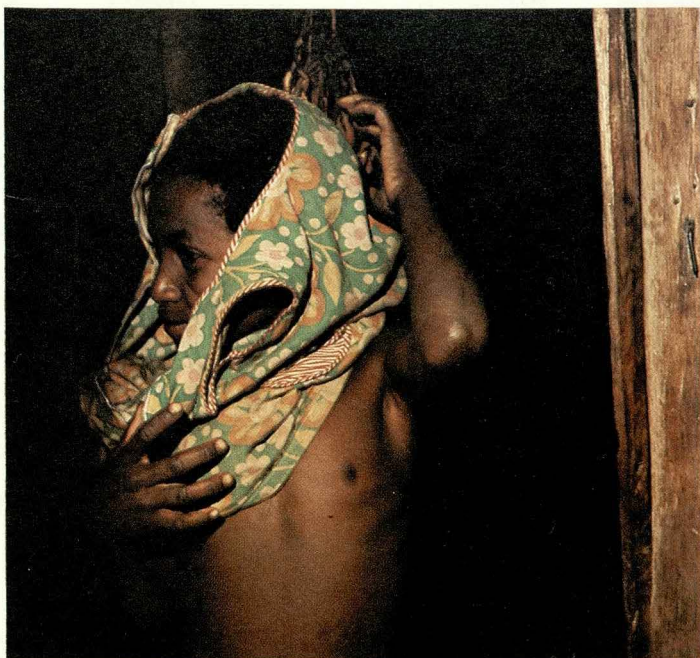
Dressing up in traditional style for a singing or party is something young Rita Kipanguei, 6, of Kilau Village in the Chimbu Province, loves to do.

Like children everywhere, she loves to shed the dull everyday dress and put on the bright decorations for a celebration.

At the slightest excuse, like a drizzly afternoon with nothing to do (and there are plenty of those in the Chimbu), out comes the suitcase containing the feathers and beads, and Rita is begging her father, Samson, to help her dress.

It happened one afternoon while I was visiting Kilau. 'Right,' said Samson in response to Rita's pretty persuasions, 'I'll dress you up if our visitor will take some pictures.'

It was a pleasure.





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OUTBACK

Story: Len and Joy Rutledge
Pictures: David E. Wilson

The loneliness is intense. Distorted by a mirage of unrelenting heat, the steel tracks of the railway shiver and shake into blurred distance. The north Queensland outback is living up to its reputation as a bitter adversary, a reputation earned 100 years ago and not tarnished since by a moment of weakness. This country has broken many men, dashed so many hopes, shattered countless expectations. But still they come, adventurers, explorers, gold seekers, cattlemen.

The gold seekers today are few, replaced by a new breed of miner outfitted with hard hat and mini-computer. And now they are joined by that new breed of foolhardy — the tourist. What is it about outback north Queensland which attracts these people?

The cattlemen are easy to explain. To them, land used to mean money — and is beginning to again. They know the land is rough. But their vast holdings allow the cattle to

range far and wide and to survive on meagre supplies of food and water.

The adventurers are there simply because this is tough, challenging country. There's low-level helicopter flying to muster cattle. That's dangerous work. Crocodile hunting in mosquito-ridden mangrove swamps is not for the faint-hearted.

The miners are there because this is one of the world's mineral storehouses. They are searching for, and finding, tin, antimony, copper, lead, uranium, phosphate, zinc and gold.

Gold was discovered on the Gilbert River in 1869 and on the Ethridge in 1870. Then, in 1873, James Mulligan reported gold on the Palmer and the rush was on. More than 25,000 Europeans and Chinese worked the Palmer at the peak of the rush.

Mulligan continued to explore and found a new field on the Hodgkinson. Towns mushroomed overnight. Thornborough, the Hodgkinson 'capital', by 1878 had 10,000 people, 22 hotels, nine general stores and some handsome government buildings. Four miles away Kingsborough boomed, faded — and died.

Gold was not the only mineral found. Glenville Pike, in her book, *Pioneers' Country*, tells how Mulligan and some others were prospecting the ranges west of Herberton in 1881. Camped on the Dry River, they indulged in some rifle practice, using a bluff as their target. Investigating their marksmanship, they found the shots had exposed a lode of native silver. Thus was Silver Valley found and a new township, Newellton, born. Wolfram was mined at Koorborra, copper at Mount Garnet, copper-silver-lead at Chillagoe. The mineral bonanza seemed never-ending.

Further south gold had been discovered at Charters Towers. By 1886 it was Queensland's largest gold mining area and the town was prospering. The country was easier than many mining areas further north and the railway had arrived from Townsville on the coast. The Queensland Government seemed

almost fanatical in its desire to develop the area.

In a stroke of genius, several Charters Towers mining companies offered shares on the London Stock Exchange. Soon a gigantic boom was in motion. The town was flush with money. Palatial offices, shops, banks and a stock exchange went up. The city grew to become the second biggest urban area in Queensland. Today, mining in Charters Towers is dead; very few people have even heard of Koorborra; Thornborough no longer exists. In their place are Greenvale, Mount Isa, Mary Kathleen and Monument.

It is easy for the tourist literature to describe the attractions of the Great Barrier Reef, Queensland's white beaches, tropical palm trees, sparkling waterfalls and dense tropical forests. It is not so easy to describe the magnetism of history. Yet now, in 1979, people are being drawn to the site of Thornborough, to the remnants of Ravenswood, to the few isolated buildings that are Chillagoe. They are being drawn by

stories of events which are only now being retold.

Little remains of the Palmer field, but in Cooktown the tourist can visit the Chinese cemetery and see evidence of the 20,000 Chinese who fought flies, mosquitoes and hostile Europeans and Aborigines to win gold for families in distant China.

The visitor to Mount Mulligan can see the remains of buildings, debris of the colliery and the tall chimney stack. What he can't see is evidence of the gigantic explosion of 1921 when the colliery blew apart, killing 75 men. Nor is there much evidence of the railway that operated for 45 years and carted out all the movable buildings on the final run. But, as any visitor to these parts will tell you, the history is still there. You can feel it in the air.

More obvious evidence of the past is at Charters Towers. The city lives on but with a population now of only 8,000, only a shadow of its former glory. But at least it has survived. The stock exchange building has been restored, a number of the

impressive bank and office buildings are still being used. The whole town has an atmosphere, not of the 1890 boom years but simply of the past.

Then there is the railway. Thousands of tourists enjoy the scenic ride along mountainsides, through tunnels, over waterfalls, from Cairns to picturesque Kuranda. Few, however, realise that more than a thousand men toiled five years with pick and shovel, bullocks and a few donkey engines to perform one of the greatest engineering feats in Australia up to that time.

To the casual visitor, north Queensland is a paradise. To many, who helped to develop this area, it was a hell. To the more discerning tourist, this area is a treasure house of images, experiences and history. *Len and Joy Rutledge are freelance travel writers based in Townsville.*



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