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# paradise

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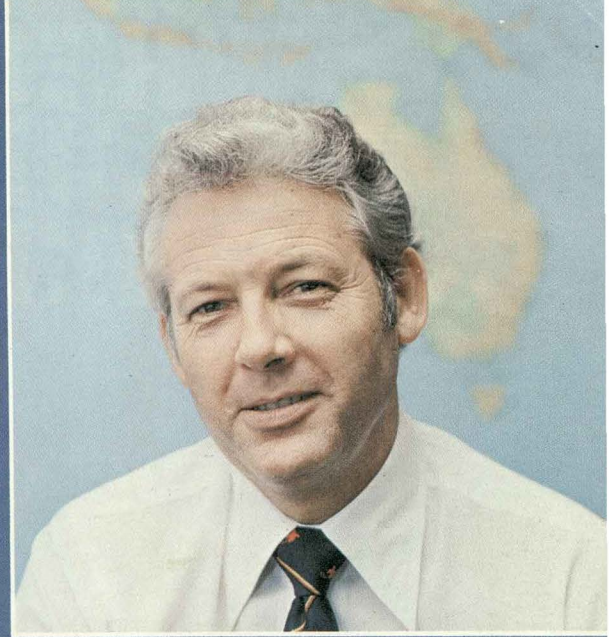
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## Welcome aboard

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In this issue of *Paradise* we introduce the children of Papua New Guinea as a contribution in support of the aims of the United Nation's International Year of the Child. Dr Paul Brennan's article provides a fascinating insight to the immense value and importance Papua New Guinean parents and society attach to their children.

Staff Journalist Biga Lebasi recently met up again with American Fred Hargesheimer, the founder of a Papua New Guinea school which 'fell from the sky', and tells the story of Fred's wartime ordeal when he parachuted into enemy territory and of his efforts ever since to thank the people who saved his life.

  
G.S. Fallscheer  
General Manager

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## COVER

Climbing for goals is a powerful feature of a child's development from the day it leaves the womb, and this is symbolised in Gary Kildea's picture of the happy Trobriand Islands boy on our cover. Turn the page for Dr Paul Brennan's Year of the Child report.

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# WHERE CHILDREN ARE HEROES

By Paul Brennan

*An 'International Year of the Child' was not required to teach Papua New Guineans the importance of children. For thousands of years children have occupied a prominent place — often pre-eminent — in the minds and activities of her myriad cultural groups.*

Children of New Guinea are nothing less than heroes. Here — in a land of a thousand or so cultures, one fourth of the world's total — the child is not only welcomed, nourished and pampered. He, or she, is viewed as the saviour of today and the promise of tomorrow.

This attitude is rooted deep in the island's legendary past. Hundreds of oral stories, distributed over a wide area, have revealed the monster-slaying child as a major theme of its folklore. The plot, much more intricate than a 'Billy Goats Gruff' tale, always centres around an ogre — a pig, cassowary, snake, giant — and the child hero.

When all adult attempts to destroy the aggressive monster fail, the tiny figure of a child emerges. Brought up in seclusion, this unlikely and often unpromising antagonist kills the monster and allows his countrymen in exile to regain and rebuild their lost land. Forever, they and their territory are safe from extinction.

The pride expressed by the storytellers today in their association with the child hero or heroes, is always beautiful to behold. Drama, enthusiasm, charm, characterise the narration of the final battle between monster and hero. The contemporary storyteller, though familiar now with new and different 'heroes', has in no way lost his image of the true heroes — children.

This dominant attitude toward children is not only reflected in myths; it also emerges in a multitude of cultural ways: bride price payments, death rituals and exchange ceremonies all highlight the value of children. They demonstrate tangibly that children have no peers among life's valuables. In more subtle ways,



often at the sub-conscious level, this message is manifest.

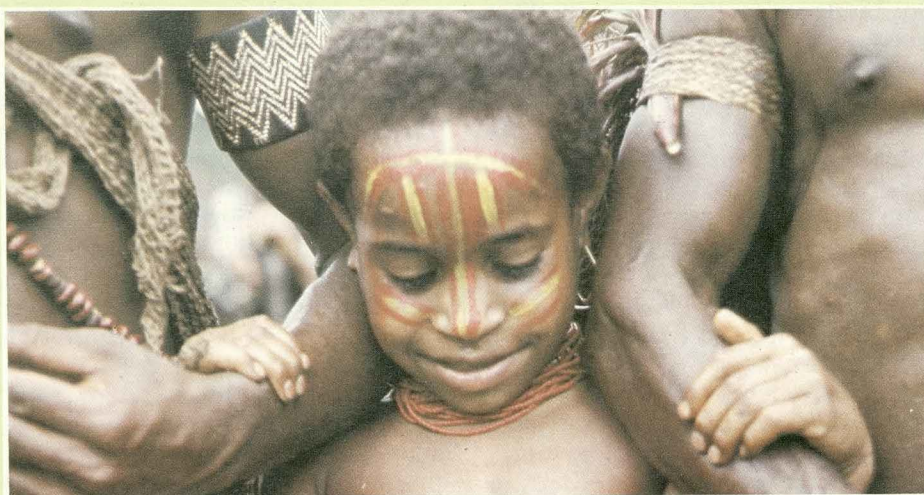
In some New Guinean languages, for example, the verbs of existence — 'to be' forms — are different for men, women and children. Infants for example 'exist' in the same way that clouds, rainbows and bridges 'exist'. They are suspended phenomena, and as such are capable of communicating messages in different directions, between mankind and other parts of his environment. If they ceased to exist mankind would lose his most important and direct means of communication with the living forces not only in his past and future but especially in his present.

The late beloved 'grandmother of the global village', Dr Margaret Mead, was not the first to be attracted to the children of Papua New Guinea. Nor will she be the last. Many researchers, students and tourists alike, have found and will continue to find that 'growing up in New Guinea' is a fascinating experience to observe and, if possible, to participate in.

In 1968 when my wife and two children accompanied me to the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea to an area now known as the Enga Province, where we spent the next eight years, immediate questions arose as to our identity.

'Are you really the father of those two children?' two wizened Enga elders asked me one day. They were deadly serious. 'Of course I am. Why do you ask?' I chuckled. 'Because you haven't shown us that you have what it takes,' was literally their rejoinder. I was taken aback but tried to hide my instinctive resentment. I asked them just what that special 'what it takes' might be. 'A beard,' they replied, 'Beards indicate that men are fathers.' Ever since then I have worn a beard to try to make clear to the Enga one important message about my identity even though now, in this changing society, that message, like many others, is often confused.

The primary purpose of marriage in Enga society, as well as in many other New Guinean cultures, is procreation. The idea of zero population



Left: asleep in a bilum bag;  
below: strength — a little girl joins her  
elders in a dance near Kapiaga

growth is virtually incomprehensible to these people. 'We marry so that children can be born and take our place' — *Waneme panda nyetamopa lao wane mandenya lao enda nyngi* — is their commonly expressed goal. When selecting a bride for one of their eligible bachelors, clansmen will always consider as a primary physical quality the girl's potential for childbearing. Plumpness of physique is a good feature. The bride price given by the groom's clan is primarily in anticipation of the fruit of the woman's womb. And when children are born, additional gifts are given to the mother's clan to further recompense them for their gift of human life.

Traditional attitudes toward conception vary widely throughout New Guinea. Pre-scientific logic naturally did not have the benefits of microscopes, test tubes and other sophisticated laboratory gadgetry and analyses. Many cultures do not relate conception to a particular number of occurrences of intercourse, believing that activities of both human and non-human forces control such an enigmatic phenomenon. Fishing, hunting, and trading expeditions, gardening sequences, meteorological events, and simply the will of departed ancestors, determine for many when conception occurs.

For others, occurrences of cohabitation are meticulously counted, for repetition of the act prescribes what the results will be. The Enga, for example, have believed that

three occurrences automatically would produce a child. Today this sacred belief, inherited from time-honoured mythology, is retained by many although suspicions, created by modern life, are increasing.

In the union of male and female a magical relationship exists. Alone each is sterile but together death is challenged. In their full participation, though each symbolises the exact contrast of the other, a future is guaranteed. The combination of contrasting partners is demanded for something of permanence to be conceived — namely a child. As the suspended product of opposites, it lies for a short time (during infancy) in its vulnerable state, capable of communicating messages (in both directions) between mankind and everything opposed to mankind. Potentially, no greater hero could be imagined.

The little hero usually does not enter with much fanfare. In many New Guinean societies no ritual welcome ushers the baby into his community. In fact, his emergence often repels many of his relatives, fearful as they are (males especially) that this rite of passage, accompanied by contaminating fluids, might diminish their own virility.

Because in traditional societies the infant death rate has been high, a grace period was always allowed to test the newborn's development. Even now, for a period of several months after birth, the child is viewed suspiciously. Will it live? Will it be strong? Will it be able to



Below left: Tari child wears traditional make-up; centre: at play on the Trobriand Islands; right: fun in the sun for future leaders

accomplish its life destiny? What message might it communicate to those preceding it?

One of the most susceptible parts of the infant's body is the soft spot on the top of its head. Because many New Guinean groups believe new life can be affected through this 'opening' they tenderly place various substances on it, often with accompanying magical spells, to ward off evil intentions.

The influence of powerful men, especially successful warriors, can have a devastating effect. A glance at the child can be enough to injure it, even kill it. For the Enga, a reddish clay (*kakai*), rubbed on the soft spot, is usually thought sufficient to shield the impressionable life. Another similar practice still common, is the wearing of the umbilical cord on the child's wrist. As a charm, its power is much more effective than any lucky penny or rabbit's foot could ever be.

The naming of New Guinean children does not usually take place until the young life has had a sufficient chance to develop physically. Perhaps after six months, or even a year, its relatives are finally convinced that this being, lying in a suspended state, will be able to survive. At that time — and not until — there is great rejoicing. Now the life can be named. Before, the relatives would be afraid to identify the child with a name, for one's name is synonymous with one's identity, in this life and the next. Had it not survived, the named child would need to be

reckoned with as a spirit; a child who might have died without a name would have no identity.

Joyous feasting usually surrounds the name-giving ceremony. Relatives of both the mother and father come to the home of the child where, perhaps for several days, banqueting, takes place. A highlight of this time is the first cutting of the child's hair, done usually by the mother's oldest brother. It is he who also pronounces for the first time the name he has selected for the little hero.

The uncle and the mother's clan generally are rewarded for their important part in bringing this human identity into existence. After all, it is the mother in many Highland cultures who imparts to the infant its physical substance of flesh and bones. These substantial elements must be properly remunerated with gifts of pigs, cassowaries or other valuables. The father of the child, who has imparted his spirit and personality, does not receive gifts because the child remains part of his social group.

The first few years of growing up in New Guinea usually find the child in the close presence of its mother. Her activities — planting, harvesting, fishing, preparing food and many others — are usually programmed to allow for her child to be with her, bouncing contentedly in her *bilum* (bag), slung contentedly from a nearby branch, perched adroitly on her shoulders, or tagging along close by. The slightest whimper can send its mother running, produce the

mother's breast or stimulate a slight pat of the hand. Coddling and pampering are the rule rather than the exception. Ideal motherhood is the building of an atmosphere of generous love and security around the new life, without, of course, neglecting the needs of the father.

Father's care of the child is equally indulgent. He discourages his wife from physical punishment because he believes this is harmful to the child's development. Traditionally, if the father dreams about his child, regardless of the dream's outcome, he will be most concerned, for dreams are powerful portents.

The Enga for example had a ceremony connected with dreams of children which involved the 'planting of pandanus seedlings'. Since the dream would be thought of as coming from an ancestral ghost wishing to shorten the child's life, the father would need to counter that influence with the following activities.

A specialist in dreams would shave off all the hair of the child, with the exception of a small circular section on the top. These would be tied with a vine so that the hairs stand upright, pointing, like pandanus seedlings, toward the sky. A young boy would be sent to the top of a tree nearby and, instructed by the specialist, begin to call out to the sky deities. Shouting the name of the child, he — the hero that he is — would then request that the life span of the child not be shortened, as the dream had indicated. On the





ground a pig would be cooked and a pandanus seedling planted in the cooking pit, along with a white flower. Thereafter the child's hair would be permitted to grow, and all concerned would be confident that the hero's interception would allow the child's life to be normal.

It is not only the biological mother and father who influence New Guinean children. All members of their social group (usually a clan of some 3-400) have a considerable role in helping the young life to mature. In fact, some languages of New Guinea have no words for biological mother or father; it is the sociological relationships which are important.

In contrast to the nuclear family emphasised in the Western world, New Guinean societies place the emphasis on the extended family. The child therefore has many 'mothers' and 'fathers', 'brothers' and 'sisters' and, of course, many 'homes' as well. The total clan territory is the child's playground. He feels 'at home' in it all, and participates naturally in the total environment. His world is not separated rigidly from the world of adults, nor are their activities for the most part 'off limits' to him.

Adjustments for him come gradually rather than abruptly, as is the pattern common to so many young Westerners. Not only is the New Guinean child 'in' life; he is as its centre. He learns early and in a natural way what life's goals are, as well as its frustrations, tensions and

successes. He is nurtured to accept his role as a hero of tomorrow.

Since every New Guinean child has its place, the Western practice of adoption is not only virtually unknown but also incomprehensible to most modern New Guineans. The thought of denying one's birthright — the position within one's group and the relationships with one's fellow members — is for most the same as denying one's birth.

'Formal' schooling is new to the New Guinean. Traditionally the child has learned more by observing and participating than by lecture or theoretical instruction. A toddler of three or four may not yet be weaned or wear a leaf, but he or she is never too young to experiment with the skills necessary to cope with one's environment. Boating, gardening, handling pigs, splitting firewood — all are learned naturally at an early age. The children's many 'tutors' encourage their participation and share with them the culture's encyclopaedic knowledge of the total habitat.

Since the radio and the classroom have come relatively recently to Papua New Guinea, the emphasis is still largely on the eye rather than the ear. The use of all one's senses, each in its proper place, is regarded as natural. One's total physical and mental abilities are needed in the very physical New Guinean environment.

As a father of four sons, two of whom were born in the mountains of Papua New Guinea, it has been fascinating for me to observe the

skills which they have acquired so naturally while playing with their Enga friends. They learned early to use and respect fire and sharp knives, to climb fearlessly to the tops of tall trees, as well as to be creative with the grasses, barks, vines and other important and useful parts of their environment.

Equally important in their luxurious childhood has been an early awareness, learned from their Enga friends, that one's environment must be respected and not exploited. The birds, the soil, the trees and plants, and even one's water supply, deserve to be used in proportion to one's needs, for conservation means provision tomorrow.

A poem by Martin Monumwetala, a Papua New Guinean student, begins with these words:

*One world, two worlds; and I stand in between.*

*Old world and new world; I am your divided child.*

*My life you are dividing. I do not know where to stand.*

Survival — to say nothing of being a hero — in any one world is accomplishment enough, but to be asked to do it in two worlds is a demanding task. That many Papua New Guinean children are having difficulty with this incredible assignment should surprise no one.

I well remember one of my first encounters with this struggle to find meaning in the ferment of culture change. In this case — as was so often the way memorable experiences happened — it involved children.





Clockwise from right: *sleeping on the job; there's nothing like mothers milk; healthy mum and babe at Trobriand Islands; hunting lizard with mini bow and arrow; experiencing the change*

Pimbinakae (the name of an Enga bird) was a little boy of about eight who loved to walk with me on research patrols through the bush. The year was 1969, two decades after the area had been opened to the outside world. Walking down through dense undergrowth, I accidentally snagged my arm on a thorn bush. Pimbinakae noticed the few drops of blood trickle along my arm. To my great amazement, he shouted to the other Enga carriers in our group: 'Come and see the red man bleed. He really has red blood.' They came running and, with equal excitement, came to understand that day — evidently for the first time — that the European change agents among them ('red' in their colour spectrum) were made of the same physical substance as they. That, to them, was a revelation.

Numerous other revelations have been experienced by the 'children' of New Guinea during recent times of change:

- *Before it was accepted that mothers would breastfeed their children up to three and four years and that little if any sexual contact with their husbands would occur. Today family planning schemes are struggling to replace this effective traditional birth control practice. In fact the national birth rate has soared to approximately three per cent.*

- *Before there never was child abuse, but in each society it was accepted that discipline of various meaningful kinds would be admin-*

*istered to children. Today parents find their children's misbehaviour frustrating. Many times, as a new authority figure, I was called upon by Enga parents to administer 'the proper punishment' to their children for particular 'modern' misdeeds.*

- *Before it was assumed that children's participation in various activities would bring rewards of appropriate kinds not only to the children but to their clansmen as well. Today attendance at school does not automatically bring favourable results, as illustrated by the request of frustrated clansmen when they asked the headmaster of a high school; 'We have loaned you our boy for 16 years. When will you pay us back?'*

- *Before children were expected to function with their clansmen in pursuit of shared goals. Today, the fathers exclaim in exasperation: 'Why, when our kids come home from school, won't they work in the gardens or help with the chores? Why won't they listen to us any more?'*

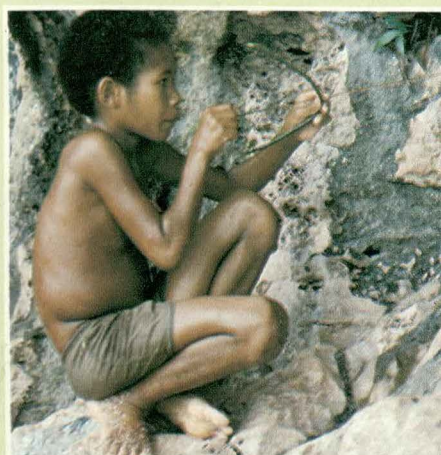
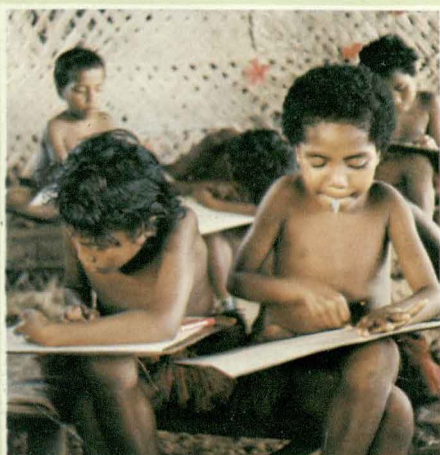
To these, and a host of other revelations, the children — and parents — of New Guinea struggle to find proper meanings. One example will always stand out in my mind. It occurred in 1975.

My eldest son had proudly raised a large pig. Pudzy was admired by all the Engas in our community. One night, under cover of darkness, four school dropouts from a neighbouring clan broke into Pudzy's pen, led her

through the back fence and butchered her. Without informing the police, the clansmen of these boys discovered their misdeed, contacted their 'fathers' and immediately the entire clan set about repairing the broken relationship.

At their own initiative the fathers, a group of some 20 men, came to our house the next morning to apologise for their 'clan's wrongdoing'. 'We know your insides are crying,' they began, and went on to state that a compensation ceremony would take place. My son and I heard speeches addressed to us, calling for repair of our relationship, and understanding over children 'who were hard like stone'. What gifts did they of their own choice offer us? Soon we saw women of the clan lead out three small pigs. The men followed with a total of Kina 250 in small denominations of cash. After presenting them to us, they asked that we be understanding about the 'small amount' that they had to give us at the time. The four young culprits were forced to observe the entire transaction. Then, in conclusion, the clan fathers insisted that I take the teenagers to court in order that they 'understand better what they had done wrong'.

That example will always remind me of the true Papua New Guinea we as a family have come to know and appreciate. Even if the children — destined to be heroes — sometimes behave more like villains, something all children know how to be at times, the clan atmosphere will not fail to provide them with



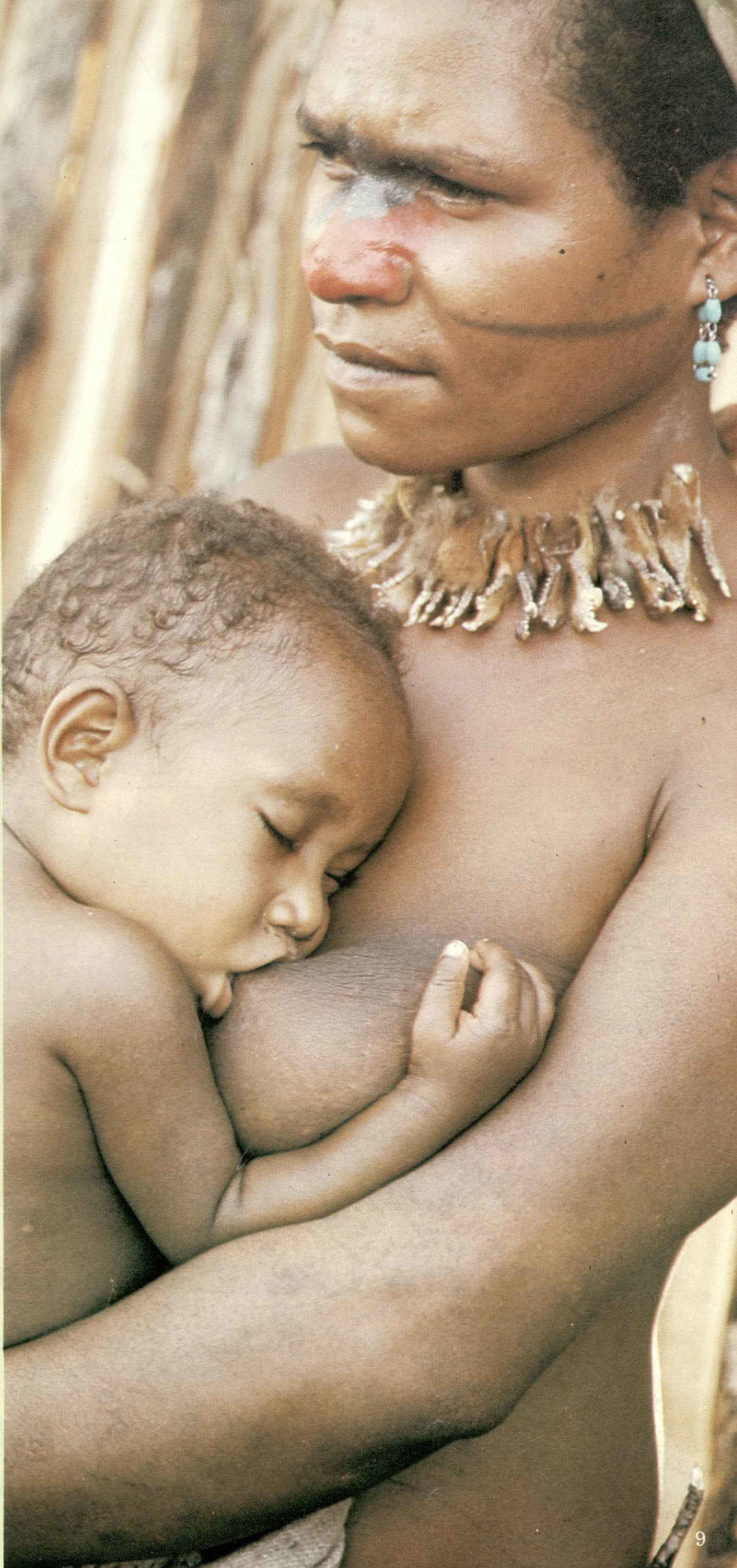
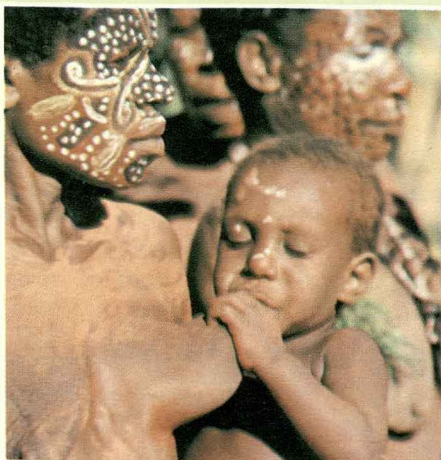


security, support and correction, whatever is needed at the time.

All nations, like people, have their infancy. The 'International Year of the Child' comes to Papua New Guinea at an appropriate time. Not only are her actual children, 700 varieties, distinctive among the world's youth, but her national experience is also noteworthy. Celebrating her fourth birthday on September 16, Papua New Guinea is coming of age in a world of rapid change. Threatened by such cultural homogenisers as trucks, telephones, tourism, and television, she strives to retain her uniqueness and stubborn independence — a reputation making itself known all around the world.

R. Fosdick once said: 'The future belongs to the irresistible power of things that can grow.' Situated just a few degrees south of the equator, the lush tropical nation of Papua New Guinea has never been short of 'things that can grow'. Her flora and fauna know few equals internationally. But it is especially the nation's people which have brought her to prominence. They, especially in the form of the children, provide the irresistible power for growth necessary for the future.

In cultural groups, but now united in a larger family, let us hope that Papua New Guinea's children will continue to be heroes — for themselves and for the world — for a long time to come. — *Dr Paul Brennan, a senior member of the PNG Office of Information, is the author of Let Sleeping Snakes Live.*

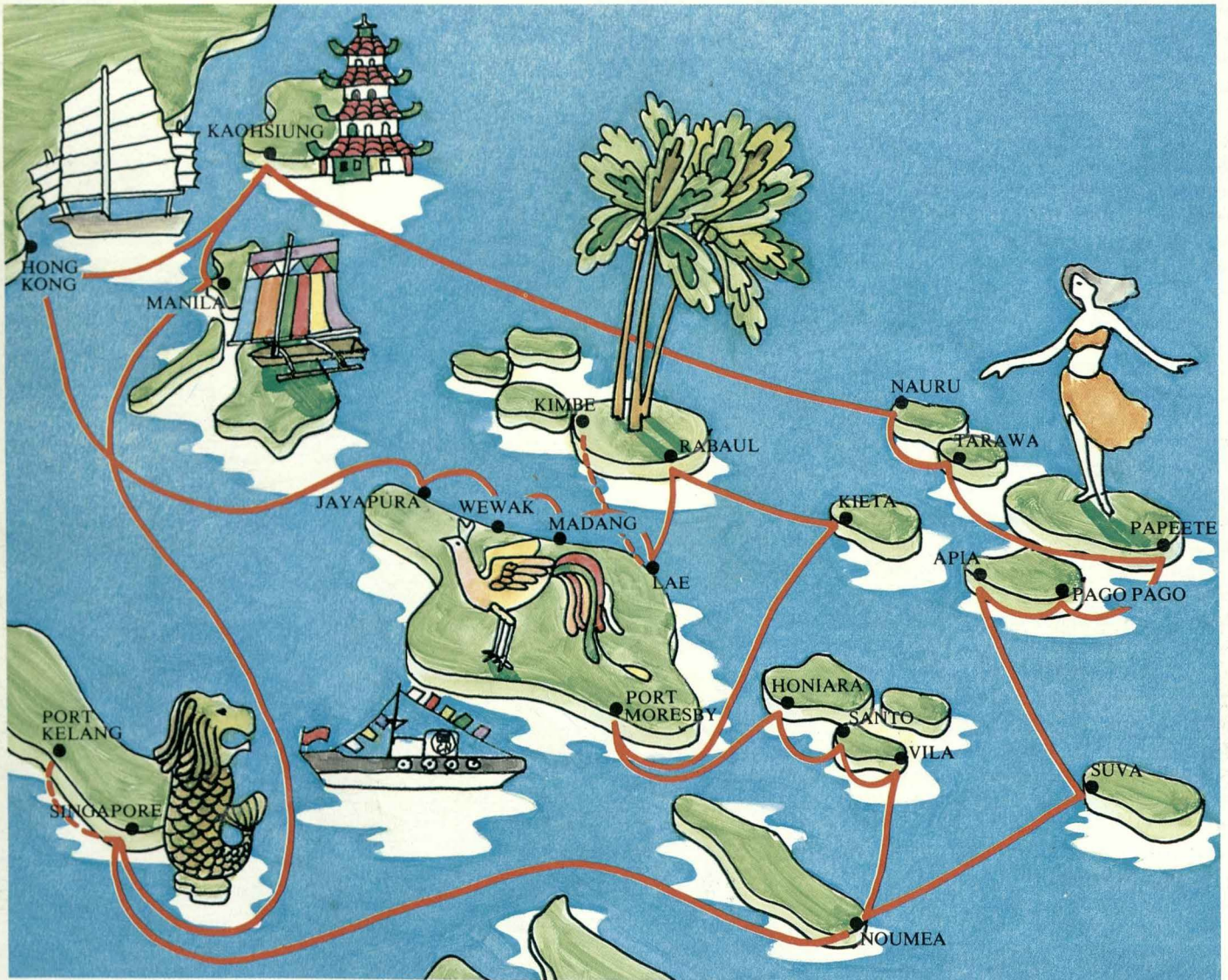




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# RACING-HONG KONG STYLE

In days gone by, racing may have been the sport of kings. But more and more, as monarchies fade into history, racing is a sport of the people. Nowhere is this more evident than in the British colony of Hong Kong. The only monarch ever to make an official visit to a meeting was Queen Elizabeth II in 1975. But the lack of royalty does not deter the hoi polloi. They roll up in their thousands. There's no doubt, horse-racing is the most popular pastime in the colony.

By Saul Lockhart

And those who attend the racing are only the tip of the iceberg. Whether they be demure Chinese matrons, burly construction workers, Hakka farmers, Tanka fishermen, or even newly-arrived Chinese or Vietnamese refugees in transit camps, they're busily placing off course bets (legally and illegally) and listening ear to transistor, as each race is run. In short, twice a week for nine months, a universal gambling fever

hits the colony with a passion rarely matched elsewhere.

The recipient of most of this largesse is the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club (RHKJC), an ancient, non-profit institution which has the legal monopoly on gambling.

The first racing in the colony is said to have been informal match races between British soldiers in the 1840s, the colony having been established in 1841. The RHKJC traces its official history back to the formation of the Hong Kong Jockey





Club (HKJC) in 1884. The 'Royal' came in 1960. Official records go back to around 1850 when a mare, *Kathleen* 'won two long distance races and on the following day won two more'. There is evidence in a newspaper of a race in 1846.

It was not long before the HKJC linked up with the other European settlements on the China coast. In those days a sturdy little animal called a China pony was used, first being raced in Hong Kong in 1856. By the end of the century, the China pony breed dominated racing. China ponies were famous for carrying 'heavy weights long distances, and even steeplechasing'.

Racing began in Happy Valley, on Hong Kong Island, and they're still racing there. (Steeplechasing was at Fanling in the New Territories.) The first buildings were 'bamboo and rattan matsheds', but by 1892 a grandstand in 'cricket pavilion style' was completed. In those days, races were the social event of the

week, giving the ladies an opportunity to show off the latest styles.

Happy Valley was an unpopular place with Europeans because of its marsh which was blamed as a source of malaria. (The Chinese name for Happy Valley is *Wong Nei Chung* - Valley of Yellow Mud.) They preferred to live on the Peak. (It was not until the Japanese occupation in World War Two that the last of the marsh was drained.) Now the Happy Valley course is hemmed in by high rise apartment houses.

Disaster struck the Happy Valley course on 'Derby Day', February 26, 1918, when a 'crowded terrace of matsheds collapsed onto cooking fires'. More than 600 died in the blaze. By 1931, there were two new three-storey grandstands. In 1957, two additional seven storey grandstand blocks were erected with another extension in 1969. The present 16-storey RHKJC building was opened in 1975.

Racing was suspended briefly

during the Japanese occupation but it was resumed on the orders of the occupation government. Quite obviously the supply of horses was interrupted so that eventually even a 'bus horse' - *Kau Loong* - was raced. However, it was not until the end of the occupation that the nadir in Hong Kong racing was reached.

To quote from the official history of the RHKJC: 'Horses were in such short supply that programmes were supplemented by races for wooden horses, made of three-ply, 15½ inches long and 8½ inches high. They galloped down a contraption of wires in front of the grandstand. Winners were penalized by having weights removed so they would slide down the wires more slowly'.

One day in March 1975, with its usual self-confidence, the RHKJC announced racing would commence at a new course at Shatin in the New Territories at '2 pm' on October 7, 1978, the Year of the Horse. But it was not to be. A gelding named



Happy Valley's 1918 'Derby Day' fire; from top: computer display gives start prices; punters arrive at Shatin by train; Happy Valley from the Peak; punters pack the stand at Shatin



Perfect, refusing to enter the starting gate, delayed the opening by three minutes.

The new course is among the most modern in the world. It is built on 41 acres out of a total sea reclamation area of 250 acres near what was the sleepy little fishing village of Shatin. (By 1985, the 'village' will be a new town with an estimated population of a half a million.) For the statistically minded, 16 million tonnes of fill material were used, the reclamation taking only 27 months.

The circumference of the turf track is 1897 metres and it is 33 metres wide. The straight is 1000 metres as a result of a 'chute' leading to the home stretch. A second chute, in the back stretch extends to the 1800 metre start. The all-weather inner track circumference is 1683 metres.

The single grandstand is 220 metres long and covers 16¾ acres. It can hold 33,000. A public enclosure holds 5000. The new course cost







*In the home straight at Shatin*

around Kina 80 million. One of the 'mod cons' is a 30 x 6 metre video matrix screen which provides punters with a close-up start-to-finish view of each race. The screen can show cine-film or videotape, stills from photographs or slides, written characters, figures and the digital input from a computer. Horses are housed in 10 two-storey air conditioned stable blocks with room for 500 horses.

Across the harbour at the 'other' racecourse, the track at Happy Valley is 1550 metres with a straight of 340 metres. With chutes, it can be extended to 2400 metres. The minimum race distance is 940 metres. The grandstand can accommodate 44,000 with room for another 5000 in the infield.

Because of the cramped conditions in Happy Valley, the stables are multi-storied with exercise pits on the roofs. Many apartment dwellers in Happy Valley can sit in their living rooms and watch horses exercising at the stables and on the course. Happy Valley does not have a parade ring.

The RHKJC has a fully computerised operation connecting the two totes and the 100 off-course betting centres (OCB) with the main computer room in the Happy Valley headquarters.

It imports all of its horses from Australia, New Zealand and the

United Kingdom. On arrival they are tagged with the old colonial term 'griffins', which actually was the term given to colonials coming to Hong Kong from India. A maximum of 800 horses can be accommodated at both courses. Horses are graded into seven rated classes with an eighth category for maidens/griffins. Class one races, of course, bring out wads of money).

Turnover in the 1977-78 season, betting and lottery (during the off-season, the RHKJC also runs a twice-weekly lottery) was K520 million. The gross betting turnover for the same racing season was K440 million. The RHKJC is a non-profit organisation and, after expenses and taxes have been paid, proceeds are turned over to various charities and organisations — hospitals, clinics, libraries, schools, old age and juvenile homes, music societies and sports associations. In that season nearly K12 million was handed out. Since the RHKJC started professional racing in 1972, more than K48 million has been given to charity. (The first recorded charity by the RHKJC was in 1918.)

The racing season is from mid-September to mid-June. In the 1978-79 season, 69 meetings were scheduled at both venues. Racing is on Wednesday evenings (21 meetings), Saturday afternoons and

occasionally on Sunday afternoons.

Meetings for the 1979-80 season have been set at 61 with only six on Sundays. Shatin will stage 35 and Happy Valley 26. There is no full weekend of racing. It is either on Saturday or Sunday. The average turnout for a meeting is approximately 34,000 with another 500,000 placing bets at the OCBs dotted around the colony. Before the OCBs were introduced in 1975, it was said that for every dollar bet at Happy Valley, 10 exchanged hands illegally. The OCBs have made a dent in illegal bookmaking, but it is still thought that about four to five dollars are illegally bet for every dollar laid with the RHKJC.

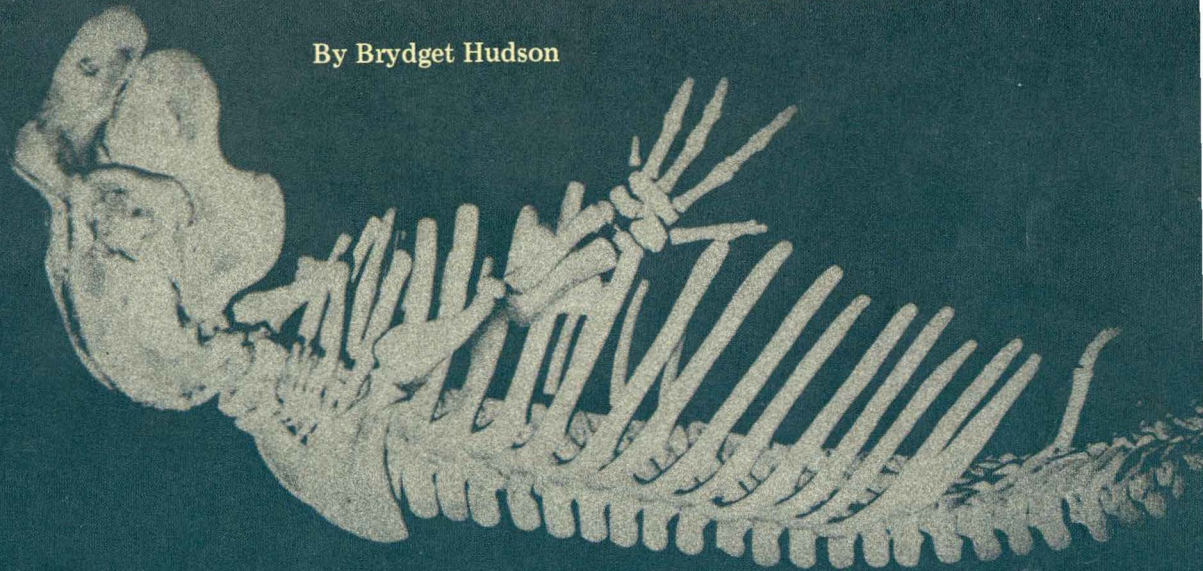
Though the RHKJC is a private club, it is possible for visitors to Hong Kong to purchase badges for a day's racing on presentation of their passports. Check the newspapers for racing dates and present yourself at the RHKJC headquarters in Happy Valley. The Hong Kong Tourist Association also has racing information. — *Saul Lockhart is a Hong Kong-based writer.*





# DUGONGS~ doom or deliverance?

By Brydget Hudson



Dugongs, which belong to the Order Sirenia, named after the sirens of Greek mythology who lured sailors to their doom on the rocks, may themselves be doomed unless urgent measures are taken to protect them. The Wildlife Division in Papua New Guinea is waging a campaign to give these shy, inoffensive animals the protection they deserve.

The Government of Papua New Guinea is committed to the conservation of its natural resources, particularly those of nutritional and cultural importance to the people. The dugong comes within the guidelines of this policy.

The Wildlife Division started a conservation, management and public education programme to find out if the degree of protection afforded the dugong, as a result of its being declared a 'national animal', was sufficient. 'National animal' status protects the animal but allows continued cultural use of it by subsistence communities.

Dugongs are found throughout the coastal waters of Papua New Guinea. A postal survey by the Wildlife Division in 1973-74 established that dugongs are most numerous in the Western Province in southwestern Papua New Guinea where hunting for their meat is more intense than in other parts. Good numbers were indicated also in Manus, East and West Sepik, West New Britain, Morobe and North Solomons Provinces.

Dugongs, which are rarely seen because of their shyness, feed on seagrasses, of which there are more species in Papua New Guinea than in any other country. Seagrasses grow on muddy, sandy sea bottoms away from freshwater influence. The dugong's



big facial disc seems to act as a vacuum cleaner as it eats tracks through the seagrass beds. They feed on the beds at high tide and then retreat to deeper water when the tide ebbs.

To manage dugong resources, it is important to know how many there are, so the Wildlife Division conducts regular aerial surveys of the dugong population. Dugongs are easily recognised from an altitude of 300 metres or less. Their grey-brown bodies are cigar-shaped. They have fluked tails but no dorsal fin like the dolphin.

Dugongs spend a lot of time

resting on the surface but swim in a distinctive 'flat' way whereas dolphins tend to raise themselves out of the water as they swim. At high tide over seagrass beds dugongs can be identified by their muddy feeding trails and by their tails when near the surface. While conducting dugong surveys, counts are also made of other marine animals such as dolphin, turtles, manta rays, sharks and various fish.

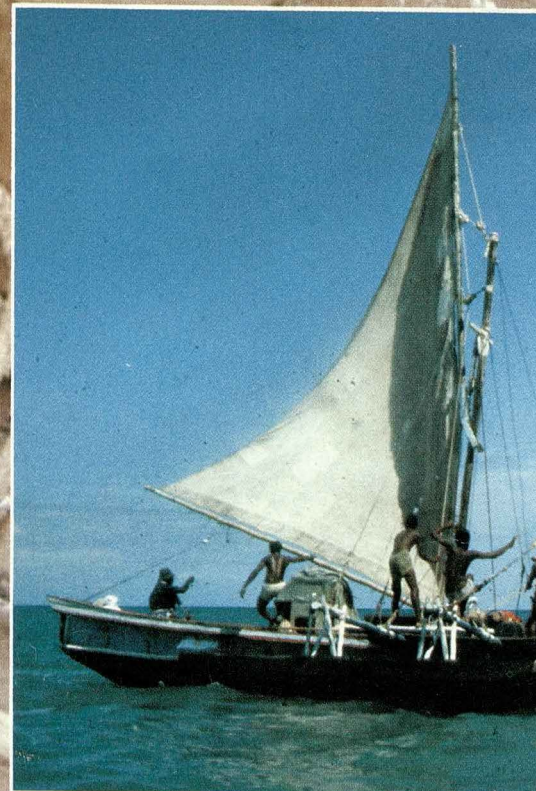
In January this year the dugong project staff tested two tagging techniques with the help of fishermen from the Daru area of Western Province.

'Flag' or 'spaghetti' tags, which have a brightly coloured piece of material which can easily be seen from the air, are harpooned into the back of the dugong. They do not

stay in position for very long but, after intensive tagging, give a good indication of the number of dugongs in the area. This information can then be used in areas in which we have not tagged but in which aerial surveys have been made.

'Tail belt' tags are tied around the tail of a captured dugong. The dugong is held by the tail for less than a minute so that it does not become distressed. The tail belts are brightly coloured and numbered. If they are sighted or returned to the Wildlife Division a small reward is paid. By this means information about the movement of the dugong will be acquired.

It is hoped soon that dugongs will be permanently marked by a branding technique. Another measure will be to mark their teeth.





This will enable measurements of growth and age to be made.

For some time the wildlife Division and Western Province people have been concerned at the number of dugongs being hunted for sale at Daru market. After the 'national animal' declaration in 1976 which automatically banned their sale, the Kiwai people of Western Province asked if they could continue selling dugongs if they undertook a management programme in co-operation with the Wildlife Division. This permission was granted and the Maza Wildlife Management Area has since been set up covering more than 184,000 hectares along the coast of Western Province.

A committee, with members from all dugong-hunting villages, makes and enforces the rule. Under the

rules, mother and baby dugongs must not be hunted, dugongs can only be hunted by traditional harpooning from canoes, and can only be sold at Daru market after they have been taken whole to wildlife officers to inspect, measure and collect biological samples from them.

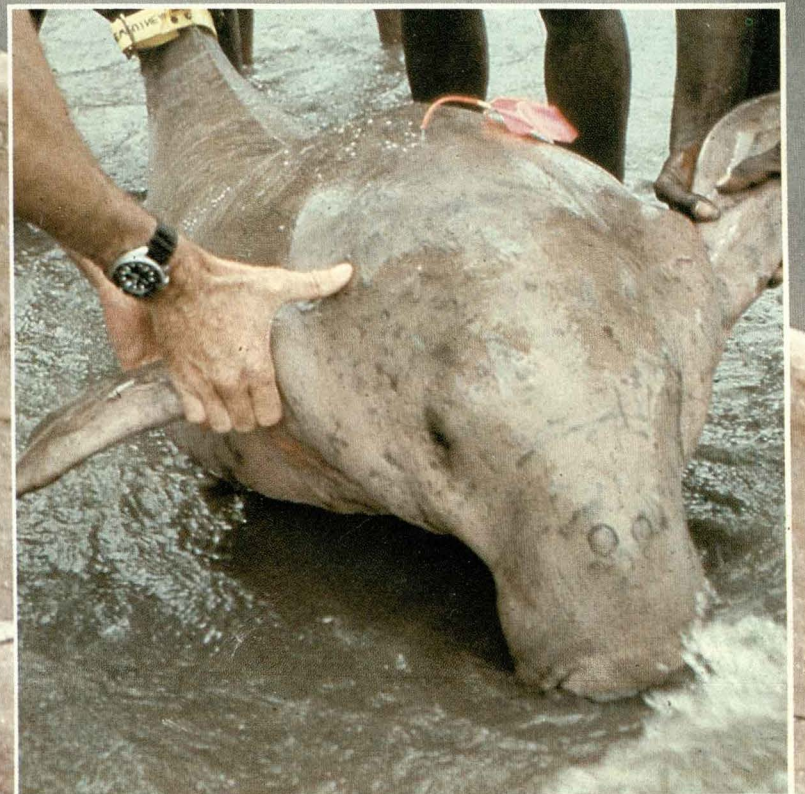
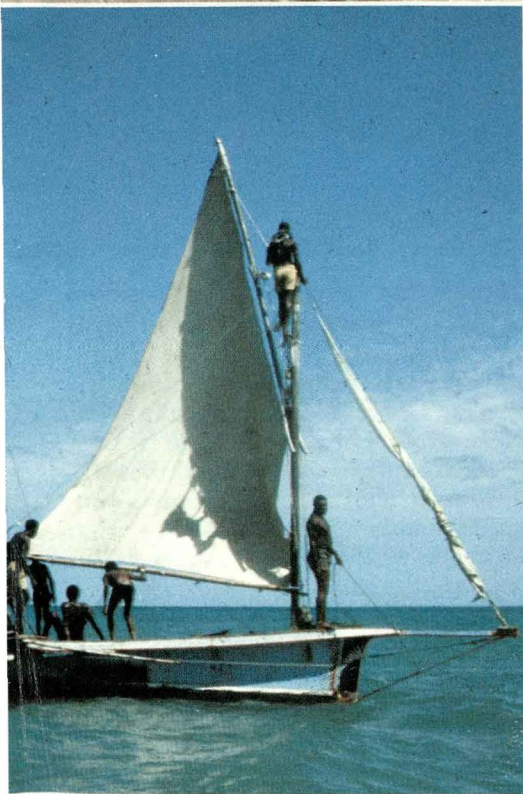
Very little is known about the biology of the dugong so this carcass salvage work is of vital importance. The information gleaned, adding to knowledge of the feeding and reproductive processes and growth of dugongs, enables the management area committee to assess whether its present rules are adequate or in need of amendment.

The dugong project team, with the help of local people, are hoping to establish sanctuaries elsewhere in

Papua New Guinea. At the end of this year the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service will make a film on dugong management and conservation in the Papua New Guinea-Torres Strait-Northern Australia region which will be used, with other educational material such as posters, books and badges to tell people about the need to help the seacow survive. — *Brydget E.T. Hudson is an ecologist with the PNG Wildlife Division of the Department of Lands, Surveys and Environment.*



Subsistence communities are permitted to hunt dugongs but by traditional methods only; below: tagging; below left: searching for dugongs during a survey







# AIR FORCE 264

Story and photography  
by Bruce Adams

*'Moresby Tower, Air Force 264 for Lae, eight persons on board, taxi clearance received Delta — Air Force 264, Moresby Tower, good morning, clear to taxi time one three — Air Force 264 request clearance for take-off.'*

The Caribou's engines burst into power. It roars down Jackson Field, Port Moresby. Ahead is a relatively

routine flight. No promise of the excitement of landing on the floor of an extinct volcano as one of the Caribou trio had done in years gone by. Or of an approach between two hills toward an airstrip with a 650 metre drop at the end of it.

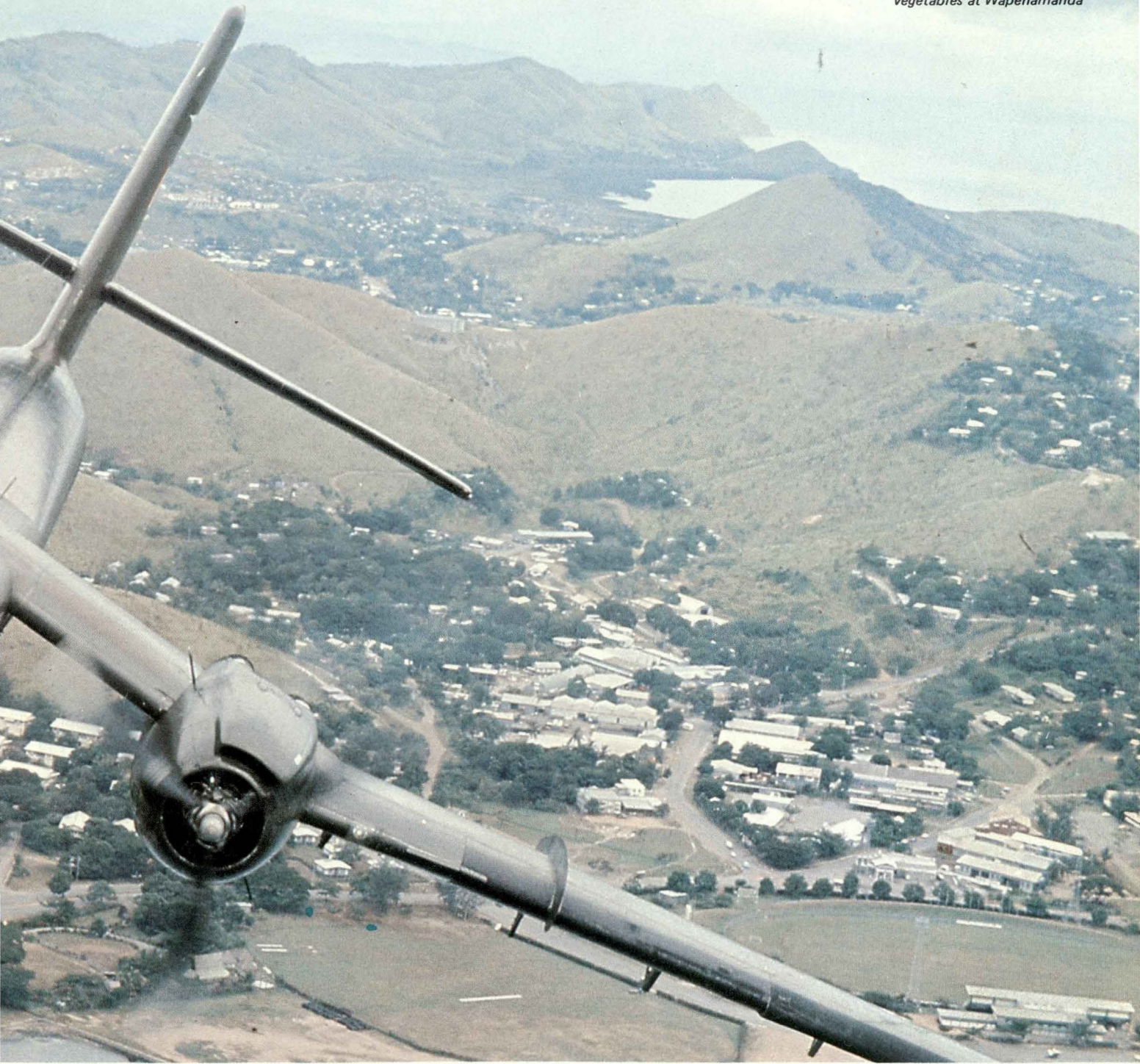
But, as always, there's the challenge of the weather, mercurial in its ability to swing from brilliant sunshine to blinding squall in a second. And the mountain peaks. And inaccurate maps which don't

always tell exactly where those peaks are. It's not the clouds which worry the pilots, one of them remarked. 'It's the rocks in them.'

The Caribou begins its climb in clear sky. The destination is Lae over the ranges to the north. As we approach the mountain slopes the cloud builds up. Mount Yule peaks at 3200 metres. We climb to 3400 metres.

Visibility cuts back. We dodge in and out of cloud. Suddenly pilot Bob Winckel points to the right. Protruding a few feet above bright, white cloud is the black, sinister summit of Mount Yule. Soon we are dropping in to a mountaintop





airstrip, Guari — 550 metres long and 1900 metres above sea level. Only an aircraft with a STOL (short take-off and landing) performance like a Caribou can handle this kind of strip. On take-off there's no turning back — you fly down the valley or into the side of a mountain. Half-an-hour later we look down on Bulolo, centre of the Morobe gold-fields — old dredges rusting and rotting standing out clearly — and then it's on down to Salamaua and then across the Huon Gulf to Lae.

We refuel, take aboard more freight and passengers and head off for Wewak — up the Markham Valley where the river winds crazily across

the flats then over the divide into the Ramu Valley. Along the way, at 200 metres above the valley floor we can see signs of one of the biggest air bases of the Pacific War.

West of the Markham and Ramu valleys, cloud builds up again and we dodge and weave; into a small squall; out into the sunshine; now its heavy rain. The Caribou presses on tirelessly. It is late afternoon when we arrive at Wewak. The aircraft is unloaded and secured for the night, ready for an early start.

It's bright and clear as we lift off the Wewak strip, heading west, just off the coast. Beneath us clear blue ocean; to our left, along the coast,

the scars of war are still clearly visible: old airstrips, pockmarked with bomb craters of yesterday's violence, some wreckage clear to see, other bits and pieces only giving a hint of their presence under the possessive, ever-repossessing jungle. Ninety minutes and Vanimo comes into sight — a neat settlement tucked away inside a bay with jungle-clad hills, all around, sweeping down to the shore. Vanimo is the home of a garrison of the Pacific Islands Regiment.

On the ground pilots and load-master hand-pump fuel while a small ambulance is taken on board, bound for an inland mission hospital. As





soon as it is securely tied down we are taxiing again for take-off. We head toward the mountains. The country is hilly and heavily-timbered. Among the trees are tortuously winding rivers and, between the hills, sunlight glints on hidden swamp.

It is 30 minutes to Amanab where the airstrip is flanked, both sides, by houses. The pilot banks to the left sharply and we land in a cloud of dust. As we come to a standstill the rear loading ramp is dropped. Waiting to meet us are the leader of a military border patrol and an Australian captain from an engineering company based in Port Moresby. They have been on the go for two weeks. In one day they had covered more than 30 km. Not bad going in such rough country. Along the way the patrol had helped local people by repairing buildings, renewing bridges, and providing medical care.

The curious crowd swells, mostly schoolchildren and a handful of European missionaries. And the local district officer. The ambulance is unloaded and driven away by hospital staff.

It's up and away again, this time with the patrol on board, and bound for Vanimo. A good night's sleep, refuelling and the usual mixed bag of cargo. No matter where they fly in Papua New Guinea, Caribous never fly empty.

Ninety minutes and it's Wewak. Cargo off. Cargo on. This time fresh food for military personnel at Wapenamanda over the mountains to the south, not far from Mount Hagen, provincial capital of the Western Highlands. Once over the top we fly just above the floor of a valley into Wapenamanda. As far as the eye can see is a patchwork of vegetable gardens.

Again there's a big reception. Word has gone out that the Caribou

is coming and people have flocked in from surrounding villages to watch the fun. With them they bring their own particular brand of fresh vegetables — lettuce, onions, carrots, potatoes, cabbages.

Our destination again is Wewak but, in typical New Guinea fashion, the fickle weather has turned nasty on us. Loaded to maximum weight, we bounce along, slap bang into a violent tropical storm. The Caribou might just as well be matchwood. Loadmaster Daryl Millar, moves around checking anchor straps. Visibility is nil. Without weather radar, flying is a mix of 'contact', instrument and dead reckoning. The two pilots have their hands full keeping the Caribou on an even keel. We hit a pocket and drop like a stone before pressing forward again.

Pilot Bob Winckel tries to contact Wewak but can't. Water starts to run down inside the fuselage. It's dripping all over the place in the cockpit — on both pilots, on the control panel and near the radio equipment.

We estimate we are about 15 minutes out from Wewak when Bob makes radio contact. The news is not good. It's even worse weather over the coastal town, visibility is almost non-existent and the cloud ceiling is not much more than 30 metres. We are advised to ride out the storm. By the time we get over Wewak there's nothing to be seen. The wipers can't cope. We do circuits. Fuel is fine. Now we are down to less than 200 metres. Bob opens his small side window; the wind and rain beat a tattoo on his face. But he's seen what he wanted to. 'It's there,' he shouts and edges down to 100 metres, heading toward a tiny gap through which the ground can be seen. Eighty metres, 60, 30 — and there it is, the strip. We touch down in a great splay. We can't see

the hangars from the run way.

Within 30 minutes the storm has passed on and the sun sets the steam rising. The Caribou is unloaded and refuelled for its next day's travels. Port Moresby the destination. It's routine flying to the Markham Valley but a small cloud build-up does not augur well for the crossing of the Owen Stanley Range to Port Moresby.

Our fears are confirmed. As we head south from Lae it's pretty black and soon it's all around us. There's no going back. We climb. Fifteen hundred metres, 2000, 3000. The crew don oxygen masks. We push on up toward 4000 metres. Still nothing. We roam around the sky looking for a break. Suddenly there's one beneath us and down we go to about 2500 metres. It's the floor of a valley. Map references are taken as we fly along it. We're about 25 km off course. We can't go back so the new flight plan is to head for Popondetta in Northern Province. A few more gaps present themselves and they are put to good use.

We see a range looming out of the gloom to starboard. We can't go up, it's far too black. So it's down again — and then up again to over 3000 metres. This time we are over the top. The worst is over. The south coast comes into view and we descend to 300 metres, tracking along a small river. There's more rough stuff ahead but Port Moresby radio says the weather there is perfect. Through more squalls and then there's Jackson Field, bathed in late afternoon sun. 'Moresby Tower Air Force 264 from Lae, request clearance to land.' — *Bruce Adams is an Australian Defence Department writer/photographer who has made many visits to Papua New Guinea.*





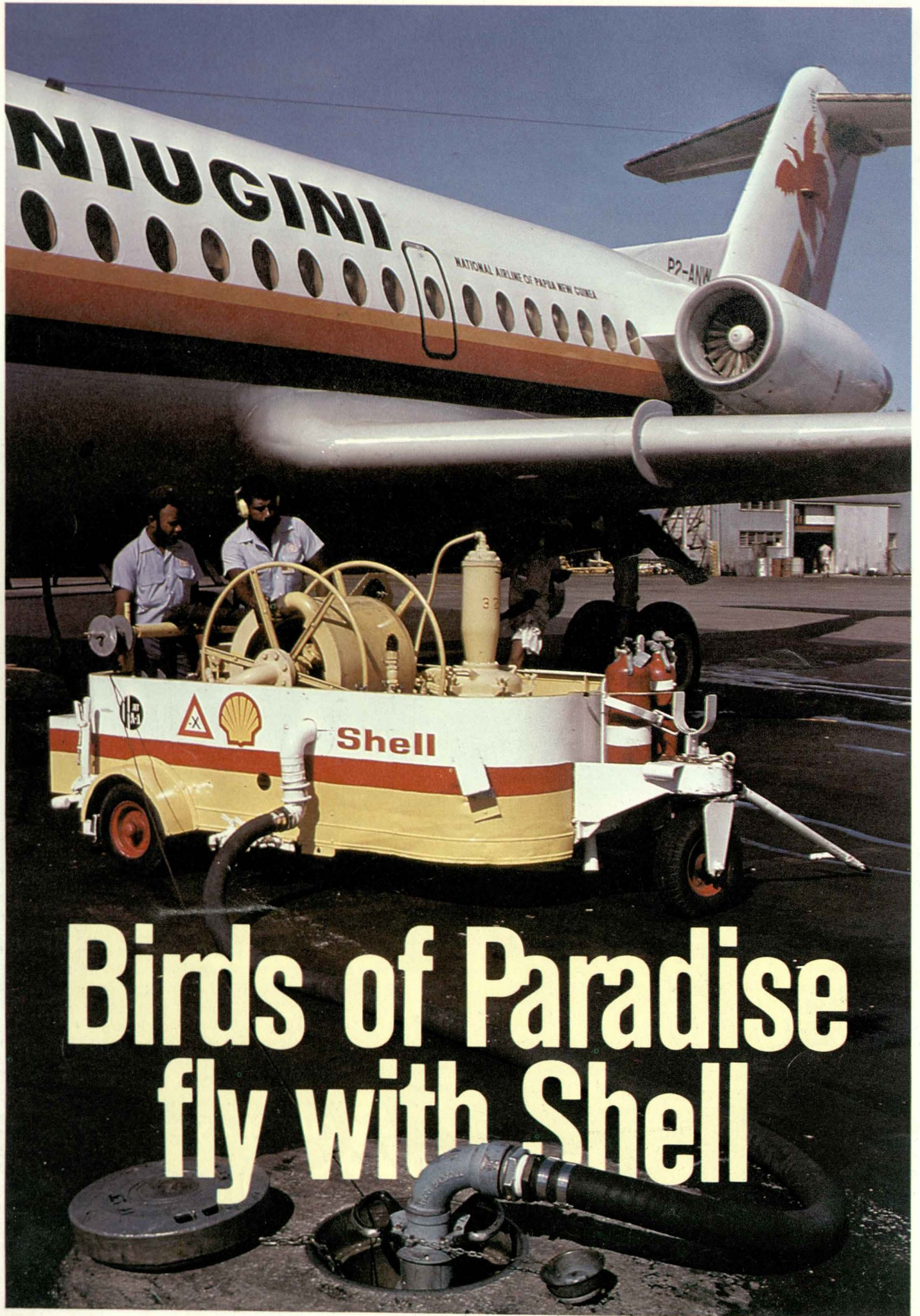
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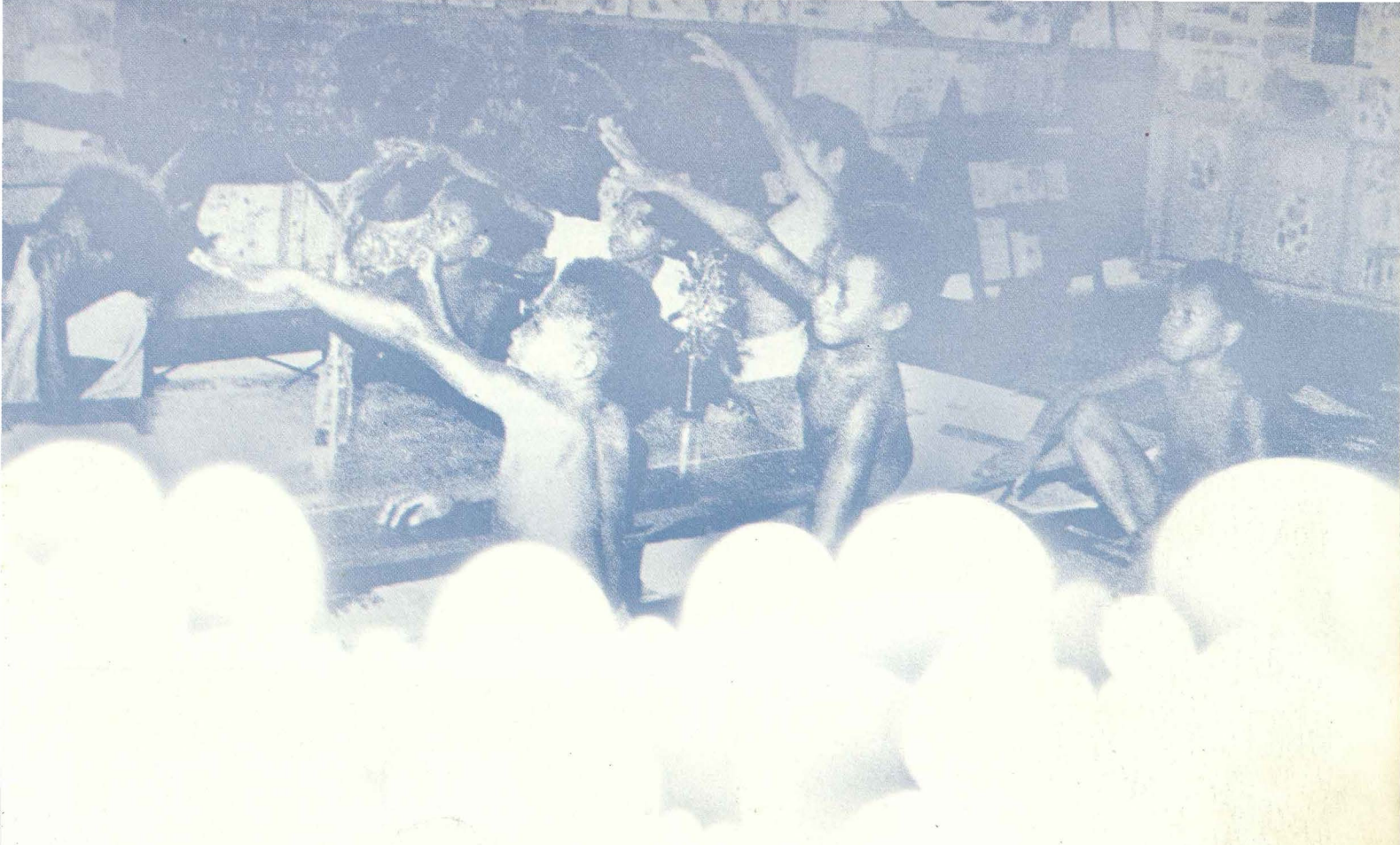
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## The school that fell from the sky

Fred Hargesheimer, blood streaming from a gashed forehead, drifted down toward the jungle-clad mountains of West New Britain. It was February, 1944. His plane had been knocked out of the skies by the Japanese. Below him, as far as the eye could see, the territory was Japanese-controlled.

A lonely, frightening situation for a white face in a Melanesian world. So easy to spot. So hard to hide.

When he picked himself up he found himself, apart from the gash, to be in pretty good shape. No point in hanging around. A compass bearing and he set off, slogging through mud, scrambling up and down ridge, pushing through clinging jungle. Emergency rations soon ran out. At night mosquitoes by the million shared his camp. There was plenty of food around him. But how to choose? It was not easy for a concrete jungle dweller, as he was, to pick the palatable from the poisonous in this alien world.

By Biga Lebasi

For 21 days he pushed on. Loneliness. Despair. Delirium. Nightmares. He prayed. He reached a riverbank, barely knowing he had done so. Was that a group of people? It was. Nakanai tribesman, paddles and spears in their hands, stood silently watching him. Lauo, their leader, broke the silence, greeting Hargesheimer and handing to him a crumpled note. It was from an Australian officer. Lieutenant Hargesheimer broke down and cried.

The Nakanai paddled him downstream and cared for him at the coastal village of Nantambu where he stayed for five months. When Japanese patrols approached, the villagers warned Hargesheimer by sounding conch shells. He would race off to his hideout at the edge of a nearby swamp. 'The children were great,' he recalls. 'Shy but friendly and loyal. They would follow me almost everywhere I

went, covering up for me. They would make sure all my flying boot imprints were erased.'

He began to suffer dizzy spells. His temperature rose. Uncontrolled sweating. Malaria had taken hold. His appetite fell away. But Aida Togogo, who was then breastfeeding, came to the rescue, feeding him with cups of her own milk. He slowly regained his strength. In his delirium, Hargesheimer remembers the voice of 'the faithful Apelis' singing *Onward Christian Soldiers*. 'It was in a language I couldn't understand but the tune was unmistakeable,' he remembers.

When he was ready to move, the villagers took him inland to the hideout of Matt Foley and two other coastwatchers who radioed the US base in Port Moresby for instructions. They were told to get him to the coast at a beach near Nantambu along with other rescued pilots. When a submarine called to take them off New Britain, Fred



Hargesheimer made a secret vow to return.

It was not until 1961 that he found himself in a position to fulfil his vow. With a personal bank loan and the family holiday fund, he crossed the Pacific from his St Paul, Minnesota, home, to personally thank the people who had saved him at great risk to themselves. Ideas of how he could repay his friends flitted in and out of his mind. Suddenly it came to him. What the people of Nantambu

needed was a school — the children and the adults.

As the MV *Managuna*, a government trawler waited for him to make his farewells, Apelis, Lauo and Aida led their people in, not *The Star Spangled Banner*, but *God Save the Queen*. On his way home Fred Hargesheimer was struck with the problem of carrying through with his idea. He reckoned he needed about \$US15,000. But where would the money come from?

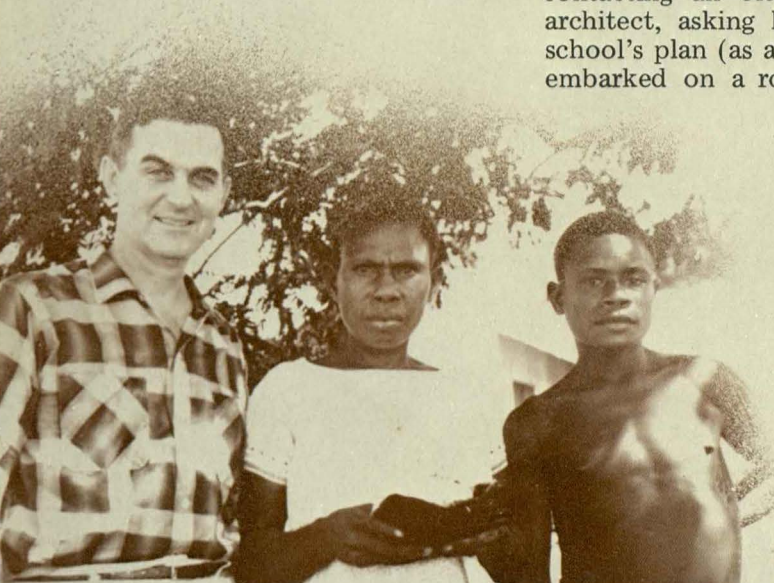
He got the wheels moving by contacting an old schoolmate, an architect, asking him to draw the school's plan (as a favour). Then he embarked on a round of informal

talks, lectures at clubs and to church groups. The money started flowing in. A woman he met on a flight, impressed by his idea, signed a cheque on the spot for \$500. Within 2½ years the money was there — all \$15,000 of it.

In 1964 the Airmen's Memorial School opened its doors at Ewasse, a village not far from Nantambu, with an enrolment of 130 students. Five years later the school had its first Papua New Guinean headmaster, Emil Ngansia, in charge of an all Papua New Guinean staff. It is a self-help school. 'Independence' is its motto.

Fred Hargesheimer was back in Papua New Guinea this year. I first met him in 1970 when I was with PNG's national daily newspaper, the *Post-Courier*. Then he told me his story leading up to the establishment of the school. This time he talked of problems facing youngsters in today's education system:

'One of Papua New Guinea's main social problems is what to do with the two-thirds of the boys and girls completing primary education who cannot find places in high or technical schools and therefore lack sufficient training to find jobs. The present primary school curriculum



Fred Hargesheimer, Aida Togogo, Robert Togogo



Above: Joseph Gabu of Nantambu village found Hargesheimer after his 31 day jungle ordeal; centre: the original school; right: the school that fell from the sky



is aimed at preparing students for high school; it is not developing youngsters for a useful village life. They are forgetting their own traditions and are unskilled in village crafts.

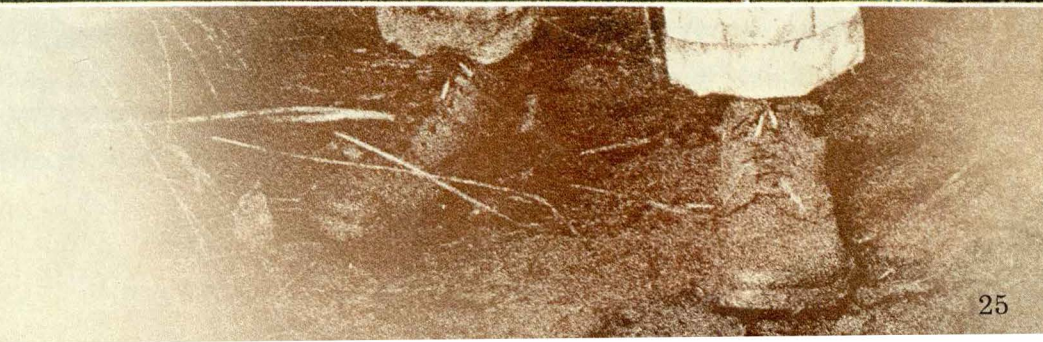
‘Those who do not go on to high school, through no fault of their own, often consider themselves failures. They become alienated from their elders, dissatisfied and a source of potential trouble. Vocational centres have been established but the entering age is 15 whereas most children complete primary education at 12 and 13. In the intervening years students forget much of what they learned and lose the discipline of regular school attendance.

‘The Airmen’s Memorial School is in a unique position to help overcome this problem for the people in the Ewasse area. We have good facilities and resources, but we must find a way to get the people to show us what is needed to prepare the children for a useful village life.’

The school that ‘fell out of the sky’ needs financial support. Donations may be sent to Air Niugini payable to the Airmen’s Memorial School, Ewasse. — *Biga Lebasi is editor of Air Niugini’s staff magazine, Balus Toktok.*



*Hargesheimer before a flight from Laloki near Port Moresby to Rabaul*





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# OCEAN PARK

By Saul Lockhart

A multi-million dollar marineland is not something an intending visitor associates with Hong Kong. The tourist thinks of this British colony more as a gigantic shopping paradise. But it has one of the world's finest and increasing numbers of visitors are turning up with Ocean Park at the top of their list of 'things to do'.

When the idea was first mooted, someone wrote: 'Anything not directly pertaining to shopping could not hope to attract the visitor's time.' He was wrong. And so were other cynics. Ocean Park, now nearly three years open, ranks among not just Hong Kong's but Asia's favourite tourist attractions.

Spread over 180 acres on two levels on the south side of Hong Kong Island between Aberdeen and Deep Water Bay, the US\$150 million park is, as its name implies, a combination park-marineland. The lower site, covering 40 acres, includes Waterfall Garden in which a variety of birdlife lives, in a pleasant, protected environment. In the 'touch-and-feed' area are llamas, goats, kangaroos, lambs and calves and, inevitably, there is an exciting children's play area. Then there is the Garden Theatre, with seating for 800, where sea lions put on daily comic acts. Snoopy, the top sea lion, has an amazing repertoire of balancing tricks. Alternating with the sea lions are bird acts in which trained macaws and cockatoos ride bicycles and push carts. There are three to four performances daily.



Ocean Park's most famous guests were Bao Ling and Bao Li, giant pandas lent for a few months by the Kwangchow Zoo. Not only were they on a special diet of bamboo leaves brought daily from Kwangchow, they were accompanied by their own keeper and veterinarian. A rare pair who made a great hit during their stay.

The lower level also has an activities area where various events such as *kung fu* and *tai chi chuan* (Chinese shadow boxing) and cultural events are staged.

The 'marineland' is on the 140-acre upper level, linked to the lower site by 252 cable cars which can move 5000 people an hour. The six minute journey gives the visitor a panoramic view, not just of Ocean Park but of a sweeping, craggy coastline, islands, the fabled South China Sea, and the superb southern approaches to Hong Kong Harbour. The 1500 metre cable car route rises to a height of 200 metres.

Attractions on the upper level are the Ocean Theatre, Atoll Reef and Wave Cove.

In Ocean Theatre, marine mammals perform up to four shows daily in a 1.5 million litre pool before an amphitheatre which can hold up to 4000 people. The tank was specially designed for performing dolphins which require a pool large and deep enough to build up the speed necessary for high jumps.

In Wave Cove a pneumatic machine builds up a series of waves running along a 100-metre rocky 'coastline' along which live 50 different species of marine birds and animals such as stellar sea lions, fur seals, cormorants and penguins. They can be viewed from three levels, one of which is underwater.

Atoll Reef is, quite simply, the world's largest aquarium, holding two million litres of seawater and



30,000 fish involving about 200 species. Viewing is from four levels. The top view is of a 'tropical atoll' with a shallow reef. The middle level, or fringing reef, is large enough to allow fish to follow their instincts and form schools. The barrier reef is at the bottom, at a depth of more than 6.5 metres. It is here that the larger species — sharks, rays, eels, groupers — live.

To make sure that every fish gets a share, feeding is often done by hand. It's quite a sight — a scuba diver in the depths, surrounded by thousands of fish, including sharks.

By far the largest star is a new arrival — a 500 kilo killer whale named Hoi Wei. She is now being trained to take part in the act at Ocean Theatre. Hoi Wei — which means 'ocean glory' — was a name selected from a colony-wide contest to change the name she was given before arrival — Suzie Wong — which was not considered suitable.

Although only just over three metres now, Hoi Wei will top out at more than five metres and weigh 1000 kilos. Caught off Iceland in the 1977-78 licensed catch, Hoi Wei

was bought for approximately K150,000.

On her way to Hong Kong, Suzie, as she then was, was held in a dolphinarium on the Essex coast in England. In a severe gale on New Year's Eve, her holding tank was damaged. The water leaked out leaving her stranded in not much more than a metre. Ocean Park's handling supervisor, Henry Leung, who was bringing Suzie to the colony, promptly hopped into the freezing tank to calm the frightened whale. In the meantime help was on the way in the form of the fire brigade, which called in a crane to lift Suzie out and take her to temporary quarters at Windsor. Suzie survived to become Hoi Wei.

Ocean Park, not surprisingly, is a Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club (RHKJC) venture. Apart from the Hong Kong Government, it is about the only organisation with funds enough for such a job. The RHKJC took on the project at government urging, the original idea having come 20 years earlier from the colony's then director of fisheries research, one J. Bromhall. His plan





Top: tricks at the bird show;  
centre: Papua New Guinea dance troupe  
make friends at Garden Theatre;  
bottom: diving in Attol Reef

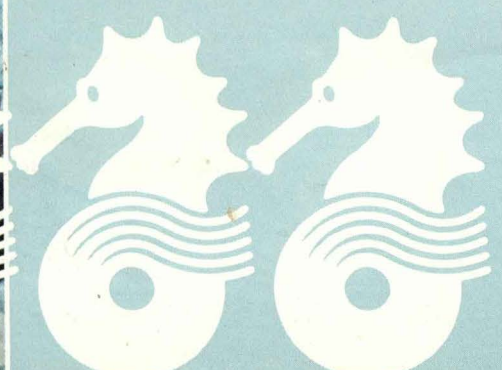


encompassed only eight acres. Major Harry Stanley, former executive director of the Hong Kong Tourist Association, kept the idea alive. He was thinking in terms of an outlay of about US\$3 million on just the lower level. By 1972 when the first designs were produced, the project had expanded to \$6 million. Eventually, with the government throwing in Brick Hill, which now forms the upper level of Ocean Park, the RHKJC agreed to commit about \$50 million to the project.

About two million people visit the park each year nowadays. At high season and on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, up to 25,000 pass through the turnstiles during opening hours — 9 am to dusk.

Several countries have provided exhibits as well as China. Cherry trees were donated by Japan and kangaroos by Australia. Papua New Guinea is providing plants for the above-water area of the Atoll Reef and orchids when suitable houses are built for them later this year. Ocean Park at the moment is negotiating with the PNG Government to establish a small breeding colony of two species of birds of paradise.

Entrance charges to Ocean Park are US\$3.00 for adults and \$1.60 for children for access to all areas; \$1.00 for adults and 40 cents for children to the lower level only. The park is easily accessible by bus or taxi. Obviously, weather conditions affect outdoor performances and, just because it's raining in Kowloon it doesn't mean it's doing the same at Ocean Park. Check by calling H-532244 for information about the weather, special events, times of shows, and, in case there's a rush on, whether you can get in.





# Travelodge Port Moresby



Port Moresby, the Nation's bustling capital, now boasts a spectacular new Travelodge tri-arc hotel on a superb hillside location in the middle of the city. This 180 room property, now open for business, offers guests panoramic views of the magnificent



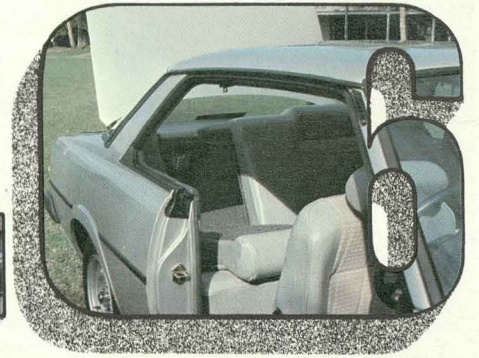
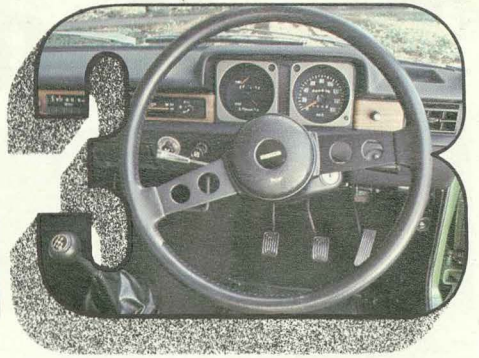
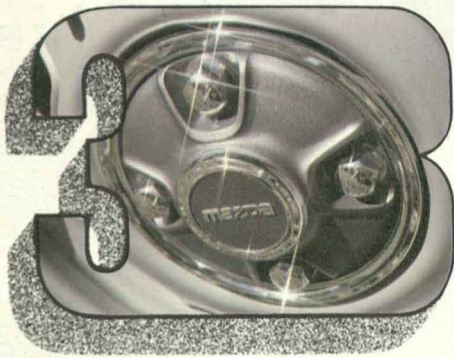
harbour and ocean together with a full range of facilities including convention rooms. Travelodge offers the first truly international standard hotel in this exciting new nation to extend the Travelodge chain of hotels across the South Pacific.

For further information write to the general manager, Travelodge, PO Box 3661, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Phone: 212266 Telex: NE22248

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## Widows of Mendi

By Sydney Palmer

My 'boss' was a worldwide food company. I was 'controlled' from Sydney. My 'brief' was to promote the company's products. My 'beat' was Papua New Guinea, particularly those areas where newspapers rarely if ever penetrate.

With my two Papua New Guinean companions I roamed hither and yon. There was no selling involved. Just the three of us extolling the virtues of our wares. Sometimes we

would venture into villages, strange and wonderfully new to our eyes, where even pidgin was not common — and their amazement at our presence and ours at theirs resulted in scenes of great welcome.

A village councillor would come to break down the language barrier. We would tell him of the virtues of our goods. He would pass them on in *plestok* — all done by that marvellous piece of equipment known as

the public address system. The councillor would swell with pride at the importance of his role; the villagers would gaze raptly at his delivery.

There were no dull days on that trip, no frustrations. I was, in effect, a paid tourist, allowed to pick and choose my next destination. There were so many new and remarkable places. Such a place was Mendi.

The road from Mt Hagen in Papua





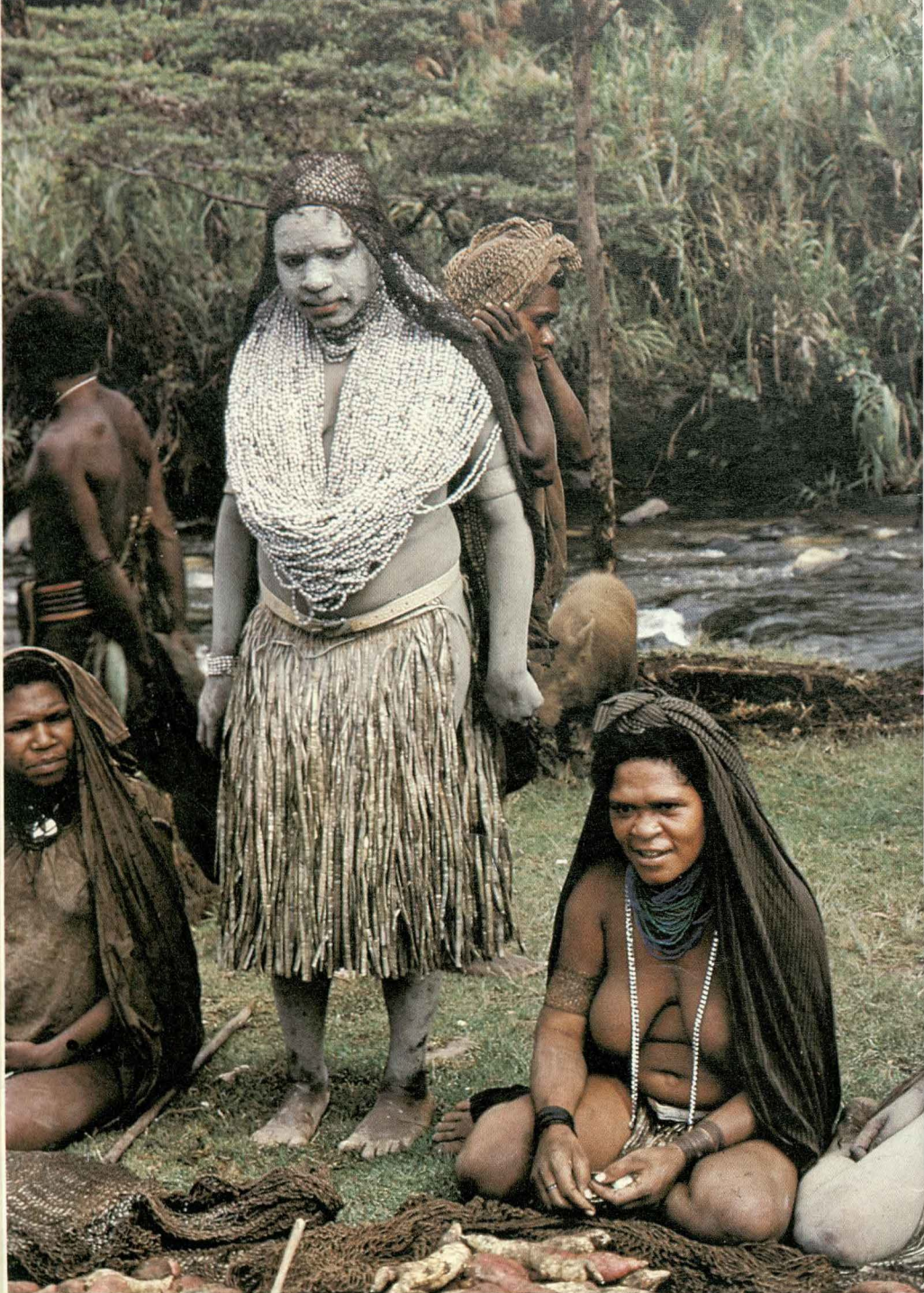
Above: cheerful widow samples Milo;  
right: widows rest near a creek

New Guinea's Western Highlands Province, over the mountains, past the imposing Mount Giluwe, to the Mendi Valley in the neighbouring Southern Highlands, is not the best in the country. But the demanding drive is rewarded with a spectacular vista — and a very complete provincial headquarters town with all facilities necessary for a comfortable stay.

It was at the market place, just a little way over the Mendi River bridge, that I met the greyish-white widows of Mendi. In stark contrast to their dark sisters, they are an incredible, almost frightening, sight. Their faces are thickly covered with a very light, almost white, clay. This is applied when they are bereaved and is worn for some six months. The clay, of course, will break up and it is renewed at a river or a creek.

On one occasion I had the unusual experience of seeing a widow come down to the river. She was quite aware of my presence. With extreme precision and neatness, she laid a piece of clay wrapped in plastic on the ground. She removed her heavy necklace of Job's beads (more generally known as Job's tears) and entered the water clad in bead skirt made of native beans and not at all like her whitish bead necklace. She was quite meticulous in her toilet. There was much scrubbing of the body with a fibre sisal pad. Then the clay was taken into the water and kneaded on a flat rock, with the addition of a little water, into a thick paste.

Completely unconcerned — as if



unaware of her audience — she began to renew her body and face clay. The body is only lightly treated but the face is daubed. The facial muscles can be controlled and just a gentle smile will not disturb the clay pack.

However, even grief must eventually give way to happiness and these ladies of Mendi, after long mourning periods, begin to smile again. At first privately. Then more openly. But, for the viewer, the effect is not a happy one; it can be quite unnerving to see the white clay crack and the dark skin beneath show through. Indeed, the smile becomes grotesque.

During one of our promotions a widow came to our table and made a hot drink in front of her beaming

sisters. It turned out to be a jolly event. The bead necklaces they wear are quite heavy, sometimes weighing as much as 12 kilograms. Perhaps it was to lighten her burden that she handed me a few strands. But I believe she simply wished me to have a memento of my meeting with the widows of Mendi. — Sydney Palmer is a resident of Papua New Guinea and has travelled widely throughout the country.





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