paradise

No. 20
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NATIONWIDE in Papua New Guinea

paradise

No. 20 November 1979

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IN THIS ISSUE

Hello and welcome

There's a special delight in seeing Papua New Guinea through the eyes of a visitor from a completely different cultural background. When Japanese photo-journalist Midori Noguchi arrived she had no idea what to expect. (That's her pictured above with friends on the Trobriand Islands). The report of her journey which took her well off the beaten track, is featured in this issue.

Relics from World War Two, scattered throughout the mainland and islands, appear to have a magnetic force which attracts veterans from all sides involved in the conflict. Some are quickly being claimed by the jungle, such as Admiral Yamamoto's Betty bomber on Bougainville Island, visited recently by Australian photographer Bruce Adams. His trek into the jungle to see it starts on page 23.

And for our American passengers, Bryan McCook's account of Richard Bong's epic in Papua New Guinea, should bring back memories for some.

Even snails are beautiful in our country, and fascinating according to Brian Parkinson (page 29). A glimpse of our rugged mountains and a tour of the Philippines Island of Luzon complete this issue of *Paradise*, which I trust you will enjoy.

G.S. Fallscheer
General Manager

PHOTO CREDITS

Bruce Adams
Brian Coates
Tom Cooke
Roy D. McKay
Midori Noguchi
Brian Parkinson
Gordon Tait

COVER

Paradise designer Tom Cooke took the cover photo from a helicopter abeam Mt. Olga near Mount Hagen in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea. The Sepik Wahgi Range dominates the skyline

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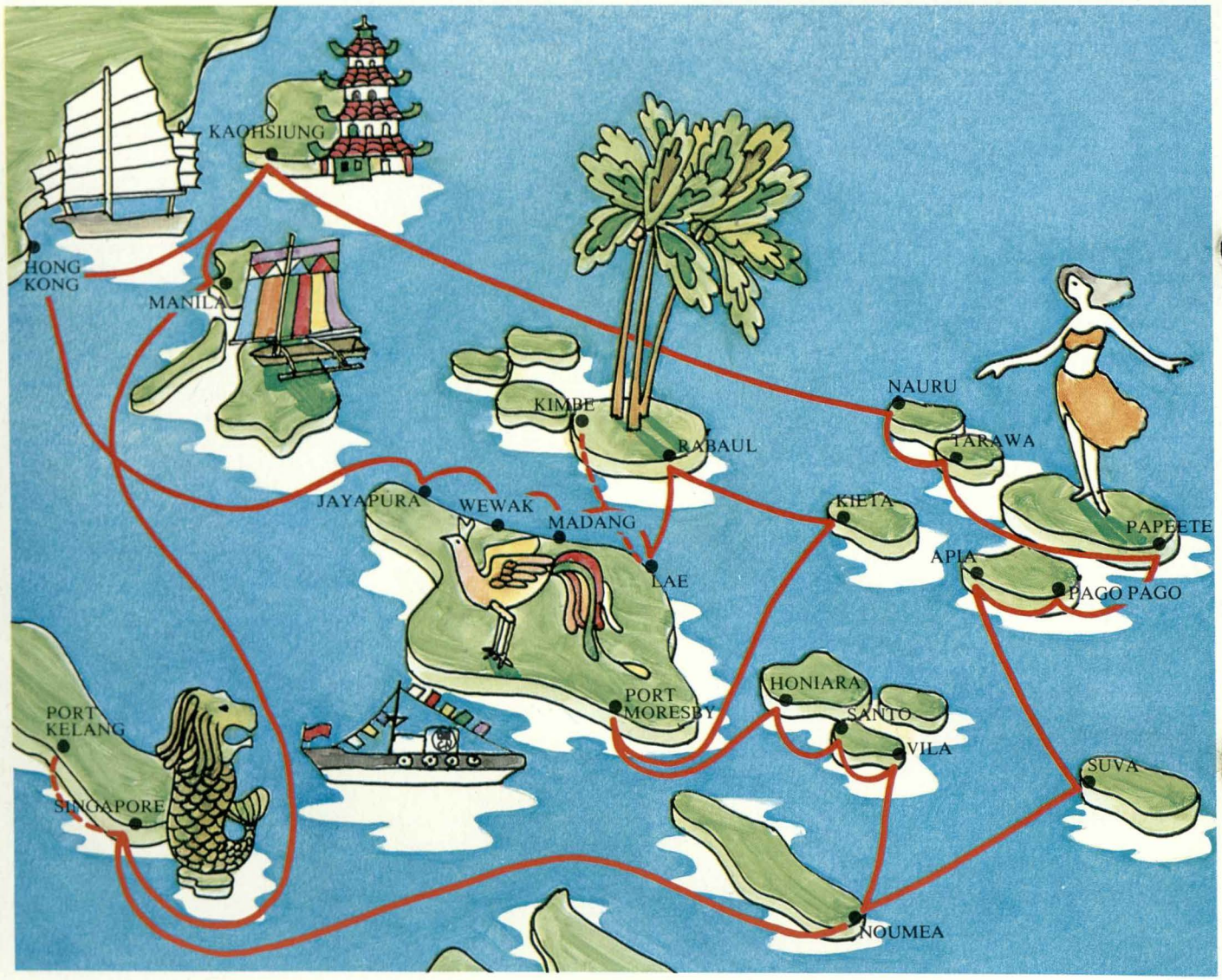

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LUZON

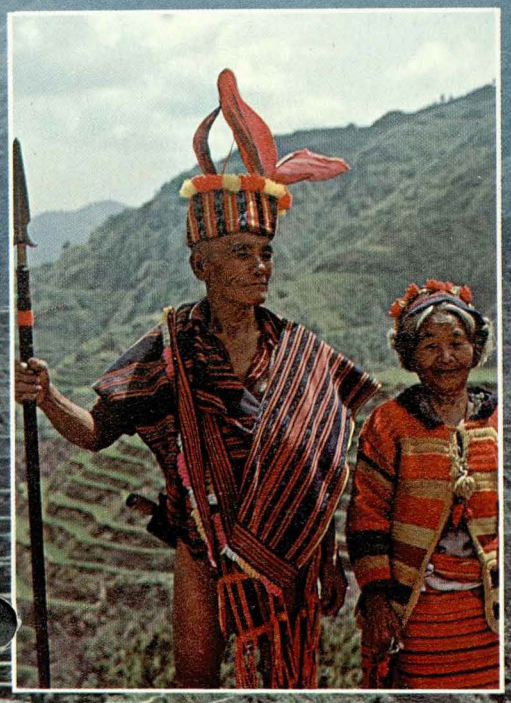
Story and Photography by Brian Coates

It is almost impossible to discover what makes a country tick until the atmosphere of its rural areas has been tasted. The Philippines is like this.

The nation's largest city, Manila, is a holiday all on its own, but to prove our point we took a leisurely drive from Manila to Legaspi in southern Luzon. It's bitumen all the way which means the two or three day drive takes little or no toll of a holidaymaker's stamina.

The road rolls along on flat or undulating land, used mostly for growing rice. The occasional hilly spots are planted with coconuts and on a couple of pieces of higher ground we found remnant forest, home for hornbills and soaring honey buzzards. These two areas are the Quezon and Bicol national parks. Highly acceptable resting places along the road are to be found at Lucena and Naga.

As we ambled along we started to see in that rural environment the characteristics which combine to



Centuries old rice terraces at Banaue, northern Luzon; inset: *proud* Igorot *couple dress in the same fashion as their ancestors*

make up the Filipino personality. The people are friendly and attractive. They work hard on their land. They play hard. Their children and their Christian faith are the centre-posts of their lives.

At different places along the way it is possible to see all stages of rice growing. The *carabao*, domestic water buffalo — a gentle, obedient beast to which the people of Asia owe so much — patiently ploughs the paddy. Then come the planting, harvesting and threshing — all by hand.

After seeing how much toil goes into producing one grain of rice it did not seem right to us that well-laden trucks should go skimming by, rice spilling out through their ill-fitting tailboards.

Way out in the open countryside the driving is easy but in and around towns and villages the roads are clotted with gaily-coloured jeepneys and tricycles, the most common form of public transport. Now and then we saw fascinating pedlars' wagons laden with wares and towed by a Brahman bullock. And, all around, quite unperturbed by man, is a wide variety of birdlife — cattle egrets, purple herons, and sandpipers in the ricefields; emerald doves, small parrots, woodpeckers and many others in the forest.

As we neared Legaspi, the cone of Mayon Volcano appeared over the horizon. I have never yet seen a photograph which does justice to that majestic sight. Mayon rises 2422 metres in near-perfect symmetry. It dominates the countryside for many miles around. Clouds and white vapour swirl about its summit. In places the land is strewn with lava boulders which indicate that this mountain is very much alive and to be respected. Mayon is not something you can keep your gaze away from for long.

There's plenty to see at Legaspi — hot springs, caves, the ruins of Cagsawa church, destroyed by Mayon in 1814, and its replacement, built at a safer distance at Daraga. We found what we felt to be the most beautiful people in the Philippines by taking a trip along the by-roads of southern Bicol.

Another trip to make out of Manila is along the northern highway to the province of Nueva Viscaya. At the town of Bagabag the road branches off at Banaue. Surfacing of this road is now almost complete and it is pleasant driving on the gradual ascent to mountain country. The people here are Igorots, most of whom have changed their lifestyle hardly at all in many generations. Igorot dress is colourful and distinctive. Considering that most Filipinos wear Western dress, it is something of a surprise to meet someone attired in little more than a G-string.

Mayon volcano and the ruins of Cagsawa church which it destroyed during an eruption in 1814; inset: emerald dove

Interior of Tayabas church; inset: *pedlar's wagon towed by a Brahman bullock*

We are now in the land of ancient rice terraces — carved from the mountainsides more than 2000 years ago. The guide books suggest it is a treacherous trek to get to these wonders of man's industry. It's not true now, even if it were before. The road is good. Whole valleys and mountainsides have been intricately, laboriously, carved by hand over many centuries. The terraces are still producing.

To fully appreciate their beauty and the magnificence of the engineering which has gone into the terraces, it is important to view them from as many angles as you have time to. A very narrow road winds out from Banaue's marketplace across the valley and through the terraces. It's well worth taking for a closer look.

A word of advice. Good accommodation is limited in Banaue. To be on the safe side, book ahead with the state-owned Banaue Hotel and Youth Hostel. Otherwise you might find yourself in candlelight in a schoolhouse. But it would still be fun. — *Brian Coates, author of* Birds in Papua New Guinea, *and his Filipina wife Del, visited the Philippines recently.*

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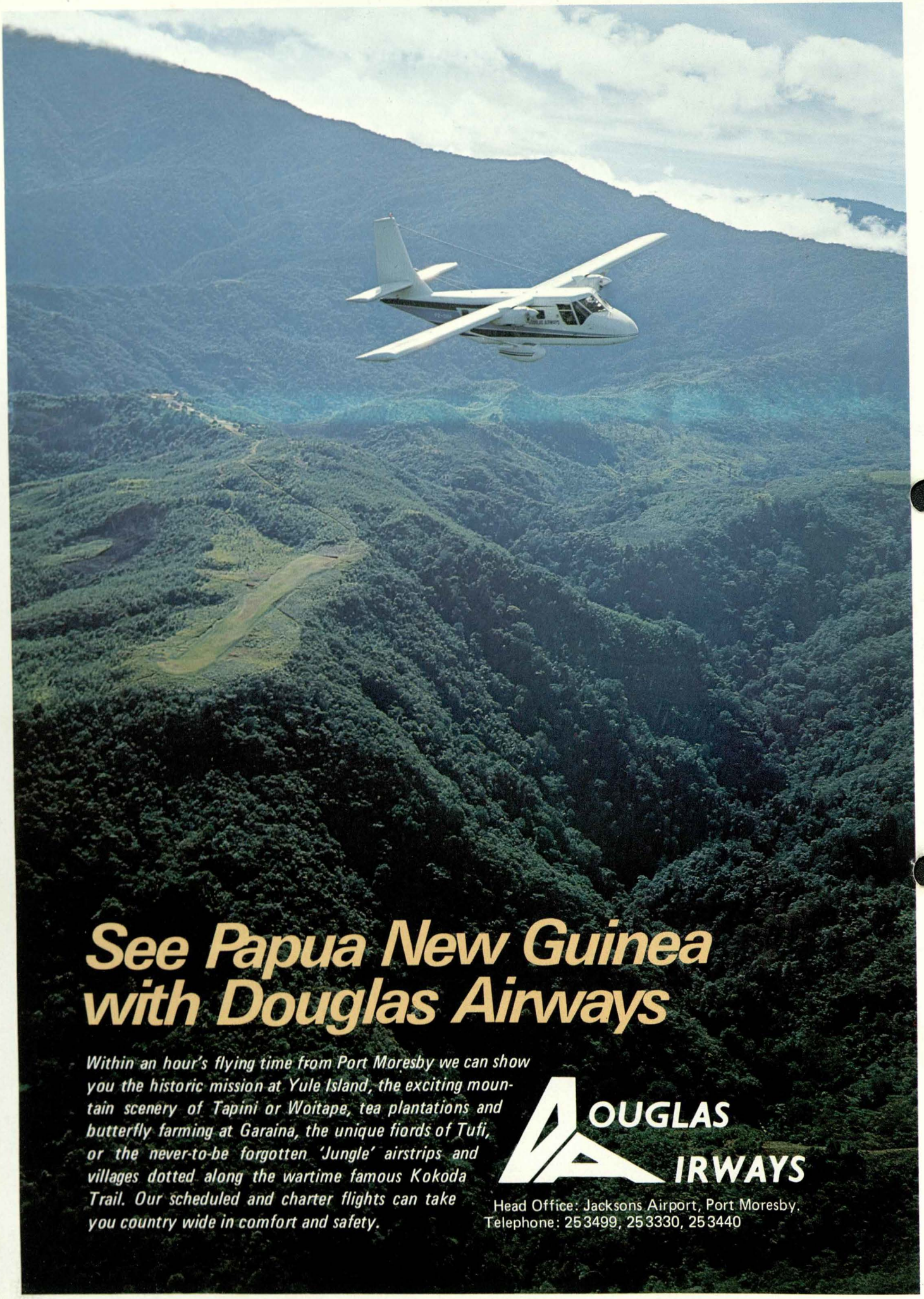

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Midori's Walkabout

Midori Noguchi is a young Japanese photo-journalist who came to Papua New Guinea, not really knowing what to expect. She tells of her travels in her own words (adjusted only where her meaning was not clear). There is a special charm in seeing Papua New Guinea through the eyes of a foreign visitor not writing in her native tongue.

Papua New Guinea for me began in Kagoshima. At the top of the ramp, the birds of paradise were waiting for passengers, spreading their colourful feathers on the light dresses of the stewardesses. Inside, countless Sepik masks on the walls turned their eyes this way and that — and crimson flowers were burning on the seats.

Surrounded by tropical vigour, I looked outside . . . to find it all blue down to the bottom. 'Is this blue of the sea, or of the sky?' I wondered while drinking an extra delicious bottle of Niugini beer. The blue partly begins to turn into gold — the sunset of the South Pacific Ocean was just coming. It seemed that my eyelids fell faster than the sun. Next time I looked outside there was nothing but darkness.

Port Moresby — a new country. Papua New Guinea. Primitive life. Savage culture. Cannibalistic people. 'How can you travel by yourself alone in such a country?' my friends worried before my departure. Although I laughed their words away my baggage was in fact swelling with lots of medicine and 'tributes to big men'. Tributes included a small crocodile toy made of rubber, which I heard they worship as a totem, signpens for their make-up, cheap lighters, cheap ballpoint pens and so on . . . They should guarantee the safety of my trip, I thought.

As soon as I arrived at Boroko — what you call downtown Port

Above: *painting on the ceiling of a* haus tambaran *at Angoram on the Sepik River;* **inset:** *coral reefs and lagoons of the Trobriand Islands*

Moresby — I realised that such tributes wouldn't work any more than primitive magic. The town was so different from what I had expected. There were no houses about to fall down as is usually the case with developing countries, no great noise, no odours, no beggars, no flies . . . There was nothing like that at all.

Instead, at the centre of the quiet town there was a huge supermarket like a gymnasium and around it were many lovely small shops painted with blue, yellow or red. Cars are new and people wear modern dresses . . . Inside a camera shop they have almost every kind of film which meant I could easily get films I needed for my trip. The price is just a little higher than in Japan. Signpens and ballpoint pens, which I brought here in high spirits, were piled up among the stationeries.

Not only such 'newborn' things but other things in this old country also surprised me. When I went to the museum I stopped in front of a big grass-woven doll used in traditional festivals. It seemed like something I saw before. And I almost shouted out when I recognised what it was . . . it was like strangely made up actresses in a Fellini film.

To my pleasure, as I walked along the streets, I could feel Picassos and other artists in the wall paintings on iron fences.

Lae — a green city. It's more than 40 kilometres from the Nadzab airstrip to Lae. Our car ran through the jungle curtains (falling) on the grass carpet. Thanks to the abundant rainfall and warm weather, all the trees and grasses stretch straight upward to the sky. Once I saw plants like Japanese *susuki* (pampas grass). They were almost three times as tall as those in Japan. People walking beside them looked like dwarves.

During World War II the Japanese Army landed near Lae and a severe battle took place. On the seashore behind Wagen village (near Lae) the waves were washing a Japanese wrecked ship. It has almost eroded away and Papua New Guinean children were having fun jumping on and off it. If there weren't a grave post with Japanese characters stuck in the sands nobody would recognise it. Nearby was a field once used by the Japanese Air Force and now it is used for model planes. Around the field spread the jungles, and it was glimmering with sunshine. I wondered if the army pilots had seen this beautiful scenery as they flew off to fight.

Goroka, Mount Hagen. The variety of showy dresses of the Highland people attract the traveller's eyes. Goroka and Mount Hagen are big trading places where people sell coffee (beans) and vegetables . . . Loinleaves-style-men are not rare here and women with a colourful cloth just winding her body, either. To see a dangling loinrope (dress) under the cloth is really amusing. A young girl putting on a gorgeous woollen yarn necklace, a young fellow wearing a big net like a cloak, an old man with feathered crown . . . they looked very particular about their dress. Even an army hat, which I wonder how he obtained, is not worn as it is (should be). He would decorate it (with his) favourite sea shells all around.

When I hold my camera ready to take pictures, people shy away holding their hands up to their mouth, the same way Japanese children or young girls do. I felt like laughing to find that gesture also in a shaggy-bearded man. I had heard that Highlanders are not friendly because people in different mountains had a long history of fighting each other. That was not the impression I had of them. I had an interesting experience on a PMV (public motor vehicle) truck.

I took a snap shot of the passengers and as soon as I did this they held out their hands to me. They weren't requesting a tip as I first thought, but they were saying 'Let's shake hands. We are friends.'

To talk about being friendly, I cannot forget the birds in Baiyer River, a bird sanctuary near Mount Hagen. The birds in the cages were chirping at us as they followed us (along the netting). The bird of paradise showed us a dance, opening and folding his feathers, and twirled around gracefully on a perch in answer to our waving hands. It is said that the paradise dance is an appeal to the female birds. Whatever it is, so long as it's waving, the bird would mistake it for her lover, so it seemed.

Besides the birds of paradise I met a lot of fascinating birds: a cassowary which made a sound like a rumbling of the ground when he shook his body; a facetious bird bent his head back to see us; a strange bird hooded like a monk and made up like a prostitute; and

many, many others.

Karawari — earth-size zone. *Balus*, an 'aircraft' in pidgin English, means a pigeon in a native language, a appropriate expression indeed. A white aircraft in the field really looks like a small bird when it is toddling and shaking its wings to take off. The aircraft I took from Mount Hagen was such a small one. Flying over the 'broccóli' forest, looking down the 'milk tea' lakes, I found out a traditionally magnificent village. It was Karawari Lodge where I was going to stay for a few days.

The scenery from the lodge is the most fantastic one I've ever seen. Just down (from) the lodge a flat jungle was spreading to the horizon, which is almost depicting the roundness of the earth. In the evening the sun came down slowly and disappeared. White streaks of smok of slash-and-burn gardening wen up into the darkening sky.

In the midst of such a grand nature, life in the lodge was quite civilised. Fans were turning under a thatched roof, the hot water flowed from the super-modernised solar heater, the meals were served in full course in a *haus tambaran* (spirit house) dining room. And speedy motor boats were waiting for us at a small wharf.

Just across the river a man with a feather crown was cutting sago with an axe and straw-skirted women were washing and cooking it. At a village upstream men in traditional dresses played bamboo flutes as they made steps to and fro.

Further on, after boating down, and down a branch stream of a branch of a branch of a branch (of the river) we arrived at a huge old

village. There a naked boy was just being given an initiation. Men, fully decorated with feathers, sea shells, cuscus furs, leaves and hibiscus, gathered in somewhat solemn atmosphere and took the boy into a *haus tambaran*. Inside was so dark that we could barely see the ceremony . . . They lined up in two files and began to stamp their feet on the floor, shouting something loudly. Then two men laid the boy (down) and bent (over him) to cut the skin on his back. The groan of the boy crept through silence. We became breathless and watched each other as if we have been the only modern people there, travelling (through) primitive ages in a time machine.

If some things had not happened, that is how I would have reported it. When I took a close-up photograph of a man in elaborate dress he asked me to send him his picture in fluent English. Knowing I had nothing to write one, he ran into a wooden shack and brought back a notebook and a ballpoint pen. He began to

Above: *Proud of her skill a woman of Bili Bil village near Madang makes pottery by hand;* **inset:** *modern musicians practice at the National Arts School*

Above: *artifact for sale in Port Moresby;* **right:** *women's dresses on display at Mount Hagen market*

write his address with ease . . . A man in a canoe lighted his cigarette with a lighter . . . A young woman swimming in the river was wearing bikini . . . and, gliding down the green Sepik River, as the wind stroked us gently by, I wondered who could believe that such a grand earth-size theatre existed.

Madang — the tropical light. Light is flooding everywhere at Madang . . . The sky so blue that (it seems) bottles of ink exploded there. The sea beaming with multi-coloured ripples. And the palm trees flashing back the sunshine, dropping down black flickers on the asphalt road. Driving through this gay feast of light I felt the moment to be almost a blessing.

The theme music of the light was the Melanesian music I could hear in the gardens of Madang Hotel. A group of young boys and girls were playing instruments and were singing harmoniously. They were wearing crown made of interwoven grass and a thin blade of grass came out like an antenna of an insect. A king of insects, a very young boy, was mounting a big bamboo drum and hitting it rhythmically with rubber sandals. When I sat beside them and hold my ears close up, the deep, marvellous sound of various scales roaded into my light body.

Trobriand — village life. My memory of the Trobriand Islands is the memory of taro and yam potatoes. I ate them at every meal and so do the villagers all day long. Usually they just boil them without any seasonings, but on some occasions they show us how skilful cooks they are.

I and some friends from Port Moresby happened to be served a very nice dish of them when we visited an old village. They were making preparations for a big dinner. Women hit the taros with a mallet, made them flat and folded them into three, French crepe-like shapes. Then an old man carried them to a pot in which coconut milk was boiling. After 10 minutes or so they became creamy with the buttery flavour. The taro stew was the most delicious food I tried in Papua New Guinea. Potatoes play a big role in the life of the villagers. It's not only food but also a symbol of richness and power. Outside my hut big yam potatoes were hung and I was told they decorated them to show how big ones they harvested. In the centre of the old village there was a house bigger than the others with lots of such decorations. It was a storehouse. During the festivals the villagers visit each other and praise each other's harvest.

The biggest festival, *milamala*, was just coming up within a month, the exact date of which is decided by the movement of stars. But I couldn't stay any longer as I had to go back to Japan. The day before my departure I saw a rainbow under the dark rainy cloud over the row of palm trees.

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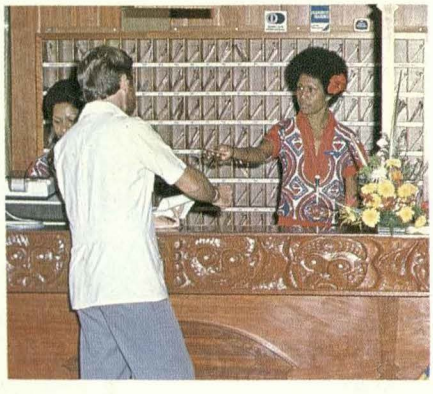

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MOUNTAINS

By Roy and Margaret McKay

Down through the aeons, humans have lived in awe of mountains, if not for their sheer size and grandeur, for the mystery they embody. Where else would you imagine the Greek gods should live but Mount Olympus? And anyone who knows their Western folklore is aware that the mountains of Europe teem with trolls and fairies. In Papua New Guinea they are not trolls and fairies — they are spirits.

Have you ever thought what else we wouldn't have if we didn't have mountains? There'd be no valleys, no raging torrents, no plunging waterfalls, no dizzying cliffs.

Papua New Guinea has more than a fair share of mountains. They are almost everywhere. Only in the far southwestern reaches of the Western Province can you not see a peak.

The huge mountain ranges of the island of New Guinea are the cause and effect of our climate. The torrid northwest winds of the monsoon season bring tropical downpours, the cooler tradewinds from the southwest bring light rains. In either case it is the mountains which force the winds into the higher atmosphere, the place where rainstorms are born.

Papua New Guinea's densest population areas are in the central mountains of the mainland where the nation's highest peak is to be found — Mount Wilhelm, 4700

Jagged peak of Mount Giluwe in the Southern Highlands Province; **right clockwise:** *rhododendrons appear above the 2500 metre level; undulating peak of Mount Albert Edward; mountain streams are icy cold and fast*

metres, but relatively easy to climb if you have the time.

The views from Wilhelm are breathtaking, as is the altitude which, if you don't treat it with intense respect, can leave you in pain and exhausted.

Though a shroud lies over much of the mainland from mid-morning onwards for much of the year, to some extent you can plan to climb to the top of a mountain at the right time for a good view. Though most parts of the country experience high rainfall, PNG is a land of plenty of sunshine too.

So, with time to spare and a mixture of good judgement and a little luck, you can start heading for the peaks of your dreams.

Mount Victoria, at 4050 metres the highest point in the Owen Stanley Range, about 90 kilometres northeast of Port Moresby, beckons attractively. Sir William McGregor, when he climbed it in 1889, reported that from the summit he could see north and south coasts of the island. He wrote of crystal clear air, cloudless nights with brilliant stars, heavy morning frosts which whitened alpine grasses, even icicles in a shaded rocky cleft, and of clouds that lay 'like lead'.

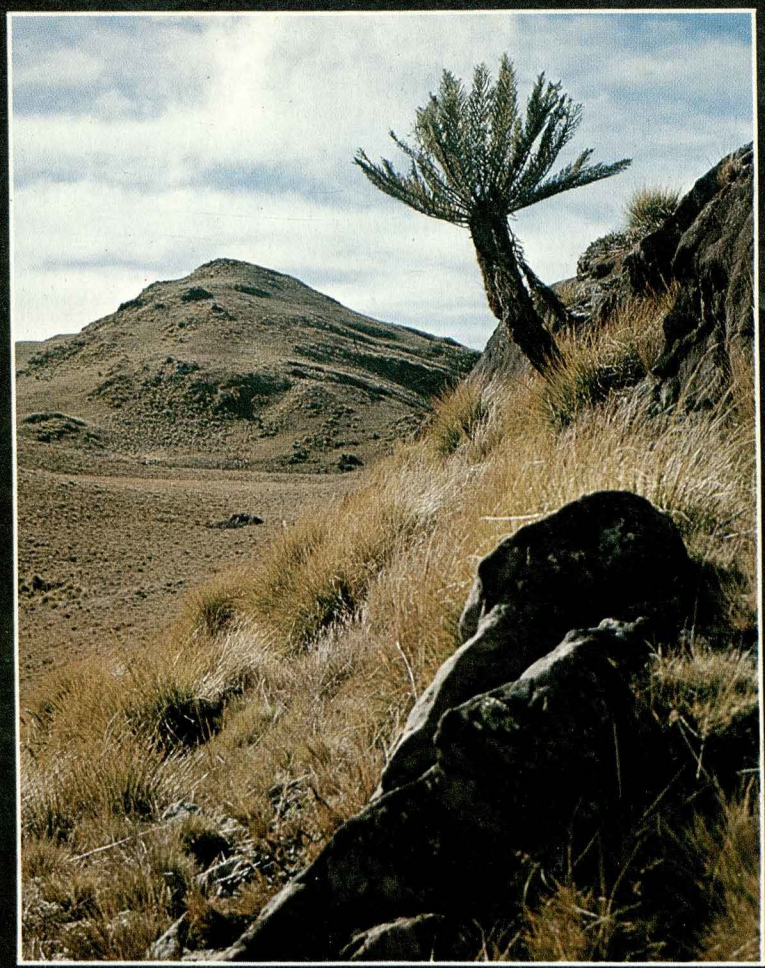
A few years ago on Mount Albert Edward, 4000 metres, we saw those 'leaden' clouds. To the west the sloping crest of Mount Yule, 3270 metres, seemed to float over a blanket of grey, and to the south-east stood Victoria, towering over the upper limits of cloud. The grasslands were not white with frost but a keen breeze kept us to the leeward of our shelter.

Mount Lamington in Northern Province brought terror to everyone for miles around in the early fifties. Until then, though Europeans thought of it as nothing more than a mountain, villagers around had always called it a 'fire mountain'. Their oral traditions held that the mountain had indeed issued smoke and steam in days gone by. On January 21, 1951, a great chunk of Mount Lamington was blown out in a mighty eruption. Nearly 3000 people died.

The vegetation on any of Papua New Guinea's mountains is a botanist's delight. The lower slopes usually are covered with dense rainforest, sometimes interspersed with impenetrable patches of climbing bamboo. At this level sheer faces of limestone are found in many areas.

At about 2500 metres the vegetation changes and thins out. Trees are often coated with mosses, ferns and orchids and the ground is like a sponge with layers of this moss covering a mass of roots. For the unwary traveller this is dangerous terrain. A careless step and an ankle is twisted.

Higher up the trees become thinner and more stunted — and masses



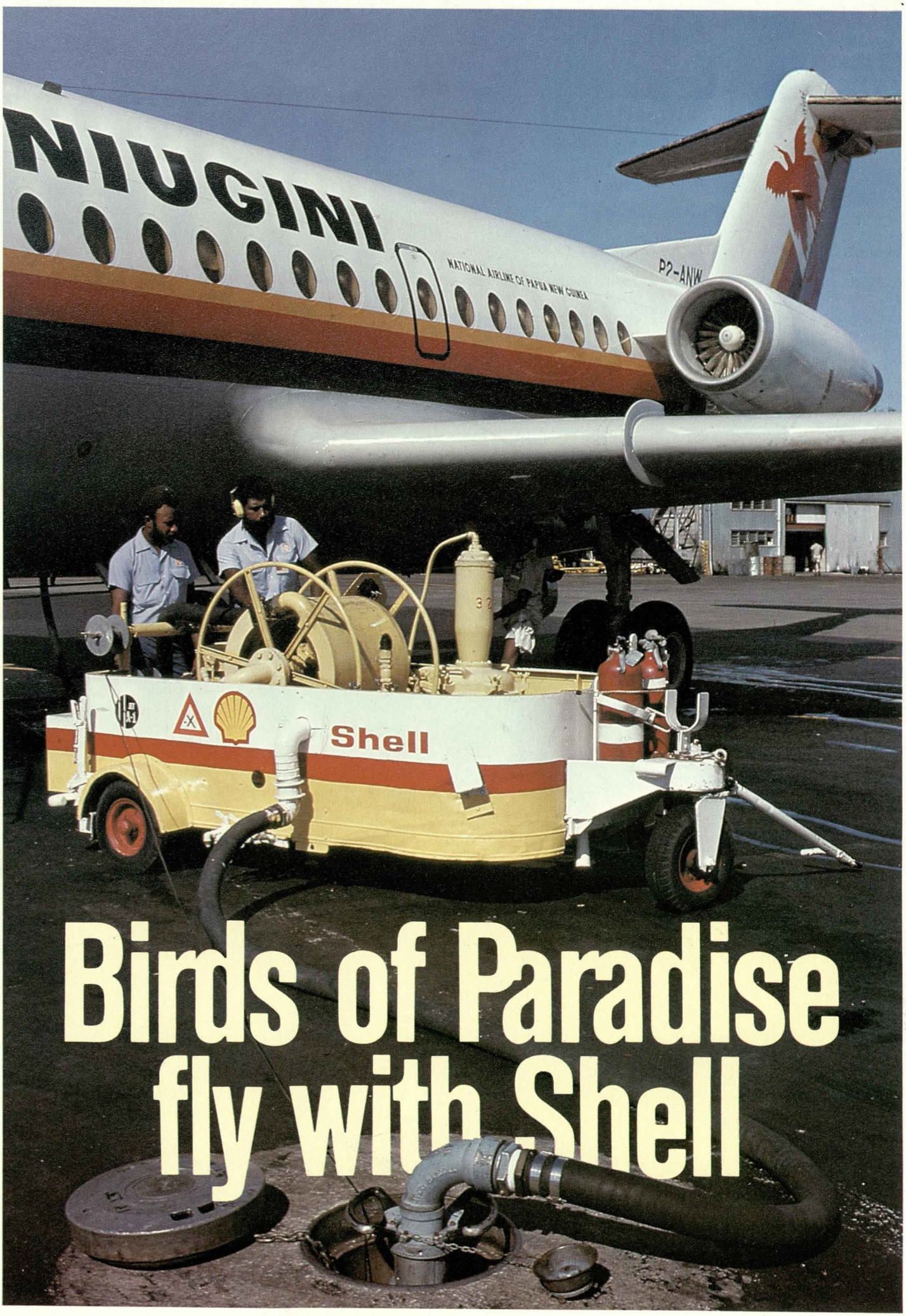
of rhododendrons make their appearance. Then comes the alpine area of low shrubs, tree ferns and grasses. Although it varies according to locality, the break from forest to alpine grassland is usually around 3500 metres. Flowers at this altitude have to be seen to be believed. The variety is amazing . . . daisies, buttercups, Dendrobium orchids, rhododendrons, and so many more.

And, just above is the sky. Every peak has its own special characteristics — some are rounded and smooth, some simply rugged, others downright jagged. A fine sample of the latter is Mount Giluwe, 4320 metres, loftiest top in the Southern Highlands Province. Mount Victoria's crowning glory is a series of crenellated ridges. Mount Albert Edward undulates easily. Mount Hagen in Western Highlands Province has a knifelike ridgetop. Mount Wilhelm literally throws up its final few feet. Sigul Mogul saw-tooths the sky. Mount Michael, named after European explorer Michael Leahy, who died earlier this year, has a pimple-like knob adorning its great massif.

You don't have to climb mountains to appreciate them. One of the best vantage points in the whole of the mainland is about 20 kilometres north of Mount Hagen town. From there, on a clear day, several of the highest peaks can be seen, including Mounts Wilhelm, Ialibu, Giluwe and Hagen, Sigul Mogul and part of the Kubors.

That very first flight most visitors to Papua New Guinea make — north from Port Moresby — provides an early taste of the magnificence of this mighty land of soaring peaks. Whether it be early morning as the mists swirl out of darkened valleys, or late afternoon when the westering sun bathes the seemingly endless ridges in flame, it is the stuff poems are made of 'when men and mountains meet'. — *Roy and Margaret McKay live in the Baiyer River bird sanctuary in PNG's Western Highlands Province.*

Always a 'fire mountain', Mount Lamington steams today 28 years after its massive eruption which terrorised the Northern Province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Benson and Hedges. When only the best will do – and isn't that all the time?

YAMAMOTO

Story and photography by Bruce Adams

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto was a marked man. Mastermind of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour and often described as his nation's greatest military strategist since Admiral Togo (who defeated the Russian fleet early this century), Yamamoto, in 1943 was commander-in-chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet.

On April 17, 1943, in the lonely Aleutian Islands in the far north Pacific, a radio message was snatched out of the air. Yamamoto's hours were numbered.

In early 1940, before Japan turned its guns on the United States, the Japanese naval code had been broken by the US Navy Combat Intelligence Unit. The Japanese changed their code late that year. The Americans managed to crack the change within a few days but, by that time, the damage had been done. Pearl Harbour had become a household word. America was at war. Admiral Yamamoto had won his first battle against the US. It was to be more than two years before America was able to draw a bead on this brilliant leader. This time there had to be no mistake. The opportunity might not present itself again.

The American Radio Interception Post at Dutch Harbour in the Aleutians immediately flashed the coded message they had intercepted to Washington. The signal had come from the Truk Islands in Micronesia's Caroline group and bore the code signal of Yamamoto's flagship.

Decoded, the message was handed to the then US Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. Yamamoto, it seemed, with aides, was to make a front line tour of inspection on Bougainville Island the following day.

Feverishly, Knox and General Arnold, chief of the US Army Air Force, worked on a plan to intercept Yamamoto. Fitted with long-range fuel tanks, 16 American Lockheed

Lightnings took off from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. They headed north for the southern end of Bougainville Island. Six-hundred-and-forty kilometres later they were in position — 40 kilometres east of Kahili airfield near the township of Buin. It was 9.15 am, April 18, 1943.

Yamamoto was 10 minutes' flying time out of Kahili when the Lightnings struck. The Japanese leader's formation comprised two Betty bombers and escort Zeroes. Yamamoto was in one Betty, his Chief of Staff, Admiral Matomi Ugaki, in the other.

Within five minutes, for the loss of one Lightning, both Betty bombers and three Zeroes were downed. Ugaki's Betty went into the sea and though he and his staff were badly wounded they were rescued soon afterward by Japanese patrol boats.

Yamamoto's Betty had a wing blown off and it plummeted into the jungle, exploding on impact. There were no survivors. Only two of its occupants could be identified, Yamamoto and Admiral Takata. The rest were charred beyond recognition. It was later established that Yamamoto, with bullets in the head and shoulder, had been dead on impact. He was cremated on Bougainville and his ashes taken to Japan.

His Betty lies in Bougainville's jungle today. I decided to find it, a wreck which has become a legend. I was not to be the first since those fateful days of 1943 but I count myself among only a few who have set eyes on it since.

My first call was at Port Moresby where I talked to Bill Chapman of the war museum. He told me roughly where the wreck was. It had come down not far from Buin, he said. He then showed me one of the control columns from the plane which had been given to him for the museum.

Tailplane of Yamamoto's aircraft rots in the jungle on Bougainville Island where Bruce Adams found it; inset: *Japanese naval bunker at Rabaul where Yamamoto held a conference before his fatal flight*

I flew over to Lae in Papua New Guinea's Morobe Province. There I was told the other control column was held by the '183 Independent Helicopter Reconnaissance Flight' of the Pacific Islands Regiment.

In Rabaul, Father Church of the Catholic Mission, Kokopo, told me he had walked into the wreckage a few months previously and had souvenired the identification plate. As far as I could tell Yamamoto's aircraft was spread right across the Pacific. I wondered how much was left to see.

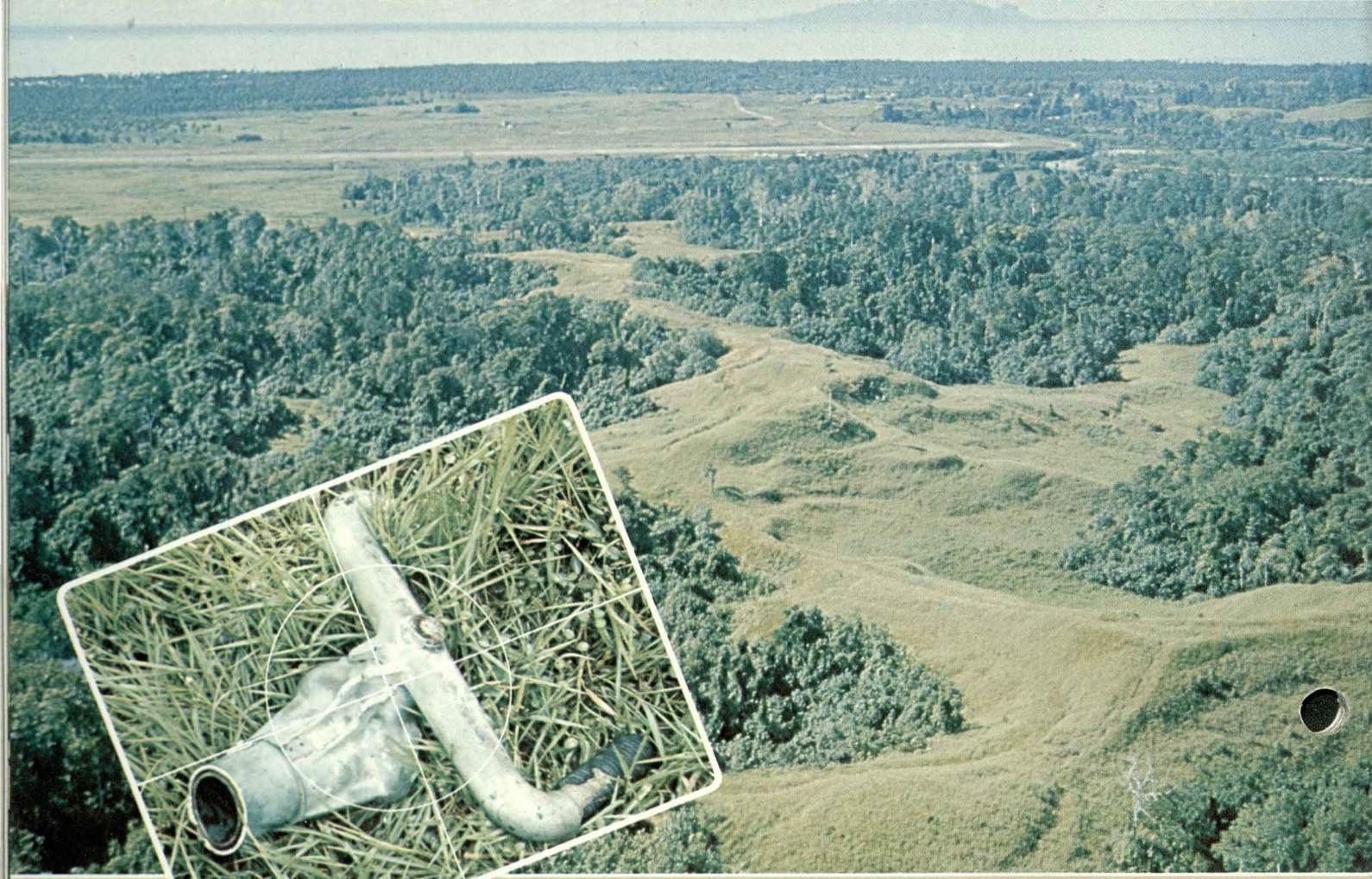
Two days later I flew to Buin, Papua New Guinea's last settlement before crossing the strait to Solomon Islands. We landed on an old Japanese airstrip. From there I could see a small township. A few kilometres further on was Kahili airstrip, the one Yamamoto was heading for when his time ran out.

Kahili is a vast open strip of ground. The United Church's Mission stands at one end of a large white cross on the ground, a token of remembrance of those who went to war and did not return. Bomb craters still pit the sides of Kahili strip and the surrounding plantation coconut trees are scarred from bombing and machine-gun fire.

The township of Buin has been moved 12 kilometres inland. A few big Japanese naval guns and a tuberculosis hospital are all that are left on the site of the old township.

At Buin I discovered that the Japanese Government had sent a photographer to Papua New Guinea the previous year, with the specific assignment of photographing Yamamoto's aircraft. He had found a guide to take him to the crash site. Wreckage on film, he had returned directly to Japan.

The assistant district commissioner at Buin assigned to me a member of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary who took me to a village about 25 kilometres from Buin. There, I was told, I might find



Above: *Bloody Ridge (foreground) and Henderson Field (horizon) at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. United States Lockheed Lightning aircraft flew from this field to intercept and destroy Yamamoto's aircraft;* **inset:** *one of the control columns of the Betty bomber*

a guide. It seemed the final resting place of Yamamoto's plane was not common knowledge.

As we bumped into the village a crowd milled around us. Speaking in *ples tok* (the local language), the constable addressed the people for about 20 minutes. We learned that one old man who, as a young man had helped bring Yamamoto's body from the wreckage, had left two years earlier to work at Kieta.

We pressed on. Thirty minutes later we found the man who had taken the Japanese photographer into the wreck. First it was 45 minutes by road. Then, at a small creek, we left the vehicle and headed into the jungle. With bush knives we hacked our way through matted jungle vines. It seemed we were making poor progress.

Eventually we came to a narrow track. Our guide said it had fallen into disuse many years before when a nearby village had been abandoned. For once the jungle fell quiet. The only sound was of branches brushing against our clothing. We stumbled on, dripping in our own sweat. A river crossing. The cool water was welcome. Another river. Another creek. So it went on for two hours.

Our guide stopped and pointed to a small clump of bushes. We peered in and saw part of a wing covered in green moss. Carefully scraping the moss away, we saw the faded red paint of the Japanese emblem. We knew we were within yards of the main crash site. Then, there it was: clearly the shape of an aircraft fuselage, but clad in a velvet coat of moss and vine-bound.

The front end was completely destroyed. One engine was burnt and charred. But the fuselage and tailplane were practically in one piece. The jungle was still in the process of tidying up. The trees around had long since healed themselves. In addition to the thick covering of moss on the fuselage, small trees and bushes were pushing up through the gun turrets. I could hear lizards scampering across the floor of the wreckage. Cobwebs sealed most openings.

Bullet holes pocked the skin of the fuselage. A few metres from the main wreckage lay two seats, both in one piece but one with bullet holes in the back. After hearing and reading of the way in which Yamamoto met his death, I wondered if I was looking at the seat he had been sitting in when the Lightnings moved to the attack.

The ground was damp, soggy, alive with insects. Camouflage paint had peeled but the metal had not rusted. In the late afternoon sun, long shadows dappling through the vegetation, the atmosphere was becoming oppressive. Here, amidst the relics of one of the most significant actions of the Pacific War, we stood watching nature at work, unhurriedly smoothing the edges over, putting to right what man has such a propensity for doing wrong. — *Bruce Adams is a photo-journalist with the Australian Government.*

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Exotic Snails

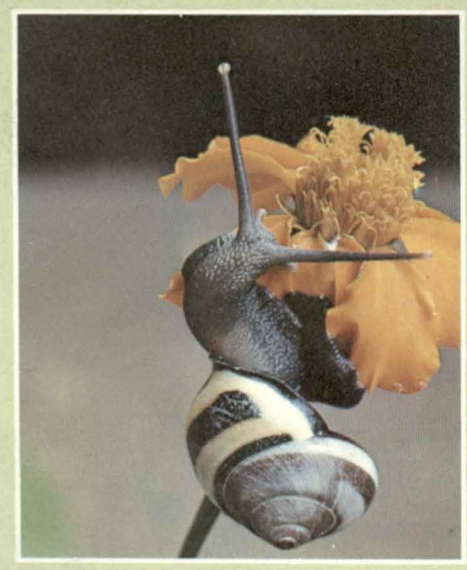
By Brian Parkinson

Shell collectors have been pilgrimaging to Papua New Guinea for many years. They are still coming. But now we've got two varieties — divers/beachcombers and landlubbers.

Everyone knows this sun-blessed land is home to some of the world's most attractive marine molluscs. But, also, it is a great hunting ground for a wide range of land snails whose shells compete keenly with the underwater variety in colour and design.

There are more than 1000 species of snail to interest the keen collector and, more attractive, almost every major island in the New Guinea group has one or two (sometimes several) species peculiar to that island. Some of these island

Rhynchotrochus wiegmanni *is a variable species found in the New Britain Islands;* inset: Megalacron novaegeorgiensis *is confined to Vitu Island in West New Britain*



Clockwise from above: Papystyla pulcherrima *from the mountains of Manus Island;* rhynchotrochus wiegmanni: *the white coloured* rhynchotrochus wiegmanni *is found in Kimbe;* Xestra citrina; **right:** Rhynchotrochus strabo dampierensis *is confined to Kar Kar Island near Madang*

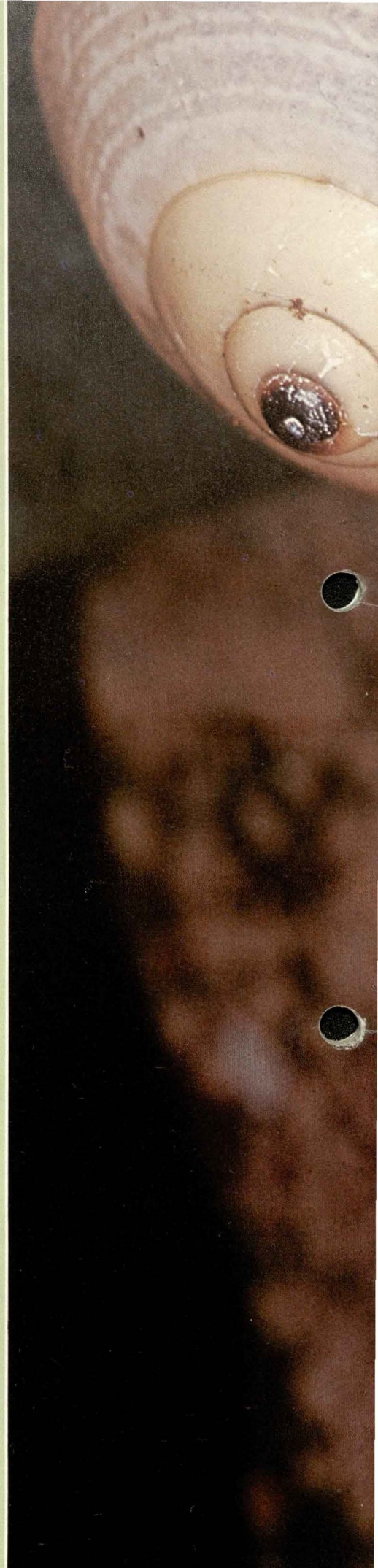
snails are extremely variable. I have seen more than 120 distinct colour forms of the very attractive *Megalacron tabarensis* which, as its name indicates, is found on the Tabar Islands off the east coast of New Ireland. Some shells are quite constant in appearance, a fine example being the Manus Island Green Tree Snail (*Papustyla pulcherrima*).

Papua New Guinea shell companies have been quick to diversify as demand grows for snail shells. New Guinea Shells of Rabaul has more than 100 different species for sale and Milne Bay Shells at Alotau has a good range of shells common to the southeastern corner of the country. Many villagers are now earning quite reasonable incomes by selling land shells to these companies.

Some snails which were common in Papua New Guinea before the Pacific War are now difficult to find. Some are never found nowadays. It is believed they fell victim to the African land snail which was introduced to PNG by Japanese soldiers. The African snail is now in plague proportions.

Frustrated seashell collectors transferred to inland towns would do well to stop gazing wistfully at their snorkel and flippers and head into the nearby bush. To add to the interest, get yourself a copy of the recently-published *Guide to the Shells of Papua New Guinea.* More than 100 species are named and illustrated in colour.

To find the shells all one needs is a sharp eye. To do the right thing by our snails, please abide by the rules which apply to sea shells: collect only perfect adult specimens, leaving any that are immature or have perforated or marked shells as a breeding population. — *Brian Parkinson is shell project officer employed by the Department of Commerce.*



ACE OF ACES

By Bryan McCook

Richard Bong; **below:** *Lightning rolls for take-off under leaden sky*

Mount Lamington, in Papua New Guinea's Northern Province — which erupted and killed 3000 people in 1951 — overlooks Dobodura, the site of the United States Fifth Air Force mammoth base in World War Two. During the 'Bloody Buna' campaign, Dobodura became the starting point for the distinguished career of Major Richard Ira Bong whose 40 confirmed aerial victories are unsurpassed by any American military pilot of any war. Twenty-eight of Major Bong's successes were scored in Papua New Guinea.

In mid-1942 Bong, in exuberant mood, having just graduated from fighter training school in California, was reported for unauthorised low flying in the San Francisco area. His commanding general had him assigned to the new P38 Lightning squadrons then grouping in Australia. Later he was posted to the combat area at Port Moresby. Like other pilots of his group, Bong was keen for action, but a major fault developed in the big twin-engined fighter's intercooling system. As a result, the P38s were not ready for combat until late in November.

Port Moresby had been defended up to this time by very limited numbers of fighters which were no match for the nippy Zero. The defenders had had a torrid time. Thirsting for action, Bong's squadron flew aggressive patrols over Lae, sometimes taunting the Zeros over the radio to come up and fight. But Japanese attention was elsewhere at the time.

Twenty-five kilometres north of Mount Lamington and the Dobodura base, Cape Endaiadere, a copra plantation, became the centre of bitter hand-to-hand fighting as Australian and United States ground forces sought to push the Japanese invaders into the sea. On December 27, 1942, Lieutenant Bong, was on standby at Laloki airstrip near Port Moresby when the alert sounded that a large force of enemy aircraft was headed for Dobodura.

Scrambling into the sticky, tropical air soon after midday, 12 P38s commanded by Captain Thomas J. Lynch, clawed their way over the ominous green carpet of the Owen Stanley Mountains to arrive over Dobodura 20 minutes later at high altitude. Almost immediately the enemy pack was sighted and, breaking into three flights, the Americans hurled themselves into their first encounter.

On the gory battlefield below, haggard and exhausted soldiers watched in amazement as the young pilots demonstrated how well they and their big new twin-engined fighters could do in combat.

Within minutes, no fewer than 1

enemy aircraft fell around the battle area sending Allied morale skyhigh. The battle over and the enemy force scattered, three American pilots including Dick Bong each claimed two victories. Back at Laloki his report simply gave his time of take-off, time of arrival over Dobodura, the fact that he had shot down two Japanese planes, and time of arrival back at Laloki. General George C. Kenney wrote of this historic air battle: *Watch that boy Bong. There is the top American ace of aces of this war . . . He just started work today.*

The eldest of nine children of Mr and Mrs Carl Bong of Poplar, Wisconsin, Dick was raised on a farm. Ice hockey and hunting trips instilled in him the clear sight and confidence which was later so evident in New Guinea.

Early in 1943 the Allies were able to gradually build up their strength and concentrate on the major Japanese bases at Lae, Salamaua, Gasmata and Rabaul. The air battles waged during this time over Japanese-occupied fields formed a period referred to by veterans as an 'all out slugging match'. In its earliest phases, the Zero pilots who operated from Lae and Salamaua made up what was considered the toughest opposition Allied pilots knew throughout the war in the Pacific. The greatest aces of the Japanese Imperial Navy, skilled veterans of China, Pearl Harbour and the Philippines, now dedicated to the protection of their newly-won territory, were based there.

Flying as high as 8000 metres, the Lightnings gave escort to the medium and heavy bombers en route to attack these highly valued bases. Gruelling times for the stretched pilots, often suffering the effects of strange new tropical sicknesses . . . three to five hours of escort . . . battles over the target . . . and helping a disabled fighter or bomber back to the safety of Port Moresby.

In action near Lae on January 7 and 8, 1943, Bong destroyed three Oscars (the crack Japanese fighter), raising his score to five. The American Ace of Aces was launched on his amazing career.

With the help of other pilots and flight leaders, Bong was developing an air attack method which later became known as the 'air superiority tactic' which included attacking from a higher altitude, short bursts of fire-power at short range, and getting away at high speed. A later addition was 'never dogfight with a Zero'.

In early March the Japanese attempt to reinforce Lae from Rabaul and the Bismarck Sea was thwarted when the US Army Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force aircraft, intercepting the convoy of eight transports and eight destroyers, were given sufficient time to gather their forces. Taking part in a massive attack on Lae on March 3, to pulverise the expected air defence of the convoy, Bong downed another Oscar in the Huon Gulf, taking his score to six and on to his second 'acehood'. During the month the enemy made several retaliatory attacks on Allied bases from Oro Bay to Port Moresby with Dick Bong scoring steadily until, on March 14, the destruction of a Betty bomber at Milne Bay took his score to 10 — double ace.

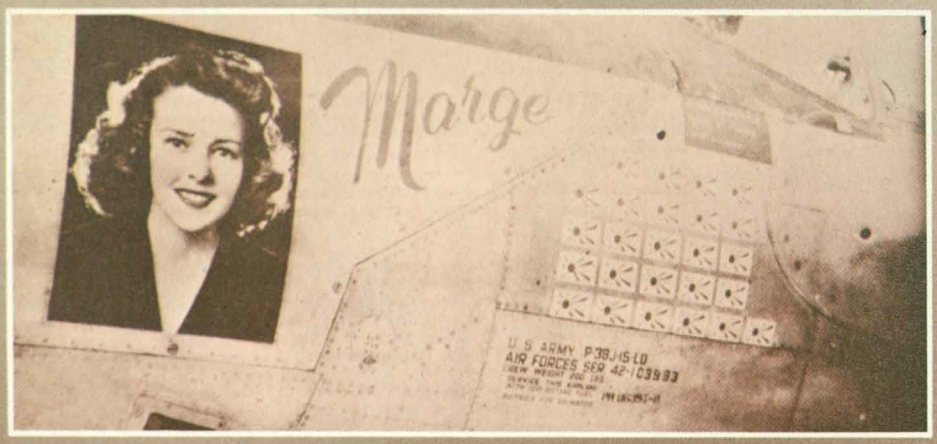
Dick was a superb aggressive pilot and a great shot. Thirty-two of his final victories were scored against the Zero which had heavily outclassed Allied fighter opposition up to that time.

With Lae cut off from further reinforcement, the Japanese fought tenaciously for its survival as a major base, air protection being provided from Alexishafen and Wewak. The broad fertile and spectacular Markham Valley now became the centre of massive air activity as the Allies sought to ring Lae off, secretly constructing airfields within an 80 km radius.

For extraordinary heroism in action over the Markham Valley on July 26, 1943, Captain Richard Bong was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. His citation, in part, read:

. . . *Leading a flight of 10 fighters north of Lae, Captain Bong sighted an enemy formation of about 20 planes. We immediately led a series of three attacks and shot down two enemy planes. At this time, 15 or more additional enemy fighters joined in the engagement . . . Disregarding the greatly superior numbers of the enemy, Captain Bong fearlessly led in his flight again and his accurate gunnery destroyed two more aircraft of three which he himself attacked . . . this flight under Captain Bong's daring leadership destroyed 11 enemy planes of which he personally shot down four.* (By command of General Macarthur).

Two of the Japanese aircraft downed by Bong on that day were Kawasaki Ki-61s, Allied codenamed 'Tony', and mistakenly considered a version of the German Bf 109.



Above: *Bong's aircraft shows a tally of 25 in early April 1944 but reached 28 by the end of that month;* **below:** *Lightnings of 433 squadron at Dobodura*

With supreme modesty, Dick Bong recorded the action: *Date: 26 July, 1943. Duty. Pursuit two hours 15 minutes. Aircraft model: P38-G5. No. of landings: 1. Scramble Lae. (* two Oscars two Type 3).*

Bong had become a triple ace. Then, for a time, the attention of the P38 fighters turned to the major Japanese base at Rabaul. The long distance meant that the Lightnings bore the brunt of the action. The two engines made the pilots especially happy. Many made it home on a single engine after being damaged or developing major faults.

Riding high above, Bong and the pilots of Ninth Squadron zealously guarded the bomber streams. When the Zeros were seen to tear off their airfields, pulling up into screaming fighting turns, the P38s, in groups of three to four, whipped over on to a wing tip and plunged earthward building up tremendous speed for the attack. From his cockpit, the pilot had command of three cannon and four .50 guns firing straight ahead. Each pilot, selecting his own nimble quarry, which might become aware of him any second, would close to literally yards before firing short bursts, then continue the dive to relative safety.

A Dinah at Gasmata, two Zeros at Rabaul in October, and two Zeros again at Rabaul in November — and Dick Bong, in action for less than a year, was four times an ace.

Over Hollandia (now Jayapura in West Irian) in April 1944, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker's World War One record of 26 victories in France was equalled and on April 12 passed by Bong when he shot down two Oscars near Sentani not far from Hollandia.

In late 1943 he had been stationed at headquarters Fifth Air Force Fighter Command at Nadzab in the Markham Valley but he had continued voluntarily to fly combat missions. Now, with promotion to major, Bong was posted back to the United States to instruct in aerial fighting and gunnery techniques.

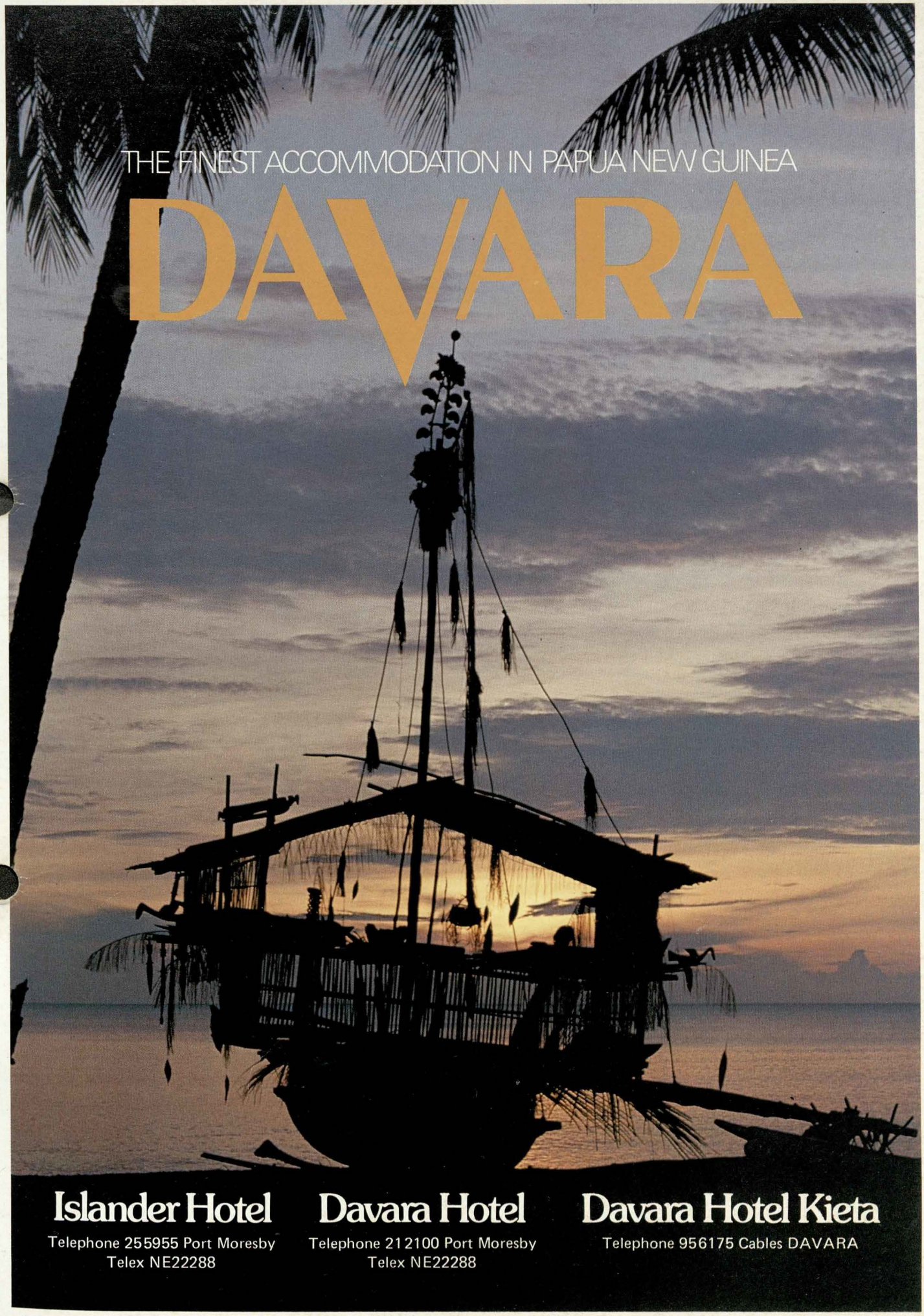
His days in New Guinea were over with 28 confirmed victories, 22 of which were first class fighter aircraft. But soon he had talked his superiors into letting him get back to the Pacific — this time as gunnery training officer of the Fifth Air Force, now centred on Borneo and the Philippines. He argued that he could not test the skill of his students unless he went along with them. His scorecard gradually crept up. In October 1944 five enemy fighters fell to his Lightning 'Marge' at Balikpapan, Tacloban and Masbate.

With 40 enemy aircraft to his credit, Bong was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honour. It was awarded to him by General Douglas Macarthur at Tacloban in the Philippines in December 1944 before he returned to the US.

Bong became a test pilot for Lockheed in California testing the first jet fighters. On the day that the 'Enola Gay', Superfortress, ushered in the age of atomic warfare at Hiroshima, Japan — August 6, 1945 — Dick Bong died at Burbank when the engine of the P-80 jet he was testing failed on take-off.

A living memorial was dedicated to Major Richard Ira Bong and veterans of World War Two at Poplar in 1955 in the form of an auditorium where he went to school. A P38 in attack attitude silently guards the memorial, a fitting tribute to this superb pilot. During the dedication ceremony, nine Air Force jets led by a lone P38 saluted in cross formation.

Changing military and political patterns, with closer and faster communications, make it unlikely that Major Bong's position as American Ace of Aces will ever be challenged. — *Brian McCook is a former Air Niugini pilot.*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