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paradise

Welcome aboard

Ok Tedi – those words have been on the lips of miners everywhere for more than a decade. They symbolise one of the most exciting copper finds anywhere on earth. Ok Tedi, if you haven't already heard, is the name of a consortium which, with the PNG Government, is to exploit the riches of Mount Fubilan, 2100 metres high, in Papua New Guinea's Western Province.

Ok Tedi Mining Limited came into existence early this year after several years of site testing and negotiations with the PNG Government. Work has now started in earnest to extract the riches of Fubilan, a mountain of copper ore with a thick gold topping. In partnership with the government is BHP of Australia, Amoco of the United States, and Kupfererexplorationsgesellschaft MBH of West Germany.

Air Niugini congratulates the consortium and welcomes this important step forward. It will be of great assistance to the government's development plans for the whole of Papua New Guinea.



Joseph James Tauvasa
General Manager



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Quality in Air Transport

Cover: A cluster of delicate sea squirts flourishes on the plankton-rich waters of the coral reefs around Port Moresby. Tony Gardiner took the picture

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long-distance driving a pleasure, even with three passengers. Our aim was to create a car with more economy, performance, comfort and value than any other on the market. Judging from the praise they're showering on us, it seems we have succeeded.



Whitewater



Story and pictures: David Judge

The Watut is a rip-roaring river running through the southern mountains of Papua New Guinea's Morobe Province into the mighty – but much more dignified – Markham River. The rapids of the Watut had been run before, but never had the people who live among the river seen such a flotilla of craft, all heading for the sea.

PUT-IN – in American enthusiasts' jargon – is the spot at which you begin your encounter with the white-water river rapids. For us, a mixed bunch of 19, put-in was near the old Morobe gold mining town of Bulolo, about 120 kilometres by road (much less by air) southwest of the provincial capital, Lae.

Our numbers broke down this way: eight rafters, three film crew, one kayaker, four canoeists and three oarsmen. Many of us had never met before assembling in Lae and

some of us had no river running experience whatsoever – including myself. But we were in the care of those who knew how to look after themselves.

The tortuous road to Bulolo from Lae after crossing the Markham River and heading into the foothills of the central mountain range provides a good insight to what Papua New Guinea's scenery is all about. The broad, many-streamed Markham has already given a hint of the mighty strength of nature in this part of the world. Then come the beauty, ruggedness



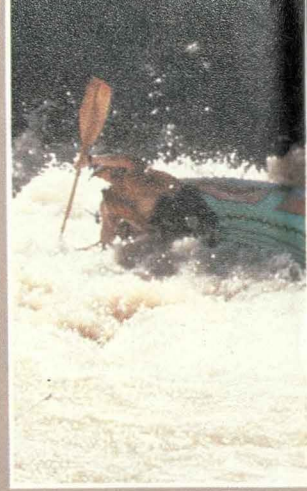
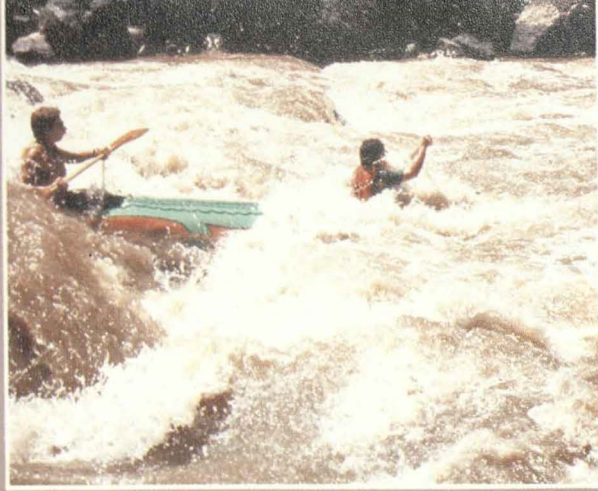
and mystery of the uplands. Seemingly soft-carpeted rolling hills of *kunai* (grass). Great to look at. But try walking through it! From valley floor to mountain top comes a spell of thick forest – or is it jungle? Don't try walking through it by yourself either.

Our party had got the taste for adventure by the time we hit Bulolo. Inflating rafts, loading provisions, a few last minute touches to the canoes and kayak and we pushed off from the security of solid ground. The Bulolo was not tough on us as

Top: *The Watut snakes through rugged country; inset: Ted Batty and Roger Price challenge Watut whitewater*

we drifted toward a wilderness of mountains. Nor was the Watut – for starters!

In those first few hours none of us said much. We moved with the slow rippling current. We could see Papua New Guinean gold miners on the banks. Sluice boxes. Water pumps. Half hills of bare earth. Though operations today are smallscale, there's still a living to be made



from gold mining for Papua New Guineans.

We passed the Snake River which empties into the Watut. The river speed quickened and the mountains closed around us, thickly forested. No longer were there children running along the river bank screaming a welcome to us. It seemed as if the river were conditioning us to what lay ahead.

The current increased. Those in the know assessed its speed as nearing Class I – bottom of a scale to Class VII, a rapid which is regarded as virtually impossible to negotiate.

Before the going got too hazardous we arrived at Taiak. The people of this small village knew some of the Americans in our party. They had travelled this way before. The rafts the villagers could take in their stride but the appearance of the canoes and kayak had them shrieking in surprise.

Taiak is a comfortable place with plenty of food. I saw gardens with *kaukau* (sweet potato), pawpaw (or papaya),

bush pumpkins, taro and *man-iok* (or *tapiok*, from which tapioca is made). Pigs, dogs and chickens wandered at will.

The spontaneous hospitality of everyone at Taiak was characteristic of the friendliness we have come to expect on our visits to rural Papua New Guinea. Only two villagers spoke English but four of our party had good pidgin so we managed exchanges without difficulty. We were given a large bush material hut with grass thatch to sleep in, built specially for river-running enthusiasts. We were offered *kulau* (green coconuts) and *drai* (ripe coconuts).

Taiak has no road leading from it. Everything is carried out along a narrow pathway which passes through high *kunai* hills and dense rainforest. Fast-flowing waterways are crossed by apparently flimsy bamboo suspension bridges. Made without nails, wire or modern materials, they are surprisingly strong.

As well as food crops, the

Taiak villagers are involved in gold mining and coffee. Dried beans have to be carried, on a journey taking two to three days, to Mumeng on the main Lae-Bulolo road, a coffee-buying post.

A villager showed us that gold is around to be found. From two or three shovels of aggregate, he panned about 20 tiny specks. Not much, but today's prices make it worthwhile for the people of Taiak.

Excitement ran high next morning. We were to meet our first whitewater challenge. Known as Harmony, we had been told it was a formidable group of four rapids in succession in the Class V range.

Before shooting Harmony we pulled into the bank about 400 metres above the section and made a precarious walk downstream so that we could get a mental map of the river. The oarsmen and canoeists discussed in detail the safest way to negotiate the mass of whirlpools, boulders and chutes of misty whitewater.

Then, adrenalin flowing, we careered into the first movement of Harmony. Drenched in spray, my first reaction was that I was out of my mind to be doing something like this. Then I committed myself to the care of the boatmen controlling the raft. What choice did I have?

For a while the raft delicately manoeuvred past one boulder and then another. Then, as we approached a gaping chasm, our leading boatman, Rick, gasped out a single expletive. In bringing the raft away from one boulder, an oar had come out of the rowlock. He grappled to regain control as we were swept into something which looked like the inside of a washing machine. The raft shuddered and swept sideways. Then it stopped on a hidden boulder. We tipped and began to take water. 'High side. High side,' screamed Rick and we clambered up. The raft responded and levelled out but now it was hanging on the edge of a whirlpool. The vessel plunged in, bent to about 45 degrees – and





then we were flat again and through it. As we headed into the third section of Harmony we bailed madly to get rid of water which was making us virtually unmanoeuvrable.

Then, as I glanced around me, I realised those who had done it before were grinning in delight. Delight or not, this was no kid's game. Even though we were all in life jackets, serious injury could easily be sustained. The river had to be treated with the respect it demanded.

Still, the third section was negotiated without drama and the fourth section, through narrows, was a pleasure — a long clean chute of water before the river began to run deeper and slower.

Our nights were spent camped on the river bank, an afternoon eye being kept for suitable resting places. The dense vegetation, which came right down to water's edge most of the time, occasionally withdrew, leaving wide sandy stretches — ideal for camping.

We were surprised to experi-

ence no mosquitoes or flies. The cacophony of crickets and cicadas during the day quietened to a hum at night. Harmless green pythons were seen gliding through the river bank reeds in search of unsuspecting victims.

Though we were there for the thrill of rapids, I appreciated the quieter moments when I was able to study more closely how the vine bridges are constructed and gaze in wonder at the giant orchids, staghorns, ferns, lichens and mosses which cling to their towering hosts.

In the higher reaches of the river we saw kingfishers, doves, swifts, rails, flycatchers, robins and parrots and heard the elusive Raggiana bird of paradise. Nearer to the Markham we saw crows, several species of eagles, hawks, herons, egrets and cockatoos. Butterflies in various hues of brilliance and camouflage adorned the river. One seemed to fly backwards. Some measured 10 centimetres across.

On the fourth day we stopped at Parachute Falls, a breathtaking waterfall spilling

50 metres into a deep pool. The pool was deliciously cool and we spent some time there, sharing lunch with people from a nearby village.

Among other rapids we encountered were Baarap, Tombstone and Bikpela, the last providing extra excitement for canoeists Ted Batty and Roger Price and Ian and Kay Richardson.

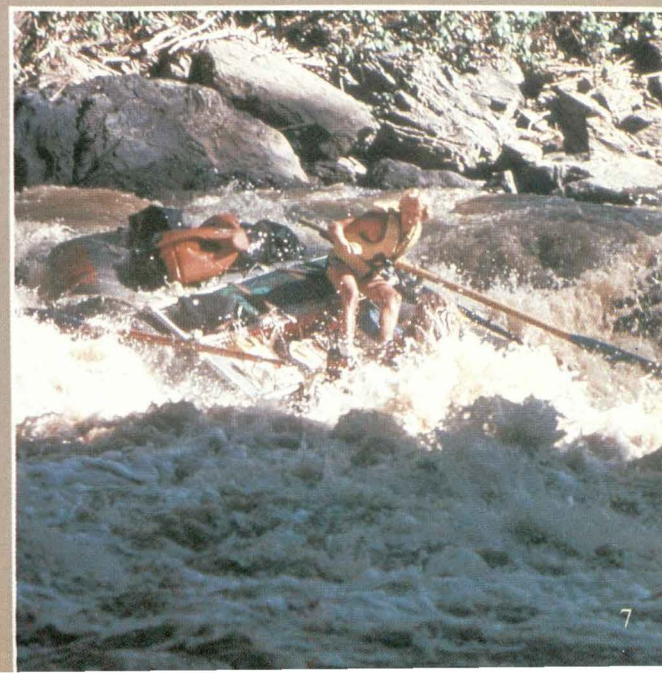
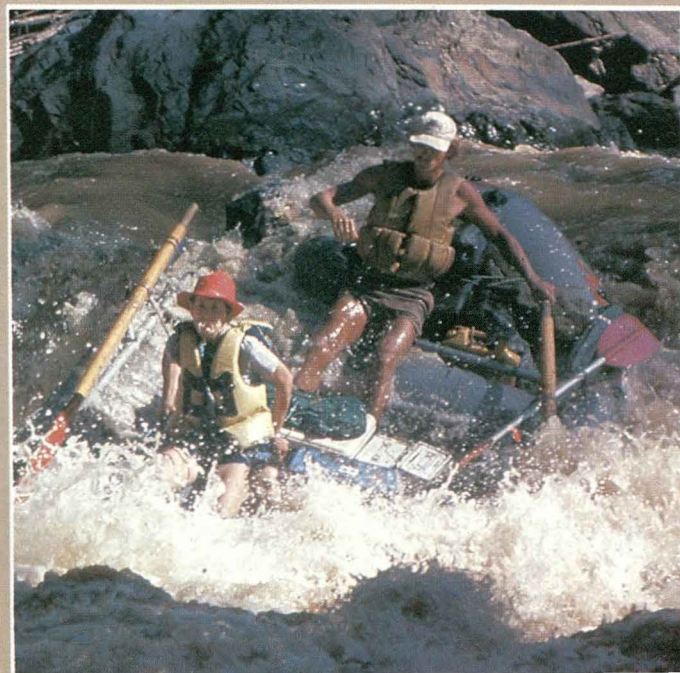
In their five metre 'Canadian' canoe — named 'Nose of the Watut' — Roger, up front, and Ted at the rear, dived headlong into the caramel foamy commotion of mist, rocks and water of Bikpela. Roger disappeared momentarily. Then he reappeared working vigorously yet confidently with his single shorter paddle to keep the canoe on even keel. The huge canoe bobbed and ducked, sometimes completely submerged. A perfect team, they corrected the effects of tremendous water forces — enjoying every second of it.

Ian and Kay — from the same whitewater canoe club in Sydney, and a highly competent

pair — hit trouble. A slight misunderstanding and they corrected *against* each other. It was enough to throw the balance in favour of the river. The canoe began to race and, as they fought to right it, they capsized in the midst of Bikpela's fury.

It seemed an eternity before their heads bobbed up through the froth and foam. They had freed themselves from the canoe and now had to ride the rapids with nothing but their life jackets to save them. The system is to get feet facing downstream, thus being in a position to cushion the impact against rocks, logs and other obstacles. They were swept away with unbelievable rapidity. When they got to the bank they staggered ashore, shortwinded, shaken but otherwise intact.

Tombstone taught us a good lesson in river-running. Rick executed a perfect pivot in approaching the main chute but then, as we passed between two huge boulders, an oar struck a boulder and ripped free of the rowlock. The safety rope snap-





The Watut, its spirit spent, glides into the many-streamed Markham a few kilometres from Lae

ped like a piece of cotton and the oar speared into Rick's armpit (momentarily inactivating him). Then it began to flail loosely around our heads until Chris Boston, a whitewater specialist from Wau (near Bulolo), was struck savagely across the forehead. He slumped forward as the raft slewed uncontrollably toward a half submerged reef of rock in mid-stream. We ran onto the rock. The upstream side dipped and we began taking water. I had hit my head against another boulder. It seemed we would

flip and I contemplated leaping out onto the closest rock.

Instinctively everyone grappled to reach the top side of the raft. As we reacted, Rick managed to fix the spare oar to the rowlock. Suddenly we were free and flying into the cauldron below. The angle of impact and the hydraulic force jolted the rear of the raft skywards and all rafters had to hang on for dear life.

We had gone into Tombstone rather lightheartedly and we had learned our lesson. Never underestimate the power of the river and never be overconfident or blase.

Steve Colman, an expert kayaker, amazed us all by negotiating the worst of the rapids without too much trouble. His

kayak bobbed and skimmed, traversing the whitewater with apparent ease. It was a delight to watch.

One set of rapids we didn't shoot. Huge trees, undermined by the current, had placed themselves awkwardly in mid-stream, the dead branches fanning out dangerously. Discretion prevailed and we carried our vessels along the bank.

In the last two days the Watut gradually flattened and widened. At one stage it had been dropping 12 metres in every kilometre; now it was only a metre. Along the banks were dugout canoes, some up to 10 metres, most with 25 horsepower outboard motors.

We were now out of the forest and surrounded by low,

grassed hills. At Chias village the children gave us a rapturous welcome and the women showed off new babies. The men proudly displayed wild boars' jaws and empty wildfowl and cassowary eggs strung on lengths of vine around their houses. These ensure good hunting, they said.

Around noon on the eighth day we swept into the swiftly flowing Markham and within an hour we were at its mouth, just west of Lae — 'pull-out' point. — *David Judge is operations director of Papua New Guinea Explorations, Sydney, a division of Australian Himalayan Expeditions. The journey down the Watut was done in conjunction with Sobek Expeditions of the United States.* ♣



KARAWARI LODGE

'... located on the Karawari River, a tributary of the Sepik, the lodge is in the tradition of Treetops and other great wilderness hotels.' *Allan Seiden, Travel Agent Magazine.*

'Something like a National Geographic expedition. No roads. Thick jungle. Locals poling dugouts. Crocodiles. You wind up at the surprising Karawari Lodge. All kinds of comfort in the midst of a thousand miles of jungle.'

Robin Kinhead, Chicago Tribune.

'This was the primitive culture we had come to see — the culture so well delineated by (the late Dr) Margaret Mead and National Geographic editors.'

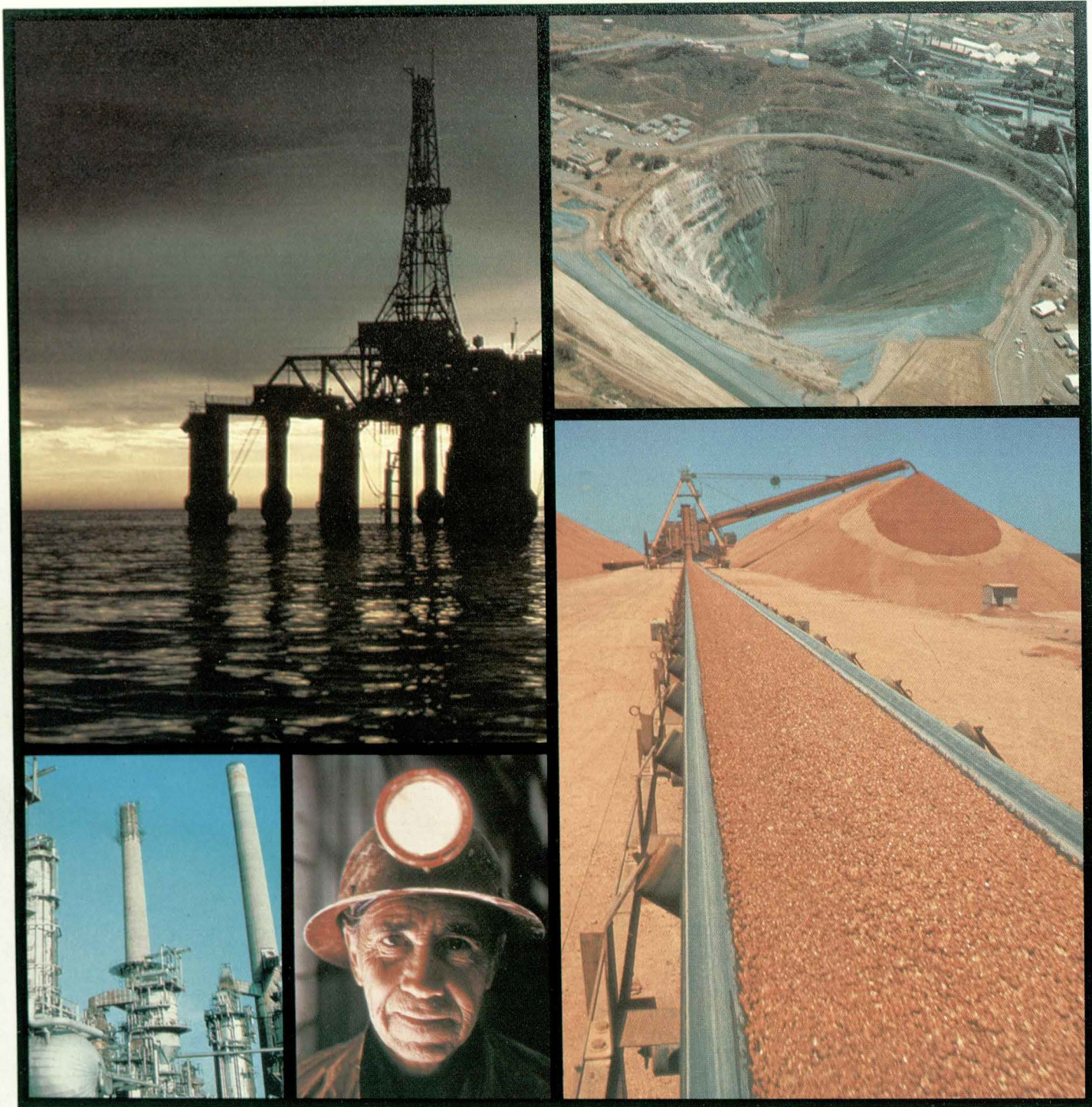
Betty Peach, San Diego Tribune.

'... the silence and peacefulness is deafening to unaccustomed city ears.' *Heather William, Sydney Sunday Telegraph.*

'Perhaps the view from the Lodge alone is worth the effort... but the real attraction could be the people. They have lived as they have for untold generations... storytelling, rituals and music.' *Charles Sribner, Pol Magazine.*



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HYTREN/AIU/196

Niugini, lead role in 'Sail the Midnight Sun', on a journey in search of his dream, the 'woman of the moons'

RAUN RAUN

A man in traditional Papua New Guinea attire is captured in a dynamic dance pose. He wears a tall, pointed headdress with a white feather, a beaded necklace, and a loincloth with a decorative pattern. He is standing on a large, circular floor mat with a complex geometric and star-like pattern. The background is dark, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man and his costume.

Photography: Kevin Murray

IF you're travelling the Highlands Highway, Papua New Guinea's main road artery, there's a good chance you'll come across a convoy of three trucks, two of them colourfully branded RAUN RAUN THEATRE in bold lettering. At the roadside you may hear a

villager shout *Raun Raun Tiata*, and, in characteristic Highlands fashion, follow up their cry with a little jig.

There's something infectious about the Highlands own roving theatre group. Perhaps it is the colour of their costumes, the rhythm of their singing and

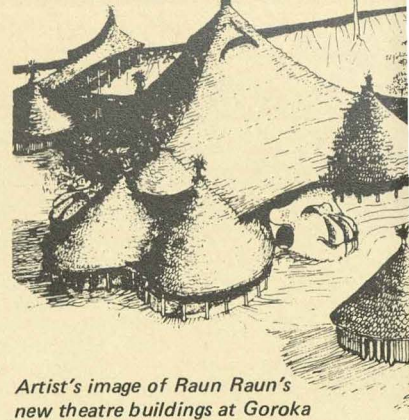
The seagull begins to tell the story of the 'Midnight Sun'



The sea makes love to the star



The sea and 'audience' character follow Niugini to the land where he will grow up



Artist's image of Raun Raun's new theatre buildings at Goroka

music — or simply their exuberance.

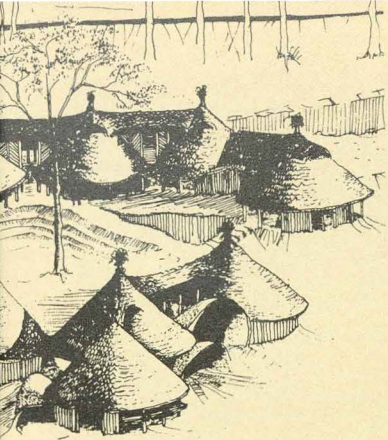
Since Raun Raun began in 1975 it has given close to 600 performances in hundreds of villages throughout the length and breadth of the five Highlands provinces — Eastern, Western, Southern, Simbu and Enga. It is estimated that Raun Raun has entertained nearly a quarter of a million people. Started from almost nothing, Raun Raun is now one of Papua New Guinea's most popular theatre groups.

It all began with an idea by an Australian, Greg Murphy, who was lecturing at the teachers' college at Goroka, capital of Eastern Highlands Province. Greg was determined Papua New Guineans should be given the opportunity to appreciate drama, folk dancing and legend by combining them in an attractive form of entertainment — and in a language they could understand, pidgin.

The name for the group — *Raun Raun* — is pidgin and combines three ideas: the literal translation of 'travelling around'; theatre in the round; and an experimental group of medical, banking and other specialists who toured rural areas and were known as the 'market raun'.

Greg, recalling the group's early days, said there wasn't much enthusiasm at first. He went around interviewing people, asking if they were interested in acting. Eventually he selected 15. For Raun Raun's first performance, no one had any idea what to charge so most of the audience paid in chunks of *kaukau* (sweet potato).

Raun Raun wowed them from the beginning. In its first two years, the new theatre group put on eight dramas and several dance dramas. 'Our



Niugini is welcomed to the 'land of the West'



productions,' said Greg Murphy after those first two years, 'fall into two main types: traditional folk operas, including song and dance, and stories of everyday life to which audiences can relate — such as a husband going out and getting drunk, then getting into trouble with his wife.

From the beginning, improvisation has been the company's way of doing things. There are no written scripts, thus giving individual members of the company an opportunity to display their spontaneous talent.

Among early productions was one specially for Papua New Guinea's independence celebrations in 1975. Titled *Nema Namba* (Mother of the Birds), it was all allegorical dance drama on the theme of independence. Loosely based on a poem called *The Dead Hunter*, it involved a fight between two birds, one black and the other a bird of paradise, respectively representing evil and good.

Two big Raun Raun successes were *Sail the Midnight Sun* and *The Legend of Jari*. *Sail the Midnight Sun* was commissioned for last year's South Pacific Festival of Arts in Port Moresby. *The Legend of Jari* was performed in New York and San Francisco in 1978.

Over the years, the company has steadily grown in numbers. Today it has 29 actors and five administrative staff — 22 men and 12 women. Educational qualifications of members range from a handful with no formal education up to Form 6. Actors receive a basic training course of two years. Then they do a further two years of acting before being allowed to become professional.

Raun Raun has been instrumental in setting up another company — in Wewak on the

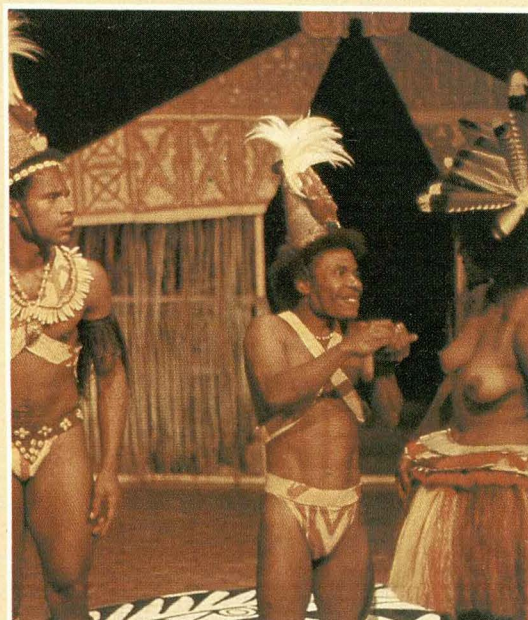
Villagers find out Niugini is about to leave them



Niugini in the land of the seagulls



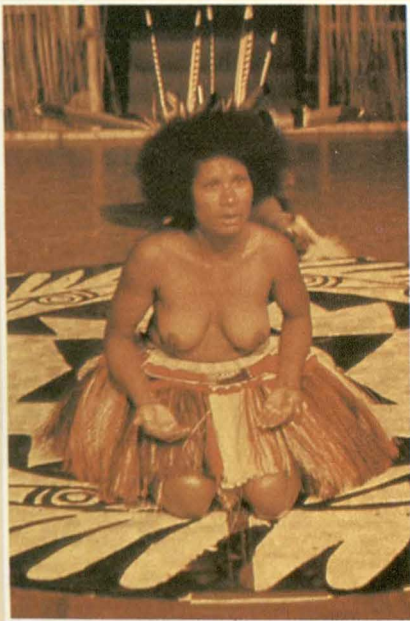
Niugini with wife Imdeduya and son Yolina



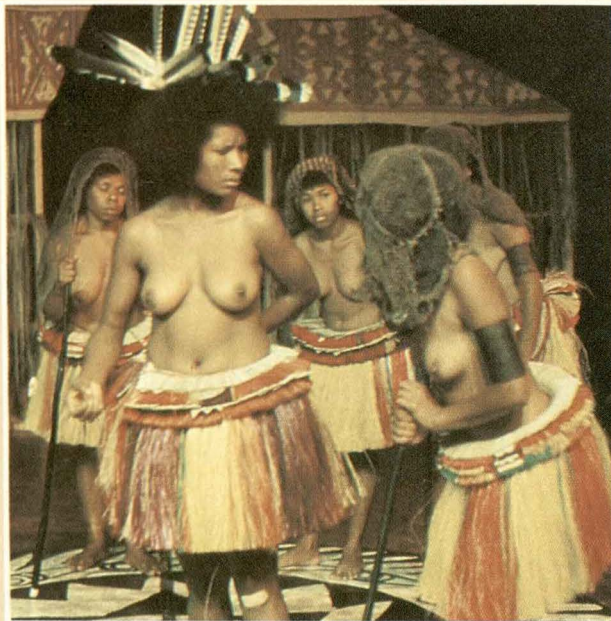
Imdeduya accepts the favours of a secret lover . . .



. . . and waits for him to call again



Old women gossip about Imdeduya's infidelity



Niugini recaptures his dream, the 'woman of the moons'



north coast of the PNG mainland – called Raun Isi.

For six years Raun Raun has been using the company director's residence as its headquarters. But nearing completion in Goroka is a group of theatre buildings modelled on a Highlands roundhouse and made entirely of treated bush materials. It is sure to prove a major tourist attraction, at the same time strengthening the foundations of an organisation which has more to its mission in life than just keeping people happy.

Acting in close co-operation with government departments, Raun Raun is playing a major role in educating the Highlands people by presenting plays on themes such as family planning, malnutrition and the coffee industry. When the plays end, government officers are on hand to answer questions and offer advice. Not surprisingly, the government appreciates the value of Raun Raun and, through the National Cultural Council, provides financial support for it.

Theatre is not new to Papua New Guineans. Theatre in the round is as old as the many cultures which make up Papua New Guinean society. What is different today is that, traditionally, individual groups of people kept their theatre to themselves. Now people from many areas of Papua New Guinea have come together as one drama group and they take their plays to peoples of many cultures and languages. Binding all these features together is the lingua franca of Papua New Guinea – *Tok Pisin* (Melanesian Pidgin). Raun Raun Theatre on the move is summed up in Greg Murphy's own words – '*Dispela kain wok raun insait long ples i bun tru bilong yumi* (Moving around from place to place is the very essence of our work).'

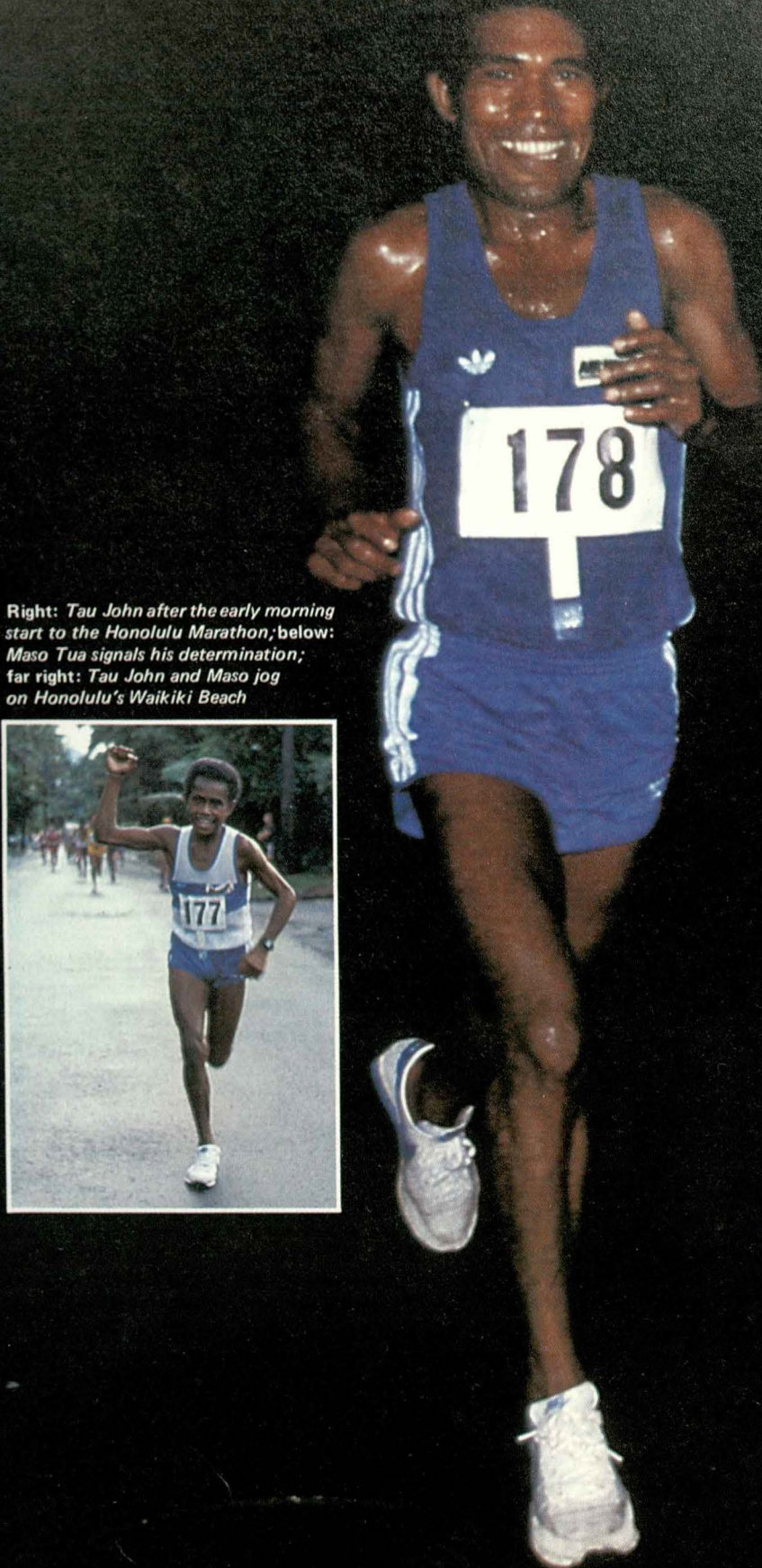


See Papua New Guinea with Douglas Airways

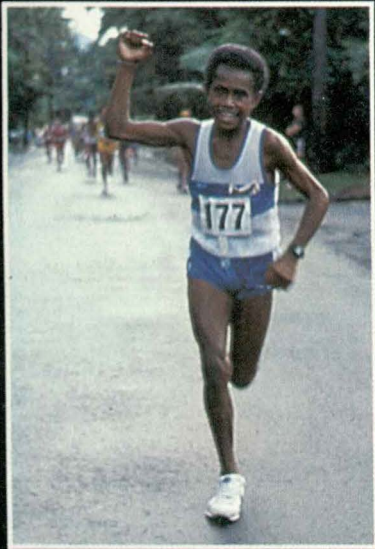
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Right: *Tau John after the early morning start to the Honolulu Marathon, below: Maso Tua signals his determination; far right: Tau John and Maso jog on Honolulu's Waikiki Beach*



MAR

TAU John Tokwepota is Papua New Guinea's top marathon man but few expected him to place as high as 25th in the field of 8000 at last December's Honolulu Marathon. Even more exciting was the time in which he covered the 26 miles 385 yards course — two hours, 28 minutes, 13 seconds. This was more than six minutes better than his previous best and, as far as is known, the best marathon time ever run by a South Pacific-born athlete. The best time ever at the four-yearly South Pacific Games was 2.30.57 by Alan Lazare of France. Fiji's Shiri Chand was credited with 2.32.19 at Suva in 1976.

As remarkable as Tau John's performance was in Honolulu, even more impressive was his run in June last year in Papua New Guinea's top long distance event, the Moresby Marathon.

MARATHON MEN

On the day of the race, June 29, this stayer from the fabled Trobriand Islands, woke at 4.30am to find his car had been stolen during the night. There's no public transport at that time of day and it was five kilometres from his home to the race start. Tau John set out running.

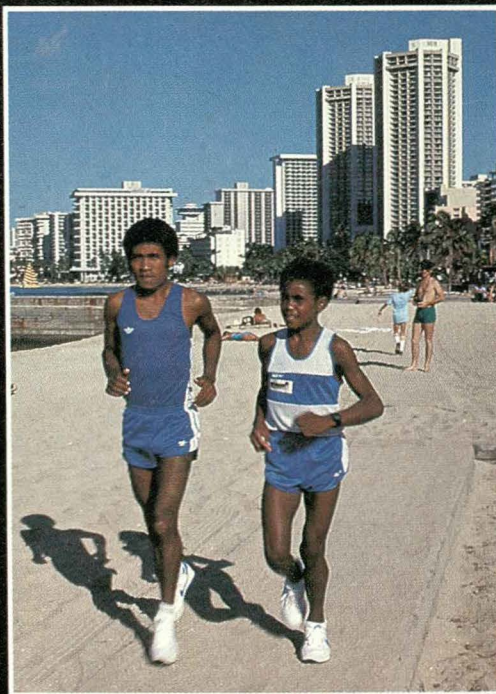
Along the way he met the first of those he was competing against. They were going the other way, already two kilometres into the race. He headed on to the start, signed up and started on the huge and lonely task of catching up.

Not only did he get back into the race. He won it by a minute. That performance earned Tau John one of two tickets Air Niugini awarded to enable Papua New Guinea's top marathon runners to compete at Honolulu.

The other went to 14-year-

old Maso Tua, a student, from Gulf Province. Running in the junior marathon, Maso's performance was also a courageous effort. At the beginning of the third lap of the course he limped into an aid station, cramp crippling both legs. As the pain eased he got up to continue running – and stepped on broken glass. Stoically he waited for it to be removed from the sole of his foot before pressing on to complete the course – another 14 kilometres.

Marathon running in Papua New Guinea is unlike anything most Western competitors have experienced. In America, for example, when temperature and humidity are above certain levels, races are stopped. In Papua New Guinea neither ever goes below those figures. ✦



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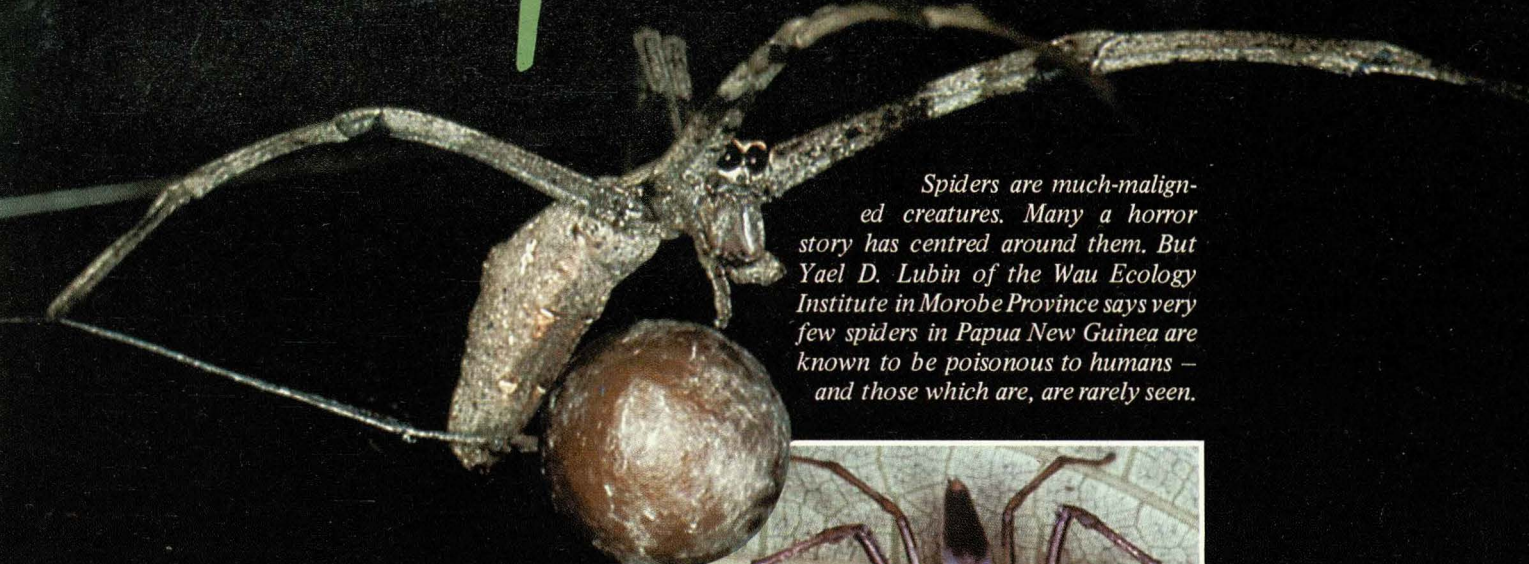
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Spiders



Spiders are much-maligned creatures. Many a horror story has centred around them. But Yael D. Lubin of the Wau Ecology Institute in Morobe Province says very few spiders in Papua New Guinea are known to be poisonous to humans – and those which are, are rarely seen.



NOT all spiders build webs but those which do are the most conspicuous. A familiar sight in gardens in Papua New Guinea is the web of the St Andrew's cross spider, *Argiope picta*. Its orbweb is easily identified by an X-shaped design of white silk at the centre. This is where the spider waits for its prey.

The orbweb is shaped rather like a bicycle wheel with hub and spokes. A separate thread, starting near the outer margin, spirals in toward the hub.

It is known as the 'sticky spiral'. Covered with sticky droplets, it is this part of the web which traps unwary insects. When an insect is caught, the spider senses the vibrations and rushes across to attack it.

The ways in which spiders

The ogre-faced spider – Dinopsis – sits on spherical cocoon and (inset) a jumping spider with jaws the length of its body

Left: No web for Arcys who waits on a vine for its prey, legs outstretched; below: St Andrew's cross spider, *Argiope aetheria*, feeding on a cocooned victim at the centre of its orbweb, makes a zigzag of white silk rather than a cross



attack different insects is a fascinating study in the flexibility of animal behaviour. Grasshoppers, katydids, bees, wasps and other large insects are immediately wrapped in silk. The spider rolls the insect around with its legs while pulling silk out of its spinnerets which are located on its abdomen. It is rather like winding cotton onto a bobbin.

This process rapidly immobilises the insect and allows the spider to inject venom with a bite at no risk to itself. Once the insect is dead, the spider can feed on it at leisure.

The mummification technique does not work on all insects. Butterflies and moths are covered with loose scales which they can quickly shed if



they come in contact with a spider's silk. Because they are adept at escaping from webs, spiders go straight in for the kill, injecting venom by biting as quickly as possible. It then gets a good grip with its jaws to prevent its prey breaking free while in its death throes.

The largest orbweb spider in Papua New Guinea is the giant

wood-spider, *Nephila maculata*. Its golden web can be a metre or more in diameter. An adult wood-spider has a legspan of 25 cm. The male, however, is tiny – only about a centimetre long. The female weaves the web and the male lives in it, stealing small insects. (Male spiders are usually smaller than females. Perhaps by being small

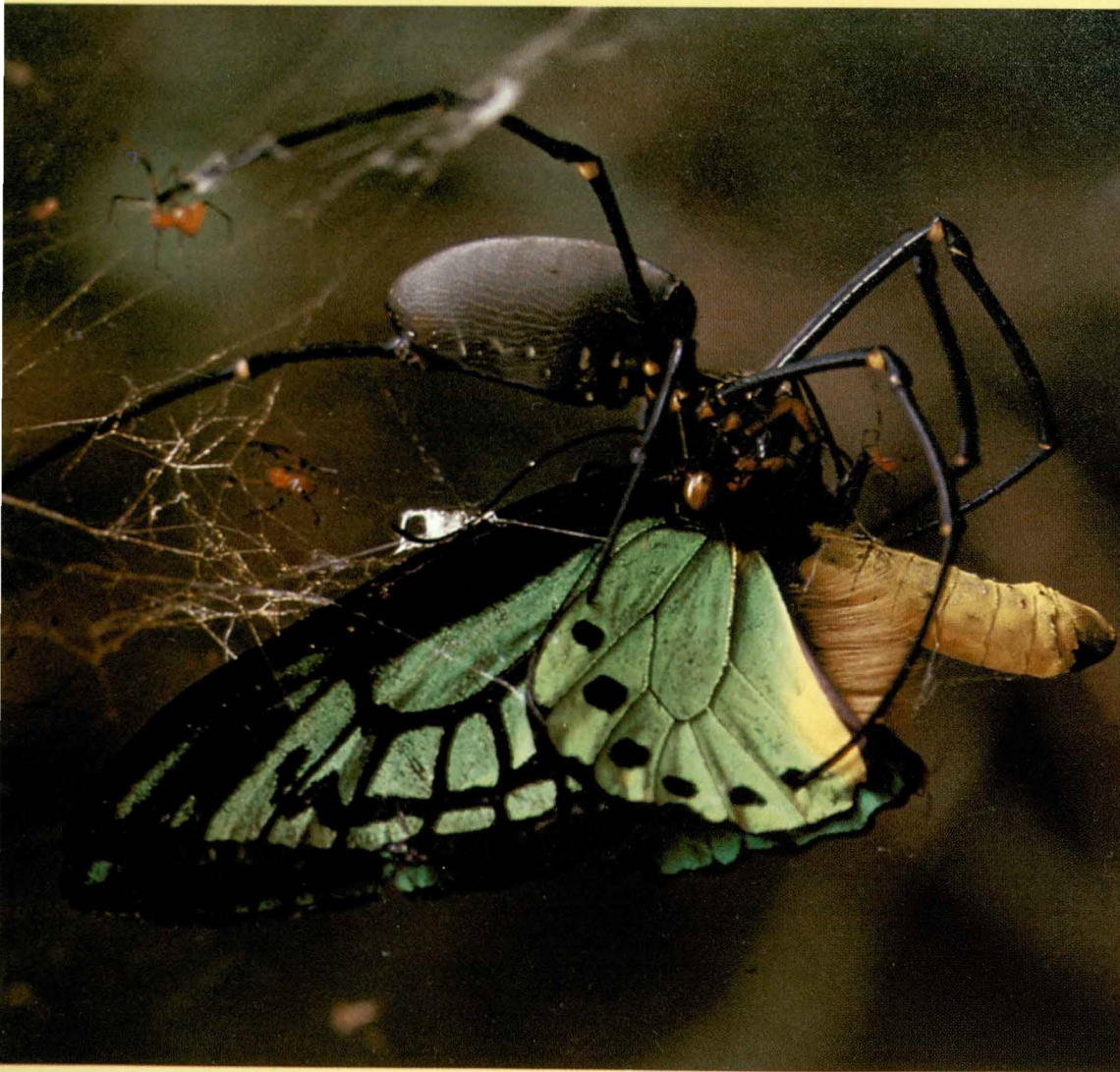
and agile the male can avoid becoming a meal for the female.)

Common in gardens and on the roadside are the colourful spiny *Gasteracantha* – often known as star spiders. *Gasteracantha brevispina* (*brevispina* meaning short-spined) is an acrobat which spins delicate orbwebs suspended by long supporting threads high in gaps

between trees. These spiders often build their webs in aggregations, attaching the supporting threads of one web to another.

The ubiquitous tent-spider (*Cyrtophora moluccensis*) provides a good example of group living. Colonies of tent-spiders can be seen in almost every town and village in the country. Each spider has its own web –

Giant wood spider — *Nephila maculata*
— feasts on a birdwing butterfly



an orbweb of fine mesh, almost like a fishing net or flywire. Sometimes the webs are drawn up at the centre giving a tent-like appearance. They do not have sticky spirals. Instead, they have a messy tangle of threads above them. The scheme is for insects to blunder into the messy tangle and then fall down onto the fine mesh where they get their feet and legs caught. At the same time the spider runs out on the underside of its web to seize its victim.

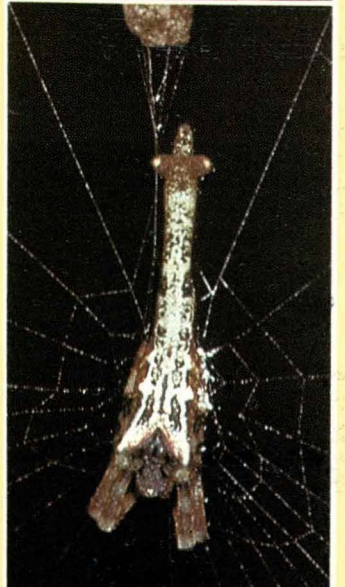
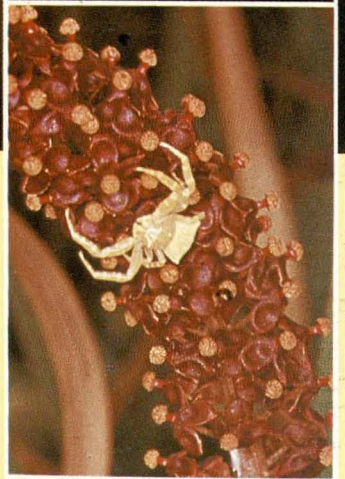
The individual webs of the tent-spider are attached to one another. Sometimes there are hundreds in a colony. The apartment-dwelling impression does not end there. Neighbours often quarrel and will fight over insects. Larger spiders will steal insects from the web of a smaller neighbour and, sometimes, even its web.

Although the individual tent-

spider lives only seven or eight months, colonies may persist for years. One colony in Wau is 12 years old. The colonies are so dense and conspicuous they are targets for many predators and parasites. The spangled drongo, a blue-black bird common in Wau, steals bits of silk from colonies for its nest. In the Star Mountains of the West Sepik Province people weave elaborate ceremonial hats from tent-spider webs.

Among parasitic residents in the tent-spider colony is the *Argyrodes* spiders. Tiny, jewel-like and silver, red and black, the *Argyrodes* are much smaller than their hosts. They live by stealing from the web. Occasionally they will attack baby tent-spiders. The hosts are either oblivious to the *Argyrodes*' presence or are unable to catch them because they can drop rapidly out of harm's way.

Right, from top: *St Andrew's cross spider*; jumping spider from Madang; moth caterpillar lives with social spiders — *Archaearanea wau* — in leaf nest; crab spider on pitcher plant flower; tailed spider — *Arachnura* — looks more like a broken twig



Though few Papua New Guinean spiders are harmful to humans, some larger spiders can give quite a painful nip with their powerful jaws. These should be handled with caution.

Papua New Guinea's spiders come in all shapes, sizes and colours. The vagabond spider does not build a web to catch its prey. Some mimic ants or beetles. Many are brightly coloured while others blend into their environment — looking just like tree bark, moss and lichens. There are jumping spiders, crab spiders, wolf spiders, huntsmen spiders . . . and many yet to be discovered as new areas are explored.

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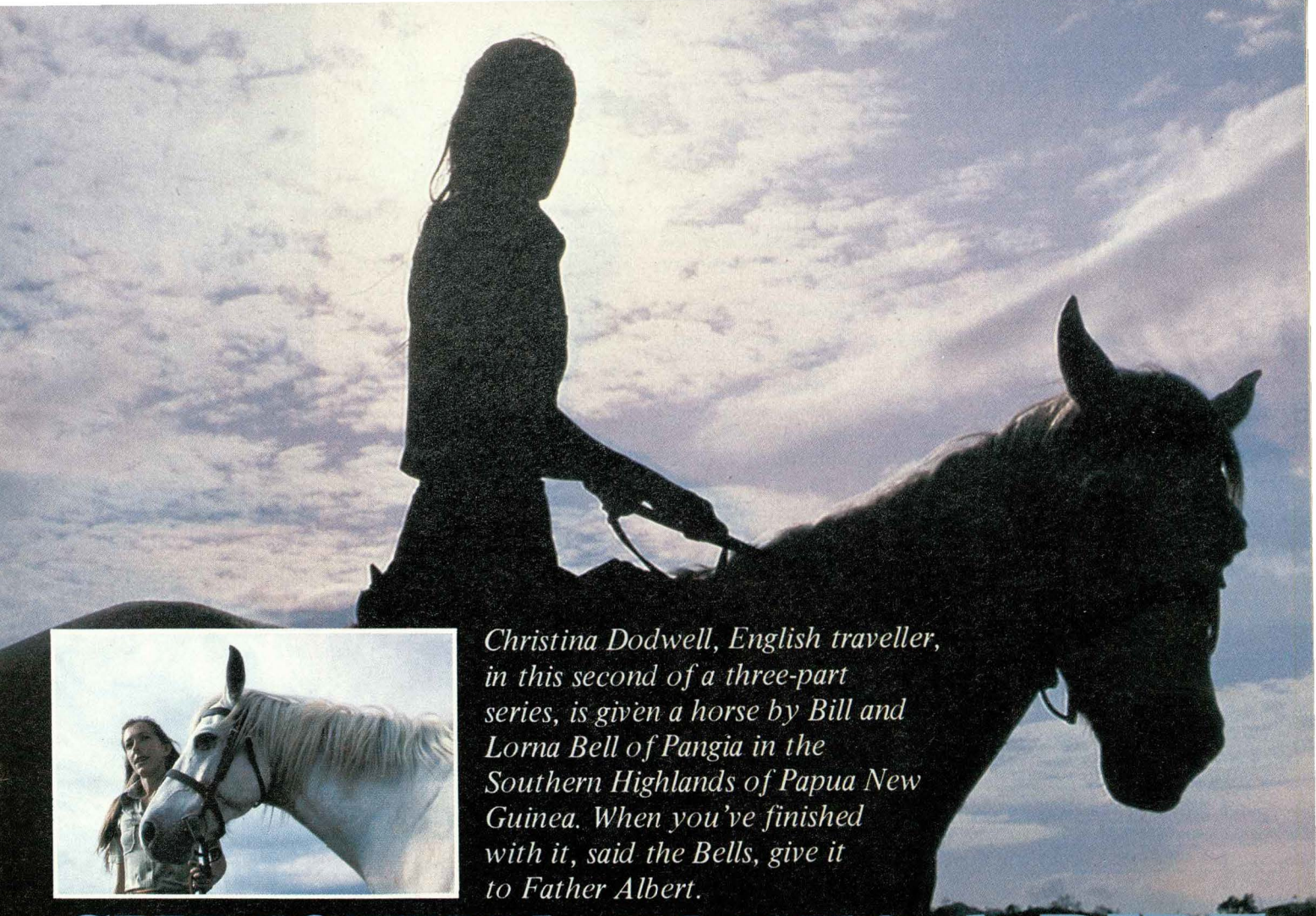


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Christina Dodwell, English traveller, in this second of a three-part series, is given a horse by Bill and Lorna Bell of Pangia in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. When you've finished with it, said the Bells, give it to Father Albert.

CHRISTINA TAKES A RIDE

THE first day was easy — from Pangia where I had met my mount to Ialibu where I'd been staying. The stallion was good to ride and didn't object to saddlebags, a necessity for my *wokabaut* on horseback.

My journey really started when I set out from Ialibu, heading along the airstrip and then west across the Ialibu basin, a wide valley crumpled by sharp hills rising to Mount Giluwe in the north. Mount Ialibu brooded behind me.

The track grew rougher and narrower until it was just a footpath across rolling scrubland of *pitpit* (wild sugar cane). Occasional clusters of thatched huts nestled in the shade of casuarina trees. Women tended *kaukau* (sweet potato) gardens, their babies asleep in the *bilums* (net bags) suspended from branches. The men sat doing nothing. Or gambling. Or talking politics. The provincial government elections were coming up.

Everyone stopped to stare at

me and my horse and many people accompanied us several kilometres. This was useful because the path was getting difficult and occasionally we needed help to hack our way through. A fearfully steep and narrow gulley led down to a river which we waded through. The hill on the other side was even steeper. The horse could just get up it but it could not have come back down. At least for that leg of the journey, it seemed, we had passed our point of no return.

Worse lay ahead. By the afternoon I'd got blisters from wielding a bushknife and both of us were caked in mud. But already we knew we could trust each other. He was sure-footed, had plenty of courage and had managed to get through incredibly difficult stretches.

It started to rain and dusk came early. The one man still accompanying me said a village was not far. But when I reached the top of a ridge, I couldn't face the descent and decided to

camp. The man wouldn't leave me. He asked if I feared him. I said I didn't. He helped me make camp.

Cloaked in dampness, we found water, gathered firewood and made a hearty supper from my provisions. We then slept rolled up in sheets of plastic — a last minute present from a thoughtful friend. It was a cold night but not surprising considering we were at 2150 metres. The horse grazed free and didn't wander away.

We woke to a red dawn with cloud blanketing the valleys below. My ally revived the fire and made tea. We set off down the escarpment.

For the next few days the going was challenging, sometimes horrifying. The saddle girth broke while crossing a marsh but, after a hero's welcome at the next group of huts — the old ones hugging me with obvious delight — the people insisted on fixing the girth for me using bark string.

One man was clearly import-

ant. His tally of bamboo sticks reached his waist. He told me each stick represented 10 pigs he had given away as an investment. He would get more pigs back after seven years. I recalled hearing that wealth is not measured by how much one owns but by how much one is owed. Eventually we reached a vehicle track. The rivers were again spanned by timber bridges. But my relief was shortlived. As we crossed a bridge the wood splintered. The horse fought to keep his feet. A hoof caught my leg and I went flying off into the river. No damage done but a sobering experience.

We gave up trying to cross the Ialibu basin and turned north to Mount Giluwe, at 4370 metres, one of Papua New Guinea's loftiest and certainly most majestic peaks. We travelled a road built by villagers years before under a patrol officer's supervision. It goes around Giluwe on the side opposite today's Mendi-Mount Hagen highway.

Election day had arrived and

I came across a village polling booth. It was early morning. Giluwe was swathed in mist, and more mist rising from the valleys below produced an eerie effect, blurring every image.

In the gloom ahead I could hear chanting. A group of men materialised — their faces streaked with white paint — dancing along the road. They were getting ready to vote; dancing themselves into the right mood. Several men waved political banners with photographs of those they supported. The horse took fright at the sight but the voting party was equally surprised. I spent most of the morning at the booth, a roped area at the top of a hill besides some abandoned huts.

As the first of the day's sun slanted through the mist, voting began. With great ceremony and dignity, the leading men cast their votes. The crowds built up and soon scores of people were stamping their eagerness to pass through the roped area. Ballots were posted into small red boxes and indelible green ink was put on a finger to prevent voters coming round a second time. Voting over, everyone joined in a *singsing*.

Pushing on around Giluwe, at about 2770 metres, I spotted a track leading up to moss forest and the peaks. So we went that way. It was bush-bashing again but with the summits set in a vast alpine grassland we were able to wander for miles. Like being on top of the world.

Over the next two weeks we followed tracks and old roads impassable to traffic and often difficult for my trusty friend. Many of the old patrol officer-inspired roads still exist but the bridges are mostly rotten. We cut our way down to rivers and waded or swam across when we couldn't make a bridge serviceable with freshly cut branches.

Roadstones were sharp and it was tough on the horse. I hoped his shoes would hold out. One rear shoe got a bit distorted after we fell through another bridge. We stopped in places

like Mendi, Nipa and Margarima looking for shoe nails but there was none.

We followed the Highlands Highway from Nipa to Margarima at a time when it was impassable to traffic. Frequently we were wading belly-deep. We met vehicles bogged, some abandoned, one up to its headlights in mud. A caterpillar tractor was trying to pull it out.

I came to rely on my horse's instinct. He would sniff his way through swampland — picking the least treacherous spots. I doubt that a stable-bred horse would have had that uncanny sixth sense.

We learnt by experience about the nature of the land; and, because of the slowness of our travels, I learnt a lot about the people of the Southern Highlands.

Firewood and stones arranged in a village means a *munu* (cooking with hot stones in a pit) is to be held soon. Wooden stakes standing in a row indicate a *moka* (pig exchange) is due. It was fascinating to watch the processes leading up to a celebration.

The *singsing* is not necessarily the finale to a ceremony. Sometimes it is just a part of a greater cycle of events which, in the Mendi area, are centred around the men's long huts. These range from 30 to 300 metres. When not in use, long huts stand forlorn and overgrown with weeds, steam lifting from their thatch in the early heat of the sun.

One afternoon, as we walked along a stony mountain track, we could hear singing. Soon we came upon a village where everyone was helping to build a new long house. Men were in the nearby forest cutting saplings, bands of youths were cutting *kunai* (grass) and the women were weaving walls from *pitpit*. As they worked they sang, harmonising.

An old man, whose wig had a leaf-trimmed net topped with cassowary plumes, told me a long house has a seven-year life

although it cannot be used until it has had one change of thatch. At the end of the first year it is used for a small pig-kill. In the second it hosts a small *singsing*. Year three it is used for a pig exchange. In the fourth year there's another *singsing*. Year five and it's a major pig-kill. It then lies empty for two years before an immense pig-kill is staged, after which it is burnt to the ground.

Then a new long house is built and the cycle starts again. Each clan has a different cycle. The long house serves the purpose of a calendar, giving year and time references to the people.

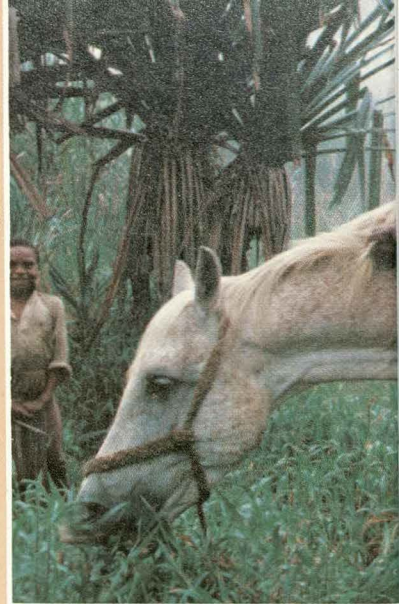
Most of the villagers hadn't seen a horse before. They came in droves to stand, at first mute, then shaking their heads and muttering in tones of disbelief.

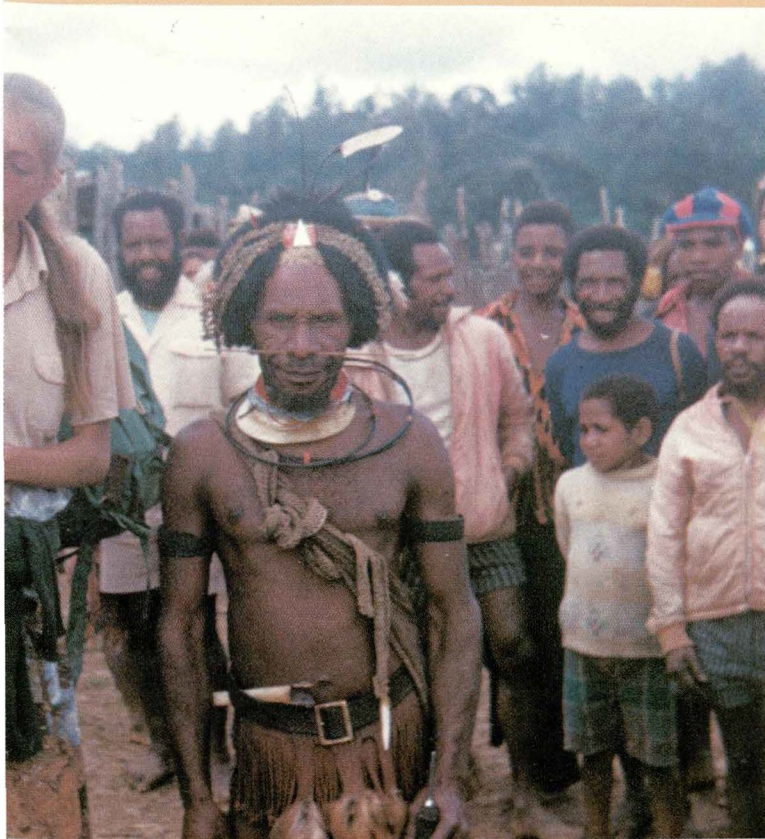
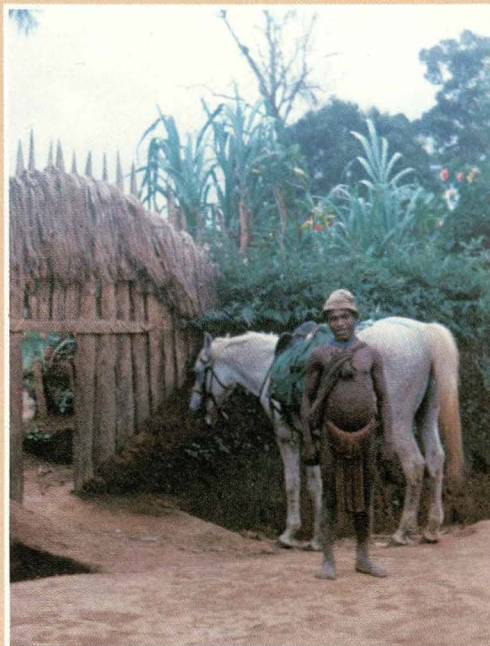
Often I stayed in villages. Sometimes in school houses, at Christian missions or in track-side bush huts. At high altitudes the bush huts are built close to the ground to provide warmth. The doors are only about 60 centimetres high making it necessary to crawl in on hands and knees.

Wherever I have travelled in Papua New Guinea I have found people to be kind, helpful and hospitable. The Highlands are no exception. Gratitude is difficult to express in words. I hope I have given as much as I have received.

Of course, not everyone was good. I ran into a few rascals. My worst moment was when someone stole my horse in the night. I tracked it for several kilometres before losing its trail. I spoke to local leaders and a council of elders was called. Eventually I found my horse tied near a hut. The thief wouldn't give him back unless I paid Kina 50. The situation got very tense before I bargained him down to K12.

Sometimes I camped in the bush knowing there was little likelihood of being disturbed. I carry a hammock. It's pleasant to lie swaying in the breeze





slung between two trees. I didn't need to tether the horse. He never strayed. Occasionally I was woken by blasts of warm breath on my face. It was only my stallion checking that I hadn't gone away.

After nearly a month on the hoof, we went through the Gap and down into the Tari basin. Tari was like a new beginning. No sharp stones — just smooth clay surfaces. We were free to gallop and gallop. This is the land of the Huli wigmen — a land of red clay, vibrantly green hills, scattered garden hamlets with huts hidden behind traditional spiked fighting gates.

The wigs of human hair, decorated with yellow everlasting daisies, are crescent-shaped and no two are alike. They are decorated variously with feathers, flowers, bottle tops, hornbill beaks, shells . . . you name it. Beards are the fashion, some with soft ferns intertwined.

Self-decoration is of prime importance to the Huli, symbolising mental and physical well-being. Face paint results in strange effects using red, yellow and white in patterns. Huli men go to work fully decorated. Those who don't have wigs have wreaths of grass or foliage. I met many wigmen along the road, just strolling along blowing softly into bamboo flutes in melodious tunelessness.

We stopped for a while — staying with Ursula, an artist, in a bungalow on a corner of the Piwas agricultural station. I called the place 'home'. It didn't remind me of home. I'm a traveller and 'home' therefore, is just a state of mind. 'Home' for me crops up in many places, often unexpectedly.

The Tari basin is vast and encircled by towering mountains. Each day I set off in a different direction. I rode toward the Doma peaks in the east and set off for Porami Ridge to the north but didn't get there because we side-tracked to a pig-kill and *mumu*.

Sadly my days at Piwas were a time of many funerals. Cause

of death usually was cerebral malaria. Frequently I could hear the high-pitched wailing of funeral parties. Mourners showed their grief by smearing their faces with ochre.

I went to Kolete. The Huli believe their first ancestors emerged from an underground world through the limestone caves at Kolete. The caves are shallow with interlinking tunnels and red ochre on the walls.

I had not intended to go further west than Tari but then I heard about the Levani Valley near Koroba. Writers have described it as The Lost Valley and Shangri-La. They said mountain barriers isolated it completely from the outside world and that it contained a different race of people. Actually there is a way in and people are wigmen, just like those outside.

I followed a disused miners' track for many kilometres and then the bed of a stream which led rockily upwards. It was over the ridge and then down a steep path made of branches. The valley was marshy and once, while floundering out of deep mud, I slipped and fell in front of the struggling horse's hooves. He was halfway jumping up the bank. Mud flew as he grabbed for a firm footing. He stopped in mid-stride and tumbled backwards into the mud. Somehow my hand found his nose and I was able to push myself out of the way. When I stood up pain shot through my knee. I was lame for several days. But lucky.

There was no blacksmith at Tari but at the high school I met 'Miss Moira', an American with a heart of gold — and a set of blacksmith's tools. Neither of us was good at shoeing but between us we did a fair job.

From Tari we retraced our steps to the Gap and headed for Enga Province. We hurried because the clouds looked threatening and the Gap is notorious for its peasoupers.

By late afternoon we were at about 2770 metres and the montane wilderness stretched



ahead, empty but for islands of moss forest dotted across open grassland. The slopes of Mount Ne and Doma peaks glowed in the evening sun. I camped between them near a forest-island, slinging my hammock between two ferns.

The forest had plenty of firewood and my ears led me to a waterfall. As the sun set a full moon rose in the east. At that altitude, the thinness of the air makes moonlight as bright as a cloudy day. The horse slept within nudging distance of my hammock and stirred his hind feet each time the howling of wild dogs came near. I was content. I felt we belonged there just as much as the dogs, moonshadows and mountains.

We travelled on into Enga Province and while there I heard there was to be a rodeo at Mendi. On impulse I decided to ride my horse in the big event — the Great Cross-Country Race. That's another story but at the rodeo I met Father Albert. My promise came back to me.

Giving my horse away was like losing part of myself. Images of him sniffing marshes for safe crossings, wading and swimming through rivers, his loyalty and courage . . . But Father Albert has a reputation for gentleness with animals. At Kagua he runs a farm with cows, sheep and goats. There are horses but his favourite had just died. I hoped mine would fill the gap.

It was back to routine farm life for my faithful companion. But already he had taken his place in the folklore of the people of the mountains. ♣



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pacific

Left: feather star attached to a red gorgonian coral; below: diver inspects a red gorgonian



Story and pictures: Tony Gardiner

capital delights

WHEN divers talk of Papua New Guinea, their mind's eye image is usually Madang, or Rabaul, or Wuvulu Island out on the Bismarck Sea. But if you are not able to find the time or money to get to these farflung places, Port Moresby, PNG's capital

city, at the right moment, can offer great diving action.

Not far off the shore there are vast areas of coral reef, still virgin and unexplored. It's not like the Caribbean, Hawaii and the Mediterranean, where masses of tourists, fishermen and souvenir collectors have selfish-

ly and brutally exploited marine life and damaged delicate reef formations.

The foundation of the reefs near Port Moresby is a conglomeration of compacted limestones built up over the aeons as a result of an accumulation of dead coral superstructures, molluscs shell casings and animal debris.

The coral colonies are formed by a tiny animal called a polyp (a soft living organism). This animal, of which there are millions, extracts from the sea water soluble calcium which it passes through its body. The result is a small sculptured cup called a corallite.

Corallites can be identified by closely examining a dead branch of stony coral on which the indented pores are clearly visible. The polyp remains housed in these corallites and, if disturbed, can completely withdraw itself for protection.

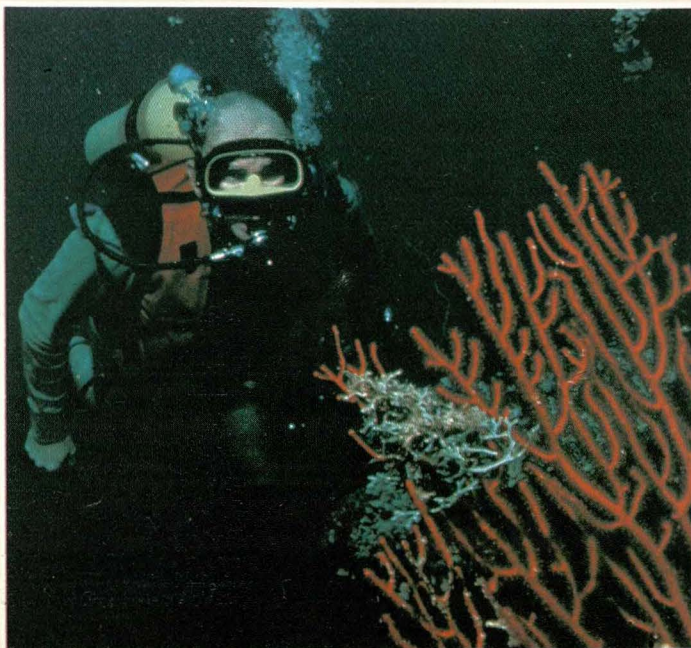
As life goes on, the reefs are

exposed to a variety of elements which can damage fragile corals. The polyps regenerate damaged areas by reproducing either sexually or asexually, depending on the species, thus providing the reefs with a continuation of the species from the initial polyp.

Their proliferation is due to an adapted hardiness which enables them to live in almost any light at a variety of depths. They can adhere themselves to any substance. Environment and conditions dictate the shape and form in which coral grows.

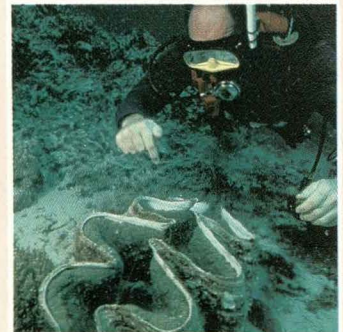
On areas exposed to heavy surf, the coral crop will be stunted or stocky whereas in areas of consistent tidal currents, huge fan-shaped corals will be found standing perpendicular and facing the prevailing current. This is to ensure that the greatest mass of plankton-rich waters flows through its many sprayed appendages.

At the top of the reef are masses of 'table-top' staghorn





Clockwise from below: Reef fish shelter under a lonely hard coral; starlike polyps of soft coral reach out in search of nourishment; a cuttlefish colours up to warn off an approaching diver; the giant clam – maker of myths; anemone shows itself off in response to the photographer's flash



corals. They are tight branches spread in a circular pattern looking upwards, like table tops, to obtain the advantage of light and suspended nutrition. The corals, being extremely fragile, are found only in well sheltered areas.

To the non-specialist, there are basically two types of coral – hard and soft. Hard are those which are scientifically characterised by the six tentacles projecting from each polyp. Polyps which produce soft

corals have eight tentacles surrounding their mouths. Most soft corals, as their name suggests, are soft and smooth. Undoubtedly they are the most striking and colourful of all corals. However some soft corals do form a skeleton. Black and red corals sought after for jewelry and the spectacular sea fans are in this category.

Though reefs near Port Moresby are relatively untouched, they too are in danger from increasing numbers of curious

visitors. The Papua New Guinea Government, to save them, has set aside areas of reef as protected reserves.

As evidence of the underwater beauty to be found around Port Moresby, all photographs on these pages were taken in the national capital's reefs. — *Tony Gardiner is an Air Niugini staff member.* 🐙





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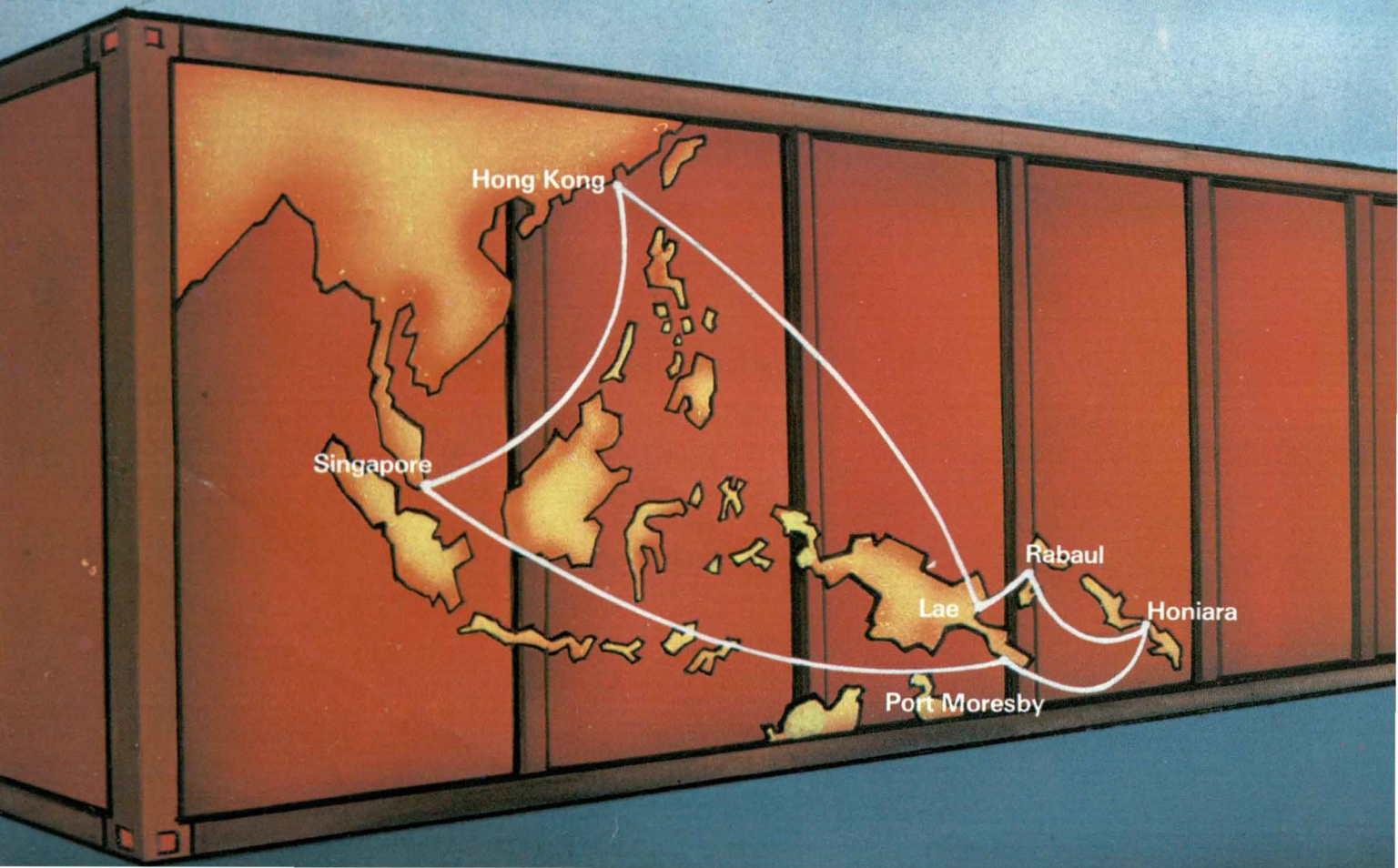
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THE 'MORESBY WRECK'

By Robert Piper

THE Moresby Wreck', as it is known in the Papua New Guinea capital, is subject of many rumours, among them that it was a German raider which ran aground in World War I. Rarely will you find someone who even knows its name, let alone tell you the story about how the SS *Pruth* became more famous in death than in life.

The *Pruth*, British built and owned, was constructed in 1916 at Sunderland, northeast England, at the yards of J.L. Thompson. Officially listed as a 'steel screw schooner', the *Pruth* was 123 metres long, 16.3 metres across the beam and had a draught of eight metres. Unladen, it weighed 3000 tonnes and it had a cargo

capacity of about 1750 tonnes.

With a cargo of galvanised iron, barbed wire, cars and oil, the *Pruth* left San Francisco in November 1923. It stopped at Samarai in southeastern Papua New Guinea to load copra and then headed for Port Moresby where more copra was waiting on the wharf.

It was squally along the Papuan coast on the evening of December 30. Captain Matthew Hudson, constantly consulting his charts, edged the *Pruth* toward the Basilisk Passage, the entrance to Walter Bay which washes Ela Beach. A sudden very strong gust on the port side and his vessel was up on Nateara Reef.

Any grounding is serious but the consensus of all on board

was that the *Pruth* could be refloated. But through the night a heavy southeast swell steadily pushed it into a more critical position. Anchors were run out to check the drift and next day work began to unload the cargo to lighten the vessel.

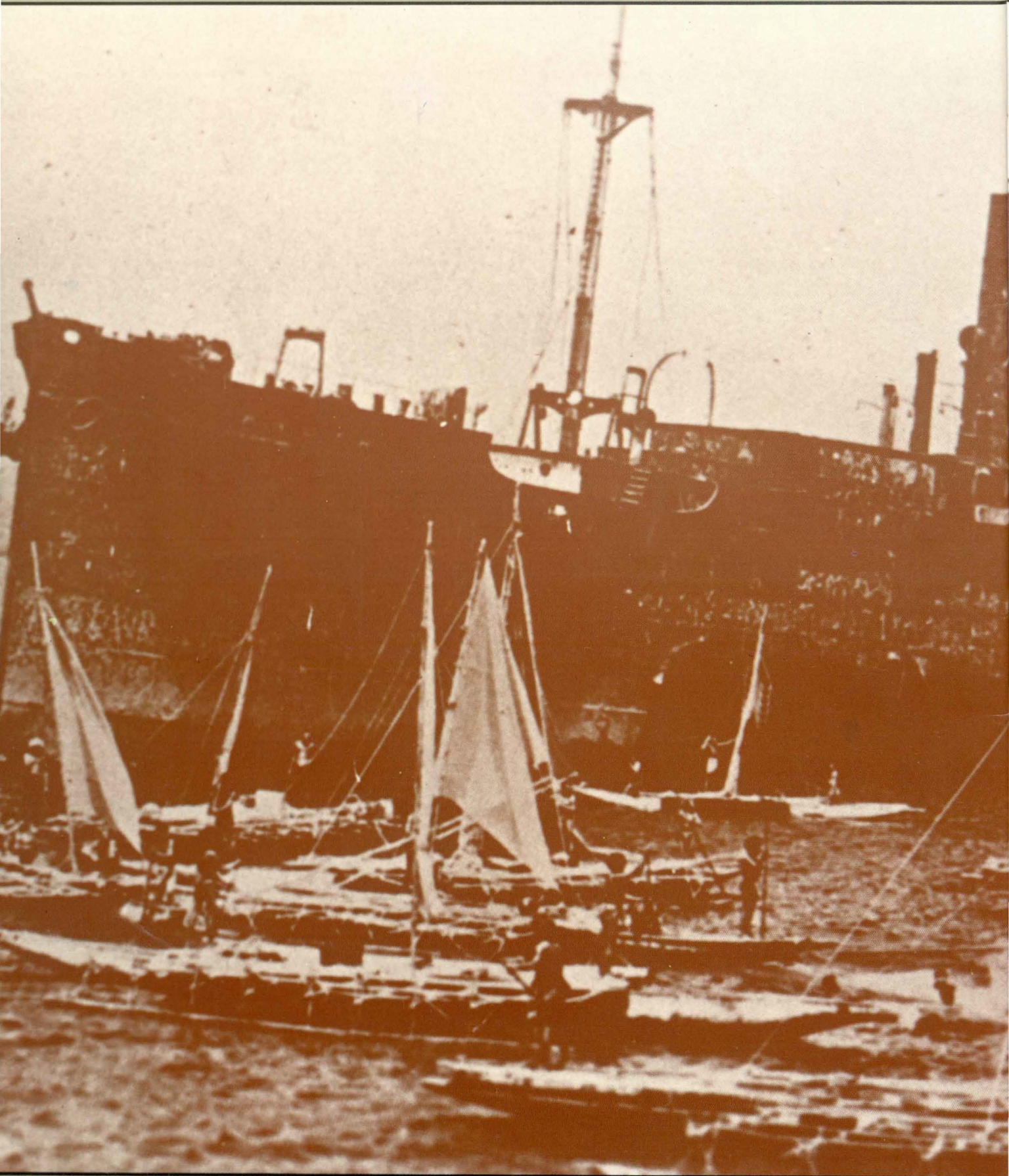
Lloyds of London received wireless messages on January 1 and 2 from Port Moresby. The second read: 'British steamer *Pruth* still aground. Anticipate refloating high tide (January 4) providing weather favourable.'

Marine authorities in Port Moresby offered to give a hand but Hudson decided he could move off under his own power when the tide was right. The high tide refloat attempt failed. It would be necessary to pull it off. However, it was considered

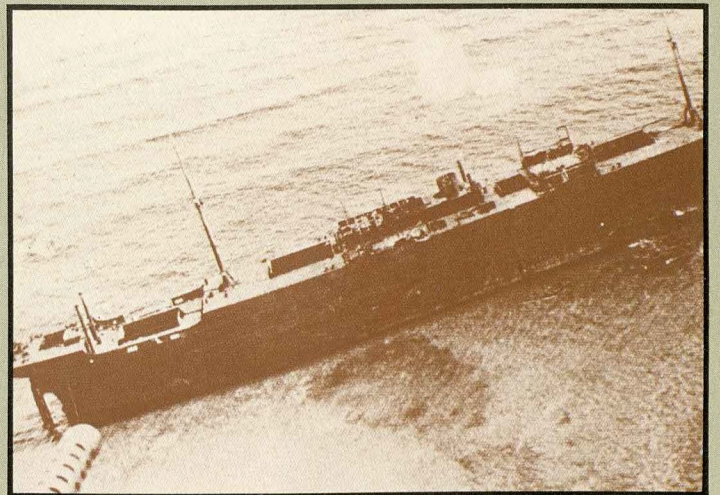
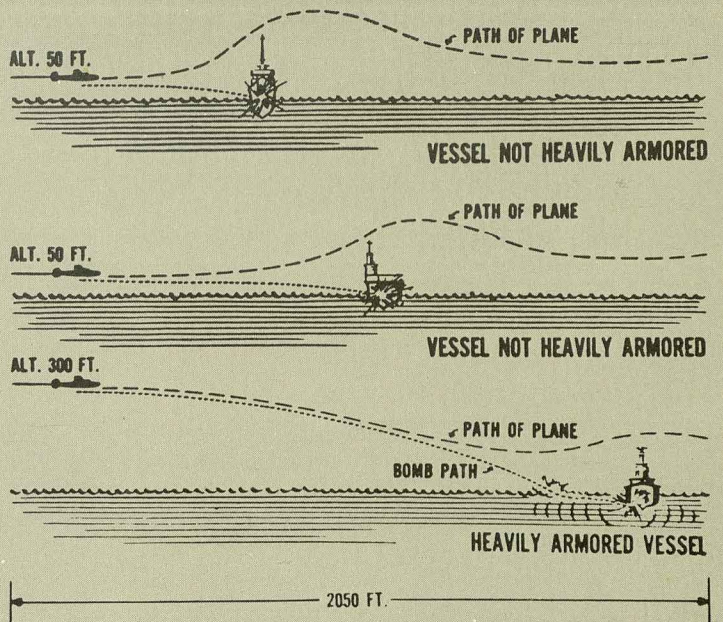
too dangerous for a large steamer to do the job so a tug was sent for from Brisbane. Ten days later the *Coringa* arrived with a diver and salvage gear.

In the meantime, a temporary wharf had been hastily erected on nearby Manubada (Local) Island. About 900 tonnes of cargo were unloaded in this way but not without incident. A small schooner, the *Lotus*, caught fire and was completely gutted. One of the Papuan crewmen suffered severe burns and died later.

By January 19, with weather continuing unfavourable, Captain Hudson was nearing desperation. He began jettisoning cargo and fuel coal. Anything which would lighten the load went out. Numbers 1



Below: Motuan canoes race past the Pruth in the late 1920s; right: bombing methods practised on the Pruth; right below: the Pruth before the bombing started



and 5 holds were leaking but pumps still kept the flow under control. Worse, the vessel was 'hogged' – caught in the centre and sagging at each end.

His efforts were to no avail. Four days later the *Pruth* was 200 metres further onto the reef and the position had become hopeless. Lloyds were notified: 'We have abandoned her.'

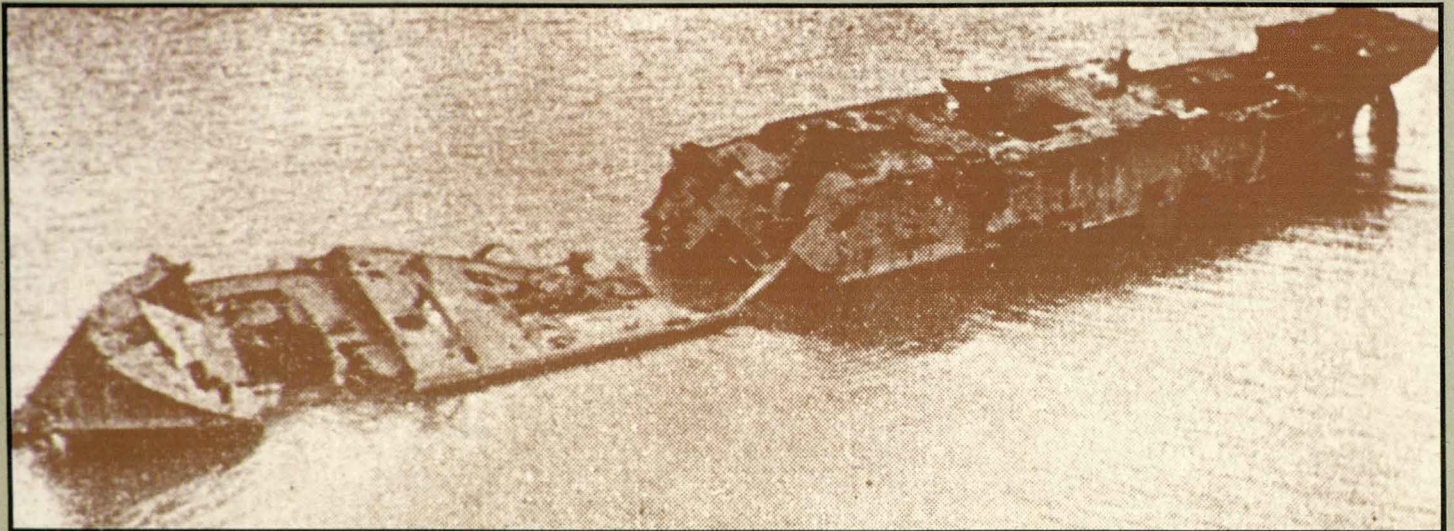
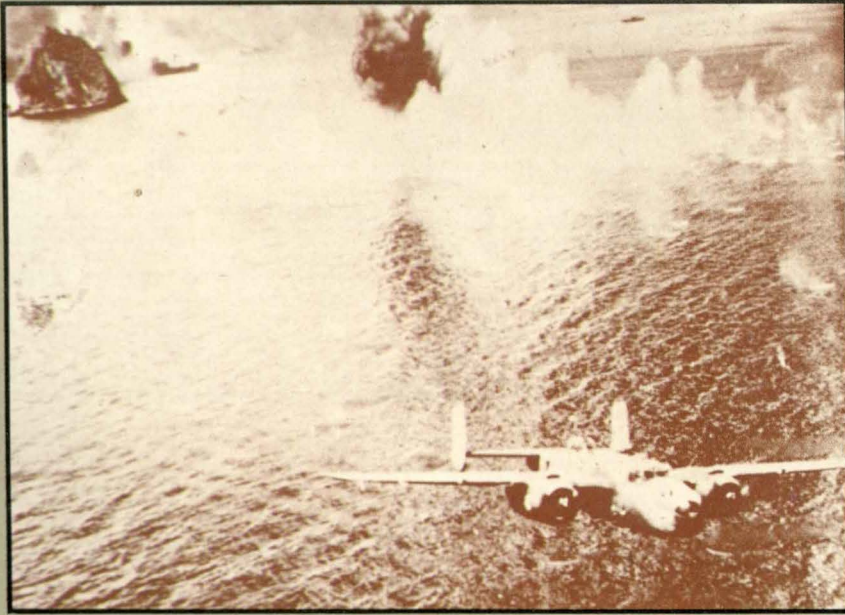
Through the thirties the *Pruth* remained firmly wedged about 15 kilometres south of Ela Beach. It was in these years that it became known as 'The Moresby Wreck'. Sometime in the thirties salvage rights were acquired by one G.A. Stewart of Napa Napa, but by 1940 it was still substantially intact and there was a move to sell it for scrap to Japan. However, on defence department advice, the Australian Government put a stop to that. Instead, the steel propeller and about 200 tonnes of other *Pruth* scrap metal were shipped to Australia on the Burns Philp vessel, the *Macdhui*

(which was later bombed and sunk in Port Moresby Harbour.)

Though now a reef derelict, the stripped and rusty old *Pruth* still had one role to play before being allowed to rot in peace. As the Pacific conflict rolled south, squadrons of Allied bombers began pouring into Papua. Their first objective – to stem the flow of enemy and supplies being landed on New Guinea's northern shores – was Japanese shipping. Aircraft such as the Mitchell B25, A20 Havoc and Beaufighter were being tested for skip bombing and strafing. These revolutionary new attack procedures demanded a high level of accuracy and demanded intense training on the part of aircrews. The most convenient target for the Moresby squadrons was the *Pruth*.

The old wreck was battered by bombs, strafed by cannons and riddled with machinegun fire. Tragically, the derelict claimed three victims during

Left: USAF Mitchells on low level attack over Rabaul harbour; below: Mitchell takes on Japanese destroyer



The Pruth, bombed, battered and machine-gunned, is left to rust in peace

Walker had earlier strongly advocated delayed fuses but on inspection it was clear that instantaneous fuses were more effective against the *Pruth's* rusty steel slab sides. Even near misses cut holes about a metre square. Kenney, who had pressed for instantaneous fuses, had won his bet and Walker rowed the boat back to deep water and a waiting motorboat. (Walker was lost two months later – on January 5, 1943 – in a B17 daylight bombing raid over Rabaul.)

The rest is history. Skills developed against the *Pruth* proved a resounding success in actions such as the Battle of the

Bismarck Sea. Convoys were broken, warships destroyed and armies left without food or equipment. The *Pruth* had played an important role in the Allied drive back through the islands.

The last Japanese air raid on Port Moresby – the 113th – came at 0345 on September 20, 1943, and involved only two bombers. It was as if one of the pilots knew of the *Pruth's* contribution to his enemy's war effort. He aimed a stick of bombs at the wreck on the Natara Reef. It missed.

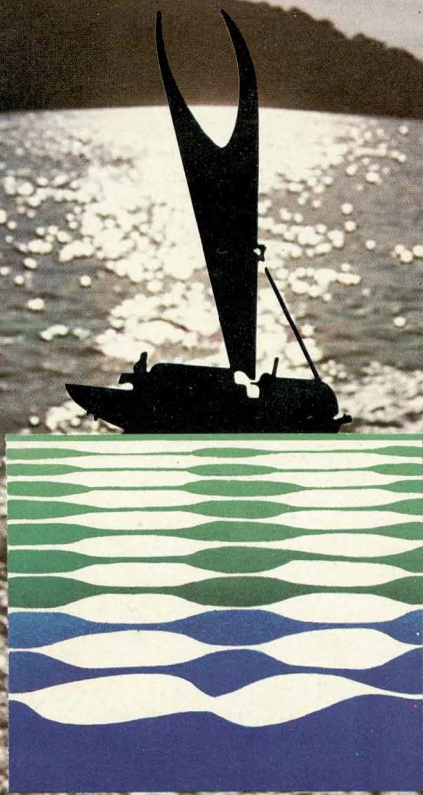
From Ela Beach today, at low tide, the *Pruth* appears as two jagged black rocks on the

horizon. The *Macdhui*, lying on its side in Port Moresby Harbour, is far more imposing. There is a move to have a plaque mounted on the beach in memory of 'The Moresby Wreck' and the Australian and American airmen who lost their lives while learning to win the war by blasting away at the *Pruth*.

If you are visiting Port Moresby and want to get to know more about the *Pruth*, and other wrecks and relics of war in the area, call on Bruce Hoy, curator of the Aviation, Maritime and War Museum. – Robert Kendall Piper is Historical Officer for Air with the Australian Department of Defence. ✪

these training exercises – one of each type of aircraft. The only survivors were two members of the Beaufighter crew. The Mitchell and Beaufighter struck the *Pruth's* masts while the Havoc was brought down when 20-pound fragmentation bombs exploded prematurely.

It is on record that two top American Air Force generals, George Kenney and Ken Walker, visited the *Pruth* by rowing boat to study the results of their pilots' handiwork. General



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