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Iambakey Okuk, C.B.E., M.P.
Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister for Transport and Civil Aviation

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Cover: Air Niugini's second Dash 7 aircraft with the Papuan Coast and the Owen Stanley Ranges in background. Photograph: PX Productions

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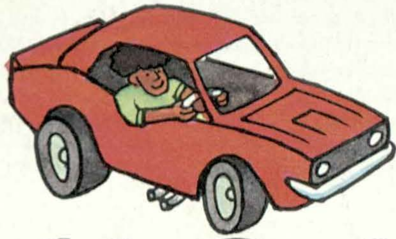
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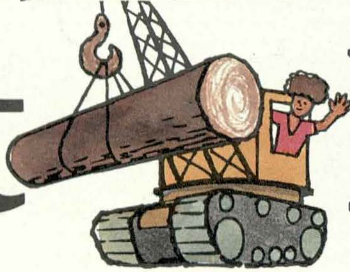
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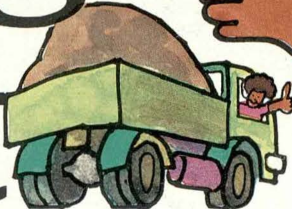

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A GREAT WAY TO FLY

THE man in the left hand seat surrounded by grey panels and gauges, cranes forward in his seat and peers over his right shoulder, then his left. He speaks to no-one in particular. "Clear three". A stab from the man's right hand unleashes the 1120 horse-power of the number three Pratt and Whitney engine. Outside the yellow-tipped black fibre-glass blades of the big paddle-like propellor whirr into action. "Clear four". And the process is repeated. "Clear two". The aircraft develops a gently swaying motion as the Pilot and the First Officer in the right hand seat continue to run through their pre take-off checks. "Clear one". Now the last row of gauges in the group of four in front of the two men becomes active. Needles jump and numbers tumble.

In unison the two men slip on their headphones like big padded ear muffs. The noise from the engines changes almost imperceptibly, the brakes are released and the aircraft is underway.

The aircraft is the most modern short take-off and landing stol aircraft in the world, the Canadian built de Havilland Dash 7. The man in the left hand seat is Air Niugini's Chief Dash 7 Pilot, Captain Ian Phillips. The flight is the inaugural Dash 7 passenger service between Port Moresby and Mount Hagen.

As Captain Phillips turns onto runway one-four-left the tower clears him for take-off and the 2,700 metre expanse of concrete stretches out in front.

It's 6.49 a.m. local time but the digital clock ticking away the seconds on the instrument panel indicates that it's 20.49.40 Greenwich Mean Time.

From outside the sound from the engines increases ever so

Right: *the 48 seat interior of the Dash 7;* **far right:** *the arrival of the new aircraft draws an enthusiastic crowd at Bulolo;* **below:** *Transport Minister, Mr Iambakey Okuk addresses the crowd;* **bottom:** *Captain Ian Phillips jokes with villagers*

slightly as Captain Phillips eases the four throttle levers forward as one. The gentle swaying motion of the aircraft increases slightly, the brakes are off, we're moving forward. Not in noisy, galloping, straining way that one experiences in a jet take-off. In the Dash 7 lift-off comes as a surprise. There's very little vibration, minimal noise and long before you expect it the nose of the aircraft kicks up and you're flying. It all seems too easy. In fact the precise electronic clock ticking away the GMT seconds confirms that from brakes-off to take-off the elapsed time is sixteen seconds. We have only used a meagre 300 metres or one ninth of concrete available on runway one-four left.

That is what this aeroplane is all about. For the first time in history of Papua New Guinea, where aircraft provide the bus service, large domestic aircraft will serve all provinces.

In announcing the arrival of the Dash 7 aircraft, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport, Mr Iambakey Okuk, said that it represented a new and challenging era of service for the people of PNG. Mr Okuk said that the STOL capabilities of the Dash 7 would enable it to serve the Enga, Gulf, Southern Highlands and Chimbu provinces. The terrain in these provinces makes it costly at best and at worse impossible to build longer airstrips to take conventional large capacity aircraft. The future development of transportation into these areas is largely dependent on aircraft with STOL capabilities.

As Captain Phillips turns left off the end of Jackson's field the concrete runway is left 500 feet below. Inside the cabin there is

little vibration and even less noise. After all the Dash 7 is reportedly the quietest domestic aeroplane in the world. Not only inside but outside as well.

Mr Okuk says that he has had it confirmed that when the Dash 7 arrived in Sydney on its demonstration flight it was so quiet that it didn't even register on the Department of Transport's highly sensitive noise measuring equipment.

In the cockpit Captain Phillips tells us that it's the Dash 7's big fibre-glass paddle propellors that make it so quiet. In the cabin the quietness is far superior to anything in its class. Conversation between passengers on the far side of the cabin is no problem at normal speaking levels,

even along the propellor line.

As we reach our cruise height of 18,500 ft., high above the Papuan Coast the noise level drops even more. The seats in the passenger cabin are firm and business-like with plenty of lumbar support, in fact not unlike those being used by the two pilots in the cockpit. Even with the cabin fully configured to take a full compliment of 48 passengers there is plenty of leg room.

The Dash 7 is fully convertible from pasenger to freight or various combinations of the two. Its four fuel efficient Pratt and Whitney engines enable it to operate at altitudes up to 20,000 ft, cruise at 400 kilometres per hour with a range of up to 2000 kilometres.

Around the world airlines with operational problems similar to those of Air Niugini are investing in the Dash 7. In Austria Tyrolean Airways are using the Dash 7 to overcome the problems of flying in the mountains, Hawaiian Air is using the aircraft to link dozens of tiny islands safely and efficiently. In the Pacific, Air Niugini is showing the way. Since the successful introduction of the aircraft in Papua New Guinea, it is now being evaluated by the national airline of Fiji.

The introduction of the Dash 7 is the first move in a long term strategy plan devised by the Transport Minister, Mr Okuk, Air Niugini and the PNG National Airline Commission to re-equip the airline with the most modern and technically suitable aircraft available.

The Chairman of the National Airline Commission, Mr Ben Sabumei, says that the purchase of the first three Dash 7 aircraft, with more to come, is an investment for the future. He says that the airline's first responsibility is to the domestic traveller within Papua New Guinea. However now that the domestic re-equipment programme is well advanced the National Airline Commission is investigating proposals to purchase new aircraft for Air Niugini's international routes to Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila and Honolulu. Mr Sabumei sees this carefully planned and implemented re-equipment programme as stage two in the evolution of Air Niugini, which commenced operations in 1973.

Mr Sabumei sees the introduction of the Dash 7 as "a vehicle to promote progress in Papua New Guinea and the development of Air Niugini as the country's national airline."

Captain Phillips is a little less ultruistic but just as enthusiastic about the Dash 7. As the aircraft turns tightly and he meticulously settles it onto its final approach to Mount Hagen airport, just one hour and thirty-five minutes after leaving Port Moresby, he grins at his co-pilot, "great aeroplane to fly". Not only that, it's a great aeroplane to fly in.

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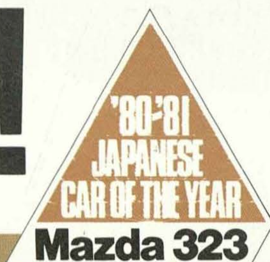

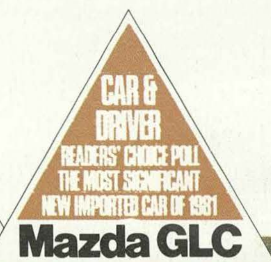

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THE MAGNIFICENT 7

By Malcolm Douglas

Five pilots and two engineers comprised the ferry crew that was to deliver Air Niugini's first Dash 7 aircraft. P2-ANN, from Canada to Port Moresby. Seven crew members that were to share the confinement of an aircraft for sixteen days, sharing the full gamut of emotions as the flight progressed half way round the world. Seven of us in a Dash 7. It seemed only fitting to dub ourselves — "The Magnificent Seven".

Tuesday November 10 saw us all assembled at Downsview Airport, Toronto, Canada, birthplace of the Dash 7 ready to commence the flight.

After take-off we settled down to cruise at Flight Level 190 (19,000 ft) in a clear moonlit night above a layer of cloud that lay like a protective blanket over North-Eastern Canada, as we forged ahead to our first stop — Goose Bay.

Weather forecasts had promised us favourable winds and we were logging a comfortable 245 knotts.

In the cabin, off duty crew members dined regally on Canadian salmon. Not forgetting those on duty on the flight deck, we quickly mastered the art of hostessing and we took turns at waiting on de Havilland pilots Bruce Flynn and Barry Norris who were crewing the first sector.

Arriving at Goose Bay we found one mile visibility, a 1,500 ft cloud base, and light snow falling. The Goose Bay terminal building was deserted but we were greeted by a ground handling agent who replenished our fuel tanks while we trudged through the snow to the Weather Office.

The forecaster, once again, promised us favourable tail winds and a good forecast for our arival into Reykjavic, Iceland, 1,350 nautical miles away across the North Atlantic.

Five hours and fifteen minutes after take-off from Goose Bay found us on final approach at Reyjavic — local time 8.30 a.m. and in these high latitudes, still dark. As in Goose Bay we touched down in the midst of a soft snow fall, and we could clearly see the high snow banks on each side of the runway in our landing lights, where the snow had been bulldozed to the side to leave the runway clear. Although it was snowing, and with a gusty crosswind, plus a strong possibility of ice on the runway, we were completely confident with the superior ground handling of the Dash 7.

Following a twenty-four rest stop we reboarded our aircraft for the next leg through to Rotterdam, Holland.

After take-off, we remained cocooned in cloud until about 100 miles from Scotland where we were to make our landfall at the Orkney Isles, passing abeam Inverness, and continue tracking down the British Isles. This was our first true landfall we had made visually since lifting off at Downsview. Up until now all our flying had been at night.

We were all thrilled to see the green fields unfold below us. In fact, if one listened closely enough, it was just possible to hear the skirl of the

pipes as we passed over Scotland, 19,000 feet below! Strong tail winds considerably shortened our flight time into Rotterdam.

Departure time from Holland the following morning found us gazing at our aeroplane — covered in ice! Bravely the sun struggled over the horizon, and we decided to let nature take its course, and let the heat of the sun thaw out our aeroplane. Accident books are full of aeroplanes that attempted to take off with ice on the wings!

"What did you do today, Daddy?" Your children may well ask. This day the "Magnificent Seven" crossed the airspace of Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Greece, finally descending through bumpy cumulous clouds to land at the island of Corfu. We were all in good spirits as we crossed the North African coast and followed the Nile down to Luxor, famous as the starting off point for visitors to the world famous "Valley of the Kings". We thought we might have had ample time to visit these tombs at great leisure,

Left: *The Dash 7 on its delivery flight at snow-covered Reykjavic airport in Iceland; and* **above:** *in stark contrast a warm village welcome at Garaina in PNG's Morobe Province*

as the refuelling truck, driven with more exuberance than common sense, came within inches of smashing into our outer port propellor!

Leaving Egypt and the River Nile behind us we struck across the Red Sea and the deserts of Saudi Arabia, crossing the centuries old caravan paths as we headed towards Bahrain in the Arabian Gulf for a refuelling stop before pushing on to Muscat, arriving there at midnight, local time.

Weatherwise, conditions couldn't have been better for our Crossing of India. Leaving Muscat just after midnight we crossed the Arabian sea under the cover of darkness arriving in Bombay shortly after dawn. Three hours later, after countless forms had beem stamped, handling charges paid, fuel bills settled we were on our way to Calcutta and hence to Bangkok.

From Bangkok on, it was all downhill, as the saying goes. Another short break in Singapore and then to Darwin where we took time off to "pretty up" our aeroplane prior to the last sector to Port Moresby.

After sixteen days, of flying hours; extended duty periods and flight over 22 countries, the "Magnificent Seven" and the first of Air Niugini's new fleet of Dash 7 aircraft arrived in Port Moresby exactly on schedule.

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In the sparsely-populated flatlands of the Morehead region of southwestern Papua New Guinea rocky outcrops are rare. But anthills are plentiful, some of them four metres high, chunks of which make fine substitutes for rocks when constructing cooking ovens. Mary Ayres reports.

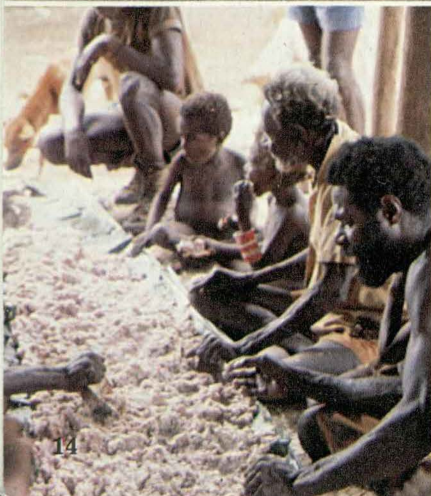
anthill ovens

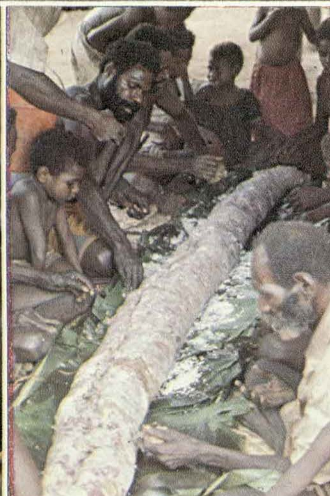
photographs Mary Ayres

YAMS are central to the diet of the people of the Morehead region. Manioc is second favourite and sago, taro and sweet potato are eaten occasionally. There's plenty of meat in the bush in the form of wild pigs, wallabies, cassowaries and rusa deer. The rivers teem with fish, especially barramundi, saratoga, mullet and catfish. And there are crocodiles.

No one who lives in that area of Western Province drained by the Mai Kussa, Wassi Kussa, Morehead and Bensbach rivers should ever go hungry.

The almost flat countryside is dominated by *melaleuca (paperbark)* and *acacia* trees, producing landscapes very similar to those of Northern Australia.





Left to right from top: *ladies prepare the oven; men scrape yams; and grate with shells; removing wood with bamboo tongs; the oven covered with paper bark; the cooked yam meat is heaped onto banana leaves; and rolled into the shape of a giant sausage; the baked yam pudding is devoured with delight*

The anthills, which occur throughout the area, are usually reddish-orange, a consequence of the high iron content in the soils.

Traditionally, food is baked in an oven or roasted directly over a fire. There is no evidence that bamboo containers have ever been used for boiling food and pottery appears to be unknown.

Though women do the everyday cooking, the men play an important role in the preparation of food for ceremonial feasts. For several days before a feast, women gather materials for the oven. They chop firewood to heat the oven, cut paperbark to cover it, and break up the anthills with axes, using the pieces as oven stones.

On the day of the feast the women first lay out a frame of pawpaw (papaya) trunks and spread chunks of anthills within the frame. Then firewood, supported by the frame, is carefully layered over the anthill pieces, spaced to ensure good ventilation. Then another thick layer of anthill pieces are placed on top of the firewood. Using paperbark as tinder, the women light the fire.

Meanwhile, the men are preparing the feast food in the shade of a tree. Long yams are the essential ingredient for the feast food which is known as *neuma*. Each man contributes yams and arrives armed with knife and yam scraper.

First a man skins the lower part of the yam. Then, with a shell, he scrapes or grates the meat of the yam. The middle section is cut and the core is scraped out with a long, narrow, spatula-shaped tool made from black palm wood.

Steadily, a mass of gooey raw yam pulp grows in the centre of the men's work area. The rinds of the yam sections and the tops of the yams are put aside for storage. These will sprout and be planted later in the year.

The pulp is wrapped in banana leaves to form long food pockets. By this time the wood in the oven has almost burned out and the anthill pieces are red hot. Any remaining bits of wood are tossed aside with bamboo tongs by the women so that the paperbark covering will not catch fire.

The anthill chunks are then spread out and the food packets are placed onto them. A few anthill pieces from the perimeter are then tossed onto the food packets and the whole oven is covered with layers of paperbark.

Everyone waits. Men and women sit in the shade of houses or trees, rolling cigarettes or snoozing; children play. About two hours later the oven is opened. The *neuma* is heaped on a new work surface of banana leaves. Sitting on either side of the *neuma*, the men, with half coconut shells, mix large quantities of grated coconut meat into the baked yam pulp. Then they roll and shape the *neuma* until it assumes the proportions of a giant sausage.

The food is now ready for cutting and distribution. Sweet and rich with coconut meat, the baked yam pudding is devoured with great pleasure by all. — *Mary Ayres, a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Chicago, spent two years in the Morehead area of PNG studying traditional customs*

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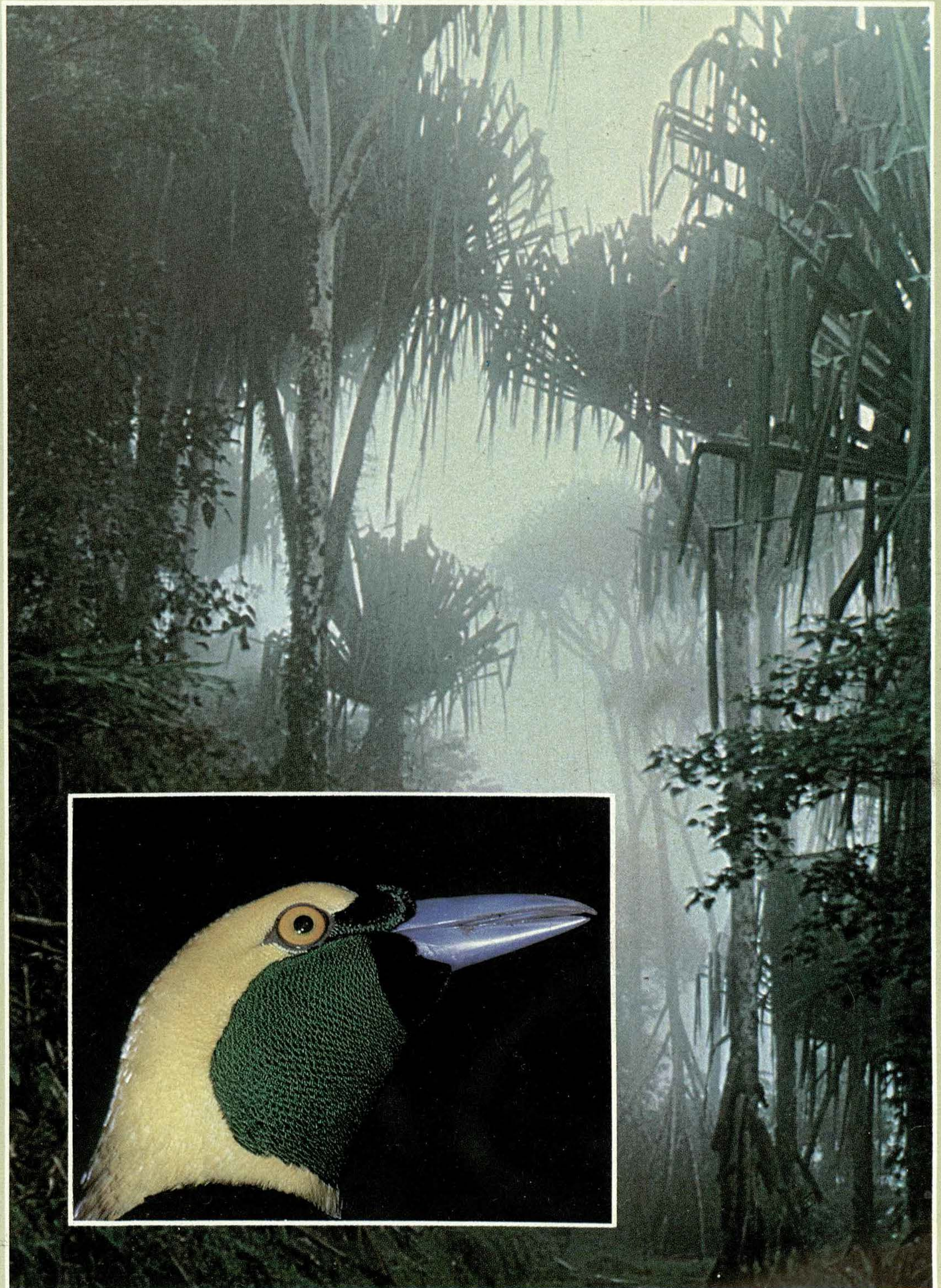
ON THE WILD SIDE

Inset: Raggiana *bird of paradise, one of 32 on the endangered species list.*

It is 10 years since the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment from which came the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Papua New Guinea, both in its National Parliament and in the field, has worked vigorously to promote the objectives of UNEP. Peter Eaton describes some of the measures designed to conserve Papua New Guinea's wildlife resources.



B. Peterson

E. Lindgren

PAPUA New Guineans, like most Pacific Islanders, live hand in hand with nature. Over thousands of years they have achieved a relationship which has meant both a bounteous harvest of animal products to sate a wide range of human needs and security of existence for the island of New Guinea's teeming wildlife.

Today, that balance is under threat. There are indications that in many areas wildlife is becoming scarcer and that some species could be in danger of extinction.

This is partly through destruction of their habitat. (More and more forest is being cut down for farming and logging operations.) It also is because new methods of hunting — using shot guns and nylon nets — are proving too effective, and indiscriminate, in the destruction of wildlife.

The development of roads has opened up many hitherto inaccessible areas and the growth of a money-based economy has created demands for wildlife for sale and export. Add to that Papua New Guinea's growing human population. All in all,

many new pressures are being brought to bear on the country's fragile natural resources.

As well as a source of food, wildlife is a source of clothing, tools, weapons, musical instruments, even 'money' (dogs' teeth and shells have long been used as traditional currency).

Wildlife also is interwoven intextricably with the spiritual and ceremonial life of Papua New Guineans. Their legends and art often involve animals and birds. In many areas kinship groups have special attachments to certain species which they regard as their totems. The bird of paradise (*kumul*) is the country's national emblem, appears on the national flag and is the symbol of the national airline.

Before Papua New Guinea was caught up in the tide of modernisation which is sweeping the world at an ever-increasing rate, tradition — consciously or subconsciously — helped protect wildlife. If villagers noticed a particular animal or bird was becoming scarce they would agree not to hunt it for a period to give it time to recover its numbers.

Other rules restricted the hunting of animals which were too young or were breeding. Jealously-guarded customary land rights also helped protect wildlife by excluding hunters and collectors not belonging to the land-owning group. (This was particularly so in the case of bird of paradise display trees and in the volcanic areas in which the megapode (bush fowl) breeds.

Religious and magic practices controlled the hunting and eating of certain animals. In many Papua New Guinean societies it was forbidden to hunt wild dogs because they were believed to be guardians of particular groups of people. In other societies it was feared that if a dog were killed children would be stolen.

Other *tambus* protected insect-eating birds. Wagtails, for example, could not be killed in garden areas because it was thought they were really spirits.

Carlene Lohberger

*The bird of paradise (**left**) has been sought after for centuries; **below:** its richly coloured plumes often form the centrepiece of ceremonial dress*

This brought ecological benefits: not only were the birds protected but they kept down insect pests.

There were bans on the catching and eating of animals at times when important agricultural activities were necessary. Even today in parts of the Highlands cassowaries cannot be hunted during taro planting time and in the East Sepik turtles may not be eaten during the yam harvest.

Now customary rules are under threat. Some are no longer effective. Now laws enacted by the National Parliament are necessary to protect wildlife.

One of Papua New Guinea's

Office of Information

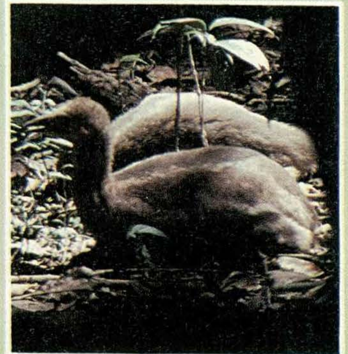
B. Peterson

Brian Coates

The cassowary is widely sought by village hunters; **below right:** *cassowaries are often reared in villages;* **below:** *when they are fully grown they are slaughtered for festive singsings*

most important pieces of legislation is the Fauna Protection and Control Act which designates protected species. These can only be hunted by Papua New Guineans and by traditional methods for traditional purposes only. Modern equipment, such as guns and nets, cannot be used, and the wildlife victims can only be used as food for the kin of the hunter and for ceremonial purposes.

Species protected by the act include all 32 types of birds of paradise found in Papua New Guinea, the New Guinea eagle, Salvadori's teal, the osprey, the goura pigeon, three types of egret, the long-snouted echidna,



Peggy Sinclair

the dugong, Boelen's python, trout under 20 centimetres, and seven species of birdwing butterfly including Queen Alexandra's birdwing, the largest butterfly in the world.

Other measures which help to control commercial exploitation are customs regulations which forbid the export of any form of wildlife, alive or dead, without a permit. Papua New Guinea has signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) which aims at the prevention of illegal trade in wildlife.

Crocodiles have their own legislation. The Crocodile Trade (Protection) Act demands licences for hunters and for people to trade in their skins. It is forbidden to kill crocodiles with belly widths of more than 50 centimetres (because they are breeding animals) and less than 18 centimetres (because they are too small for trade purposes). Crocodile farms are being encouraged in which young animals are reared until they are of sufficient size to bring a good price for their skins.

Brian Coates

Because of its management and farming programmes, Papua New Guinea has been exempted from the CITES em-

bargo on the export of saltwater crocodile skins.

The temptation to use modern hunting methods is great. One fellow prosecuted last year at Maprik in the East Sepik Province was fined Kina 400 for catching 26 raggiana birds of paradise with a net and then selling them. In a passionate defence he claimed the net he used was made of traditional materials and that it was a net '*bilong tumbuna*' (of the ancestors, perhaps grandparents). Unfortunately for the defendant, his net had been confiscated at the time of his apprehension and the magistrate would not accept that a net with a label reading 'Made in Japan' could be '*bilong tumbuna*'.

Other types of management are being attempted with the objective of combining conservation with a means of deriving a cash income. An insect farming and trading agency has been set up to develop the breeding of butterflies and beatles for international markets. In Western Province, where there are thousands of wild deer, introduced early this century, a deer management programme has been started. And in the Southern Highlands there is a cassowary farm.

Conservation areas are not easy to set up in Papua New Guinea because 97 per cent of all land is under customary ownership and land-owners are usually reluctant to relinquish their rights to it.

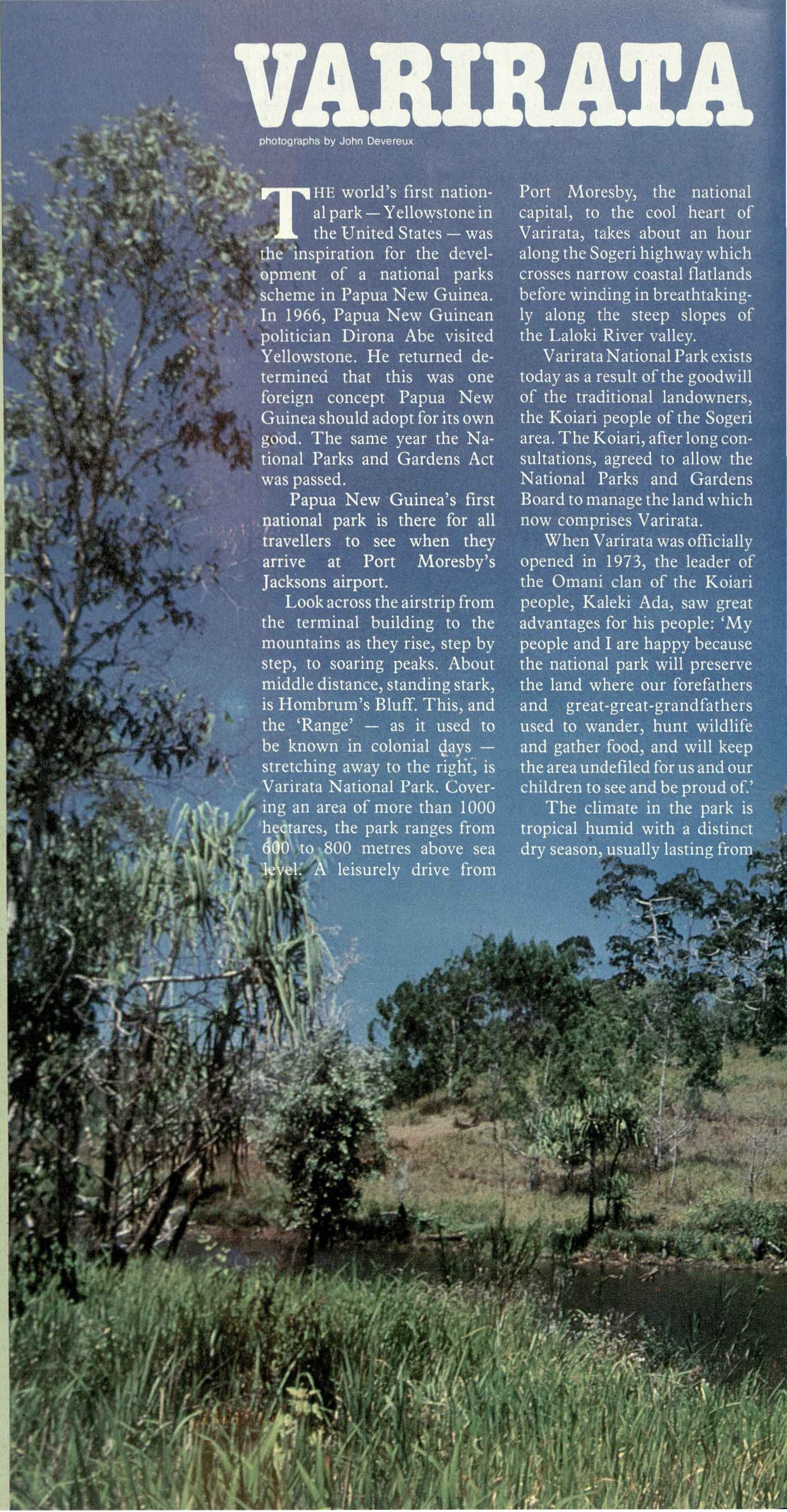
Nevertheless, as pressures on land and natural resources increase, it has become vital that certain areas be set aside for conservation purposes. As well as providing wildlife protection they ensure that at least some regions are preserved in their natural state for future generations to see.

There are two full national parks in Papua New Guinea — Varirata (see box) on the Sogeri Plateau near Port Moresby and McAdam in the Bulolo Valley in Morobe Province.

Smaller areas are managed

VARIRATA

photographs by John Devereux



THE world's first national park — Yellowstone in the United States — was the inspiration for the development of a national parks scheme in Papua New Guinea. In 1966, Papua New Guinean politician Dirona Abe visited Yellowstone. He returned determined that this was one foreign concept Papua New Guinea should adopt for its own good. The same year the National Parks and Gardens Act was passed.

Papua New Guinea's first national park is there for all travellers to see when they arrive at Port Moresby's Jacksons airport.

Look across the airstrip from the terminal building to the mountains as they rise, step by step, to soaring peaks. About middle distance, standing stark, is Hombrum's Bluff. This, and the 'Range' — as it used to be known in colonial days — stretching away to the right, is Varirata National Park. Covering an area of more than 1000 hectares, the park ranges from 600 to 800 metres above sea level. A leisurely drive from Port Moresby, the national capital, to the cool heart of Varirata, takes about an hour along the Sogeri highway which crosses narrow coastal flatlands before winding in breathtakingly along the steep slopes of the Laloki River valley.

Varirata National Park exists today as a result of the goodwill of the traditional landowners, the Koiari people of the Sogeri area. The Koiari, after long consultations, agreed to allow the National Parks and Gardens Board to manage the land which now comprises Varirata.

When Varirata was officially opened in 1973, the leader of the Omani clan of the Koiari people, Kaleki Ada, saw great advantages for his people: 'My people and I are happy because the national park will preserve the land where our forefathers and great-great-grandfathers used to wander, hunt wildlife and gather food, and will keep the area undefiled for us and our children to see and be proud of.'

The climate in the park is tropical humid with a distinct dry season, usually lasting from

The Varirata National Park is a leisurely drive from Port Moresby; **right from top:** *Koiari tree house; picnic areas are scattered throughout the park; panoramic view of Bootless Bay from Varirata*

May to December. However, because of its altitude, visitors find pleasant relief there from the heat of the national capital down on the coast.

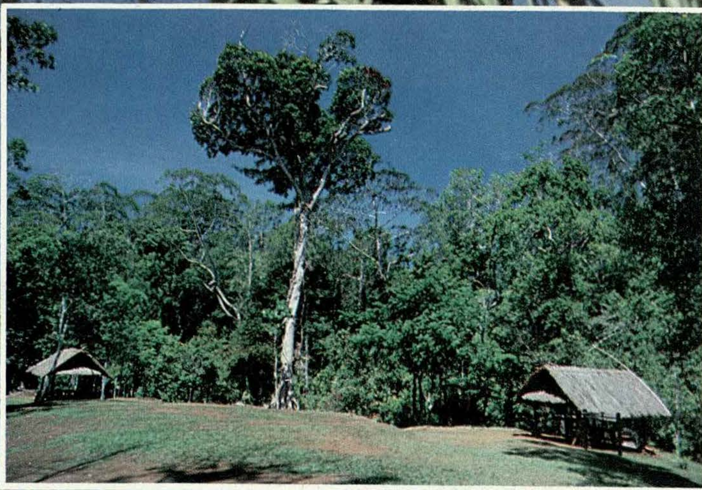
A system of lookouts enables visitors to admire panoramic views of magnificent scenery.

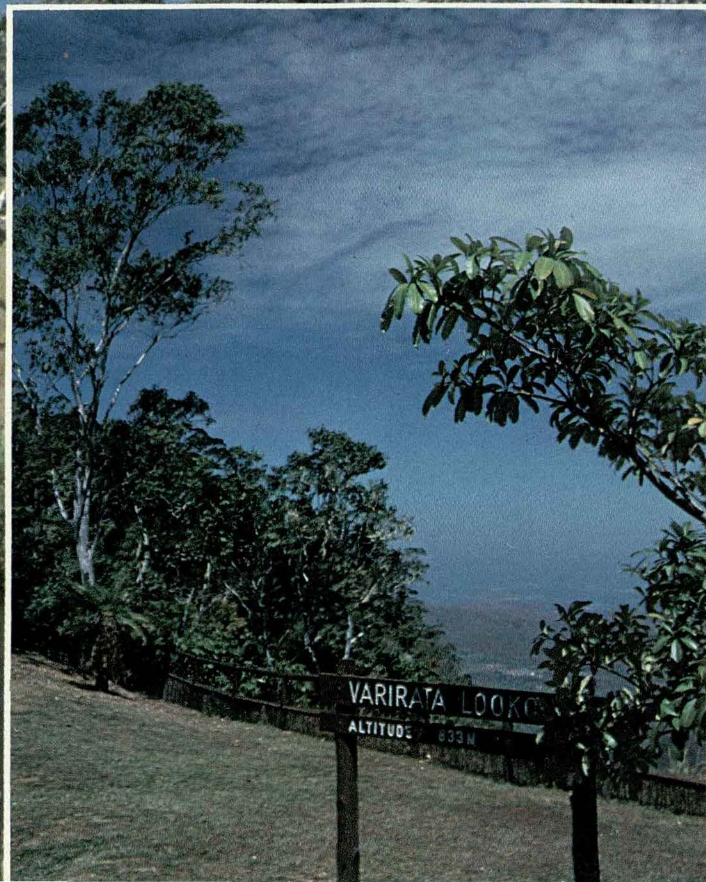
Varirata's vegetation includes tropical rainforest, savannah woodland, grassland, secondary growth and gallery forest. Ferns, bamboos, lawyer canes and orchids are common. Raggiana birds of paradise, bower birds, white cockatoos and many more bird species flourish in this friendly habitat.

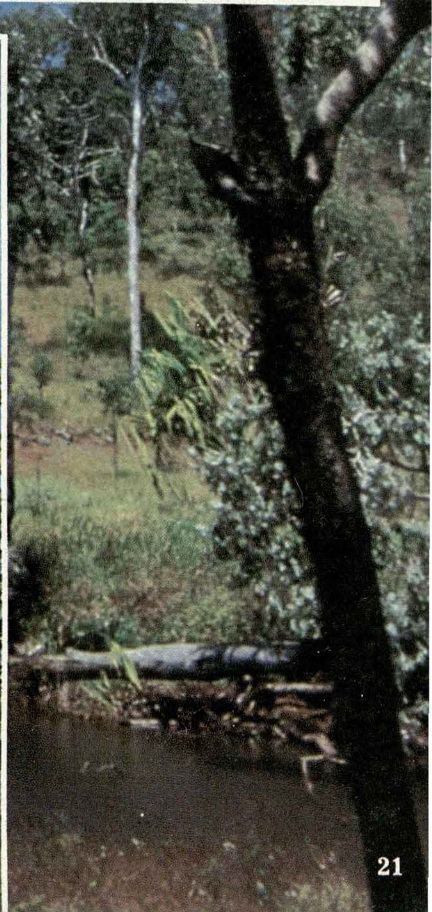
Animals include wild pigs, anteaters, spotted cuscus, deer, bandicoots and brown pythons. An added bonus for the naturalist are the many brightly-coloured butterflies and many varieties of insects and lizards.

A small toll is charged for entry to the park. Half a kilometre past the welcome house is the only camping site. However, picnic areas are to be found throughout the park and well-defined walking tracks make bushwalking a pleasure for even the inexperienced hiker.

The 'tree house' — a structure which has played an important role in the lives of the Koiari people — is still to be found in Varirata. Used as a place of refuge during times of tribal warfare, the Koiari people decided the park would be an ideal place to preserve this and other examples of culture. ◆







by the National Parks Service. Among them is an area at Cape Wom, the site of the Japanese surrender in New Guinea at the end of the Pacific War, and Namenatabu on the slopes of Hombrum's Bluff where the Allied commander, General Blamey, developed a botanical garden.

Two other protected areas, Nanun and Talele Islands off the coast of East New Britain, have a rich variety of bird and marine life.

A popular park with tourists is the Baiyer River Sanctuary in the Western Highlands not far from Mount Hagen. There you will find the largest collection of birds of paradise in captivity. There are many other examples of Papua New Guinean fauna in cages and in natural settings. Several species can be spotted from the walking tracks which run through rain forest in the sanctuary.

Administrative and land tenure problems are delaying the establishment of other national parks. Among them will be the area containing Mount Wilhelm, at 4750 metres, the country's highest mountain; Horseshoe Reef, in Central Province, which will be the nation's first marine park; and Mount Gahavisuka, in Eastern Highlands Province, well known for its orchids. The Kokoda Trail, in Central and Northern Provinces, famous as a battleground in the Pacific War, is to be designated a 'national walking track'.

A type of conservation unique to Papua New Guinea is the 'wildlife management area' which remains under customary tenure and is only declared at the request of the land-owners. This usually happens only when land-owners become concerned about over-hunting and wildlife scarcity. The land-owners form a representative committee which draws up the rules to control collecting and hunting. Once the boundries are defined

David Bishop

Herds of deer on the Bensbach River are culled annually under government supervision; **left:** *the Goura pigeon;* **below:** *crocodiles reared in captivity;* **right:** *tree Kangaroo* Dendrolagus dorianus

and the area is gazetted, rules can be enforced and offenders prosecuted.

The first and largest wildlife management area was declared at Tonda in Western Province. It is a region rich in deer, cassowary, crocodiles, wallabies, water birds and several varieties of fish. The people of the region wanted to control the killing of the animals and get some benefit from a small but growing tourist trade.

Now tourists can hunt only deer and duck, which are not important to the village people for food. (They rely on wallabies and cassowaries which are protected against hunting by outsiders. Visitors who want to hunt must buy a licence and pay for the animals they catch at a set rate. There also is a limitation on their bag.

Wildlife management areas at Pokili and Garu in West New Britain protect the breeding grounds of the megapodes which lay their eggs in warm sands near volcanic springs. Over-collection of eggs, the killing of the birds with guns and dogs, and logging operations in their habitat, have combined to threaten the megapodes' existence. Management area rules now forbid guns, dogs and tree felling in breeding areas and egg-harvesting is controlled and limited to local people.

A marine wildlife management area at Maza in Western Province, is concerned with the control of dugong hunting and another on Long Island, in Madang Province, aims to protect turtles and fish from over-exploitation.

Wildlife officers are now more confident that the combination of grass-roots involvement and strong legislation will provide an effective protection for Papua New Guinea's animals.

— *Peter Eaton is Co-ordinator of the Land Administration Programme Faculty of Law UPNG*

Peggy Sinclair

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PROTECTION FOR THE SPIRITS

Artifact thieves and fanatic Christian proselytizers have wreaked havoc on multi-cultural Papua New Guinean society over the past century. Last year Barry Craig, Curator of Anthropology at the National Museum, travelled through the northwestern Fly River (Western) and Sandaun (West Sepik) Provinces to tell the people how to obtain the protection of Papua New Guinea law for their cult-houses. Gillian Perchard, who travelled with Craig, tells the story.

OUR message for the old men of the villages we were to visit was simple: look after your cult houses and have them declared 'national cultural property', giving them the protection of the National Cultural Property (Preservation) Act of 1965.

This protection would mean that anyone attempting to damage or remove any part of a cult house could be prosecuted.

In days gone by some fanatic Christian revivalist groups have encouraged the destruction of sacred relics on the grounds that they were the works of Satan. The consequence has been the loss, almost overnight, of cultures, which have existed for, perhaps, thousands of years.

Our plan was to fly to Bolobip airstrip from Kiunga then walk down to Old Bolobip. From there we would walk west across the foothills of Tabubil, base of the Ok Tedi mining company, north to Bultemabip and over the Hindenberg Range into the Telefomin region of Sandaun Province.

However we found Bolobip was in heavy cloud and were forced to Olsobip. From there we walked to Old Bolobip. (*Bip* is the local word for 'place'.)

Olsobip, a patrol post, is a mixture of traditional bush material and modern timber-framed houses. The patrol officer allocated us an empty house and a man who offered his services as a carrier for our journey the next day helped to get our luggage to it. Two other men also offered their carrier services and we arranged to make an early departure the next day.

After filling our stomachs (to the accompaniment of a cicada serenade) with a meal of *apika* (spinach-like), sweet potato and corn, which we bought from villagers, we settled down for our first night.

The floor we slept on was hard and dirty. Occasionally a cockroach scurried over our bodies. Yet it was the most comfortable conditions we were to enjoy for some days to come.

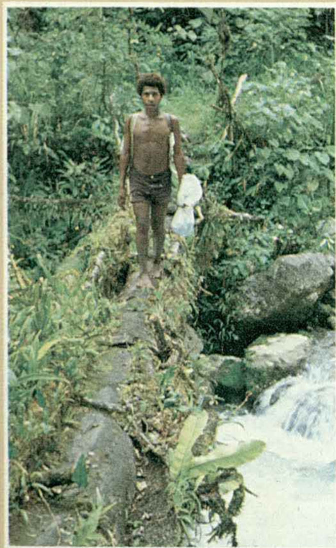
We were on our way next day by 7.30am along a squelchy quagmire excuse for a path. At first I tried to step on stones to avoid the mud but then gave up and ploughed on regardless. My shoes were quickly soaked and remained that way for the rest of the journey.

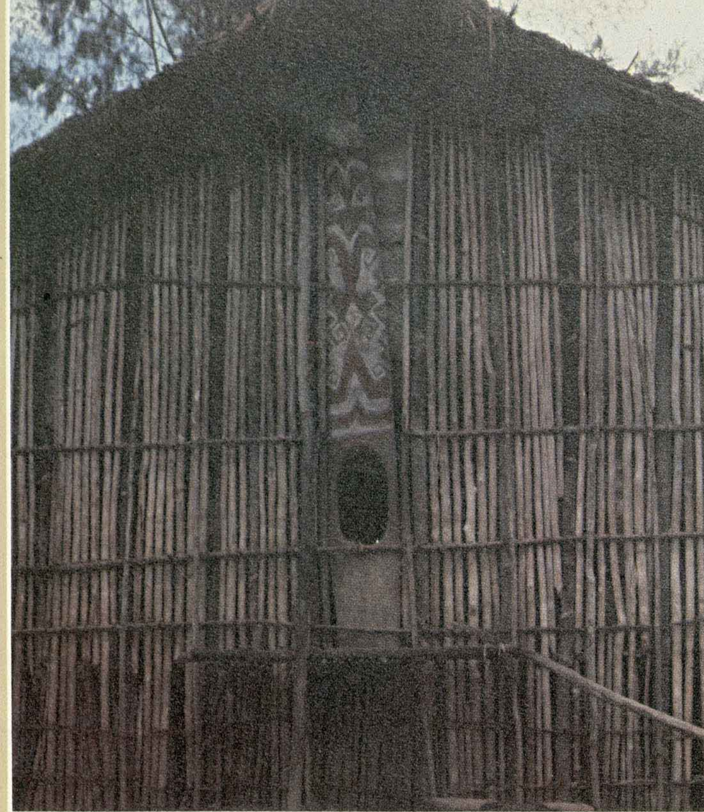
So prolific were the parasites and epiphytes in the dripping rainforest that it was difficult to make out the shapes of the trees. On either side of the narrow

Barry Craig

*The photograph of the Tifalmin Spirit House (**above**) was taken in 1964. It has now disappeared as the author discovered in her trek across the Fly river gorge (**below**)*

Below: *a torturous trek through dense jungle with frequent obstacles*





Left: *Cult house now emptied of all sacred relics;* **below:** *at Magalsimbip a man in traditional dress displays a shield;* **bottom:** *display of pig jaw bones inside cult house*

photographs Barry Craig

path the vegetation clug together, so thick as to be near impenetrable.

When we came to a tributary of the Fly there was no bridge — just huge boulders strewn across surging waters. A carrier held my hand as I scrambled over. I was to discover that the villagers are remarkably thoughtful in this kind of situation and would rather fall in themselves than lose one of their charges.

Once across the river we climbed steeply for three hours. Each time we thought we were near the top the ground would slope up and away from us again. Fortunately we were able to regularly refresh ourselves at the crystal clear pools along the path. Sometimes a pandanus leaf would be squeezed between rocks above a pool, forming a natural drinking fountain as the water ran through it.

We came across some Bolobip people on their way to Olsobip when we reached the top of the mountain. In this group was an old woman who was the mother of a boy Barry had taught when he was a teacher at Telefomin primary school in the early sixties. The amount of activity on these seemingly remote mountain tracks never ceased to surprise me.

After passing through two small villages we began to meet schoolchildren walking out of Bolobip to neighbouring villages. After one group passed us we could hear them singing, in traditional highland fashion, about the 'wait meri na man'. Obviously, a white woman is still rare enough in this part of the world to elicit such a reaction.

It was near dark when we reached Bolobip which comprises three adjacent villages. The people of the area are the Angkeiakmin (*min* meaning people).

Mostly their clothing was Western-style, but lack of washing facilities and money meant it was for the most part dirty and tattered. Some older men were in traditional clothing — penis gourds and pig tusks through their septa; some had bamboo tubes through holes in their ears while others had cassowary quill ear-rings.

Only the school at Bolobip was modern. The houses, raised about 60 centimetres above the ground by stilts, have floors and internal walls made from the bark of the pandanus. Roofs are thatched with pandanus leaves. The external walls are of split timber. In the centre of a hut is a fireplace around which everyone sleeps at night. It is unknown for a baby or small child to roll into the fire while asleep.

Many people gathered that evening in the hut allocated to us. They talked with Barry in pidgin. They wanted to know why he was there. Others just watched our every move, gasping in awe at some of the wonders of modern life that we had brought with us.

As they talked they smoked home-grown tobacco rolled in a leaf. Taro was cooked for us in the ashes of the fire. It was buried about five centimetres deep and pulled out every 10 minutes or so to turn it and test if it was cooked.

Taro, a root crop, is the main food of the area. There is a saying that a man can travel for half a day on sweet potato but for a whole day on taro. Its high energy value was to give us stamina throughout our journey.

Villages in the area have three houses for men and up to 20 for women and children. The men can choose to sleep either in their own house or a woman's house. The women do not have a choice.

Boys sleep with the women until time comes for initiation. Then they move into the men's house called the *kawelam*. Another house, the *katibam*, is for the old men. The third men's house is called the *yolam* though it can be allocated another name as well. This is the cult-house of the tribe and it is here that men learn and enact many secret rituals connected with the growth and well-being of their taro, children and pigs.

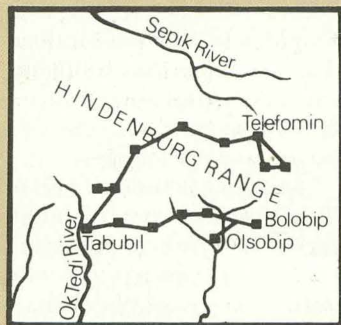
Shields, pig jaw bones and the bones of ancestors kept in string bags are housed in the *yolam* and looked after by a curator. In a small village there may be only one men's house serving all three purposes.

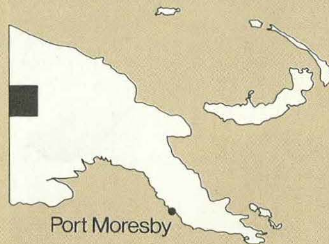
The Angkeiakmin's most important cult-house is at Bolobip. It had no curator at the time of our visit because the previous one had died without appointing a successor. The men were having problems making a firm decision about the future of the house. However, encouraged by our visit, they said they would set about restoring the house and its contents.

From Bolobip we headed for Golgobip, home of the Fegolmin. This was only a half-day journey. Along the way we saw the spectacular sight of a thin stream of water falling hundreds of metres down a sheer cliff face.

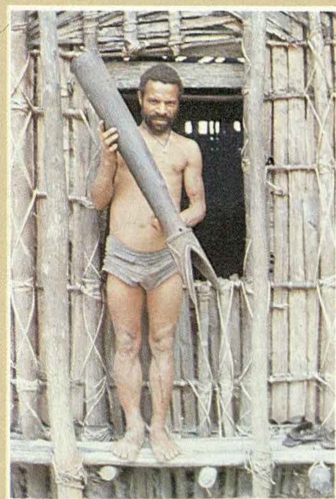
At Golgobip, where people had been working for weeks on a new airstrip, we found the main cult-house intact but in need of repair. The men of Golgobip said they intended to

Left: yalom *mens house at Falamin;* **below left:** *villager with hand drum at Imigabip;* **below right:** *skull and other bones which have fallen from a cave at Tifalmin*





The author's epic trek through the Western and West Sepik provinces



restore it as soon as the airstrip was finished.

Next morning we pressed on to Imigabip, home of the central cult-house of the Fegolmin. Its special name is *nongam*. It was in a state of near collapse but again we were assured it would be restored.

That night, as the smoke from the fire in the house we shared with half a dozen people and several dogs swirled around, irritating my eyes and lungs, it was easy to understand why so many people I met had bronchial problems.

After staying a day at Imigabip, we left for Migalsimbip, the domain of another people — the Wopkeimin. The path was rough, overgrown and difficult to negotiate. The carriers showed great concern on the occasions I slipped and fell.

Often we passed gardens sometimes several hours' walk from the owners' villages. But ownership rights are quite clear and nobody steals another's crop for fear of communal disapproval and reprisal.

By early afternoon we were only half way to Migalsimbip so we decided to stay overnight at a small village of five houses called Bolangabip. There we were taken to a hut in which a man in traditional dress was trying to open a tartan case. He struggled with the key until finally the lock sprang open. Inside the case were tins, pieces of plastic and a variety of other trivia from the outside world. Opening one tin, he produced about a dozen two kina notes. There was much discussion among the people until finally someone was given a note to purchase some sugar. Apparently a tradestore was only half-an-hour walk away.

Sometimes, even in the tiniest village, a man with initiative will open a store, bringing in stock along mountain tracks from the nearest airstrip. Consequently, goods are highly-priced. On this occasion, one kilogram of sugar cost K1.40.

At Migalsimbip we found the *kawelam* in good repair but it housed only minor relics.

We were looking forward to reaching the relative civilisation of Tabubil. By mid-afternoon, after leaving Migalsimbip, we reached a village called Wangbin. Just below it was a deep lake nearly two kilometres long. Tabubil, we were told, was two hours further down past the lake. It seems water from the lake seeps down through the limestone bedrock and emerges as a spring just above Tabubil. Water from this spring serves the Ok Tedi mining camp.

As we walked down to Tabubil it began to drizzle. Then the rain became heavier. The air stayed warm and we were cocooned in dampness. By the time we walked into Tabubil we felt like returning heroes. My legs were covered in fleabites which were slowly becoming infected. We were both weary and hungry.

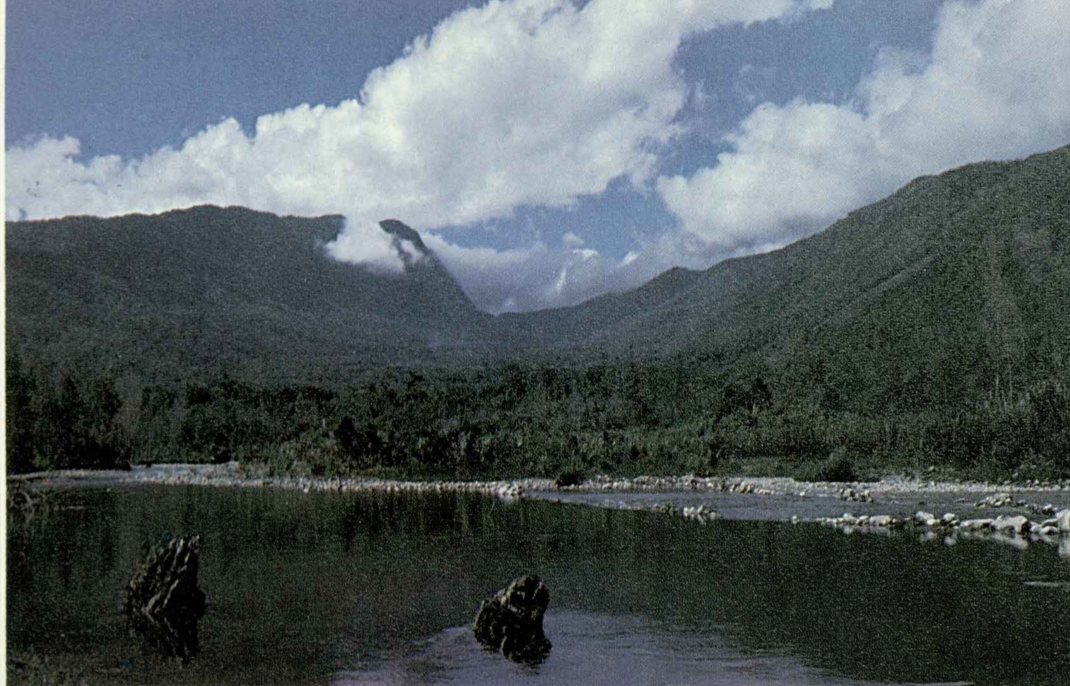
The hospitality was marvellous. We ate at the mess and were provided with clean beds. We rested all next day knowing that the hardest stretch of the journey — over the Hindenberg Wall into the Telefomin Valley — still lay ahead.

A truck gave us a short lift along a new road built by the mining company. It is part of a road which will link Tabubil with Mount Fubilan where copper is to be mined. The walk to Tungganabip, which lies two hours' walk from the base of the Hindenberg Wall, was the most demanding we had yet experienced. Most of the time we spent traversing old garden areas which were a tangle of huge logs and clinging undergrowth.

We reached a very muddy Tungganabip at dusk and were greeted by friendly people who brought us food and eagerly of-

fered to guide us next day. Our three carriers were a long way from home and in unfamiliar territory so we were glad of the extra help.

Our next destination was Bultemabip, the most important village of the Wopkeimin. It turned out to be a disappointment. Both village and sacred houses were in poor repair. The carved and painted boards of the



Left: *"The most beautiful sight one could ever wish to see", so said the author as she entered the land of the Tifalmin;* **below:** *the supreme cult house of the Telefomin*

cult-house had fallen off the walls and were lying on the ground. Two dogs were the sole occupants of the whole village. We propped the boards up and asked our guides to pass a message to the men of Bultemabip to think about rebuilding the cult-house before the contents were endangered by the elements.

We walked on to a small bush hut at the base of the Hindenberg where we stayed until next morning.

We set off at first light, anticipating a tough passage. The path up the mountain is short and steep, rising to a plateau about 2300 metres above sea level. Up there we walked, seemingly interminably, through moss forest. Huge sinkholes bordered our path, the forest burgeoning out of them creating the impression of firm ground.

We pushed on a further 300 metres up to the north rim of this high plateau. At 2pm we were able to see over the far side. Below us lay open valley of *kunai* grassland — the consequence of constant burning of the rainforest.

Behind us we left a cloudy sky and an annual rainfall of more than 7500 mm. Ahead of us lay a golden valley, blue sky and a rainfall half that amount. We could see Telefomin clearly but it was 40 km and three days walk away.

We descended light of heart and foot. We knew then how it was that Ivan Champion, the first European to set foot in these valleys, could exclaim in his book *Across New Guinea from the Fly to the Sepik*: '. . . the most beautiful sight one could ever wish to see . . .' We were entering the land of the Tifalmin.

As we reached the first village children ran out, offering to sell us pawpaw (papaya).

A little further on we met a man named Sulukin who recognised Barry from his previous expeditions.

The cult houses of Tifalmin village have long since been destroyed but we were shown some bones and skulls kept in caves above the village. Some, sadly, had rolled down the hill. We encouraged the old men and school master to rectify the situation. Plans were made to place the relics back in the cave and to fasten mesh across the entrance to prevent dogs from disturbing the bones.

The next two days were spent walking down the valley through the territory of the Ulapmin. The sacred relics of these people have all been destroyed though the main cult-house at Dimidnip still stands.

Finally we reached Telefomin, district headquarters and home of the people of the same name. The supreme cult-house of the Telefomin, the *telefolip*, is in a village of the same name a few kilometres from the district office. A grove of towering pines, planted by Telefomin ancestors, forms an awe-inspiring entrance to the sacred village in which the bones of the original ancestor, a woman called Afek, are kept.

Afek instituted the system of men's and women's houses. When she came to the village site of Telefolip she built an *unangam* (women's house) and then the supreme cult-house. She slept in the cult-house and her husband in the *unangam* — but neither slept well. The next day the two discussed their problems and agreed to swap houses. Next night, both slept soundly and Afek was satisfied. The separation has continued ever since. The sites of the original *unangam* and the cult house have not changed.

So strong is the tradition of Telefolip that when Christian revivalists were busy destroying many relics in the area they were warned they would be killed if they dared touch Telefolip.

Working out of Telefomin, Barry Craig made a brief journey to the neighbouring area of the Falamin. At one village, Yogavip, he was shown more of Afek's sacred relics.

The results of our travels were two requests for legal protection of cult houses (by the people of Falamin and of a small village near Imigabip); an assurance from the people of Migalsimbip that they were quite capable of protecting their cult-house and its contents without the help of the law; and every other village saying it would talk over the possibility of having their cult-houses declared 'national cultural property'.

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TANIMTOK

***Tanimtok** is the pidgin name for a government interpreter who 'turns' or translates from pidgin into a local language and vice versa. David Eastburn discusses the role of the tanimtok and traces the career of Sune Okikiok who has been a government interpreter for more than 30 years.*

To be a *tanimtok* is to be a person of prestige and influence. Often he is the only means by which the government can communicate with a specific group of people. This was particularly the case in the days of early contact between patrols and people who had not previously been aware of government authority. The *tanimtok* is often vital to the successful resolution of disputes and ensuring that justice is done in the courtroom.

But he is often more than just an interpreter. As his reputation grows he is looked to for unofficial advice by both government officers and villagers. And in some of the more remote outstations he plays an important role in day-to-day affairs.

The interpreter's black uniform comprises a pull-over shirt

photographs by David Eastburn

and a *sulu* or *laplap* which is like a kilt. The uniform is a vestige of the colonial era and is similar to that which used to be worn by Papua New Guinean policemen. Interpreters often jokingly commiserate with older policemen about the loss of their 'real' uniforms which were replaced in 1964 with modern drip-dry 'tradestore' uniforms.

Interpreters were chosen for training because they were known to have skills in learning languages and translating or because they knew a little of the language of a group of people a patrol officer wished to contact or visit.

Sometimes the first interpreters in newly-opened outstations or patrol posts were men who had been arrested during earlier patrols into the area and sent to gaol for breaking the government's law.

Obviously the government's law was new and quite different from traditional law so the people arrested were not punished severely. The gaols were as much educational as corrective institutions.

While in gaol, prisoners from newly-contacted areas were taught how the government worked, pidgin, hygiene, basic carpentry and other skills useful in village life. Armed with this knowledge, some of them became interpreters on their return home. Others became interpreters after learning pidgin and the ways of government by attaching themselves to a member of a patrol — usually a policeman — when one of them passed through their area.

Sune Okikiok MBE and

Left: *Sune proudly displays his medals;* **below:** *keeping a watchful eye at Marawaka;* **bottom:** *Mick Leahy in the PNG Highlands*

holder of the Loyal Service Medal has been a government interpreter at Telefomin in the highlands of the Sandaun (West Sepik) Province for more than 30 years.

He is a tiny man and his *sulu* is a little long on him. He now wears a large army hat to protect his head from the sun. He is highly respected in the Telefomin area and a gentleman in the true sense of the word.

When John Black and his party passed through Telefomin on their epic Mount Hagen-Sepik patrol of 1938-39, Sune and two young Telefomin boys attached themselves to the party. One of his friends was killed by an arrow when the patrol went into the nearby Mianmin valley but Sune and his other mate went on with Black through Wabag to Mount Hagen.

From there they flew to Goroka and Madang and then travelled by boat to Rabaul where they attended a pidgin vocational school with three young men from what is now Enga Province. The Enga lads had joined the patrol of another well-known government explorer of the thirties and forties, Jim

Taylor. Sadly, Sune's Telefomin friend drowned at Rabaul.

When John Black and Jim Taylor returned from leave, Sune went with Black to Bogia near Madang and the three Enga lads rejoined Taylor. From Bogia, Black went into the Ramu Valley.

When the Japanese invaded New Guinea in 1942 Sune and Black walked back to the north coast at Madang to inspect damage inflicted by the enemy. Black's party watched Japanese movements from Nobanob before they headed back up the Ramu Valley where they met up with Taylor's party.

Sune walked on with Black through Bundi to Kundiawa (Simbu Province) and Goroka (Eastern Highlands). From there they were flown to Nadzab in the Markham Valley of Morobe Province. There they parted company, Black going to Talasea on the island of New Britain and Sune returning to Telefomin — by glider. Sune, together with gold prospector and explorer, Mick Leahy and a group of American engineers were flown in to build an airstrip.

The four gliders were towed to Telefomin by Dakota aircraft (also known as C47s and, later, as commercial DC3s) and they landed on a tiny strip prepared in 1936 by members of the Ward Williams mineral expedition for their Sikorsky amphibian support aircraft.

Next day two more gliders came in, one containing a tiny bulldozer, the other a roller. The engineers diverted water to wash the topsoil off and then extended the old landing ground. Villagers worked to bring stone for the new airstrip's surface.

Sune went to Goroka after the war, returning to Telefomin as a fully-fledged *tanimtok.* There was grave concern in the Telefomin area at the time. The people were unhappy at the influence of the colonial Europeans in their land and blamed them for the declining taro yield.

On November 6, 1953, Telefomin men attacked two government patrols and killed two European officers and two Papua New Guinean policemen. At the trial later, Sune had the unpleasant and difficult task of translating for the government and for the men who had attacked the patrol. For this work he was awarded the Loyal Service Medal.

In 1979 he was awarded the MBE. He says now he would like nothing more than to retire and return to his village and gardens. But so far no one will take his retirement talk seriously. Sune Okikiok is still 'turning' the words. — *David Eastburn was a schoolteacher in Papua New Guinea for ten years. He is now completing post graduate study in Australia.*

photographs Ray Cranbourne

STEPPING INTO HISTORY

A glimpse of ancient China in Hong Kong

By Roger Boschman

HONG Kong is famous for its blend of old and new, but in the past decade the modern seems to have overtaken the old at an almost frightening rate.

Paddy fields have become housing estates, colonial style buildings have been replaced by skyscrapers and most commuters whiz under the famous *Fragrant Harbour* on the new Mass Transit system rather than crossing on the romantic but sedate "Star" Ferry.

As a communications centre, Hong Kong vies with Singapore for supremacy, and there is still tops for getting a lot of business done in a hurry. Contrasting this headlong rush into the space-shuttle age, it is interesting to see how some profits from this commercial beehive have been used to preserve ancient Chinese traditions.

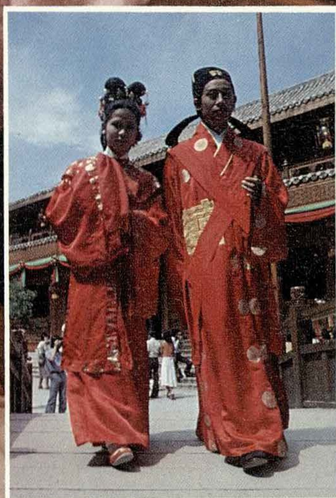
It came about through one man's vow, made many years ago.

Today, in Hong Kong, you can walk through a large, old-fashioned gatehouse into a world that existed in China more than 1,000 years ago.

There is a tranquil river with a graceful bridge that leads you to the *Restaurant of Plentiful Joy.* There you can enjoy a meal prepared exactly as it was in the Sung Dynasty of ancient China.

All the recipes and ingredients are imported directly from China. During lunch you will be entertained by dancers in costumes of long ago, a magic show, a mimic performance and a dem-

Performers in hand made costumes entertain guests



The reconstruction of the Sung Dynasty temple is authentic. In the garden (**inset**) Chinese acrobats perform as they have for centuries. **below:** Visitors witness a Sung Dynasty wedding with all the trappings

onstration of noodle-making as it was done in the old days.

For another glimpse of the past and an insight into China, there is a wax museum in the same building, displaying 70 figures from 5,000 years of China's history. They include the Empress Dowager, Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek. The figures represent dominant characters from thirteen Chinese dynasties, plus those of more modern times.

There is also a weaving shop where artisans work exactly as they did long ago and a bank where Sung Dynasty currency is used. The Sung Dynasty produced the world's first paper money.

Next door is the wood-carver's shop, where you get an idea of what went into the building of this re-creation of a Sung Dynasty city. Each tiny piece of wood in the decoration of the buildings was done by hand, most of it in this woodwork shop. Such attention to detail is indicative of the care that has gone into this reconstruction.

The cost was just under K3,000,000.

The project was financed by Chinese businessman, Mr Deacon Chiu. Many years ago, when Mr Chiu was just starting in business, he promised that if he became wealthy, he would build a portion of China's history in Hong Kong, to preserve it for future generations.

He had no blueprint except an ancient scroll painted by an artist more than 1,000 years ago. He simply asked builders to reconstruct what they saw in the scenes on the scroll.

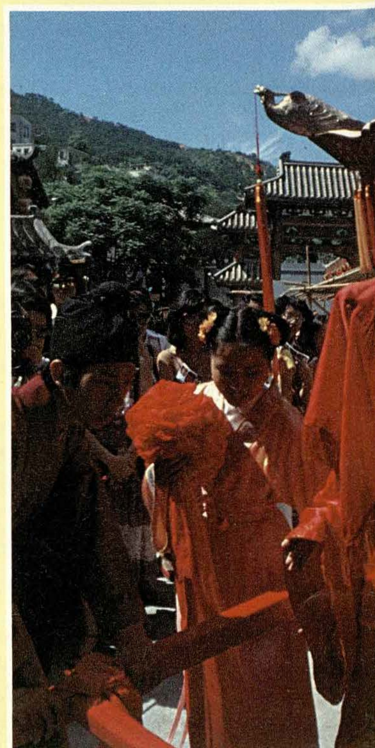
Out of 5,000 years of Chinese history, why did he choose the Sung Dynasty, which ran from 960 to 1279 AD?

The Sung Dynasty has special significance to Hong Kong, which few seem to understand. People speak highly of antiques of the Ming and Ching dynasties, but the Sung period was one of the most exciting in China's history.

It was a time of art and culture. Literature and Science flourished with seminars and conferences among the scholarly. Students were made to learn and recite the most famous poetry.

Of all the dynasties and all the emperors, only one ever set foot in Hong Kong. He was named Ping, and Hong Kong was his last refuge from the warlike Mongols.

The emperor was only a small boy when the entire court fled south to escape the attackers. The high officials had to



protect the little emperor from harm. At last they came to a cliff overlooking the sea near what is now Kai Tak International Airport.

The invaders surrounded them and attacked. The Prime Minister took the boy on his back and ran with him, right into the sea.

They both drowned.

The death of the small boy, the 18th Sung emperor, marked the end of the Sung Dynasty.

The re-creation of this Sung Village took four years with eighty per cent of the materials, and most of the workers, imported from China. Almost all of the carving and decoration was done on the spot.

It is worth noting that there is probably no such historical monument to equal it anywhere, not even in China, where in past decades much traditional architecture has been destroyed.

Even the wine you are given in the wineshop is authentic, made in China and bottled in containers especially recreated for this village.

Next door is the herbalist's shop, with more than 100 Chinese herbs available — remedies for nearly any ailment you could name.

There is also a Manor of Nobility — a wealthy family's residence — built exactly as such homes were in the Sung Dynasty.

Ancient craftsmanship is seen in the umbrella shop where methods have remained unchanged over the centuries. In the teashop and pastry store, food is completely authentic, and you can buy it with the Sung Dynasty currency you are given at the entrance.

A colourful highlight of the visit to the Sung Dynasty Village is the wedding ceremony, complete with bright costumes of the time, and sedan chairs carried by bearers. There are also fortune tellers; some use a trained bird to pick your fortune, others work from the lines on your palms.

Acrobats and trained monkeys perform near the river.

The Sung Dynasty Village can only be seen by tour groups, so speak to your travel agent and ask to have this unique attraction included in your tour. Tell him or her you want to "step back into Chinese history".

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SING SING RING-IN

Paul Fuglestad knows the* singsing *scene from the inside out. This great cultural 'trip' came his way when students from Morobe Province at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in Port Moresby asked him to join in.

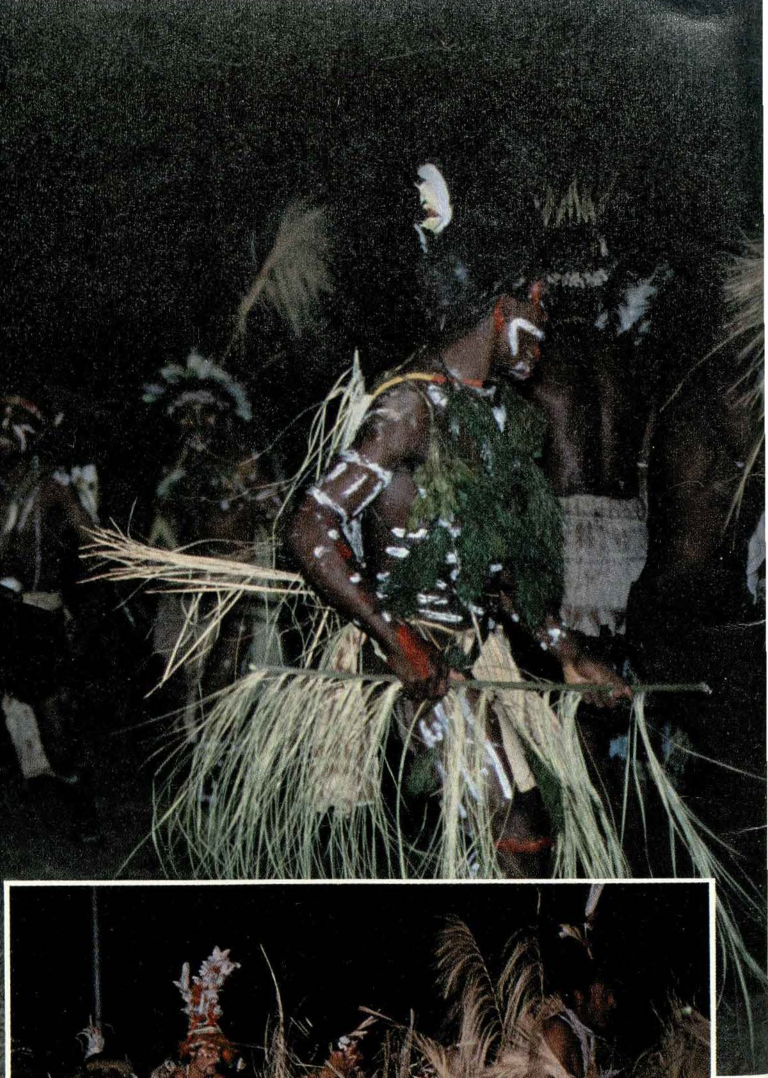
'DID you say me join in? I'd love to but I don't know a thing. I've only been here eight months.' That was me responding to Morobean students when I realised their invitation was not just to watch them perform but to perform with them.

I had returned to Papua New Guinea, as assistant to the Lutheran chaplain at UPNG, in early 1981 for the first time since I was a child. Of course, I had seen many *singsings* — the general term for any Papua New Guinean festival involving dancing and singing. I retained vivid images of the magnificent Mount Hagen Show. Now I was being asked to join in. I knew it was an opportunity I could not pass up but it was going to mean a lot of hard work.

The first week I spent learning the songs. There was *Sia from Siassi Island, Anio from Morobe Patrol Post, Makum from Markham, Duadua from Yabim, Sabi from Bukaua* and *Reo from Sio.*

I seemed to catch on rather

Paul Fugelstad: Morobean or European?



quickly but in the ensuing weeks, when it became a question of getting my whole act together — words, drum beats and dance steps — I ran into big difficulties with *Sia* and *Reo*. I had to sit out *Sia* and the singing of *Reo* I found quite alien to my knowledge and experience of music. I simply could not master the massive scale of notes and rapid-fire use of that scale.

That first rehearsal comes back to me very clearly. It was a cool damp July night. About two dozen of us gathered in a field where we made a small fire to keep us warm and to tighten the heads of our lizard-skin *kundu* (drums).

The bright moon was rising behind irridescent clouds causing our solid shadows to move as though they were silent dance partners to the instinctively precise beat of the drums. A chill of excitement ran through me.

This great feeling ebbed rapidly when I was handed a *kundu* and told to join in. But my embarrassment, just as quickly, fell away as I caught on. Realising that all were deadly serious yet enjoying themselves thoroughly at the same time gave me added confidence.

This was the first of many rehearsals. The closer we got to the real thing the more *bilas* (traditional decoration) we wore. This had a 'psyching up' effect on us. The big event for which we were preparing was the MOMASE (Morobe, Madang, Sepik) cultural night at the UPNG Drill Hall.

I stripped down and put on the small *tapa* (bark) cloth which is worn by Morobeans. Then the rest of my costume was provided by one of my PNG 'Papas' who assured me in pidgin: 'Long han bilong lapun bilong mi yet, bai mi bilasim yu' ('With the skills that my forefathers put into my hands I will dress you').

Meticulously and solemnly he did just that, using leaves, arm bands, beads, pigs' teeth, bird of paradise plumes, a belt of shells and magnificent headdresses. Last to come was the painting of my face and body with traditional blacks, whites and reds.

With my tan and *bilas* and

with my hair covered it was hard even for my friends to pick me out. Many were unaware that a white was in the Morobe dance group.

The sensation of being a 'Morobean' performer and dancing in public had me nervous through to the very last dance. The feeling of dried paint on my face and body, sweat evaporating in the coolness of the night, dust on my feet, the burning in my thighs at the end of the *Duadua* and the applause — all were quite overpowering.

The show lasted four hours. I wondered how it is that Papua New Guineans can do this sort of thing all night long. For me a dream had come to life. I'll treasure my memories of that night for the rest of my life.

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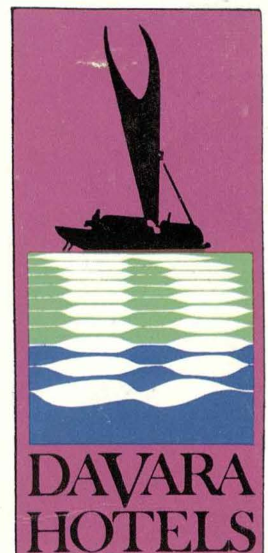

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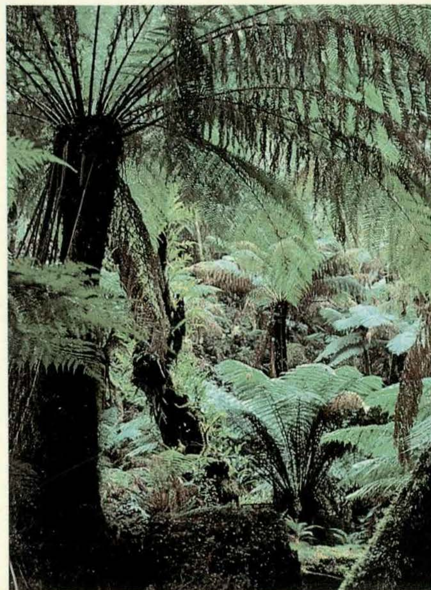

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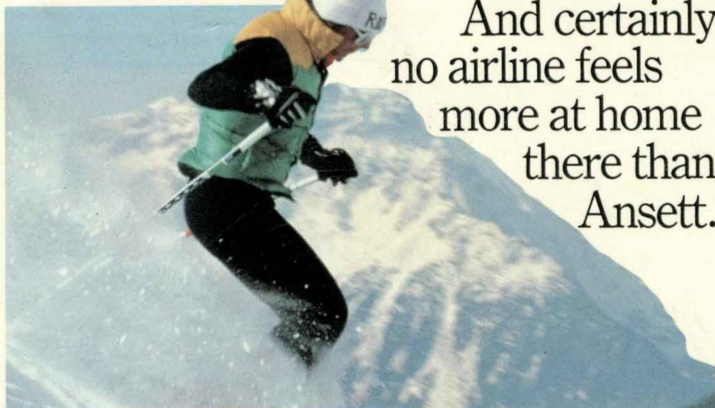

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