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# paradise

Welcome aboard

This is my first opportunity to extend my personal greetings to you, our passengers, since assuming my new position, and it gives me a great deal of pleasure to do so.

This issue contains an interesting miscellany of articles including a look at our Cabin Service training which I believe will help you to understand the combination of natural characteristics and extensive training which results in the standard of service of which we are all so proud.

For service is what an airline is all about and in the final analysis, I, like everyone else in Air Niugini, am here to serve you.

Masket Iangalio  
General Manager, Air Niugini

No. 47 July 1984

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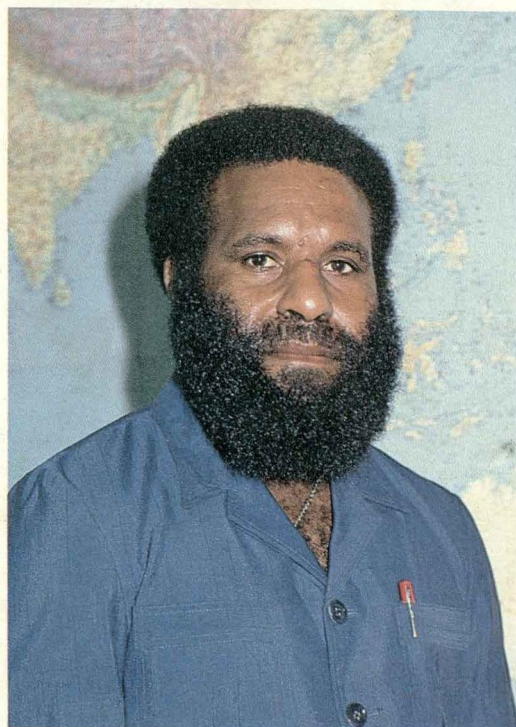
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Quality in Air Transport



**Above:** Mr Masket Iangalio, the new General Manager of Air Niugini.

**Cover:** Down in the forest something stirred . . . The Parotia or "six-wired" Bird of Paradise, *Parotia Lawesii*, performs his display dance on the forest floor, having first meticulously cleared the area of fallen leaves and other debris. He puffs out his chest and gently oscillates to and fro, causing the sunlight to glint on the metallic feathers of his breast shield. Photo by John Devereux.

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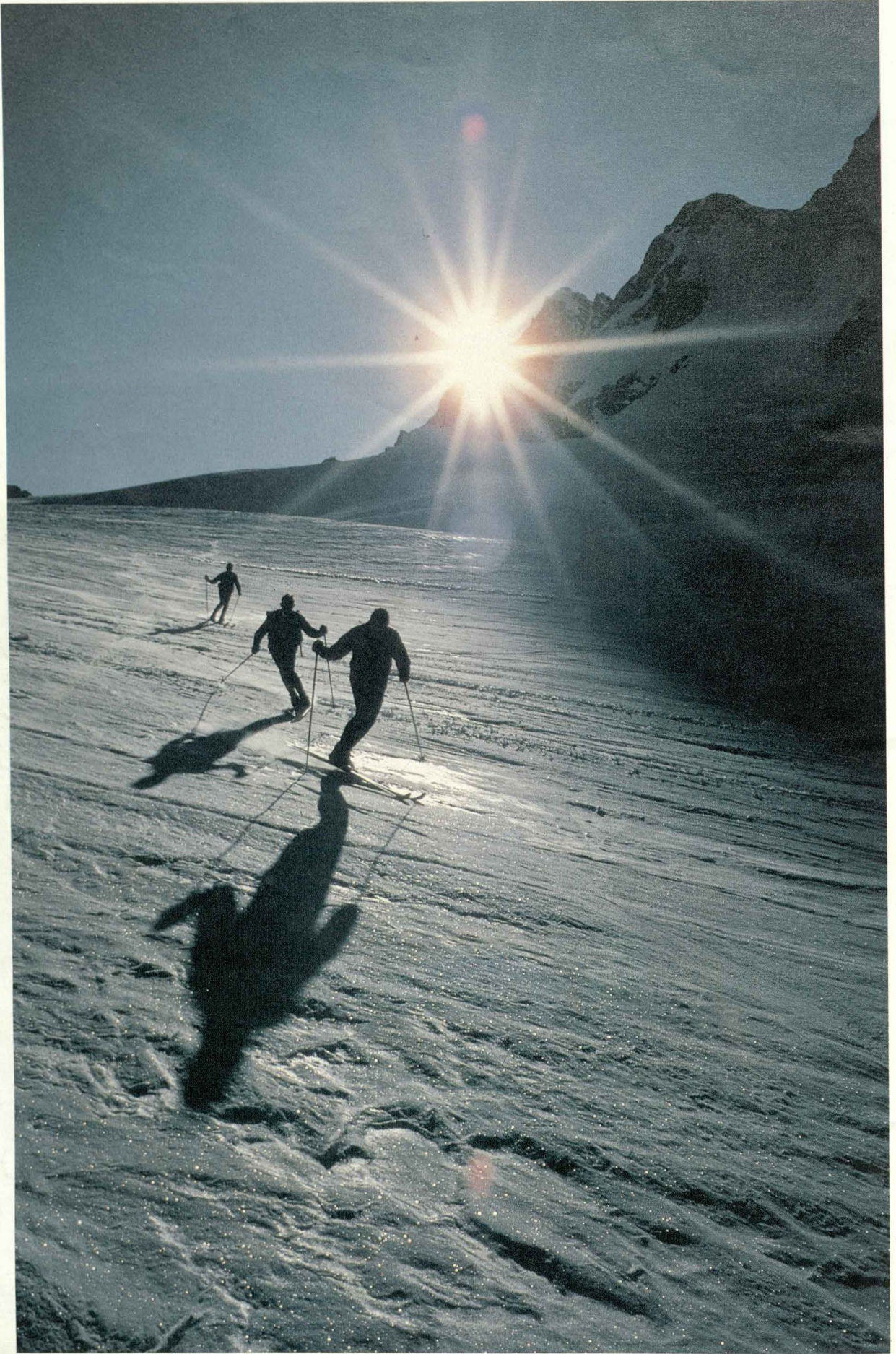
# NEW ZEALAND

by Colin Clarke, with photographs by Brian Brake

*Spectacular view of the Neve of Franz Josef from the air, looking towards the Tasman Sea in the West. Photograph by Brian Brake*



# NEW SKI LAND



**A**SK the ski instructors at California's Squaw Valley ski resort where they go in summer and many will tell you "New Zealand". Ask why and they'll look surprised at the question and answer: "It's great, man. Just great". And if you can't take the word of a ski instructor as gospel, who can you trust?

Since the mid 1950's New Zealand's ski industry has boomed. From the days when skiing enthusiasts, all fifty or so of them, would climb thousands of feet up a mountain for the pleasure of skiing down before climbing up once again, it would be fair to say that in New Zealand, no sport has grown so quickly. The reasons are obvious once you look at a map of the country. Mountains — and plenty of them — are all within only a few hours drive of the country's main urban centres.

The uniqueness of New Zealand's ski resorts is their surprising differences; each has its own character invariably locked into the fantastic scenery in which it is located. From Queenstown's Coronet Peak, for example, the view across Lake Wakatipu to the Remarkable's, as craggy a range of mountains as can be found anywhere, is enough to halt even the most cynical skiers for a moments' contemplation.

An increasingly popular form of skiing is to be found on the 29km long Tasman Glacier in the South Island's Mount Cook National Park, where an area of permanent snow and ice is reached by helicopter and ski-plane. The slopes are of varying steepness and three or four hours can be spent not on fast downhill runs, but in exploring the alpine scenery at over 2500m (8000 feet) at one's own leisurely pace. This is not for learners and the guides will want proof of competency before you board your transport. However for those who can ski well enough there's a run of 8km which, after heavy snow

falls can stretch down the glacier for 21km.

Most ski fields, however, have something for everyone. In short form, the following are the most popular and should be considered in any holiday you plan.

#### North Island

**Whakapapa, Mt Ruapehu:** Situated mid-way between Auckland and Wellington, the slopes of Whakapapa are on the side of a volcanic mountain — which is quietly active but no threat! Excellent facilities and apres-ski recreation are to be found especially at the THC Chateau, a hotel which looks like it should be set somewhere in Austria. Equipment hire is available.

**Turoa:** On the opposite side of Mt Ruapehu to Whakapapa, this is the most recent ski-field to be developed in the North Island. Good terrain for both learners and the more advanced skier but no equipment can be hired so take your own.

#### South Island

It's in the South Island that some of the best ski fields in the Southern Hemisphere are to be found.

**Porter Heights:** An hour and a half's drive from Christchurch, Porter Heights has one of the country's longest lift served runs, and offers excellent terrain to meet all skiing standards. All facilities are available.

**Mt Hutt:** At 2074 metres (6800 ft) and only ten years old, Mt Hutt is not only one of the highest ski fields in the country but also among the best served. It has an exceptionally long season which is probably why it's so popular with Christchurch skiers who need drive only 104 km to reach the slopes. Mt Hutt has all facilities including heliskiing.

**Powder Snow Valley:** This is the field for those who want something different. At the headwaters of the Rangitata River, Powder Snow Valley has all the facilities without the



photo: Mount Cook Line



photo: Mount Cook Line

**Left:** dawn ski-ing on the Tasman Glacier, Southern Alps. Photograph by Brian Brake; **top right:** fun for all on the slopes; **right:** ski lifts take the sweat out of the ascent so novices can concentrate on their descent

The Mount Cook Line provides an invaluable service to skiers — they fly into many ski locations that are hard to reach by other means



photo: Mount Cook Line

crowds you find elsewhere. *Mt Dobson:* Another of the recently opened South Island fields catering more for the intermediate and advanced skiers. Most facilities are available but accommodation is quite a few kilometres from the field. *Tasman Glacier (Mt Cook):* This is the place for the helicopter and ski-plane outings mentioned earlier and can be reached from the THC's lovely, old-world Mt Cook Hotel. *Tekapo:* There's a 33 km drive from the nearest accommodation to the Tekapo field — but it's worth it! Set deep in the Southern Alps, Tekapo is ideal for beginners and intermediates

and has full skiing facilities. *Lake Ohau:* Another of the fabulous South Island ski-fields that has a view to rival the snow. Lake Ohau is off the main Christchurch-Queenstown highway and is well worth a day's skiing as you're driving south. All facilities are available. *Treble Cone (Wanaka):* This is the highest of the southern lakes fields (2073 m, 6800 ft) and although there's no accommodation on the slopes, it's not too far away from Lake Wanaka township to be a problem. Treble Cone is a favourite with American skiers — they say it reminds them of home.

*Coronet Peak, (Queenstown):* Probably New Zealand's best known ski-field set in the most memorably scenery, Coronet has it all. Only 16 km from Queenstown with buses servicing the fields every half hour or so, Coronet Peak is up to FIS standards. And apres-ski opportunities in Queenstown match the slopes with restaurants and hotels galore. All ski facilities are available and rental equipment can be hired on the ski-field or from a variety of shops in Queenstown. The time to go skiing in New Zealand? Well depending on the area, June to October are the best months. The costs are reas-

onable and there's everything you can want to make your skiing enjoyable — including a host of American instructors. But one word of advice — check with your travel agent regarding ski tours before you make your decisions — there are some great packages to be had if you hunt around for them. So go to it; hit the slopes in New Zealand this year. 🏔️

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***Air Niugini operates a twice-weekly service from Hong Kong to Auckland, via Port Moresby, in conjunction with Air New Zealand and Cathay Pacific***





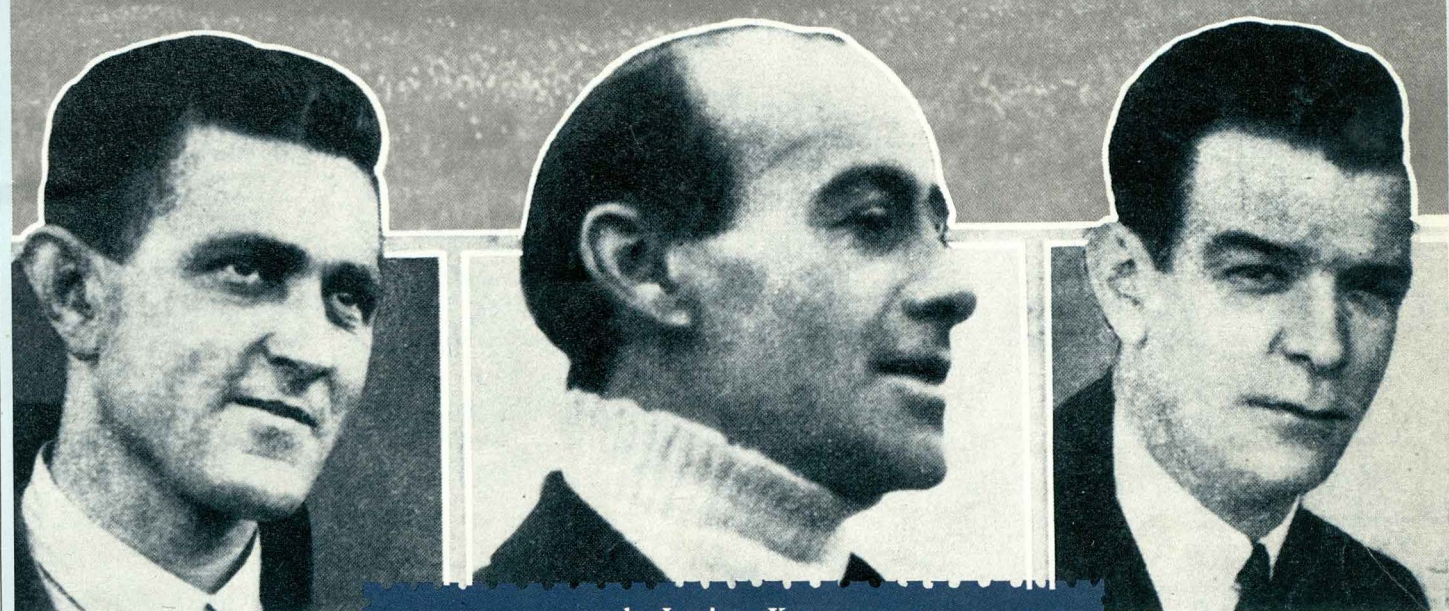
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by Loujaya Kouza

# AIR MAIL 50 YEARS ON

*The first aircraft to fly the mail from Australia to PNG, the 'Faith in Australia'  
The crew were (from left): Bob Boulton, G.U. 'Scotty' Allen, C.T.P. Ulm*

**I**N July this year, Papua New Guinea and Australia celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the first official Air Mail service between the two countries.

The service was launched on 24 July, 1934 when the famous pilots, Charles Ulm and G.U. (Scotty) Allen took off from Melbourne's Essendon Aerodrome in their "Faith In Australia" the AVRO X, VH-UXX, on the first stage of the flight from Australia to New Guinea.

This flight was experimental and represented a serious attempt to survey the possibilities of regular commercial airline operations between the two countries.

Their destination was Lae, for the capital of the mandated territory, Rabaul, still lacked a proper aerodrome and the AVRO X, a licence-built British version of the tri-motor Fokker FV 11b/3m, was too

large for any makeshift field.

The "Faith In Australia" was in Port Moresby on 27 July, after 25½ hours in the air, and her load of mail consisted of 28,822 pieces, ordinary and registered.

The air mail flight of the "Faith In Australia" was a big event, and when the aeroplane landed at Port Moresby there were four goldfields machines awaiting Ulm and Allen. The pilots of these aircraft agreed that they would guide Ulm and

Allen to Lae. If visual contact was lost with any one of them for any reason, the other machines would, if possible, take over as guides.

The weather conditions over the interior were very bad, and the AVRO X, which had a limited ceiling, was soon flying as high as it would go, among mountain peaks that were higher still. One of the pilots abandoned his attempt to reach Lae, and landed at Wau. Half an hour later the AVRO X and

other aircraft followed suit. Both Ulm and Allen were openly relieved, for New Guinea flying conditions were far different from and infinitely worse than anything in their experience.

On finally landing at Lae, Charles Ulm spotted Ian Grabowsky, newly returned from Australia, who was an old friend. His greeting was: "What the hell are you doing flying in a bloody country like this?"

Reporting the flight, Pacific Islands Monthly primly noted that "Mr Ulm did not like New Guinea flying conditions and expressed astonishment at the way aviation activities are carried out in such inhospitable country."

Charles Thomas Philippe Ulm was born in Melbourne in October 1898 of a French father and English mother.

Little is known of the family's arrival in Melbourne,

however Charles was only a boy when the family moved to Sydney. There he obtained employment as an office junior with an accounting firm.

Young Charles at the age of 15½ enlisted with the first battalion AIF at the outbreak of World War I. On enlisting he changed his name to Charles Jackson as he was under age and feared his parents interference with the authorities.

Describing his enlistment Ulm later wrote: "I perceived that here was an opportunity to express certain things that were in me, but which, at that age, I was too young to define."

"By the time I had reached the ripe old age of 17 years, I had seen battle, trouble and death in Egypt and Gallipoli."

Twice wounded, Charles was returned to Australia and discharged from the army on April 13, 1916. They had found he was under the required age.

At 18, legitimately of military age he enlisted under his correct name. He served with distinction in France and was finally discharged after receiving a 'gunshot wound in the right knee'.

After the armistice in November 1918, Charles spent a considerable period in England, in hospital. By then he was fully convinced aviation had a glowing future in post-war Australia.

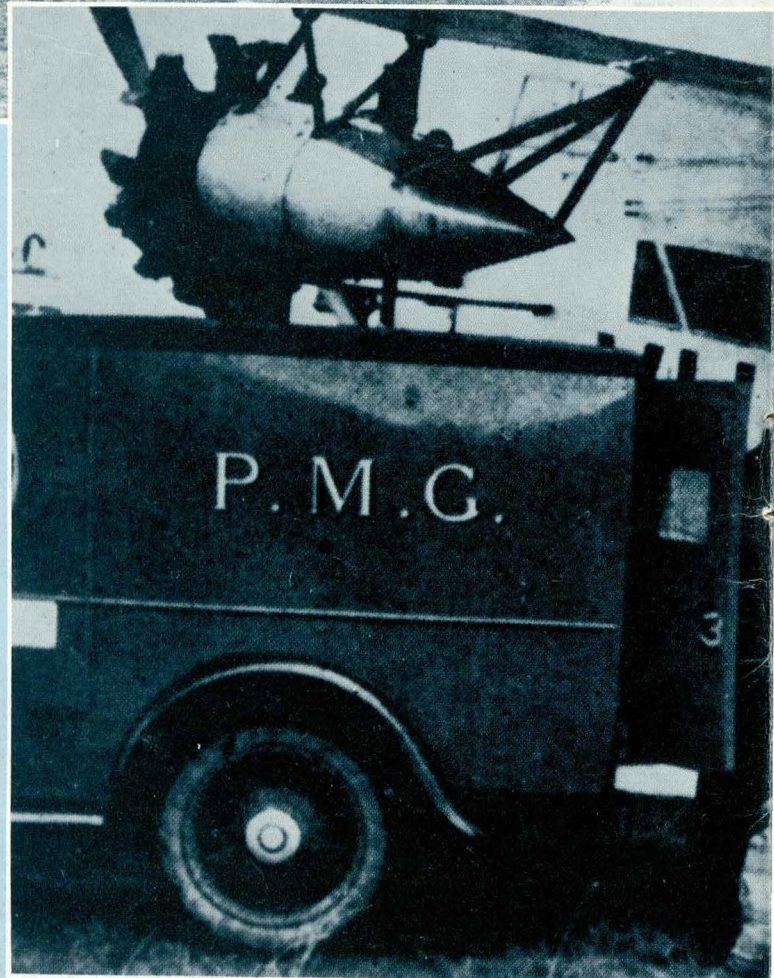
In 1920 Charles Ulm became manager and secretary of Aviation Services Company Limited. He actively promoted the business possibilities of aviation: the transportation of cargo and mail.

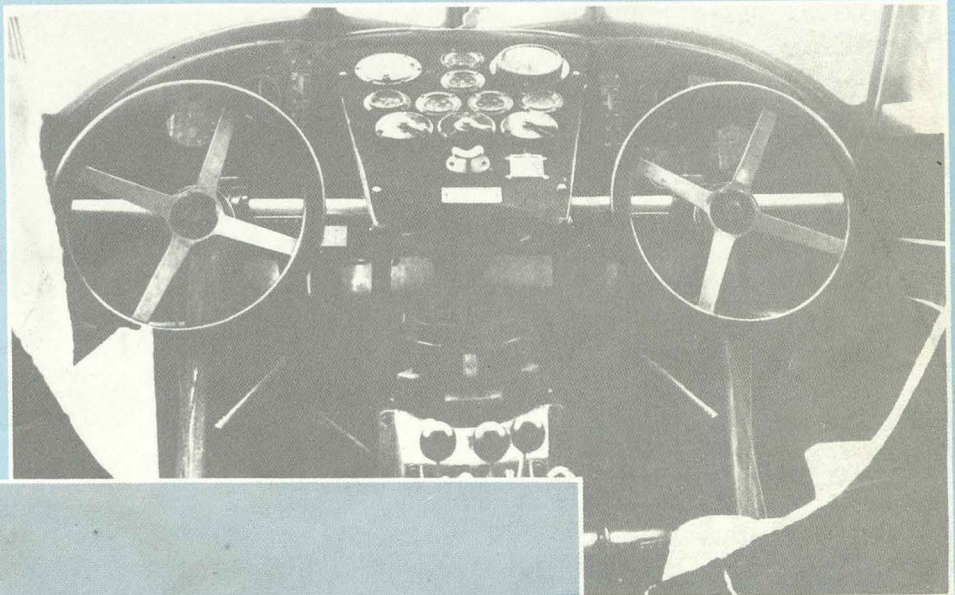
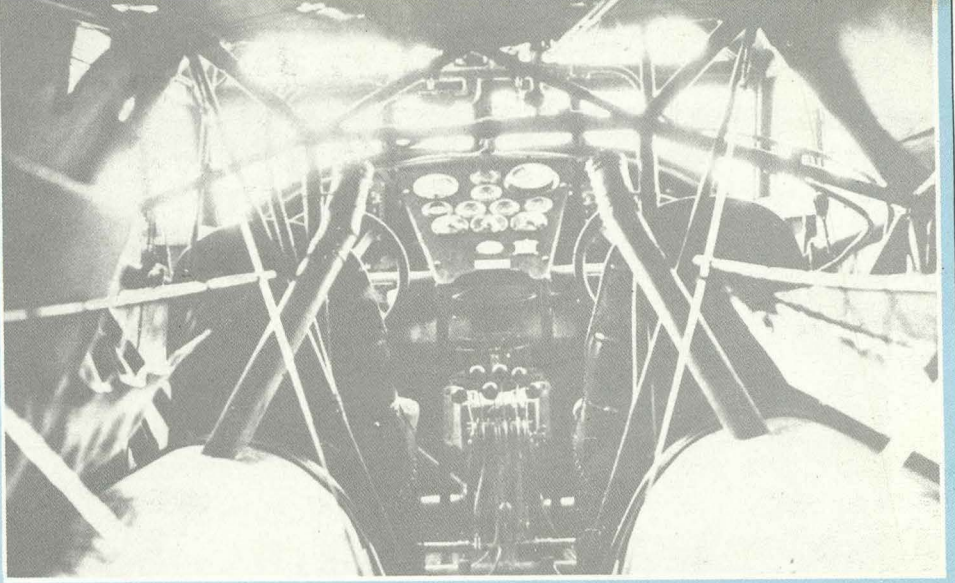
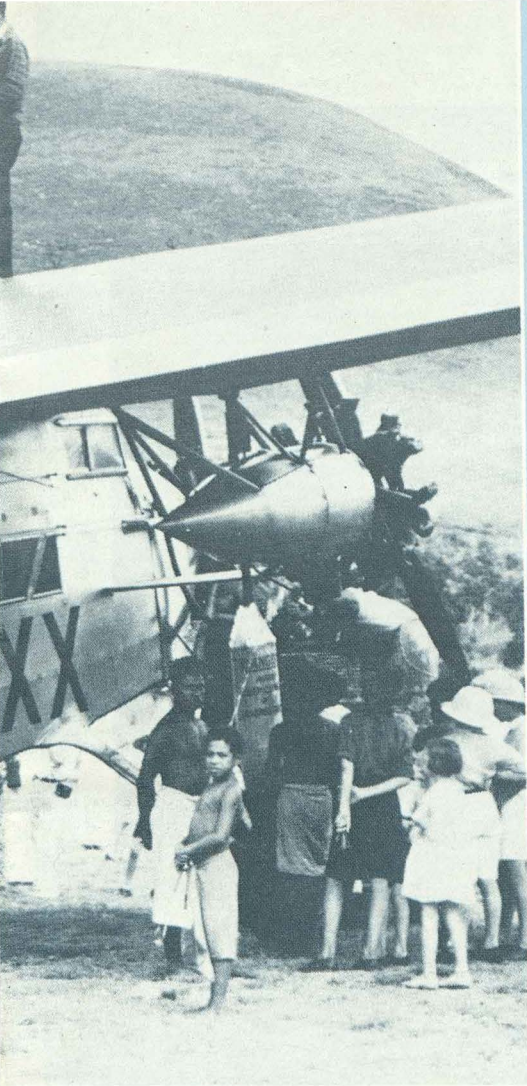
According to son John, Ulm made a practice of stripping off his flying suit, prior to leaving his aircraft, as part of his effort to demonstrate to businessmen that flying could be incorporated into their daily routine.

For six years Charles had nurtured the idea of an aerial crossing of the Pacific from the USA to Australia. Little did he know that a Charles Kingsford-Smith whom he had met briefly in 1921 also shared the same



Above: 'Faith in Australia' makes a refuelling stop; right: loading the Papua New Guinea mail aboard, prior to the historic journey





**Top:** in order to fly for longer distances, extra fuel tanks were fitted inside, taking up much of the cabin area; **below:** close-up of the cockpit of 'Faith in Australia'

# Papua New Guinea



20t

Avro X VH-UXX "Faith in Australia"

AIRMAIL - 50th ANNIVERSARY - AUSTRALIA / P.N.G

## Papua New Guinea



DH86B VH-UYU "Carmania"

25t

AIRMAIL - 50th ANNIVERSARY - AUSTRALIA / P.N.G

## Papua New Guinea



Westland Widgeon VH-UGI

40t

AIRMAIL - 50th ANNIVERSARY - AUSTRALIA / P.N.G

## Papua New Guinea



Consolidated Catalina NC777 "Guba"

60t

AIRMAIL - 50th ANNIVERSARY - AUSTRALIA / P.N.G

idea. It is incredible they didn't meet during that period. It was not until a friend of Smith's persuaded him to go to Ulm's office at Interstate Flying School in Sydney that the two discovered their common interests.

There Smith and Ulm clinched a deal that eventually led to the founding of the Australian National Airways Ltd, and brought them world acclaim as the first to fly over the Pacific Ocean from America to Australia.

The epic flights of the "Faith In Australia" proved the oceans to New Zealand and Papua New Guinea could be safely spanned. But Ulm was

fated not to see the historic beginning of scheduled services on the routes he had pioneered with such dedication.

On December 4, 1934 he was lost at sea on a flight from America to Australia in the 'Stela Australis', VH-UXY, an airspeed Envoy land plane. Accompanied by two other pilots, Ulm is thought to have missed the Hawaiian Islands and gone down into the sea when their fuel was exhausted.

The loss of Ulm was a tragic blow to the small band of Australian pioneers. Shortly after Ulm's death his reputation was accurately expressed in an emotional eulogy by his partner Charles Kingsford-Smith who

said: "Charles Ulm was many other things besides being a flier and a navigator. He was gifted, and possessed in his unusual character and temperament many of the qualities of greatness.

"I have been associated with him in many hours of stress and strain, and I shall always retain a strong sense of his forcible character, determination and sheer grit. He had a great business capacity, punch and vigour, and had he lived I am sure he would have fulfilled his dream of becoming the chairman or managing director of a great Australian world-wide aviation organisation, a position for which he was, in so many

aspects, admirably suited. Had he lived there is no saying to what goals his abilities would have taken him."

The Australian Postmaster-General's department have made arrangements to issue a Se-tenant pair of stamps in the large 50mm x 30mm size. One features a portrait of Charles Ulm based on a previously unpublished photograph supplied by his son. The other is of "Faith In Australia".

Papua New Guinea is issuing four special stamps which will feature historic aircraft including "Faith In Australia".

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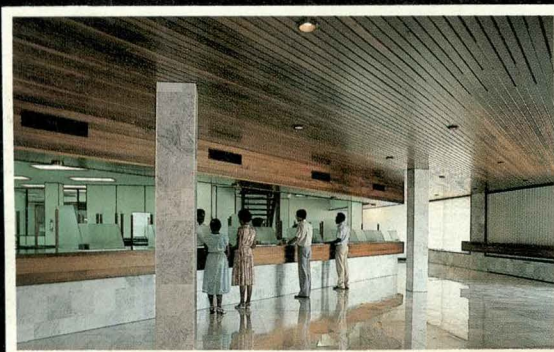
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# HOW TUNA FISH CAME TO BE

A legend from Siassi Islands, Morobe Province

by John Asong

**M**ANY years ago, a woman and her two sons lived on Long Island. They lived in a cave below the mountain volcano. Their main food was pig meat. They had pig meat with almost every meal.

One day, the two boys asked their mother why they always had to eat the same kind of meat. The woman replied, "I am sorry my sons, but there are no other kinds of meat on the island."

The next morning, the woman and her sons went to their food garden to work. As they approached the garden, a wild pig ran towards them and said, "Don't be afraid. I have something to tell you. You always keep killing pigs to get meat. If you will agree to stop killing us for a while, I promise that something good will happen." The wild pig then ran away.

All the rest of the day, as they worked in their garden, and later, as they walked home, the woman and her sons wondered about the things the pig had said. Near evening, the woman left the cave and went for a walk alone. Climbing over a nearby hill, she discovered a lake she had never seen before. The lake was full of tuna fish jumping happily about in the clear water.

The woman walked a short way into the lake and found that the fish were so tame she could pick them up by their tails. She was very surprised and happy. Gathering up several of the tuna fish, she decided to take them home to cook for her sons. The woman also decided to keep the lake a secret.

That evening when the woman prepped a meal containing tuna fish instead of pig meat, the two boys wanted to know where the new food came from. Their mother stubbornly refused to tell them about the lake she had discovered. For many weeks after that day, the woman

continued to go off by herself in the late afternoons and collect tuna fish. Even though her sons kept asking, she still wouldn't tell them where she got the fish.

Finally one afternoon, the boys followed her to the lake. They hid behind some bushes and watched the woman go into the lake and pick up the tuna

fish by their tails. After she left the lake and went home, the two boys came out of their hiding place. They ran into the lake and began catching the tame fish. The boys were very greedy and careless. They took large numbers of the tuna from the lake and left them lying on the lake shore. When they got

home, they didn't tell their mother what they had done.

The next afternoon when the woman went to the lake, she discovered that all the tuna fish were gone. Somehow, they had found a way to escape into the sea. Ever since that day, people who want to catch tuna hunt for them in the sea.

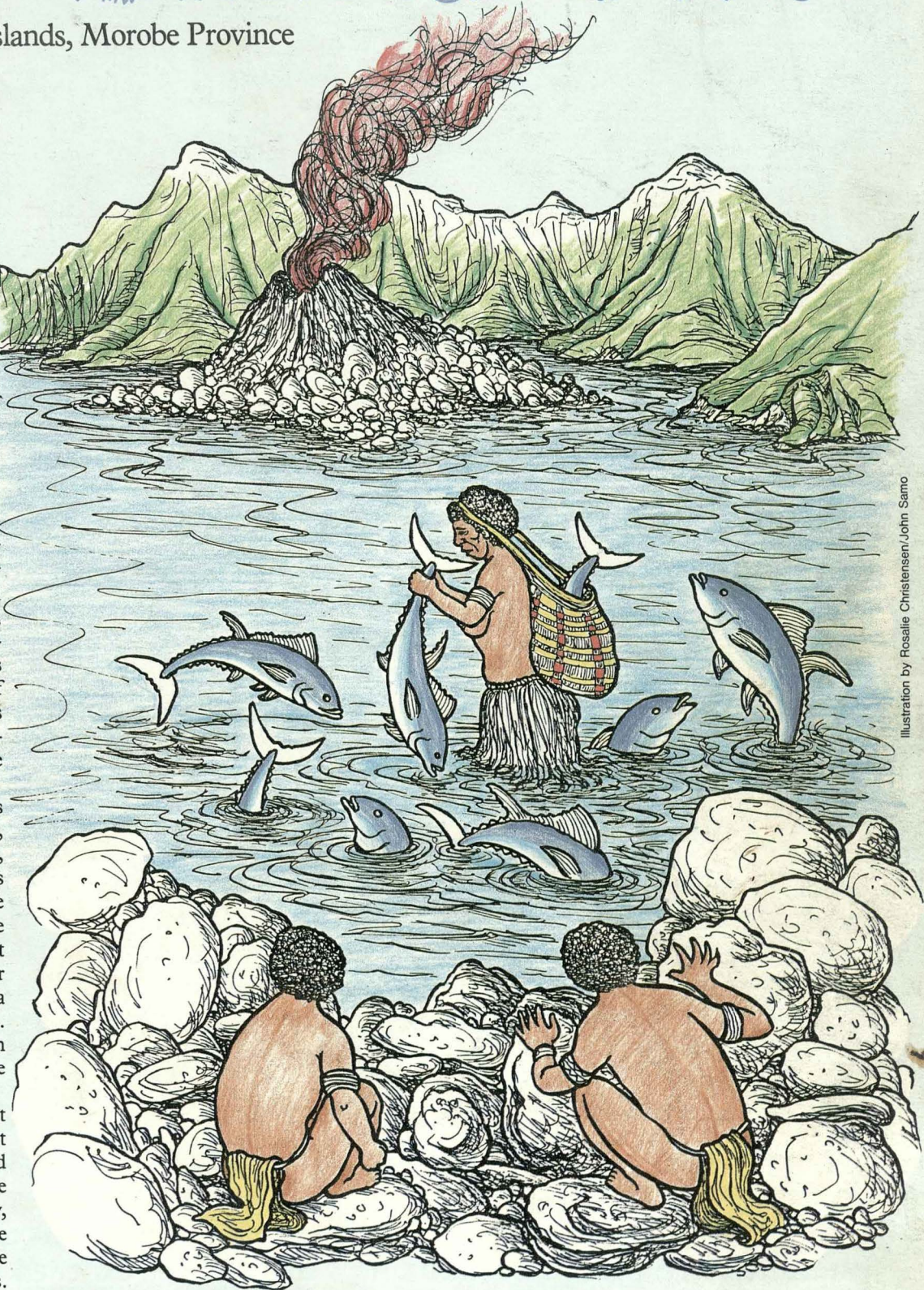


Illustration by Rosalie Christensen/John Somo



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**Missing Page/s**

Story and photos by Don Hook

# Singapore: CHINATOWN DISAPPEARING



**S**INGAPORE'S Chinatown is fast disappearing. By the end of this year it will be only a memory.

The bulldozers already have bitten away at Chinatown — that noisy, smelly, crowded conglomeration of people, poultry and reptiles . . . foodstalls, fortune tellers and funeral parlours. An exciting district that rarely rests; a way of life that has pas-



sed us by.

In its place will rise multi-storied banks and offices from Singapore's booming business district which already nudges the one-square mile of Chinatown.

There also will be government built shopping and housing complexes where many of Chinatown's 4,000 roadside stallholders will, probably for



the first time, pay rent and taxes. For the older stallholders it will be time to retire after a lifetime of living and bargaining in an area once reputed to be the most densely populated place in the world. With the stallholders will go a way of life that has existed almost since Sir Stamford Raffles founded modern Singapore in 1819 as a new British trading centre in the Far East.

Raffles divided the colony with European, Indian, Malay and Chinese zones. Thousands of Chinese immigrants swarmed into their zone south of the Singapore River. The population grew to about 300,000 but since the Second World War the population of Chinatown has dropped to less than 100,000 with the better educated younger generation moving away.

Singaporeans are divided over the demolition of Chinatown.

Ten or 20 years ago no thought was given — or even suggested — to the preservation of the past. The need was housing and the Government led by Mr Lee Kuan Yew gave priority to the clearance of slums for redevelopment projects. Mr Lee's Peoples' Action Party



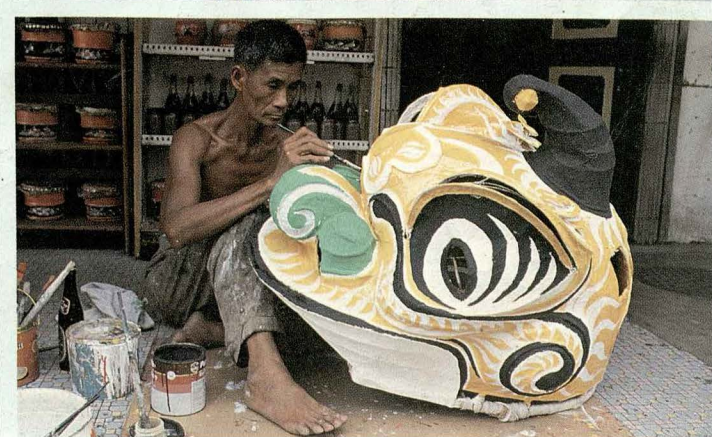
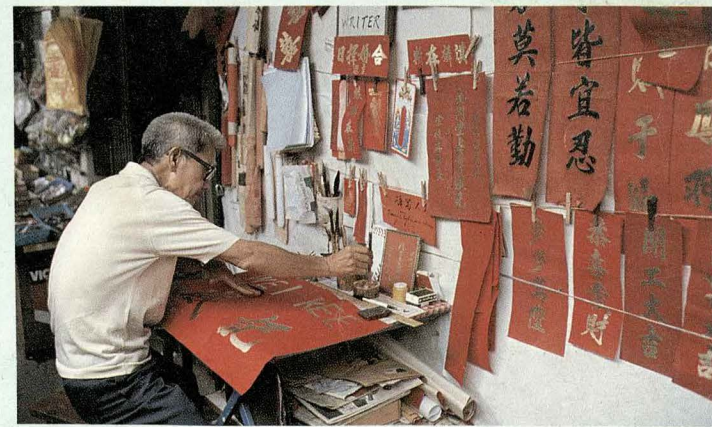
came to power with a promise to house the people and that object has been achieved.

In recent years a small but articulate lobby of Singaporeans and expatriate residents

has sought to preserve Chinatown, or an area of Chinatown, as part of the nation's heritage.

The appeal in the main has fallen on unsympathetic ears. For many Singaporeans, China-

**Opposite:** the high-rise commercial and housing complexes already tower over old Chinatown; **top left:** woodcarver at work; **below:** fruit, vegetables and spices from all over South-east Asia are sold by the roadside hawkers; **top right:** the 'snake butcher' skins a python; **centre right:** the scroll-maker;





**Top:** the fine-detail work of the metal artist requires great dexterity;  
**centre:** a face from old Chinatown: cook-amah checking the vegetables;  
**below:** outdoor eating — Chinatown style — a great place for a family meal



town has unpleasant memories. A report in *The Straits Times* in May 1982 said: "... Singaporeans got used to landscapes and other wholesale changes (education policy, industrialisation) occurring virtually overnight. None of this makes for great empathy in ordinary people towards preserving old (and usually decayed) parts of town. For many Singaporeans, Chinatown connotes not the warm glow of history but desperate poverty and a way of life that they'd sooner forget."

At a public forum in April 1982 conducted by a visiting German professor of architecture, a member of the audience said that pulling down old parts of Singapore was a physical expression of a national desire to forget the past. Not for us, he said, the Western belief that the old and the familiar is a necessary anchor in a changing world.

And so the debate goes on even as the bulldozers are revving for their final assault. Along with the buildings will go characters like Lim Kim Guan, one-time crime reporter, now official guide into "those exotic precincts." And there is 25-year-old Chee Kwong Hong, a "snake butcher" who skins pythons and iguanas and prides the shells from turtles as his equally hard-working mother collects the money and cleans the stall. The older Singaporeans will have to find new places to buy their guinea pigs and bats (aid to be good for eyesight and virility), and day-old rats, still pinkish and blind, which some believe will cure ulcers when swollen whole. 🐉

***Air Niugini flies from Port Moresby to Singapore every Saturday.***

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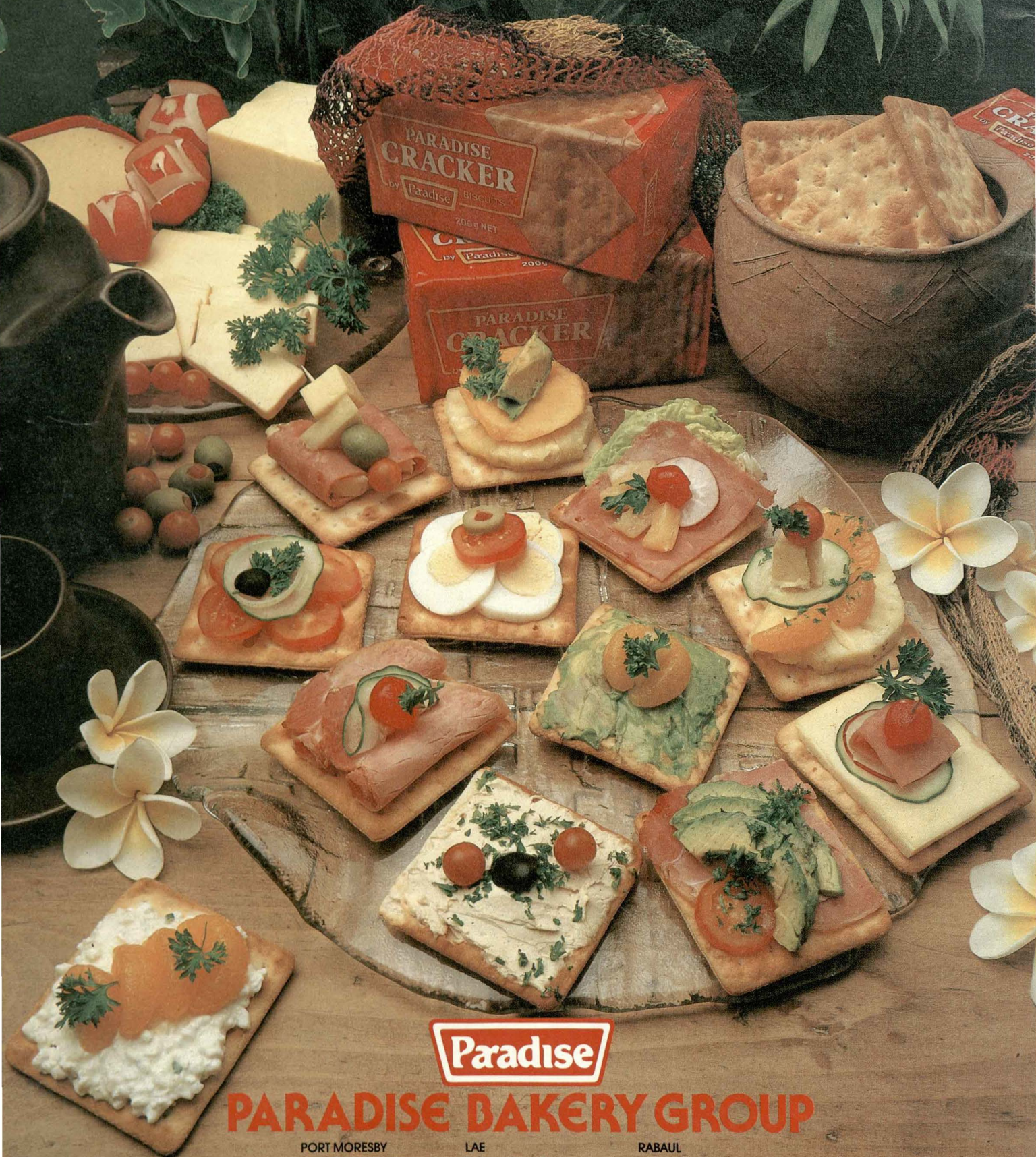
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**I**N any airline, cabin crew play a vital role in ensuring that your flight is enjoyable. But whether you are a seasoned traveller or on your first flight with Air Niugini you must notice one outstanding feature of our cabin crew — their natural warmth and interest in you, the passenger, as an individual.

This is the Melanesian way. Friendliness is part of their nature and they are genuinely pleased to welcome you aboard and make sure your journey is a pleasant one.

However you are probably not aware that all our cabin crew speak three languages and sometimes four with English as

a second language. Furthermore, all cabin crew receive intensive training which covers a broad range of subjects.

Although their warmth and friendliness is natural, they still

have to learn to cater for the individual passenger's needs; and this means everything from comforting a small child travelling alone to discussing the merits of a bottle of Beaujolais

with a wine connoisseur.

International travellers expect a high degree of service and skill and it is the responsibility of the Training Department to make sure the cabin crew are trained to provide it. Each year certain cabin crew are chosen from the domestic fleet to be trained for international flights. They will already have received initial training plus two years flying experience before they are selected to attend the basic international course.

During this course the students must acquire a thorough knowledge of the new job but

# Flying high for YOU!

By Allyson Roose

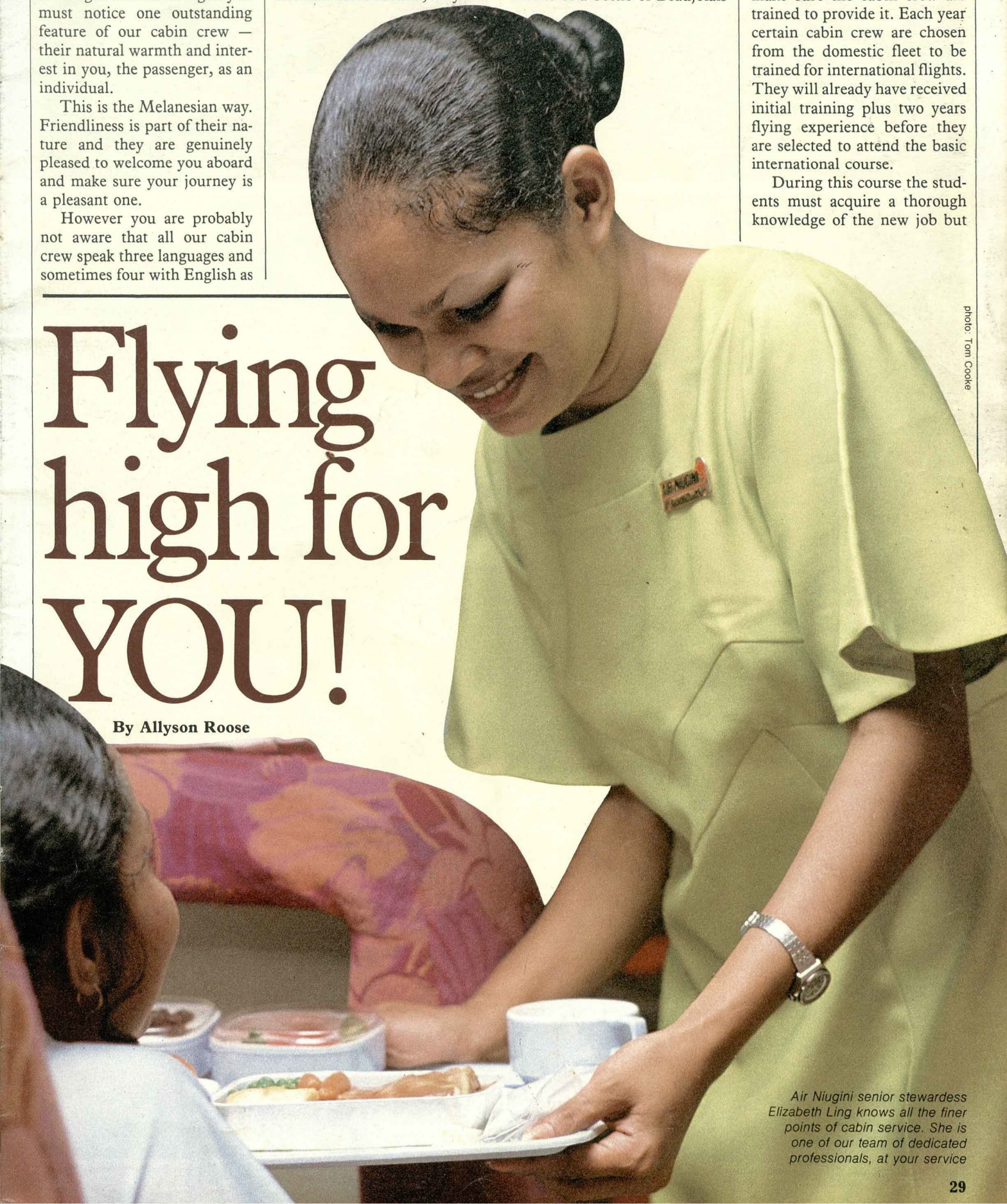
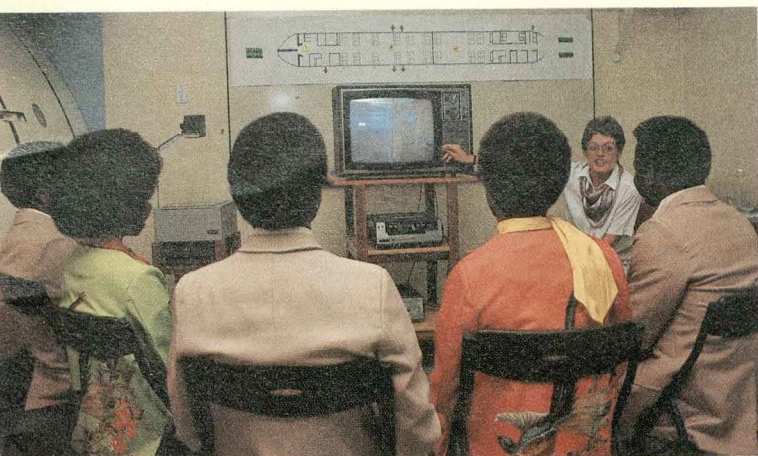


photo: Tom Cooke

*Air Niugini senior stewardess Elizabeth Ling knows all the finer points of cabin service. She is one of our team of dedicated professionals, at your service*





**Top left:** hot savouries are always a favourite with our first-class passengers and serving them correctly is a skill in itself; **centre:** learning the subtleties of the various different types of wine available on the aircraft; **below:** inside the cabin mock-up as a practice meal service gets under way; **top right:** moment of truth, as the trainees watch the video playback



the emphasis is on practical performance.

Prior to the classroom work, the students are attached to the Flight Services Kitchen. There, they can observe and assist the chefs in preparing the meals for international flights. This is valuable experience because it gives the students a thorough understanding of the type of food they will be serving in flight.

In the classroom the students must learn the routine work of aircraft systems and procedures as well as galley, bar management and converting foreign currencies.

The Training Centre is equipped with up to date teaching aids to make the training as realistic as possible. There is a simulated aircraft cabin and galley where the students are taught how to prepare and serve meals and drinks.

To put this learning to the test in an authentic environment, guests are invited to be "passengers" for a meal service in this simulated aircraft. The guests are asked to complete a questionnaire to indicate whether the service was to their satisfaction.

Then comes the real test for the students — the whole meal service has been recorded on video so that the students can watch themselves in action. Of course, the training officer is there to evaluate their performance; but because they can see it for themselves the criticism has greater effect. In training, certainly, one picture is worth a thousand words!

When the classroom course is finished the training hasn't! Each student is allocated a number of flights under the personal guidance of an experienced steward or stewardess, qualified in on-job training techniques.

Only when the inflight coaching is successfully completed can the trainee finally go it alone. We believe in Air Niugini that this additional coaching makes our cabin crew some of the most highly trained in the business. There is no substitute for practical experience gained on the job.

Even though the cabin crew member is fully qualified he or



**Top:** in Air Niugini's flight catering centre, learning the intricacies of inflight cuisine, a group of trainees get their just desserts; **below:** back in the cabin mock-up, a smiling Joe Awuku shows how it's done

she will be recalled regularly to attend refresher courses at the Training Centre. Thus, standards can be monitored and product knowledge developed.

Career Development training is an important area for cabin crew and this includes promotion for First Class Service and Supervisory positions.

First Class Service is comparable with the style and service in a high class restaurant. The airline world is a competitive one so cabin crew must be proficient in every aspect of First Class service.

The course concentrates on giving students a wide appreciation of gourmet foods and quality wines together with the correct presentation to the passenger. For example students must translate the culinary terms contained on the menu and describe the characteristics of the wine served. Above all they are taught the importance of anticipating the First Class passenger's requirements.

Supervisory skills training is given to those who will be in

overall control of the cabin service and passengers' welfare. Management of people is a demanding role and with increasing cabin crew numbers and ever larger aircraft this is a responsible position with added documentation responsibility.

And finally, but by no means least, interpersonal skills training is an integral part of every cabin crew course. At Air Niugini this is not aimed at teaching our cabin crew to smile sincerely — after all they do that naturally — but at fine tuning their natural ability. A forum is provided where they discuss how to look after their passengers better and where they can familiarize themselves with the customer contact situations they may encounter at each stage of their cabin crew career.

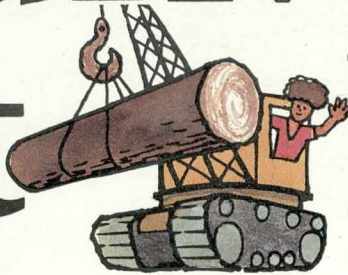
So when you fly with Air Niugini you will now know not only that the cabin crew has been highly trained to care for your every need but also, of greater significance, they do so because they really care. It's their naturally, friendly way. ☺



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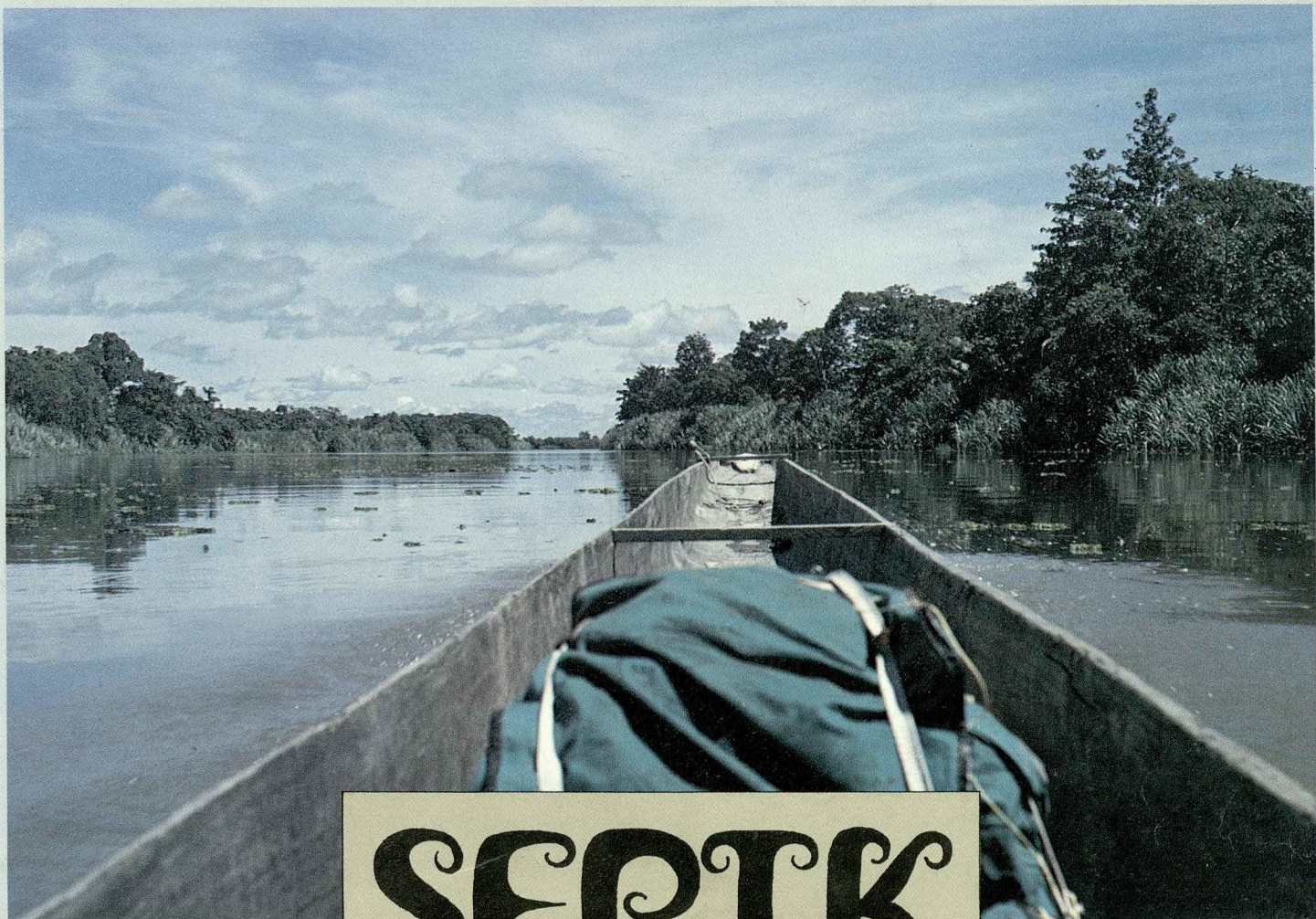
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# SEPIK REVISITED

Story and photos by Margaret Leddin

**I**N 1910 a Dutch German boundary expedition under Captain Luymes and Professor L. Schultze made an historic voyage up the Sepik river in a motorized boat and reached a point 960 kilometres from the river's mouth. The upper Sepik was suddenly no more an unsighted mystery to the white explorer.

Fourteen years later Ambunti Station was established on the middle Sepik. Under continued administrative and missionary influence intertribal warfare had been modified to a peaceable degree and traditional religious rituals are now to a great extent activities of the past.

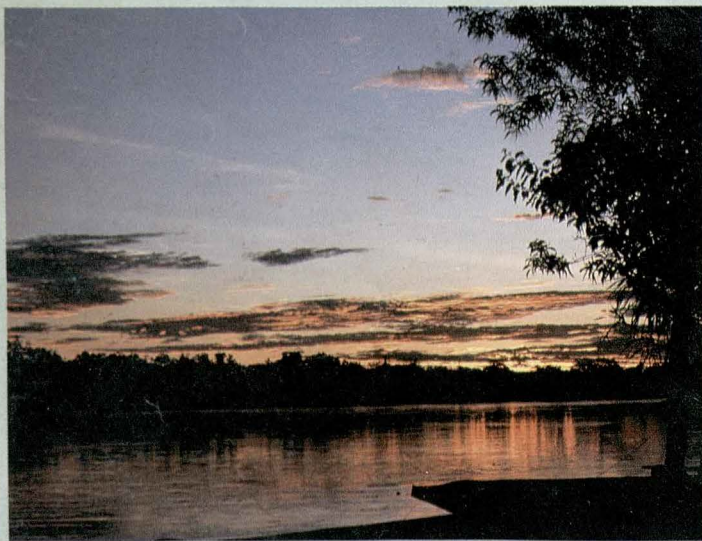
But what of the descendants of the self contained Sepik ethos? To see from a grass roots vantage point just how the upper Sepik people exist on this beautiful but hostile mosquito infested mass of water one can enter the Sepik via Green River and travel by a series of paddle canoes to Pagwi on the Middle Sepik.

Dio village 29 kilometres as

*There are two ways of cruising the Sepik river — the easy way and the hard way. The easy way is on board the luxurious m.v. Melanesian Explorer, where everything is done for you — all you do is relax and enjoy the trip. The other way is to follow the author's example and hitch rides on canoes. Less reliable, but more of an adventure*







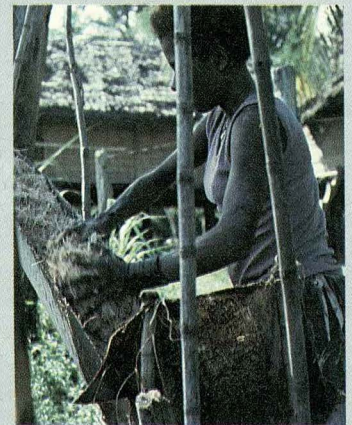
the crow flies from the Indonesian border is the first settlement sighted on the main river. Another 14 kilometres down stream is Bifro, first night stop on the Sepik. A cluster of inquisitive children and adults appear on the river bank. Their clothing reflects a combination of traditional and western fashion. The elder men wear penis gourds and many of the women favour the practical grass skirt. A sprinkling of tattered and greasy cotton shorts and skirts

are worn by some. The younger children run free in no clothing at all. The local councillor arranges a stay in the village *haus kiap*. One may donate what seems to be an unnecessarily large amount of blood to the thriving mosquito population before acquiring a small grass brush which seems to be a popular mosquito swatter. It is to be a close companion for the remainder of the river journey. A far more satisfying weapon than any chemical spray.



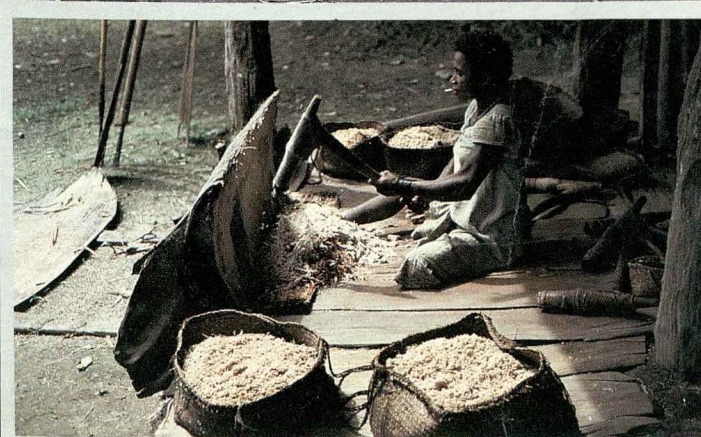
**Top:** Yentchen village reflected in the still water; **below left:** a Sepik sunset; **centre right:** washing clothes in the river; **bottom:** squeezing pounded sago through a coconut fibre sieve

The women are returning from the gardens laden with firewood for the evening's cooking. Some carry bilums from their heads with small children swaying asleep inside. Vegetables are not plentiful and many gardens are still flooded





**Photos from top:** a typical meal, village style: sago, smoked Macow (fish), banana and pawpaw; cutting up a wild pig, killed in the bush; Yabirumi, a small outpost; making sago at Waskuk village



after the heavy wet season rains. Sago, fish and wild bush pig supplemented by whatever vegetables are available, form the staple diet.

Past the moving silhouettes of the returning villagers the Sepik ripples in silver and blue metallic ribbons, then quite suddenly it is dusk.

A huge grey waterway glides past reflecting a molten setting sun and a pale grey rising moon. Soon a charcoal dusk invades the village. Gently moving dug-out canoes tethered with vine to fragile sticks resemble huge black spears thrust into the muddy rivers edge. Distant thunder rumbles among the border mountains. The hut beckons, climb the thin notched pole and prepare to sleep on the spring bark floor. Frogs and birds create a deafening and unharmonious symphony on the perimeter of the village. The villagers converse; the children play one final game in the darkness, fires slowly die and a peaceful silence descends.

In the morning, splinters of sharp dawn sunlight filter through cracks in the hut wall. Distant conversation is punctuated by barking dogs and the cry of a waking child. A new day begins on the Sepik. Pack away the mosquito net and prepare for the long river journey to Tipas. Then farewells are exchanged.

Women embark in their small dugouts for a day of fishing. Three men take their five dogs and paddle out across the strong current on a pig hunting expedition into their tribal bushland downstream from the village. The constant process of hunting, gardening and food gathering is a full days activity in which all but the very young and old play varying parts. Self sufficiency in all its varied aspects is hard work and by definition an on-going and repetitive way of life. Contemporary economic and political issues seem to be of no noticeable consequence in this

isolated human outpost. Nature is man's real dictator here on the Sepik.

A flurry of white attracts the eye further down as a flock of graceful water birds ever alert to the swishing noise of an approaching canoe wing their way overhead to the relative safety of the thick green jungle. The gentle early morning warmth of the sun is all too soon hot and tormenting. The people have an intimate knowledge of the geography of their river. Short cuts through tiny channels of fast flowing flood water provide a chance to shelter from the heat of the midday sun. Beyond the swamp and jungle the border mountains recede.

The river twists in a slowly widening course between tall verges of wild sugar cane alternating with vibrant jungle in a continuous process of decay and regrowth.

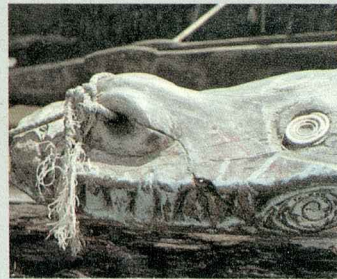
Further down, the river passes the Yellow River, the Leonard Schultze (Waliyo) the Frieda (Niyap) the Saniyap Creek and the May (Dunap) Rivers as they join the Sepik after flowing between mountain cliffs and chains of hills.

Shoulders become stiff from the unaccustomed paddling. It takes a few days to break them into the steady dipping and thrusting rhythm required to gracefully manoeuvre the dug-outs. By nightfall one is at Tipas. A village elder offers a coconut to drink from. One soon acquires a liking for the refreshing and clean liquid inside the coconut. A small child is very sick at the village. His father asks for medicine and accepts the suggestion that they travel to the Yellow River mission station about 30 kilometres away. Grille, a flaky skin disease covers many of the villagers bodies. Arms are in constant motion chasing mosquitoes and scratching itchy skin.

An old disused hut is to be shelter for the night. It is beside a stagnant backwater. The Sepik moves silently by in the evening gloom looking black and slightly forboding. Supper consists of some pumpkin and dry biscuits. There are no lamps in the village so everyone retires as the cooking fires die down. Rats playing a hectic



**Top left:** waterside at Yentchen village; **centre left:** mother in mourning following the death of her husband; **bottom left:** canoes are a way of life on the river; **below:** carved crocodile forms a canoe prow; **right:** the author outside a trade store at Chambri Lakes



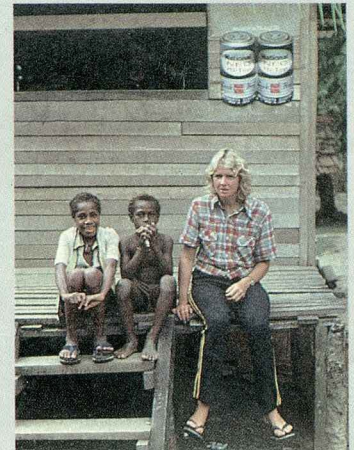
game of hide and seek on the bark floor delay sleep for a while. Then all is quiet.

The days unfold into stark and vivid images of bleached and decaying jungle hemming in a seemingly endless muddy flat and gradually widening river. Each new village has a subtly different character. Some villages only 10 to 15 kilometres apart have completely different languages (place talk). Within one village there may be as many as 20 different clans (family groups). In Waskuk village the clan totem was sago. Other clan totems include crocodile, black cuscus and fish. Further down on the middle Sepik standardized painted and carved representations of these totems are used as clan emblems.

Sago making at Waskuk is a chore undertaken by the unmarried girls. The village men regularly go into their tribal bushland to cut down the sago palm. There is always a supply of 1-1½ metre lengths of sago palm soaking in the water beside the river bank at each village. The girls lever the section to be processed on to the bank. With an axe the tough outer bark of the palm is partially stripped. Then sitting cross legged facing the length of sago the girls methodically crush the pith with regular curving sweeps of their sago palm section. Then handfuls of sago pith is washed clean of sago and

discarded. The creamy sago runs with the water into a receptacle below the trough. Next day the water is drained from the top of the sago cream and the sago is placed in woven baskets to dry. The preparation and wrapping of sago cream varies from village to village. In the upper Sepik sago is mixed with boiling water to form a transparent greyish cream. It is then wrapped in green palm leaves ready for eating. On the middle Sepik sago fried in a clay pot is more popular. It can also be baked in banana leaves in an earth or stone oven. Sago is eaten at every meal along with fish, pig, meat or any other wild animal which may have been caught.

At a small outpost village 20 kilometres up river from Imumbi the village big man talks late into the night. He has four wives and thirteen children. He



talks of head hunting in the old days and his wish for all his children to attend the May River mission school. Sitting cross legged on the bark hut floor beside a dimly glowing fire surrounded by a black and mysterious jungle, one senses the tangible presence of the past. It mixes with the present to create a twilight period in the slowly disappearing traditions of the Upper Sepik world.☺

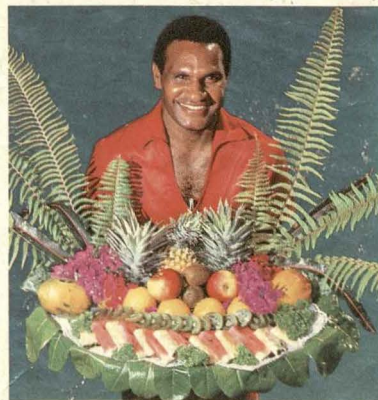
*Air Niugini operates frequent scheduled F28 jet services to Wewak, gateway for Sepik River adventures.*





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