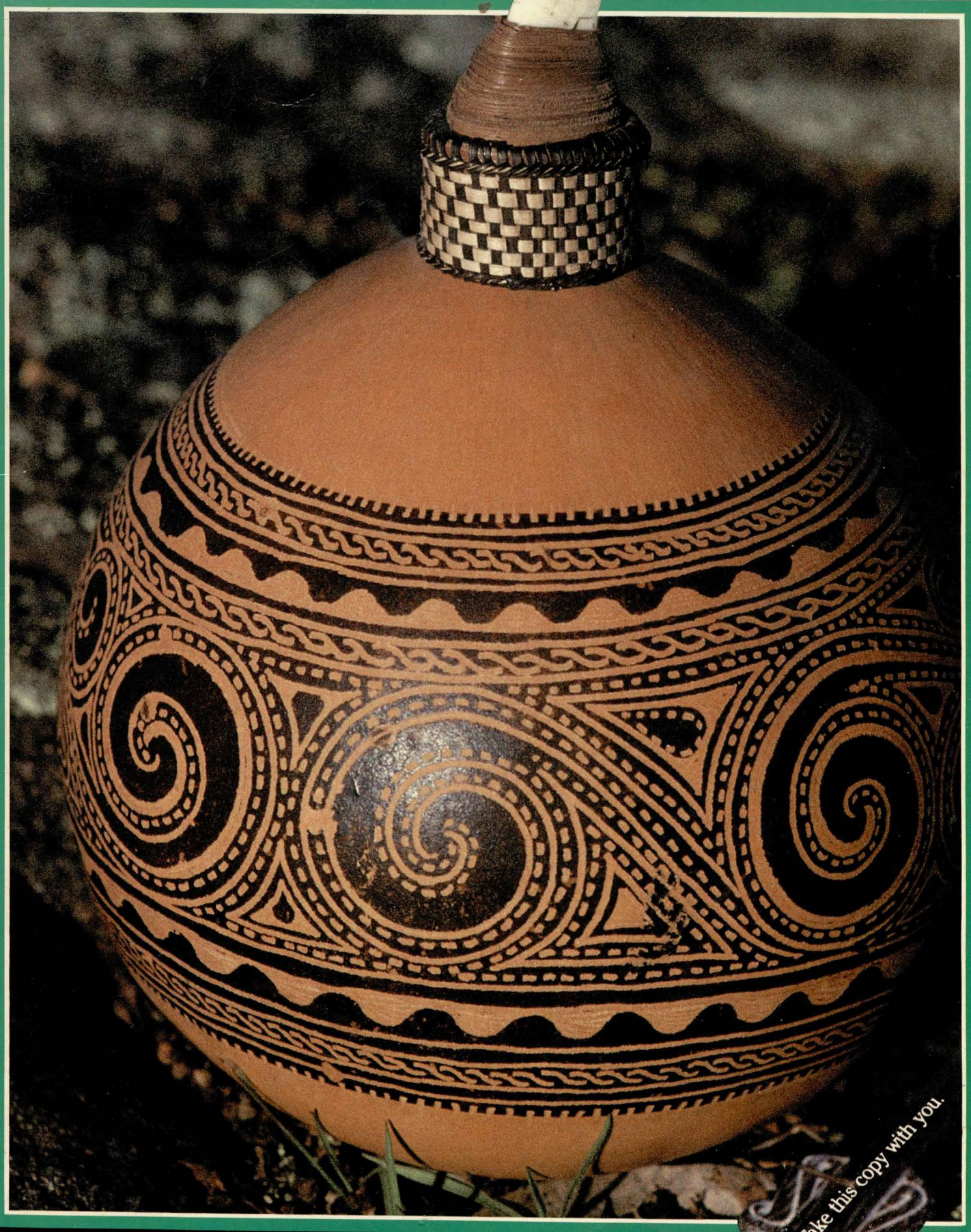
paradise

in-flight with Air Niugini



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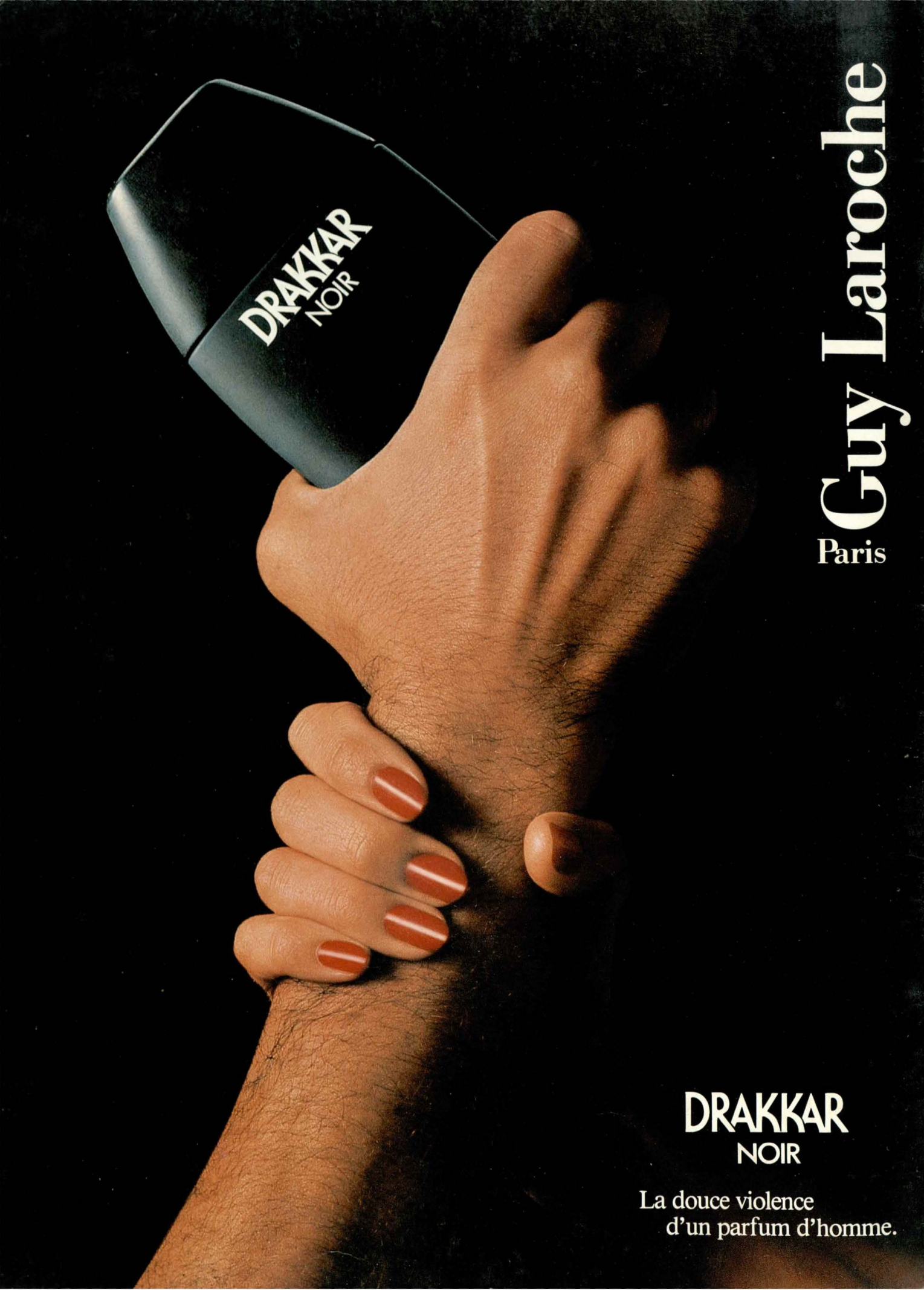
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paradise

Welcome aboard.

Papua New Guinea is extremely proud of its cultural heritage and the Raun Raun Theatre group is renowned for its re-enactment of traditional performances. Raun Raun's invitation to the Brisbane Warana Festival was an honor which the group repaid with a series of inspiring performances. That triumph is described in this issue.

Readers no doubt will be interested also in the story of Phillip, the retired headhunter at beautiful Karawari Lodge. Phillip is a tourist attraction in his own right.

We hope you find these, and the other stories, interesting, entertaining and informing.

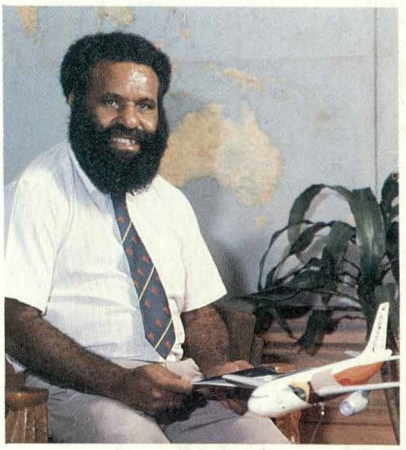
Have a pleasant flight!

Masket Iangalio
General Manager

IN THIS ISSUE:

Above: Masket Iangalio, Air Nigini's General Manager.

Cover: An elaborately decorated 'sel kambang', lime container, from the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea. Gourds are cultivated for food, made into containers and put to many other uses.



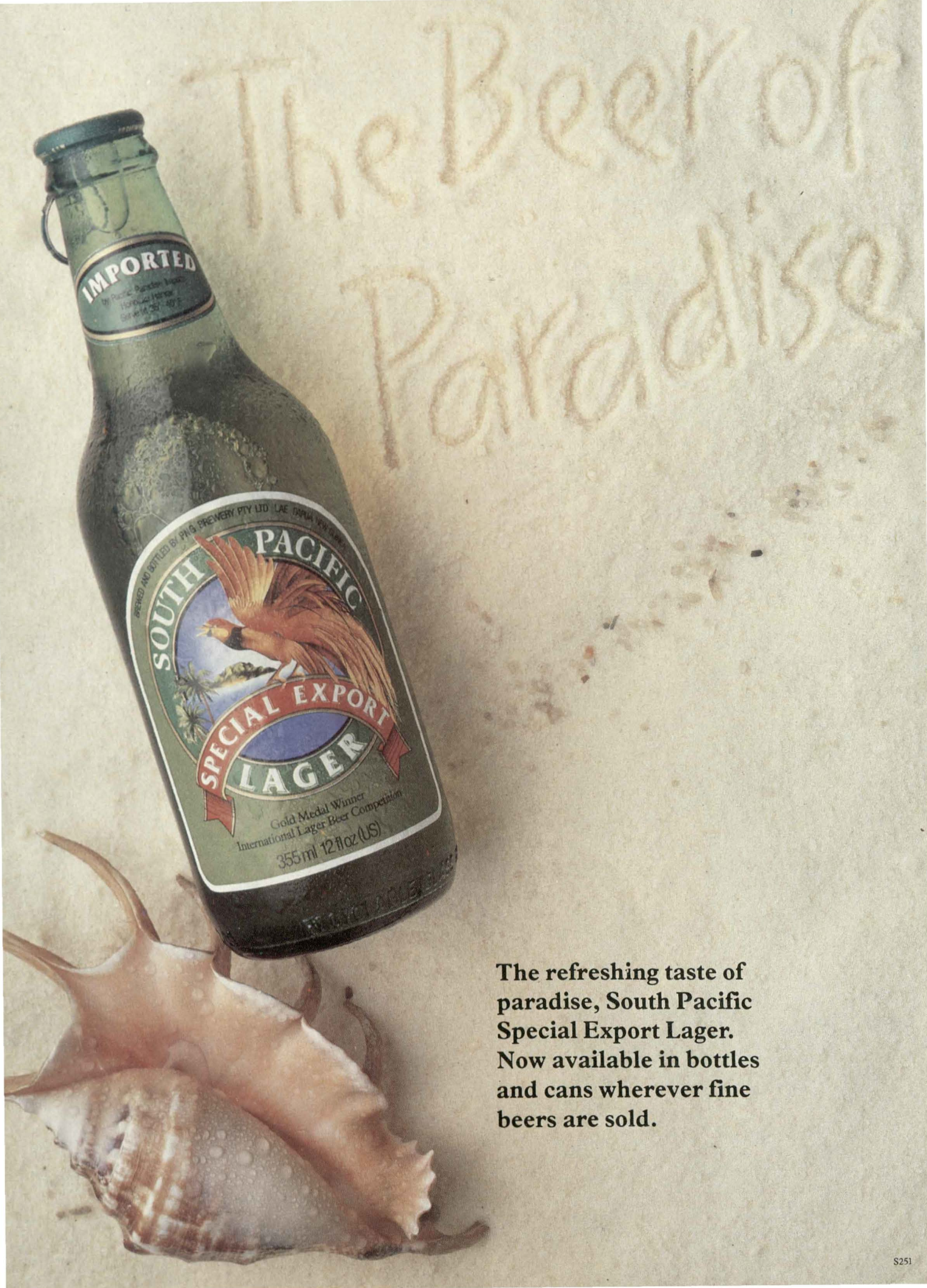
No 56 April 1986
Paradise is published bi-monthly by Air Niugini, PO Box 7186, Boroko, Papua New Guinea (telephone 273542; telex NE22225).

Editor – Geoff McLaughlin
Consultant – Bob Talbot
Design – Thomas Cooke Associates

Advertising
Papua New Guinea – Advertising Department, Air Niugini, PO Box 7186, Boroko
Australia – The Horwitz Group, 506 Miller St, Cammeray, 2062 (telephone Sydney 929 6144)
Hong Kong – Progressive Advertising Agency, 11 Kam Ping Street, Kam Ming Yuen, Rm C, 2nd Fl., North Point (telephone 5-630145-6 telex HX 65474PPAAE)
Japan – Universal Media Corporation, GPO Box 46, Tokyo (telephone 666-3036; cables 'Unimedia' Tokyo)
United Kingdom – Intergroup Communications Inc., 31 Lyncroft Avenue, Pinner, Middlesex (telephone 01-868 9289; cables Pacom Pinner)

Subscriptions
Annual subscription rates for six airmail issues are: USA, Europe, UK and Africa Kina 23 (US$28)
Australia, New Zealand, Asia and South Pacific K19 (US$24, A$25)
Papua New Guinea K13 payment by international bank draft.

Printed in Hong Kong by Progressive Printing Agency.



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S251

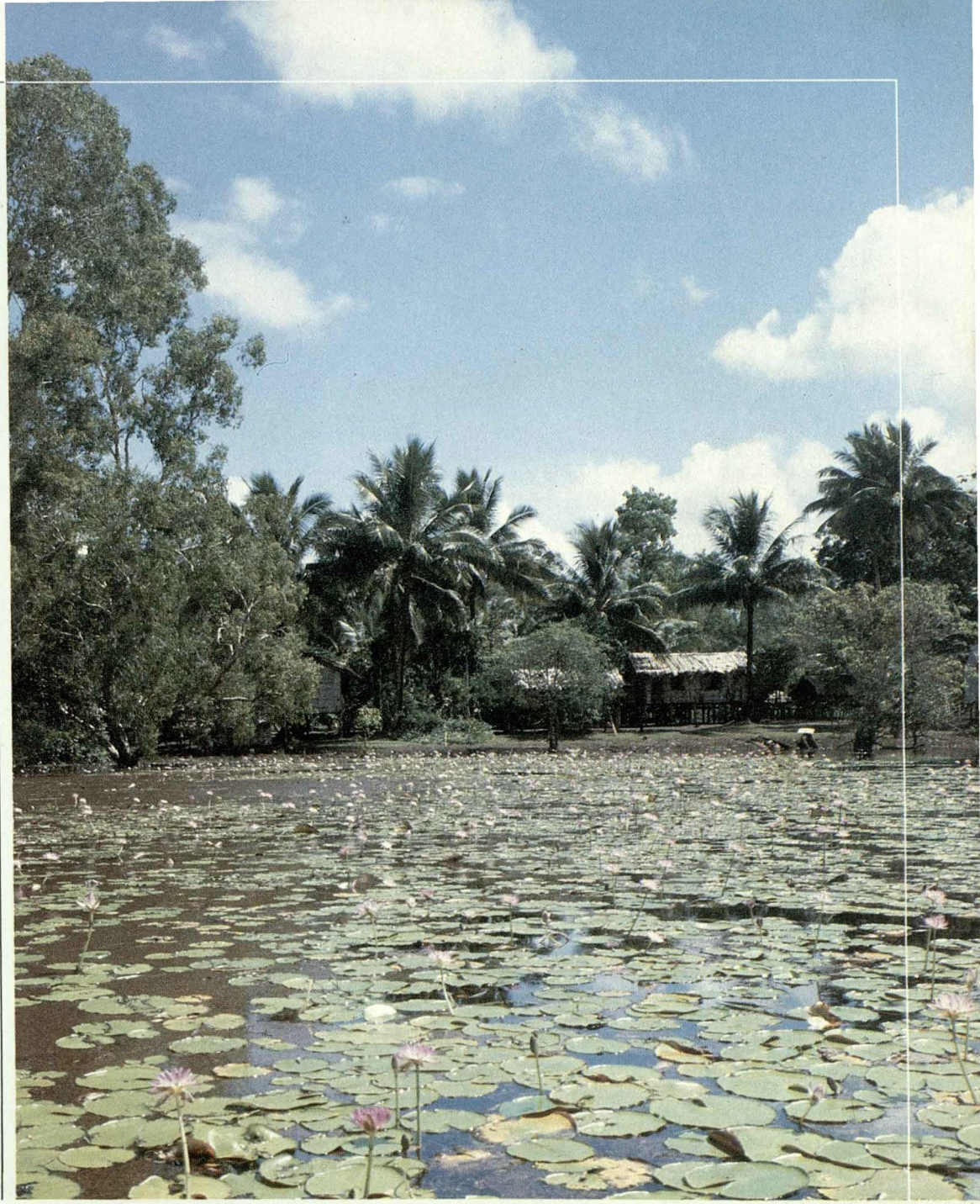
Life at Bensbach

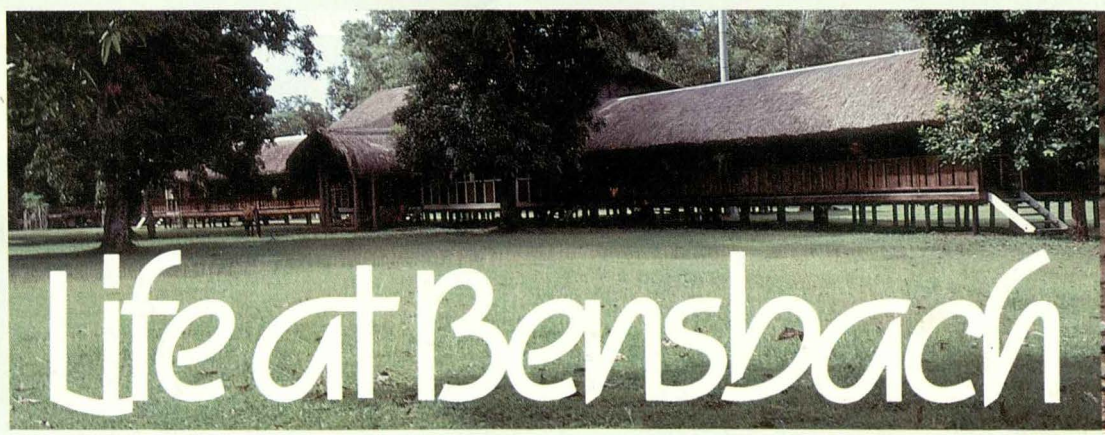
Story and photographs by Pat Woolley and David Walsh

Bensbach, in the sparsely populated Western Province of Papua New Guinea, is a paradise for the naturalist, the photographer, the hunter and the fisherman.

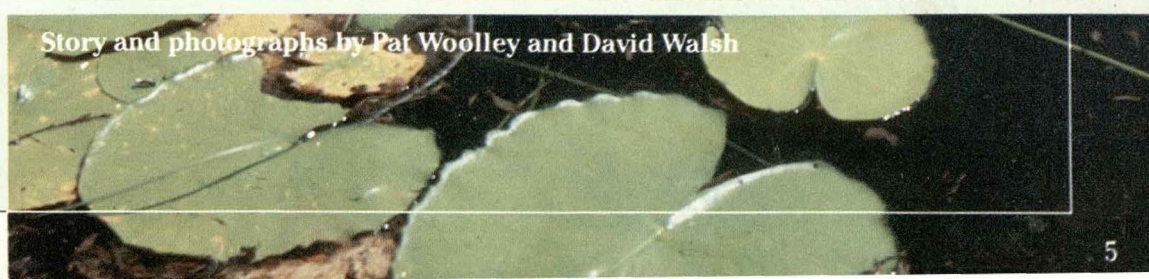
Visitors from all over the world are welcomed to the remote wildlife lodge by Brian and Doreen Brumley, long-time residents of Papua New Guinea. The lodge is situated on the east bank of the Bensbach River, about 95 kilometres up the river from the sea and 25 kilometres across land from the border with Irian Jaya. Most visitors arrive on regular air services at the all-weather airstrip but some come in private aeroplanes and others, like the police patrolling the border, in helicopters.

The plains surrounding Bensbach consist of savannah woodland and marshland. Annual rainfall is between 1500 and 2000 millimetres (59 and 78 inches) and temperatures are high – above 25°C - throughout the year. In the wet season, which usually starts in December or January, the plains are flooded and can remain under water for many months. This annual flooding makes the area very attractive to wildlife but inhospitable to man. Secure for the most part from human interference the larger animals, such as the countless deer and wallabies,





Korombo Camp village at Bensbach, a naturalist's paradise and the Wildlife Lodge **(centre left).** *A local inhabitant, a green tree frog* **(centre right).**



are not timid and can be closely approached.

Small herds of Rusa deer were introduced to Irian Jaya near Merauke by the Dutch in 1913 and 1920. The deer flourished and spread across the south coastal plains. Today they are hunted, for both trophies and meat, though under strict control. Bensbach jerky – chewy, salted and smoked strips of venison – is exported to many parts of the world.

Roads are few but in the dry season it is possible to travel by land to see the deer and wallabies. You may also see pigs, and some of the many wild dogs that prey upon the other animals. When the rains come and the country is flooded, all travel to surrounding areas is by boat. An early morning trip down river to one of the good fishing spots in a flat bottomed boat equipped with comfortable armchairs is an ideal way to see the wildlife. Wallabies and deer line the grassy banks and huge flocks of birds fly by. Many birds stand in the shallows or perch in the trees while an occasional crocodile can be seen, either sunning itself on the bank or swimming in the water when only its eyes and nostrils are visible.

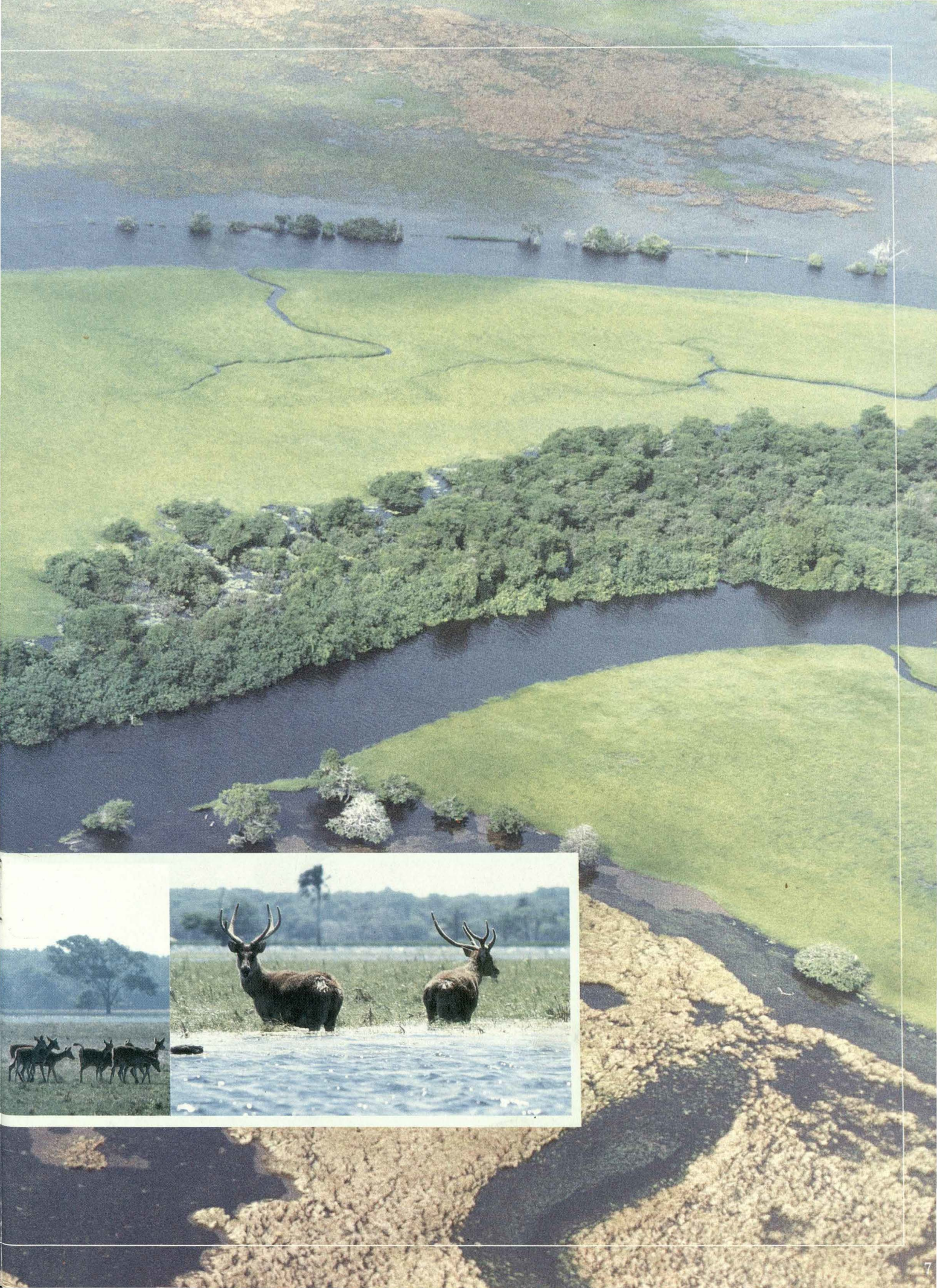
Fishing is a rewarding pasttime, even for the novice. Barramundi, tarpon and other species can be caught. Early in the season the fish have plenty of natural food and are less attracted by the lures. The barramundi that are caught nearly always have a stomach full of yabbies. These freshwater crustaceans are one of the barramundi's favourite foods and are also relished by the human inhabitants of the region.

When the fish are gutted by the water's edge, large goannas arrive for their share of the catch. So eager are they that they come close enough to take food from the hand.

As the day grows hot and the fish stop biting, a picnic lunch and snooze in a shady spot on the bank can be very relaxing. Occasionally a tortoise will emerge from the river to rest on land but the slightest movement will send it scurrying back into the water.

Local guides will always accompany you on excursions away from the lodge and their knowledge of the country and its wildlife is invaluable. Those who work at the lodge live either at Bensbach or Korombo Camp about a kilometre away. There is a school at Bensbach for the children. In the wet season the children travel from Korombo Camp to school by canoes which are left in the 'parking bay' behind the lodge. The dugout canoes are the traditional form of transport on the waterways in

Cargo boat making its way up the flooded Bensbach River. Sights along the way include flocks of birds **(centre left),** *Rusa deer does and calves with a bustard* **(middle)** *and Rusa stags at water's edge* **(centre right).**



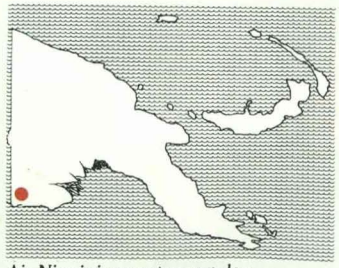
the area. They are used to reach village gardens on high grounds and hunting and fishing spots. There is no better way to see the wildlife and to appreciate thc tranquil surroundings.

Lodge supplies are brought in by boat from Port Moresby. In the dry season the boats travel up the Morehead River, a little to the east and cargo is unloaded at Morehead to be taken by road to Bensbach. When the road is impassable the boat makes the longer journey up the Bensbach River and cargo is unloaded in front of the lodge.

Not all wildlife at Bensbach is as visible as the wallabies and birds. Many animals emerge only at night, and unless you deliberately set out to catch them, are seldom seen. In the bush small rodents and marsupials come out to feed. Most of the rodents feed on plant material including seeds and fruit while marsupials like the red-cheeked dunnart and the spotted cat, are flesh eaters hunting insects and other animals without backbones, as well as small vertebrates such as lizards and birds. The omnivorous marsupial bandicoots sometimes leave the cover of the bush to forage on the lawns outside the lodge. There they mingle with the orphaned deer and wallabies, raised and fed by the Brumleys. Some of the bolder wallabies will even join visitors at the bar. The nights are filled with the sounds of bats swooping through the air and the songs of insects and frogs. The giant tree frogs often come indoors in the evening, perhaps to prey upon insects that are attracted to the lights.

Bensbach is one of the most remote and unspoilt places in PNG. It is easy to capitulate to its charm – time slows down and you have nothing to do but let yourself be carried along.

Yabbie **(top),** *a delicious crustacean that is favored by game fish and humans, but the red-cheeked dunnart, a small marsupial* **(left),** *prefers his fresh kill of white-bellied skink. Family and pets ready for trip to their village* **(right).**



Air Niugini operates regular schedules from Port Moresby to Daru in Western Province from where a light aircraft flies to the Bensbach Wildlife Lodge. Contact Air Niugini or Trans Niugini Tours for further information.

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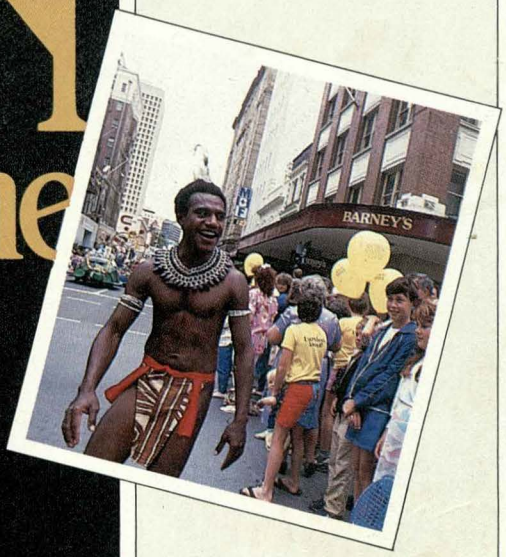
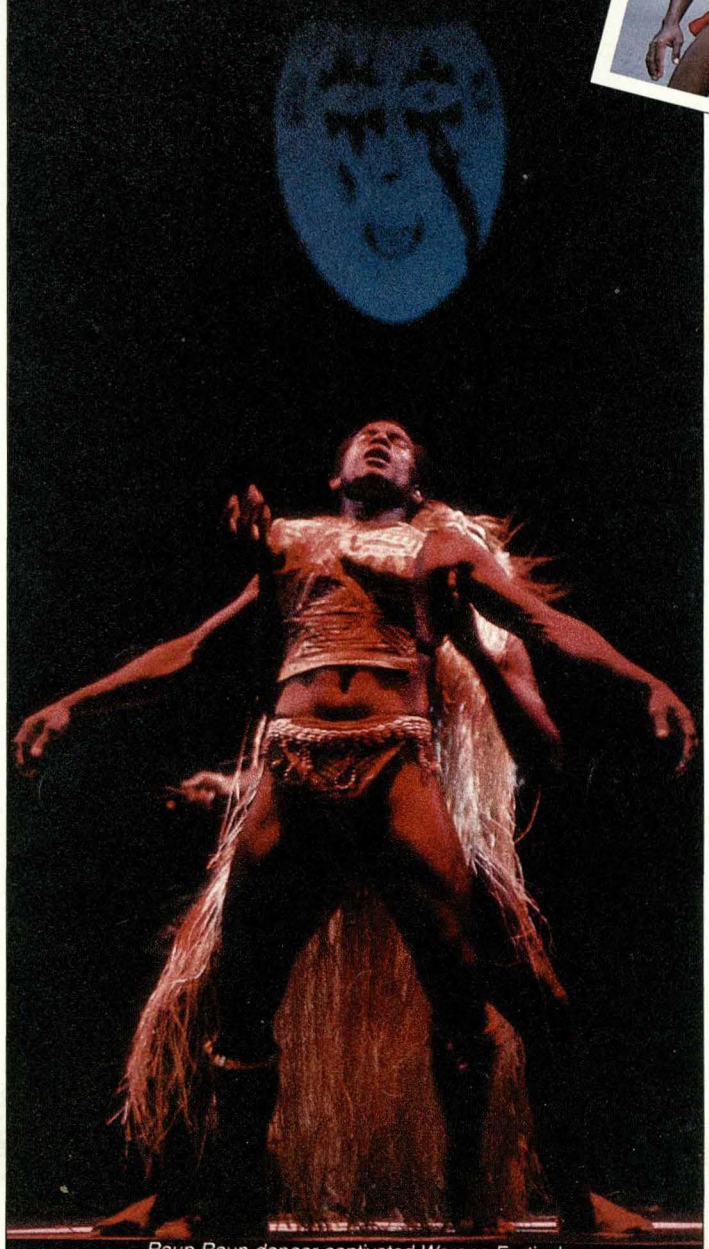
RAUN RAUN at Brisbane

Story by Andrew McKenzie and photographs by Jim Fenwick





Raun Raun dancer captivated Warana Festival audiences with stage performance **(above)** *and as part of street parade* **(above right).**

Some theatre groups might regard producing a play without a working script as a little like driving a car without brakes or steering. Both would seem to be passports for uncertain and perhaps hazardous journeys.

But for Papua New Guinea's Raun Raun Theatre, the play is the important thing, the script can always be written later. As the group's former director, Greg Murphy puts it: "It's a pretty spectacular way of doing things".

The group uses traditional stories that reflect the country's cultural background and customs, and weaves them, using song, dance and story into a powerful and very visual form of theatre.

Late last year Raun Raun was invited to perform its Niugini Niugini trilogy as a major attraction at Brisbane's annual Warana Festival. The festival generally reflects the relaxed and casual lifestyle of Brisbane people as they shake off the last of their mild winter and prepare for summer.

Warana is increasingly taking on an international theme in the scope of its presentations, and Raun Raun's presence was symbolic of the overall importance of the Pacific region.

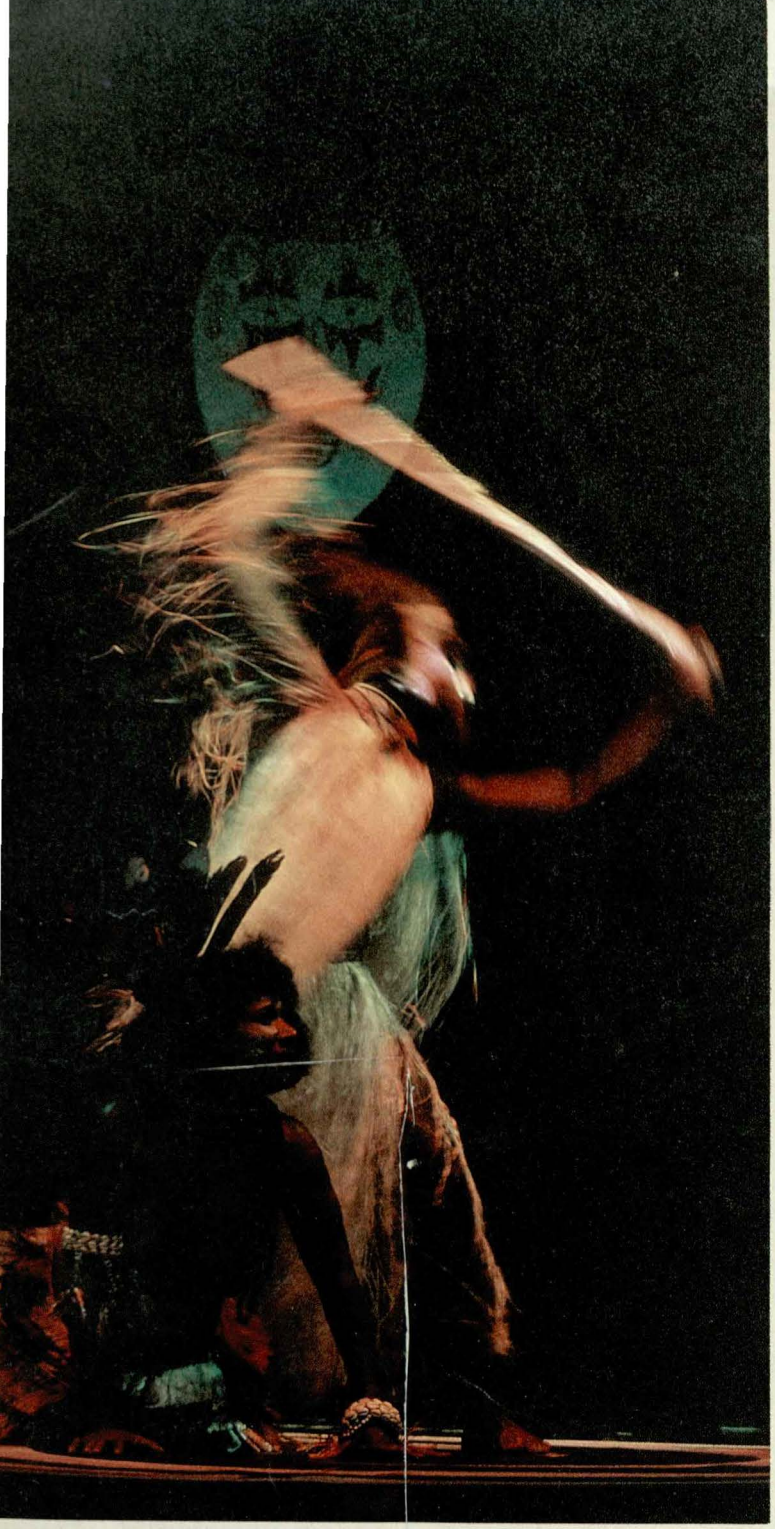
The three folk operas presented by Raun Raun at Warana, took 18 months over a period of three and a half years to research, dramatise, rehearse and produce for the stage. And true to Raun Raun's approach the English translation of the trilogy did not appear until this year.

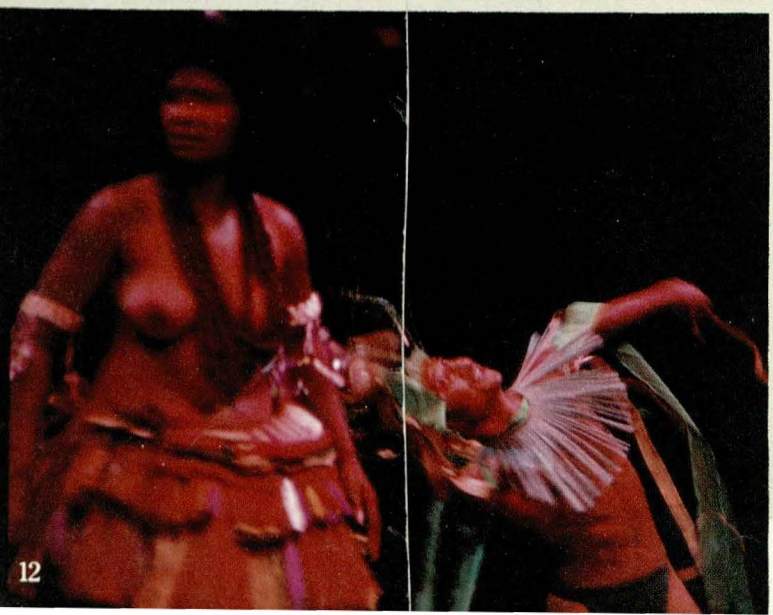
Greg Murphy, the artistic consultant for the Warana tour, said the trilogy was created out of nothing more than a few guidelines in the form of poetry written by John Kasaipwalova.

"We created the whole thing out of those poems," he said. "It meant that everyone was able to contribute to the final product. People felt free to express themselves and everyone created their own character. If we had to define our approach we would call it collaborative rather than script-oriented theatre."

Raun Raun began life in a fairly modest way in 1975 with the aid of a PNG National Cultural Council grant. It formed part of a movement called Market Raun which was designed to decentralise government and other services. It was a bold attempt to reverse the population drift towards the larger centres by providing more services at a local level.

Raun Raun (Pidgin for "to go around" or "to travel")





became an entertainment troupe for what was essentially a travelling fair. As Greg Murphy said the Market Raun "didn't quite work" but Raun Raun itself survived to follow its own directions.

"I envisaged the group in only a small way but the whole thing just took off," he said. The Warana tour was the group's fifth international tour, the previous ones being Japan (1977), New York (1978), Hong Kong (1981) and Adelaide (1984).

In addition to its valuable "cultural export" role, the group also performs for four months each year at home, travelling by truck and four-wheel-drive vehicles to some of the earth's more remote villages. These performances have an educational role, tackling important social issues such as gambling, nutrition and family planning.

Raun Raun's present director, Saio Avefa, recalls that not too many years ago the group often had to walk many kilometres to get to some villages. Thankfully the advent of four-wheel-drive vehicles has made travel a lot easier, but even then some of the villages are an incredible 35 river crossings apart.

Saio joined Raun Raun soon after it started – his only other work experience after leaving school was a year spent in a Goroka butcher shop. He said when the group travelled at home they like to become part of normal village life.

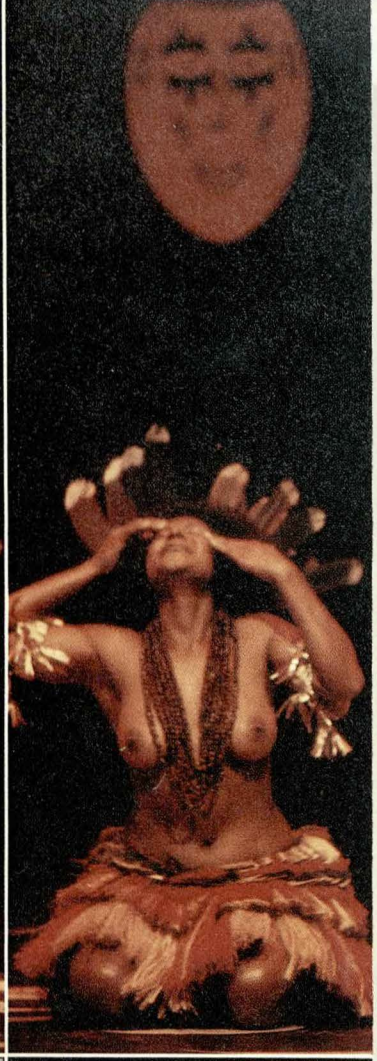
"We sometimes stay in the one village for up to four days. In the daytime if the villagers are picking coffee or something we will help them. We all

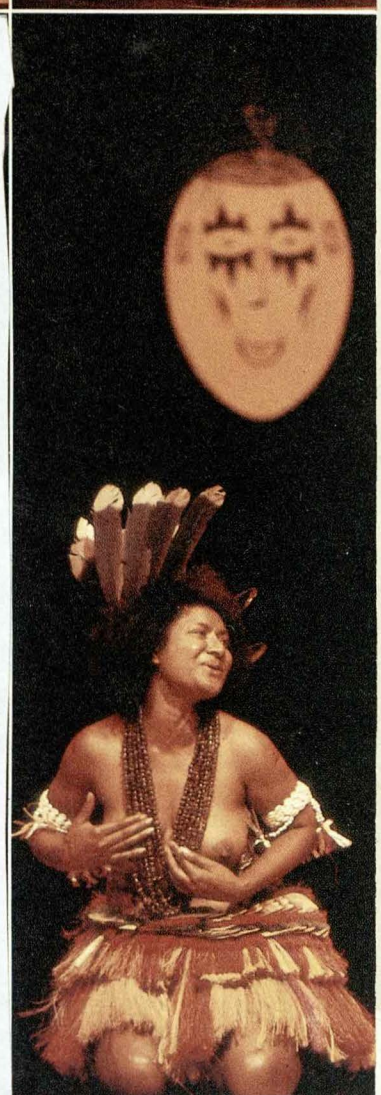
eat together and at night we give them a show. Village people need someone to stay with them and mix around so they feel they are one and not separate."

Saio recalled that he had no real idea what he was letting himself in for when he first joined the group, but the more he got into Raun Raun the more he realised just how important its work was. His thoughts were reinforced by a visit to the Black Arts Festival in Africa in 1977.

"That was really encouraging and it got me seriously thinking about what was going to happen to Papua New Guinea. Our culture was starting to die and I could see that in 10 or 20 years our very rich culture might be gone altogether."

He said that following PNG's Independence there had been much emphasis placed on economic development, often at the expense of the country's culture. Raun Raun's work was starting to redress this situation, he said, already there were more



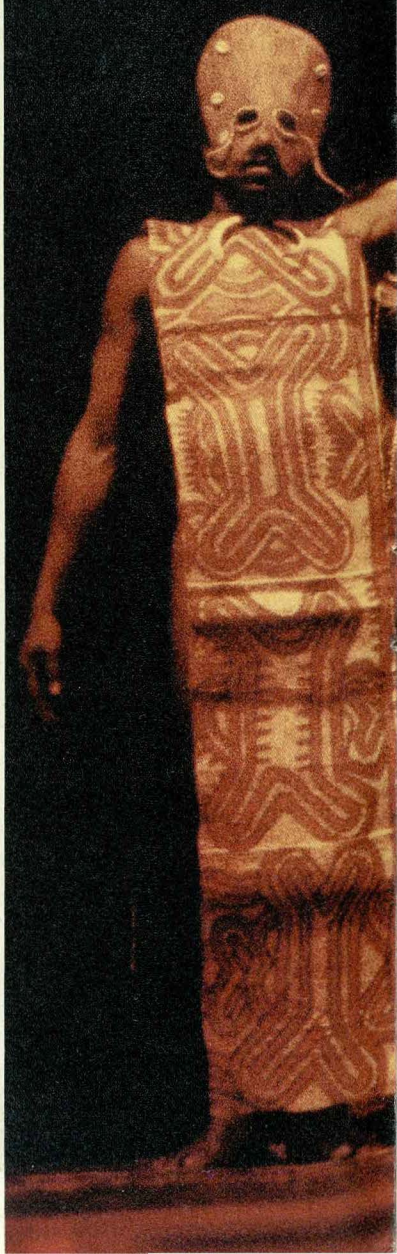


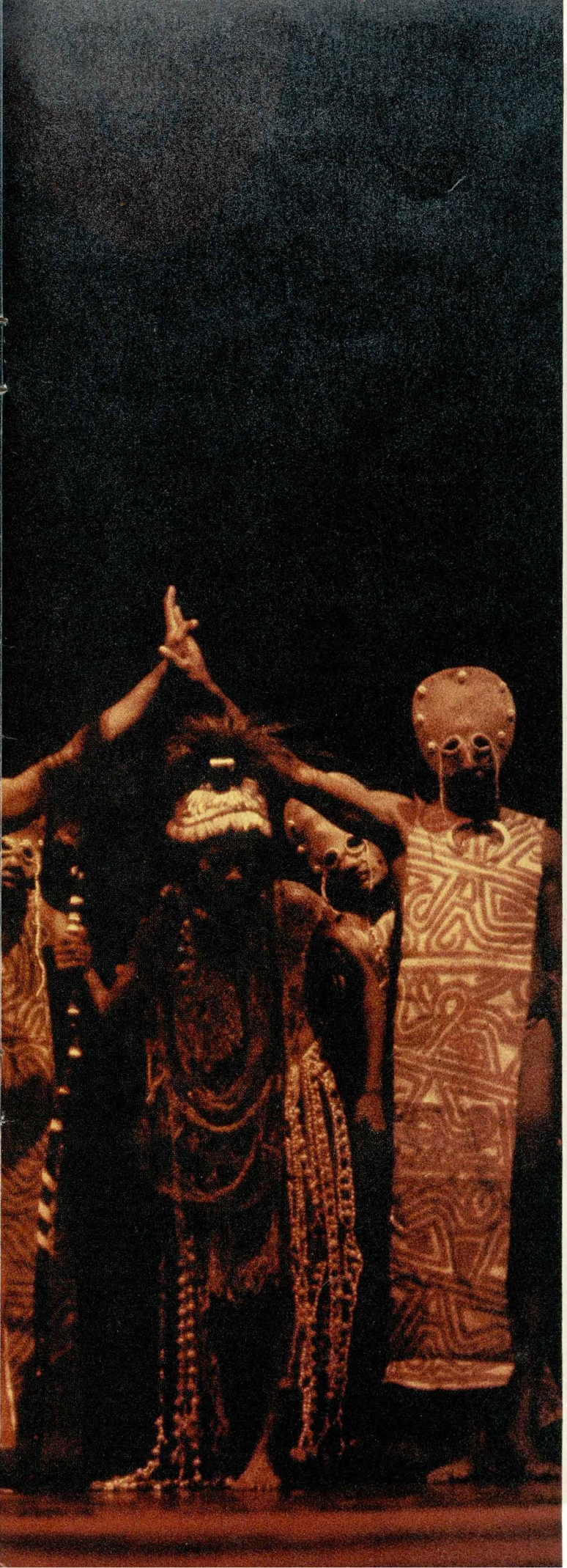
around Goroka. But since then many new members have been recruited from all over the country. New members bring their own stories, dances and music. Greg Murphy said the group's performances were all heavily researched.

"We don't use dances or songs from a particular area unless we have been taught them from a person in that area. When you consider that the country has 700 different cultures, the work we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. I think our performances are a reflection of the Papua New Guinean lifestyle - the "joie de vivre" if you like. They tell us a lot about the way people think about the country and what it's like to live there," he said.

Brisbane's Warana audiences were the first, outside PNG to see the complete Niugini Niugini trilogy. The three folk operas – Sail The Midnight Sun, My Tide Let Me Ride, and The Dance Of The Snail – were performed on separate nights. They are based on the poems by John Kasaipwalova, who derived them from stories and legends about the Trobriand Islands. The stories have a long history in the Trobriands and remain pop- with the local people.

Sail The Midnight Sun tells the story of Yolina, born from the sea and stars, who embarks on a long journey in search of Imdeduya, his dream woman. They marry and have a son called Niugini. However Imdeduya turns into a witch and menaces Yolina





who kills Niugini and escapes.

My Tide Let Me Ride picks up the story where the child Niugini is left dead on the sea. Imdeduya is in mourning for her son until she learns that the last drop of her son's blood is in the Sea. She becomes pregnant to the Sea but instead of giving birth to Niugini she gives birth to the snake Sanguma. The fearful villagers force her to take the snake into the forest.

The third part, The Dance Of The Snail sees Yolina and Imdeduya reunited to enlist the aid of the Sky and the Snail to help shed the skin of the snake to release their child Niugini. Nuigini is reborn and the cycle is completed.

In keeping with their collaborative approach, Raun Raun members make most of their own costumes, masks and props. Some of the more "expendable items" are purchased in their centre of origin.

Their music represents a unique blend of various traditional styles. Garamuts, large wooden gongs from Manus Island are combined with kundu, the lizard skinned hour-glass drums, together with wooden flutes, conch shells and seed rattles.

The performance is presented entirely in Pidgin English. Brisbane audiences were surprised to find that they could understand the story by simply following the action and picking out the occasional word. This spoke volumes for the ability of the performers who communicated not just through words, but through dance, mime and music.

The raw ferocity of pulsating drums, stamping feet and waving spears was often counterbalanced by innocent humour conveyed cleverly by simple facial expressions or an exaggerated walk.

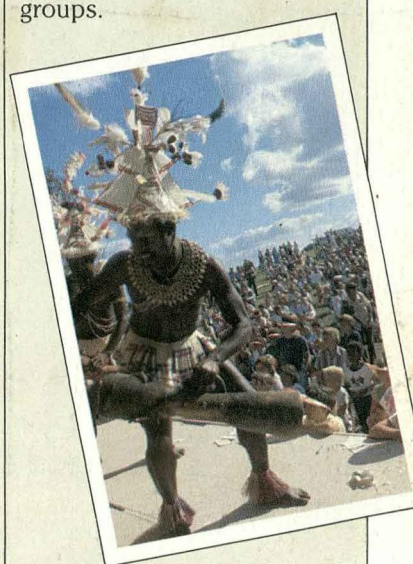
Cast members said they very much enjoyed their stay in Brisbane although the whirl of rehearsals and performances did not give them much time to explore the city.

For experienced actress, Tracy Pari, who plays the key role of Imdeduya, Warana represents her fourth international tour. For the former Manus Island shop-girl who joined the group as an 18-year-old in 1979, Raun Raun has greatly expanded her horizons.

"If I stayed a storekeeper I would have only had experience staying in one place and would not have gone anywhere. I was so small in my experience of life," she said.

When she was first given the critical role of Imdeduya five years ago, she experienced headaches and frequent tears as she tried to develop her character. She persisted and now her interpretation of the character is one of the high points of the trilogy.

And on a wider scale, PNG and world audiences are becoming increasingly thankful that Raun Raun itself has persisted to the stage where it is now regarded as one of the world's more spectacular and innovative national theatre groups.



Brisbane audiences were the first outside Papua New Guinea to see the Niugini Niugini trilogy of folk operas, seen unfolding in song and dance **(left and centre).** *Raun Raun players also joined Warana Festival outdoors event* **(inset top)** *and* **(inset bottom).**

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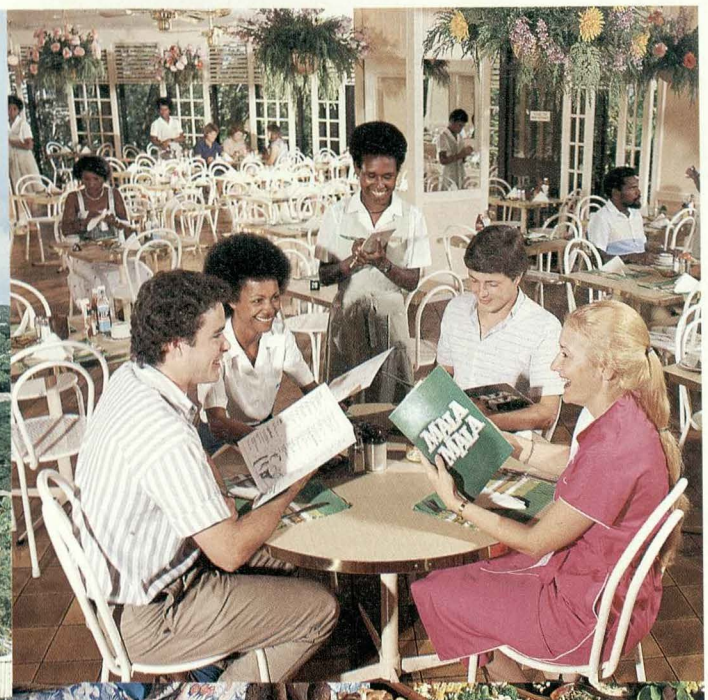

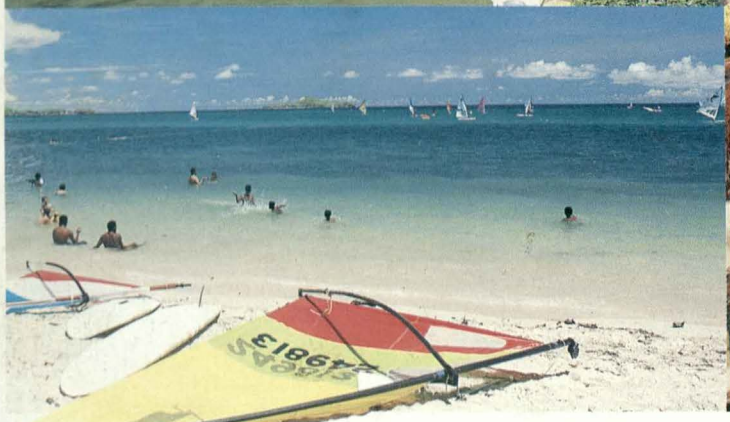

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SAVIOR from Brazil

Story by Anne Frodsham and photographs by Dr Peter Room

A tiny beetle, introduced from Brazil, has come to the rescue of the Sepik River, saving it from choking to death on a water weed.

Until the insect arrived on the scene human habitation along the river, one of Papua New Guinea's major waterways, was under threat from the prolific and invidious plant.

Now, thanks to the little creature, the Sepik flows freely, once abandoned villages are being rebuilt and the villagers' lives have returned to normal. Amazingly the insect, a species of weevil, was unknown until recently. The story of its discovery and introduction to PNG, is a classic of scientific investigation and biological control.

UNESCO was so impressed by the work it presented its Science Prize to the scientists responsible, a team from Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. The prestigious award is given on a two-yearly basis for research which is of benefit to developing member nations.

From 1972 the Sepik was subjected to the rapid spread of the green water fern salvinia, in this case the type know scientifically as Salvinia molesta. Salvinia can double its mass within a few days and has become a notorious nuisance in many tropical areas.

It had taken such a hold in the lower Sepik that villagers were unable to navigate the waterways which provide the only routes to markets, schools and hospitals. The weed also jeopardised food supplies by preventing fishing in the river and blocking access to swamp land used for sago palm production, the staple food of the area. Abandoned villages were the result, strangled by some 250 square kilometres of infestation.

Biological control of an exotic weed is dependent upon finding the natural enemies which prevent the plant becoming a significant pest in its native range but which have not accompanied the plant to the countries into which it has been introduced.

Most salvinia species are believed to have originated in South America but only Salvinia molesta has become a significant weed. Its spread around the world has been blamed on its popularity as an aquarium plant but its actual site of origin was unknown. Finding that site was the first job of the CSIRO team led by Dr Peter Room of the Division of Entomology.

Cyrtobagous salviniae **(top),** *a rare Brazilian weevil; and the meandering Sepik River it saved.*

Drs Wendy Forno and Ken Harley made the discovery in a small area of southern Brazil, near Curitiba. Their search had taken them south from Trinidad, through Venezuela, Guyana, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina. "I was in South America for four years and the discovery of the weed was the result of a very detailed survey," said Dr Forno. "We investigated every patch we came across, even in puddles on the side of the road."

She and other members of the team knew attempts by other organisations at controlling salvinia in Africa and Fiji and been unsuccessful. Those organisations used a small weevil, collected in Trinidad but taken from a different salvinia species. It was not well adapted to Salvinia molesta.

When the Australians finally located the true home range of the weed they found it being attacked by what appeared to be the same species of weevil collected earlier in Trinidad. But study at the CSIRO laboratories in Brisbane revealed the insect was a previously undescribed species that thrived on Salvinia molesta.

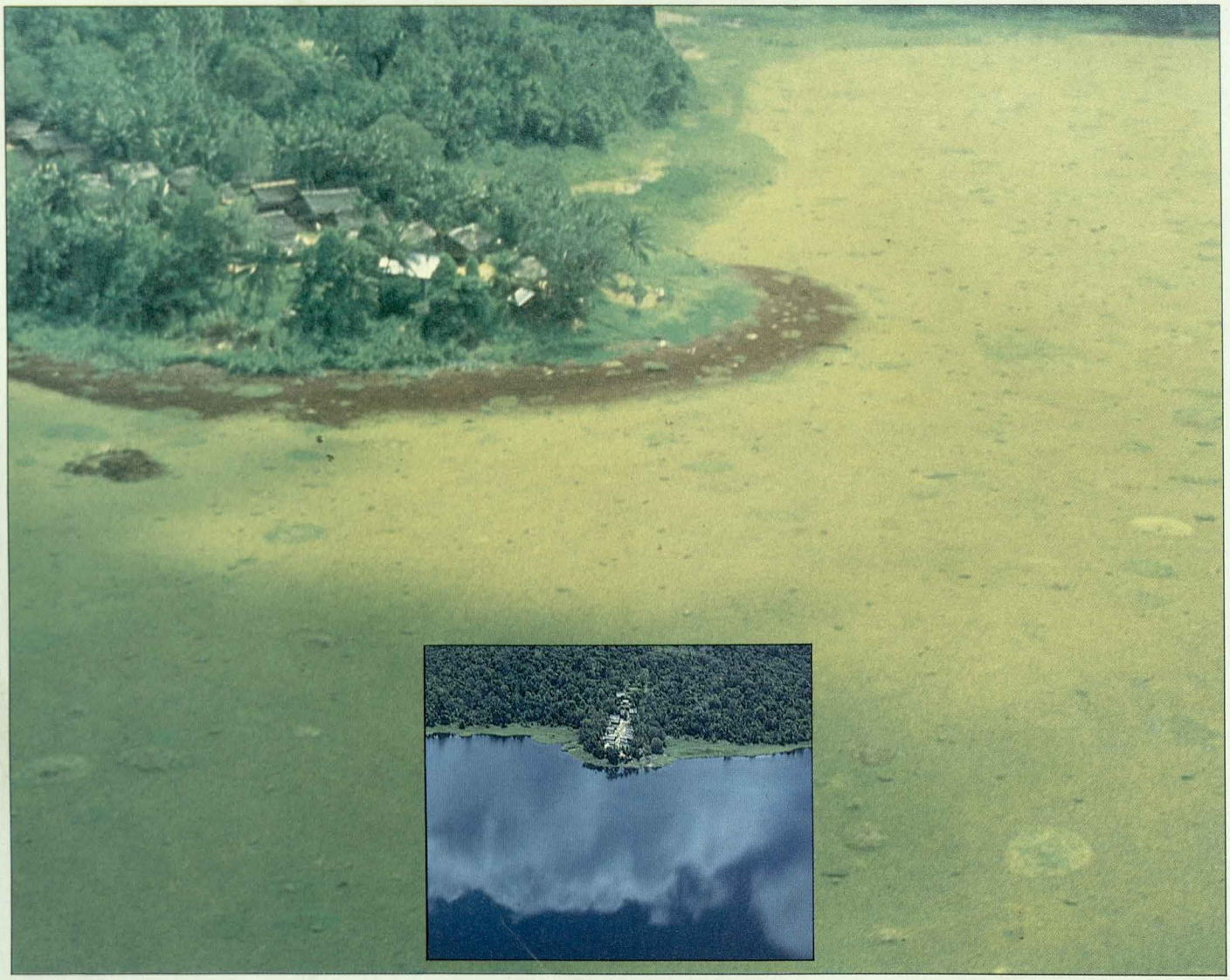
The adults, about two millimetres long, graze on buds of the weed and, importantly. their larvae tunnel into the buds and stems. Simply the plant becomes waterlogged, sinks and dies.

"We didn't know we had stumbled on a new species," said Dr Forno. "You almost cannot tell the difference. The crucial point was in its biology, different from the Trinidad weevil in that the larvae go inside the plant and therefore are much more destructive. It was an important discovery."

Under Dr Room's direction the weevil was bred in large numbers and released in northern Australia in mid-1980. The releases were spectacularly successful and at one lake site near Mt Isa in Queensland more than 50,000 tonnes of salvinia turned brown and sank to the bottom within 12 months, leaving the water clear and unpolluted.

Ridding the Sepik River basin of the weed began in 1982 with the first releases of the weevil in a lagoon near Angoram. But the project was still to provide a test for the tenacity and initiative of the scientists.

Unlike the situation in Australia, the released weevils did not multiply to sufficient numbers to damage the



weed mat, up to a metre thick in some places. Arduous hours of testing determined that a nitrogen deficiency in the Sepik waters was the problem.

Fortunately Dr Room and project manager Philip Thomas found that, given an initial boost of nitrogen to enhance the breeding of the weevils in a nucleus area, the weevils would build up to sufficient numbers to spread to salvinia far beyond the fertilised area. The weevils are peculiar animals which thrive in response to the presence of nitrogen.

Instead of declining in vigour and numbers as previously, the weevils began to multiply greatly. The damage they caused encouraged relocation of the nitrogen reserves in the plants to their newly developing buds. This in turn encouraged further attack by the adult weevil – a self perpetuating process.The death and destruction of large mats of the weed quickly followed.

Sackfuls of weevil infested salvinia were harvested and taken by boat and aircraft to the many lakes and basins

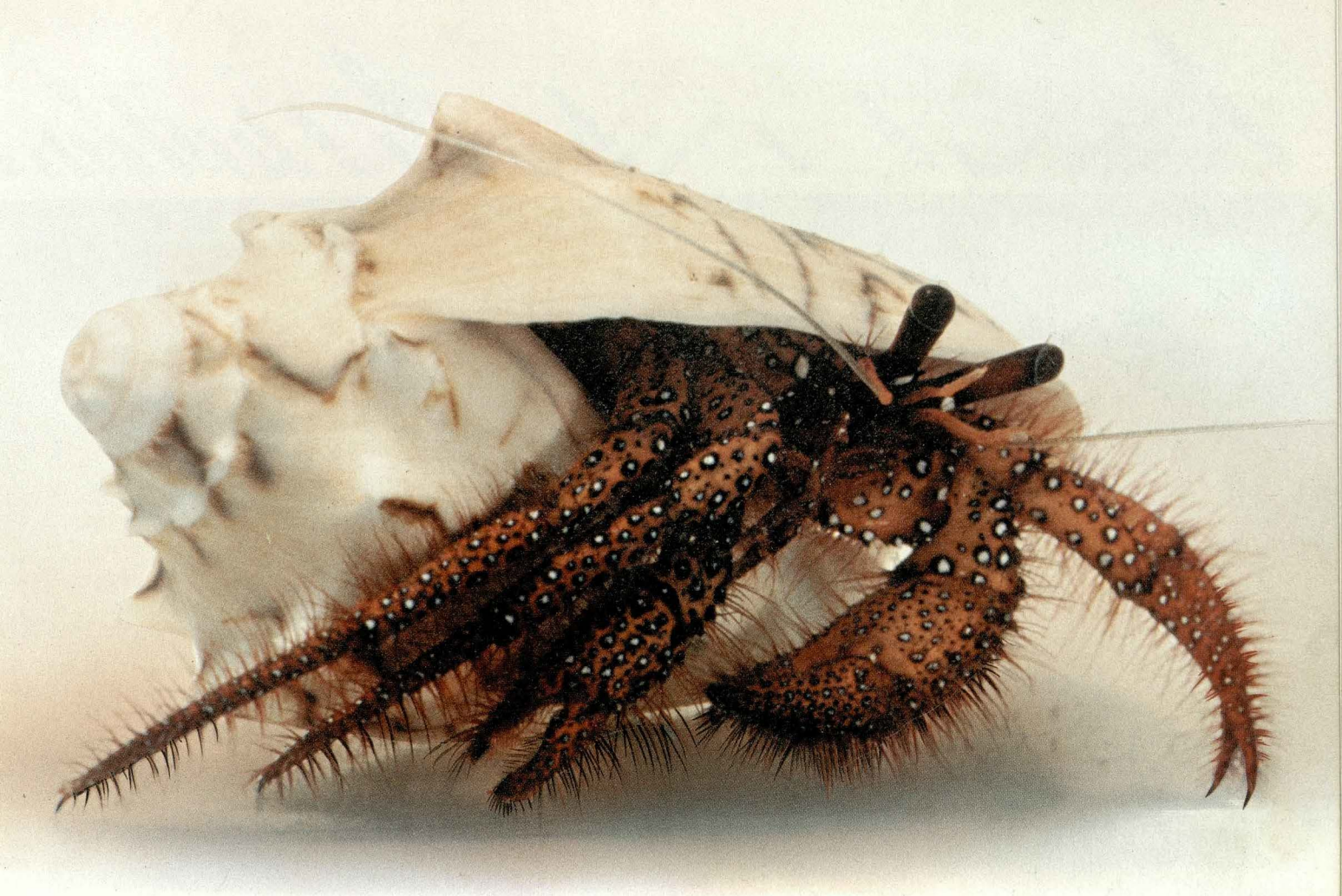
Lake Kabufwe village in 1984 **(top)** *and a year later* **(inset).** *The villainous weed* **(centre).** *Harvesting infested growth to spread on other lagoons.*

in the Sepik region. The villagers played their part spreading the story of the weevils and assisting in the distribution of the infested salvinia.

"The weevils can fly but for some unknown reason are disinclined to," said Dr Forno. "They tend to go down with the weed when it sinks instead of flying on to new pastures. They tend to flounder around in the same place. The villagers were helpful in spreading them and of course they knew where every bit of salvinia was."

By 1984 some 800,000 weevils had been released in 120 sites and by the beginning of 1986 the area covered by salvinia had dropped to less than two square kilometres.

Neither the weed nor the weevils will ever completely disappear. The beauty of biological control is that a natural balance of predator and weed is created that will ensure that salvinia will never again cause ecological disaster in the Sepik River floodplain.



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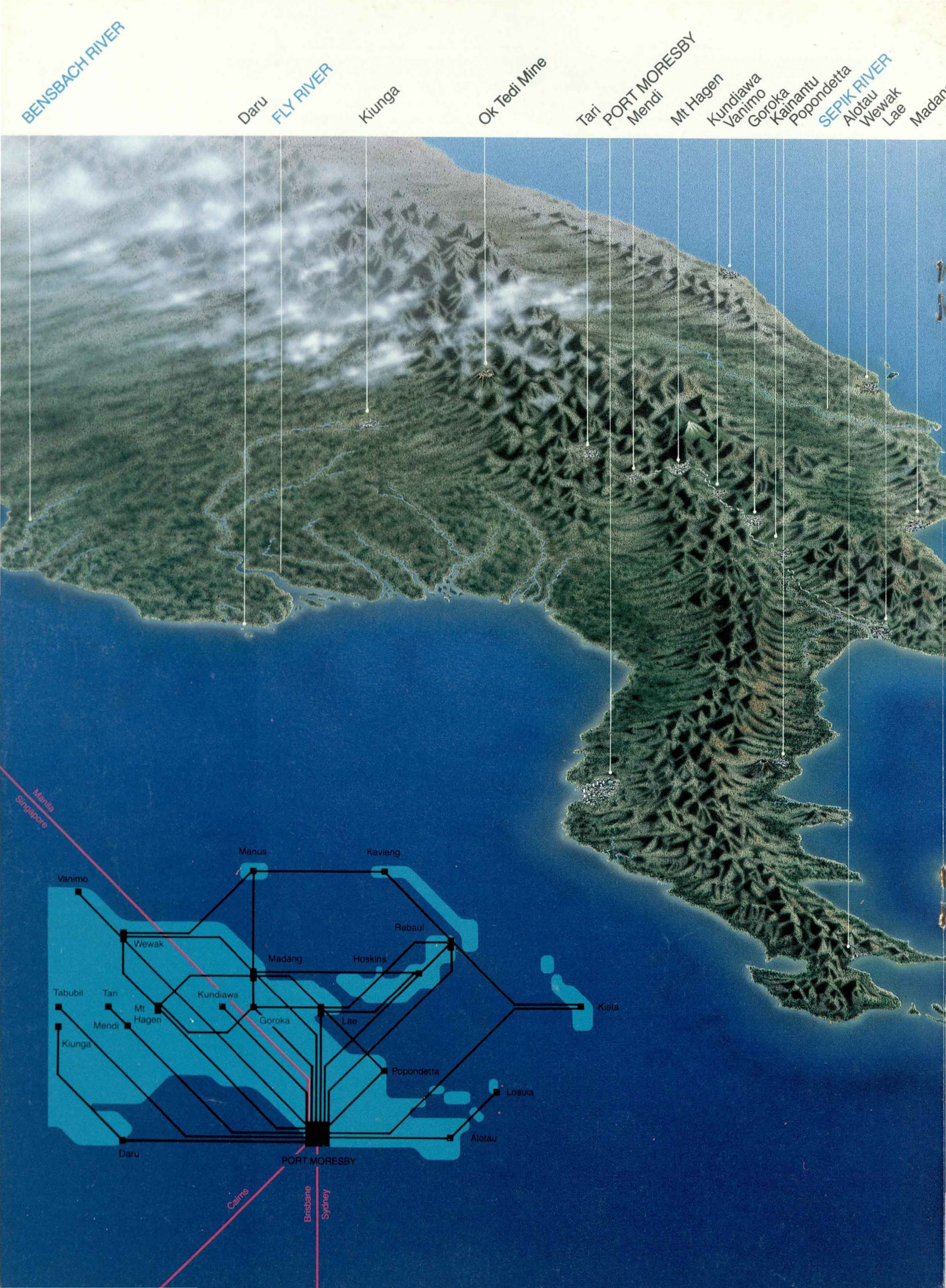
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"Certainly there is no hunting like the hunting of man and those who have hunted armed men long enough and liked it, never really care for anything else thereafter". Ernest Hemingway.

Mambi's Story

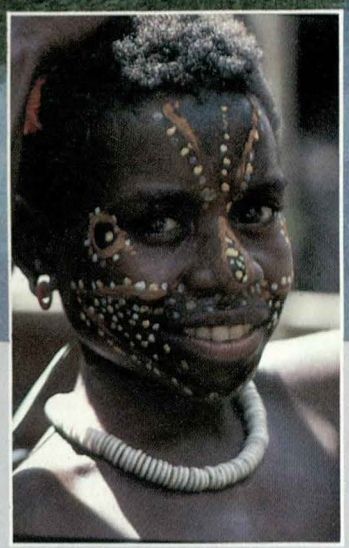
I first met Phillip while on a photographic assignment in Papua New Guinea in 1983. My work completed, I had decided to take a short sabbatical at the superbly located Karawari Lodge in the East Sepik region. The lodge, which is situated high on a ridge overlooking the Karawari River, is the ideal place for anyone wanting to get away from the treadmill of fast living. No telephones, no shops, no roads; the river is the only highway to the outside world.

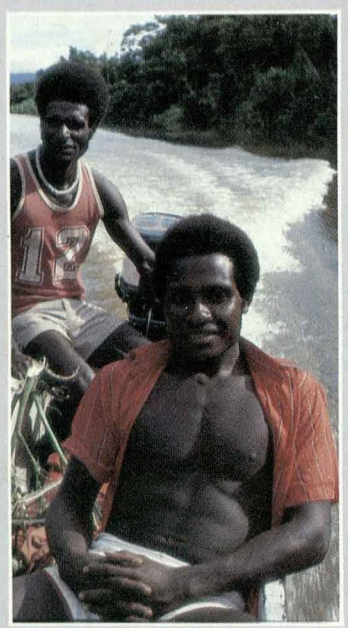
Phillip was one of the flute players who played in the main lodge for tourist groups. Despite his slight stature, he cut a fine and dignified figure in his full tribal 'bilas' (ceremonial dress). On discovering that this small, aged man had been a headhunter with eight heads to his credit, my curiosity was aroused. Over the next few days, I went out of my way to spend time in Phillip's company. My halting 'pidgin' was stretched to the limit but we managed to make ourselves understood. Little did I realise that Phillip's 'pidgin' was only slightly better than mine. We became good friends.

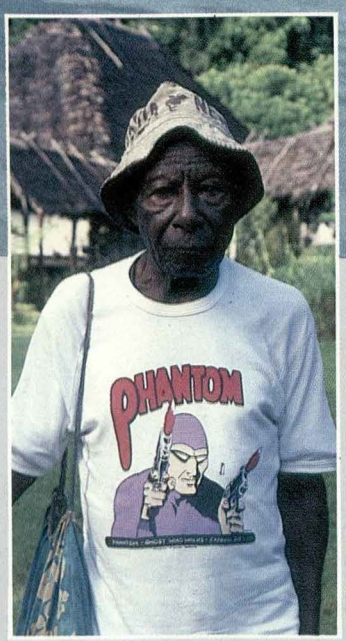
After a week of travelling the river in dugout canoes and soaking up the superb scenery, it was time for me to return to Sydney. As I left to join the river truck which would take me to the little grass airstrip at Amboin, Phillip took my hand and, with emotion that belied the fact that we had only known each other for a short time, he

Former headhunter Mambi in modern dress **(left);** *and in full, ceremonial regalia* **(top right).**

Story by Rob Walls with photographs by Margaret Olah and Rob Walls



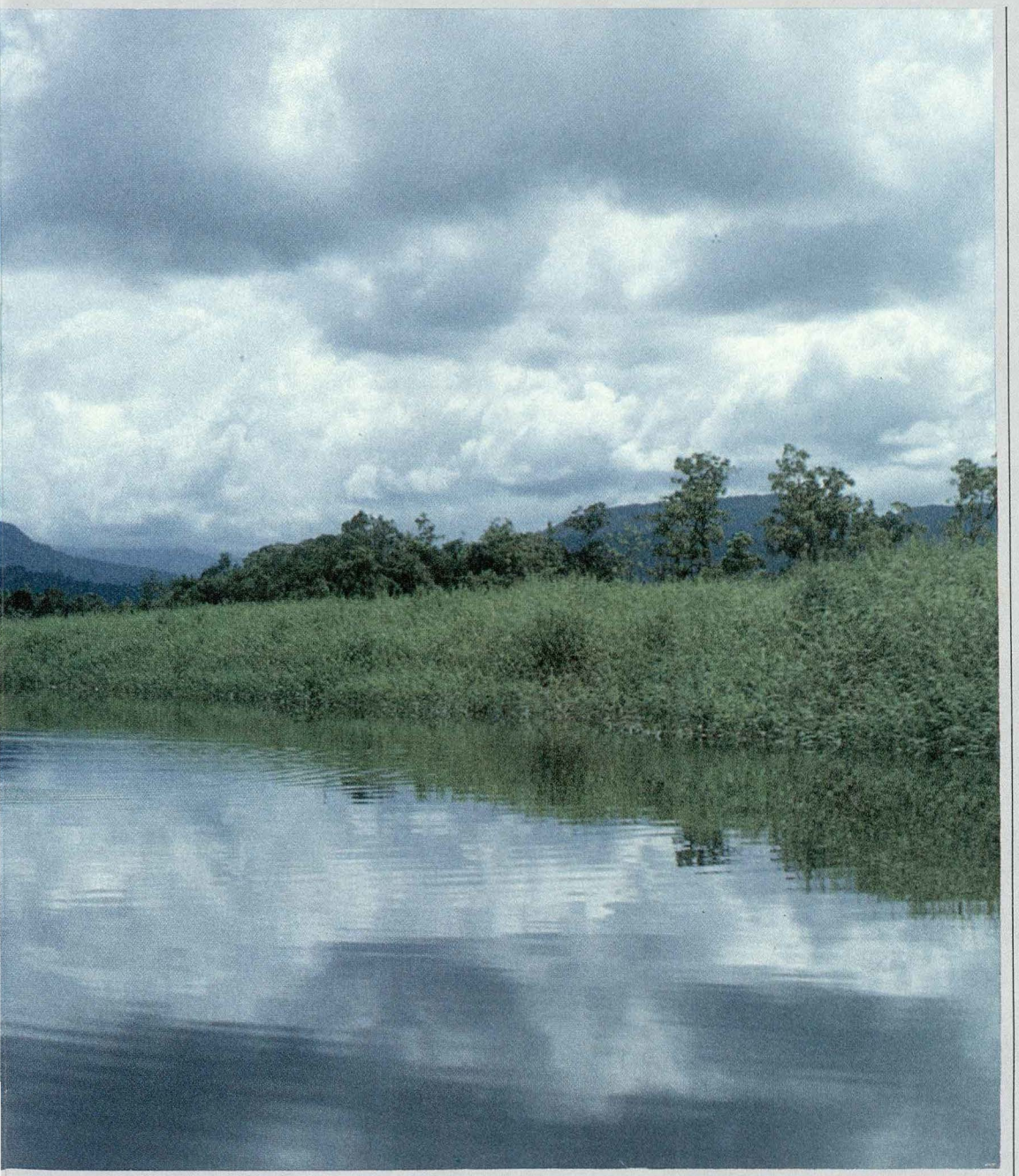




Yimas Lakes approach **(above)** *and the lookout hill above the village* **(inset),** *once an area of constant tribal warfare. And* **(from left),** *a young Sepik girl; Lawrence, the interpreter; Mambi, the warrior.*

extracted from me a promise to return. With the kind of false sincerity with which one answers the statement "We must have lunch sometime", I replied that I would come back next year. Little did I think that the opportunity would arise, but Phillip was insistent and I felt my white lie would do no harm.

At the same time he got me to promise to send him a new hat. His headgear, a ravaged terry towelling item promoting an Australian beer was in a sorry state, so I readily agreed. This, at least, was one promise I knew I could fulfil. I duly sent Phillip a fine tweed cap I had bought in Paris a couple of years before. The thought of a retired head-hunter wearing a tweed cap from Galeries Lafayette appealed to my sense of humour. Besides it was a piece of headgear eminently suitable for the status of an



elderly headhunter. A further piquancy was added by the fact that there was little likelihood of two such hats existing in the whole of PNG. This, I was later to find out, caused much heartburn for the management of Karawari Lodge.

A year later and in need of a holiday, I thought again of Karawari and the wizened old man, no doubt by now wearing his Parisian 'chapeau'. So while planning to return, I arranged to spend another week at the lodge, with the intention of finding out more about Phillip's interesting life.

The first evening there, Phillip arrived in his ceremonial dress with the flute players. His wind had got a little short in the past year and he now accompanied the younger musicians by playing the less demanding rattles. We greeted each other warmly and I presented him with a red shirt and some sunglasses which he accepted with solemnity. His treasured tweed cap had been lost from a canoe some months before and Alison, the manageress, had had a most difficult time scouring PNG to find him a replacement. He had been fond of that cap.

With his 18-year-old grandson Lawrence acting as interpreter, I explained that apart from coming to see him, I was also motivated by the desire to write down some of his life story, so that people might know what it was like to have lived there in the past. He agreed that we would talk and we arranged to meet in a couple of days when Lawrence was free from his work at the lodge.

No doubt my recounting of Phillip's life may suffer a little with the difficulties of a translation that was conducted in three languages (pidgin, Phillip's 'ples tok' and English). Therefore I would like to apologise to Phillip beforehand if I have erred in any way from what he told me.

The following then is Phillip's story:

In 1911 when the Sepik area was in its 27th year of German administration, a boy called Mambi was born in the village of Yimas. Mambi's clan group was that of the Kaikurunga (hornbill) and it was not until much later that he acquired the "Christian" name of Phillip from a Lutheran missionary.

The village of Yimas is one of the prettiest in the East Sepik and is crowned by a hill that overlooks the waterways known as the Yimas Lakes. Its people live by fishing and trading smoked fish and woven baskets for necessities such as fired clay pottery and betelnut. Even today the village looks idyllic with women cleaning fish on the foreshore while whistling kites circle overhead. Children play in old canoes and swim and splash in the water. Apart from the visiting tourists life goes on as it alway has.

For young Mambi life consisted of fishing expeditions to the lake with his parents, helping his mother prepare the staple sago and learning the skills necessary for survival. By the time he reached adolescence he was well-trained in the use of bow and arrow and was already acquainted with the traditional killing weapon, the cassowary bone knife.

All however, was not idyllic. Tradition required that young men could not marry until they had taken human heads in battle. This meant that villages in the East Sepik region were either in a state of perpetual war or in perpetual readiness for war. For this reason it was essential that Mambi became proficient at arms.

When he was eight or nine years of age, Mambi met his first white man – a German missionary who could well have named him Phillip. He remembers feeling scared and hiding, thinking that he was being confronted by an

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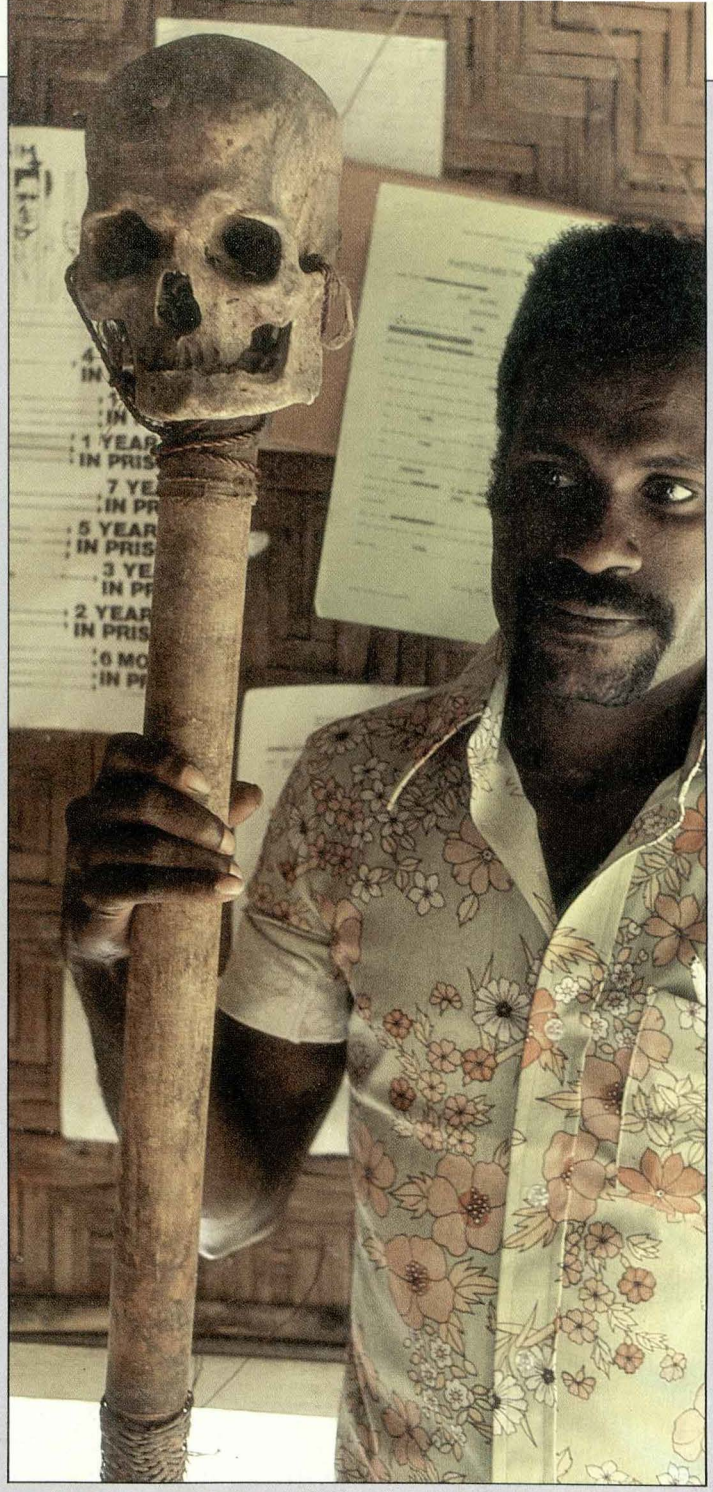
ancestor ghost. The missionary coaxed Mambi and his friends from hiding with gifts of clothing. He also, in the manner of the times, went on to demonstrate the firepower of the Lord, by shooting a hornbill and a Royal Crowned Pigeon, which he then presented to the villagers. Mambi was suitably impressed, and recalls that they cooked and ate the birds. However it took many weeks for the villagers to accept that this person was a man and not a ghost.

The trauma of ghost ancestors and firearms behind him, life on the Yimas Lakes went on in this cycle of fishing, hunting and learning the traditional fighting skills of a Sepik Warrior. The missions made a determined effort to wipe out the practice of headhunting but old habits die hard. In 1929 Mambi was 18 and of marriageable age . . . it was time for him to take a head.

A woman of the Hornbill clan had been murdered in a dispute with neighbouring villages from Wombramas. Mambi was selected to be in the party that was to revenge the killing. In order that he could marry, he was given priority in the taking of heads. The perpetrators of the murder, two men and a woman, were cunningly enticed to Yimas to trade. They were assured that the incident had been forgotten and were convinced to spend the night in the village.

The next morning, they set out to return to Wombramas in their canoe, unaware that Mambi and a small party of warriors were following them at a discreet distance. About midway between Yimas and Wombramas they pulled into the bank, probably to gather food. It was at this point that the Yimas canoe swiftly drew alongside; Mambi was the first into their canoe where he swiftly killed all three of them with his long cassowary bone knife.

Mambi's recollection of this event has not dimmed



Confiscated head impaled on a flute **(top).** *Dancers re-enacting a headhunting ceremony.*

with time. He can still recall the names of his victims whose bodies were taken back to Yimas where with appropriate ceremony Mambi removed their heads. It was at this point that I knew the delicate subject of cannibalism must be approached. I skirted it with what turned out to be inappropriate delicacy and caution. Mambi was as forthcoming on this as he was about other aspects of his life.

With obvious relish, he claimed that human flesh was "Numba wan gutpela kai-kai!". When further questioned he remembers that it tasted like the flesh of the cassowary and that his favourite part was the thigh. When asked about the ritual aspects he revealed that it was believed eating the brain of a victim would bring the warrior strength and ferocity in battle. It was normal in the event of the killing of an enemy to take the corpse back to the village where the flesh would be stripped from the body. The meat would be boiled in clay pots and all members of the community would partake. Whether this custom has anything to do with the lack of variety in the local staple diet of sago is still subject to controversial debate, but there is every indication that this was the case.

The subject of cannibalism so easily disposed of, we went on to discuss the remaining five killings that gave Mambi his reputation as a fierce warrior. Not long after this first killing a party of villagers from Allemblak visited Yimas to trade betelnut for woven baskets and fish. Mambi and his fellow warriors saw this as a fine opportunity to take heads and they ambushed the trading party. The only motivation behind this attack was the deliberate collecting of heads. In this adventure, Mambi was

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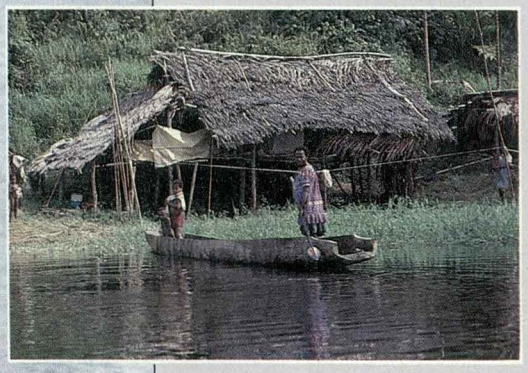


Villager extracting sago from trunk of sago palm **(left).** *A fishing camp at Yimas Lakes* **(below).**

again to distinguish himself by killing another three men. The feasting of human flesh also accompanied this raid. Mambi was now 19.

In his 20th year, Mambi experienced his last battle when warriors from a village called Imanmeri raided Yimas. In this fight Mambi despatched his last two victims. After this, his final battle, the 'kiaps' wanted to make an example of the culprits by executing the ringleaders, but the missionaries convinced them that imprisonment was a better alternative. As a result some of the men were taken away and imprisoned at Ambunti. After 10 months, a relatively light sentence in view of the 'kiaps' immediate reaction, they were returned to the village. Mambi was not among those imprisoned.

With his fighting career curtailed and his status as a warrior assured, it was time for him to marry. He took as his first wife a Yimas girl called Namunganai. When Mambi spoke of her, it was with a softness tinged with the memories and fondness of first love. Namunganai died in childbirth and although he later had four more wives, all of whom he has outlived, his affection for her still lingers.

In 1931 the rule of the Australian 'kiaps' and the increasing influence of the missions brought a virtual halt to tribal fighting in the East Sepik. It was not however, the last fighting that Mambi was to experience. With the outbreak of World War Two the Japanese quickly overran the region and eventually extended their control into the Yimas area. Mambi, a natural leader and a respected member of his tribe was made 'boss-boi' by the Japanese. He was responsible for negotiating with the villagers for food and directing any work that was required by the invaders.

Early in 1945 a Catalina flying boat disturbed the placid waters of the lake on a mission to resupply an American soldier known as "Mista Mac". Mac was the officer in command of a US section operating deep in enemy territory. Little is remembered of him or his exploits except how they directly affected Mambi.

After the aircraft lumbered off the lake, the Japanese told Mambi to investigate the intrusion. In one canoe were four of Mambi's fellow villagers, while he paddled another carrying three Japanese infantrymen. As they approached the area where the Catalina had come to rest, Mista Mac, hidden by dense bush shouted at them to go away. Obviously trying to avoid a fatal confrontation, he repeated the warning. When the Japanese ordered the canoes to go on, Mac threw a grenade in the water near them. It exploded without doing any damage but Mambi's friends in the other canoe, quite wisely fled.

Disregarding Mac's warning the Japanese opened fire from the remaining canoe.

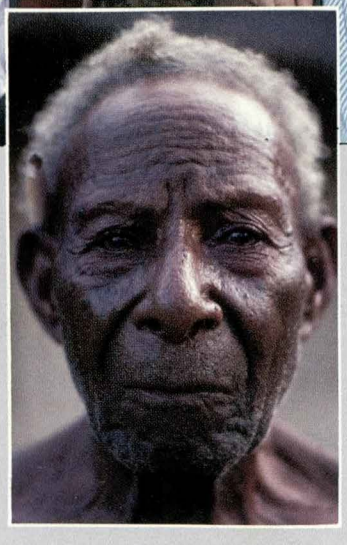
Mac hurled another grenade. This time it was not a warning. The three soldiers were killed outright, the canoe destroyed and Mambi blown into the water. Only momentarily stunned by the concussion he swam underwater to the reed beds that encircled the lake. He concealed himself in the reeds and as night approached was still lying in his hiding place. His wife worrying that he had not returned, sent out a canoe to find him. As it neared the place where he hid, he quietly called his rescuers in towards him and slipped away under the cover of darkness. A survivor yet again.

Soon after this the Japanese, fighting every inch of the way, were rolled back by the combined Australian and US forces and they surrendered to the Australians on September 13, 1945 at Cape Moem, near Wewak. Peace returned to the Yimas Lakes.

The patrol rule system used by the Australians was similar to that introduced by the Dutch in the Western part of the country. Patrol officers were to enforce the law in a new and enlightened climate that, even if only superficially, brought the modern age to Papua New Guinea. One such patrol officer, John Pasquarelli was assigned to the patrol post at Amboin. This now peaceful area captured his imagination and he dreamed of building a place where tourists could stay and experience the magic of this beautiful region.

Mambi's sons came to work at the lodge and soon he moved from Yimas to live at the house which had been provided for them. He regularly visits Yimas and the places of his adventurous early life, but prefers the security of his new existence. Having survived these turbulent times of change, Mambi now lives out his latter years performing for the tourists. It is a role he fulfils with dignity and pride, enjoying the tranquility that time has brought him and the security that allows him to watch his grandchildren grow up in an atmosphere of peace and harmony.

Well Phillip, that's it. I hope I came close to getting it right. "Lukim yu, wontok. Till next year."



Mambi with tourists at Karawari Lodge **(above).** *Mambi as he is today, formerly a headhunter, now a musician* **(left).**

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

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FABULOUS FABRICS

Story and photographs by Sheila Sparks

"Rope for tying the pig" does not conjure up images of high fashion now, but it may in the future.

As the name of a textile design it is at least unusual, original and attention getting. And the day may soon come when models will parade in clothes with just such a motif. "Rope for tying the pig" is a translation of "Halu", a cord used in a traditional Papua New Guinea ceremony. The translation does an injustice to the design, the tradition

Textile designs, blue "B.C." **(left)** *and "Halu"* **(right),** *unique to Papua New Guinea form backdrop to* **(from top)** *brown "B.C."; fabric printing; "Mekeo Head Feathers".*

and the artist who was inspired by a carving representing the ceremony.

Gaten Basakai, a student at the National Arts School of PNG, was the creator. He is one of a group of exciting young PNG textile designers whose work is being manufactured commercially in Port Moresby. The Papua New Guinea Textiles Company, which employs Gaten, owes much to his school. The company was founded by two graduates, Wendi Choulai and Phillip Brimper, and began operations using the school's equipment.

Undertaking such a venture was no easy task in a developing country where plant is expensive and finance limited. But the college colleagues were determined. "Realising half way through our course that there was no real textile industry in PNG made us aware there was a need," said Wendi. "We also realised that we could start and direct our own."

From the outset they wanted their company to be owned by applied arts people, such as textile and graphic designers. "The Director of Youth Groups was excited and offered help," said Wendi. "Unfortunately we were not a youth project so we were directed to the Department of Industries. They tried to register us as a company and get a government loan but that got bogged down in red tape."

The National Arts School came to the rescue, allowing the pair and their designers to use the printing facilities in the textiles department. For the first six months they operated out of a suitcase, literally, selling their colorful products to small businesses and individuals in Port Moresby. To avoid disruptions to classes at the school, they worked at weekends and every available evening, often into the small hours of the next day.

After three months they had earned enough money for a 30-metre printing table and a dye curing oven and they were on their way. Cloth began to flow bearing the designs "Mak

Mak", "Matchbox" and "Mekeo Head Feathers" which are unmistakably the work of the PNG group.

Many of Phillip's designs cleverly retain the spirit of traditional PNG, none more obvious than "B.C." which was inspired by a carved shield. "Mak Mak", another highly decorative design, came from a carving found on the posts outside a village chief's house. Alongside these striking images he has produced a series of original floral designs, taking his inspiration from the beautiful flora of the country. "Bush Orchid" and "Orchid" are the centrepieces.

Wendi, who spent several years overseas, designs in a different manner while retaining the spirit of PNG. The festive air of "Matchbox" was derived from a carving of the Morobe Province. Gaten Basakai, he of the "pig rope" pattern, has produced among others "Wooden Plate" based on the carved ceremonial plates used in burial feasts.

Jack Kauken, from East Sepik Province, is well-known for his small-scale fashion prints. His "Mekeo Head Feathers" captures the excitement, movement and color of the magical plumage incorporated in so many ceremonial headdresses.

Ogwin Brown invokes the progressive ideas of the National Arts School in "Fish and Waves", with its brightly colored fish against a strong background. Rich color, striking symbolism and creative ingenuity are the hallmarks of the group whose workshop is in Badili. As visitors become aware of them and their work, their reputation is sure to spread.

"Bush Orchid" **(background)** *and models wearing jacket and pants in "Fish and Waves" and shorts in "Butterfly" patterns* **(top);** *clothes in "Kipa" patterns* **(bottom).**

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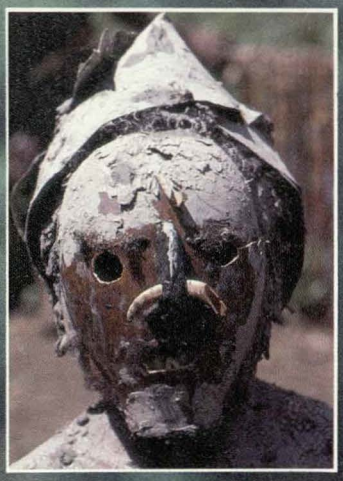


Gourds have many uses in Papua New Guinea, including calling worshippers to church **(left).** *Every day they can be seen* **(clockwise above)** *carrying water; used as a tobacco pipe; cosmetic oil container; ceremonial mask; and young gourd fruit suspended from a plant growing over a large tree branch.*

SEL AMBANG

Story and photographs by David Eastburn

'Sel kambang' is the Pidgin name for the bottle gourd (Lagenaria siceraria). It is so-called because of its association with the gourd container used for lime (kambang) which is chewed together with betel-nut. However gourds are put to many other uses in Papua New Guinea. They are most commonly used as storage containers for water, cosmetic tree oil, pig fat, bean seeds and of course lime; but they are also used as smoking pipes, masks, personal decoration, bowls, funnels, whistles and clothing. Some gourds, especially those used for lime and seed containers, are decorated with elaborate designs.

A number of varieties of bottle gourd with different fruit shapes and sizes are grown in both lowland and highland areas. The seeds are usually planted near houses in mounds of compost from household debris and ash, or in areas of rich soil in the main garden. Much care is needed to produce an undamaged mature gourd valued as a container. The plants require strong supports, often in the form of a large tree branch or sometimes a specially constructed platform, so that the fruits can be suspended and kept off the ground. The vines produce very delicate white feathery flowers and can begin fruiting about three months after planting.

Young tender gourd fruits can be eaten as a vegetable, and when cooked they have a sweet nutty flavour. The tips and tendrils of the plant can also be eaten as a green leafy vegetable and bundles of these are often sold at markets, particularly in the Highlands.

The use of gourds as everyday containers is declining in PNG with the increased availability of glass and plastic bottles and aluminium containers. However gourds are used in other innovative ways.

Hewa children from the

north west corners of the Southern Highlands and Enga Provinces make whistles from small round gourds by drilling holes in them, attaching a length of string and whirling them around their heads to produce a whistling noise. In one Hewa village the people are called to church with a 'trumpet' which consists of a length of hollow bamboo with half a gourd attached to its end.

Around Oksapmin in the Sandaun (West Sepik) Province the necks of gourds are used as smoking pipes because of their resistance to fire. On the Karu River, a tributary of the Om also in the Sandaun Province, the older men and women use communal smoking pipes made of complete gourds.

The rolled tobacco leaves are placed in the neck and the smoke is drawn into the body of the gourd via a hole in its base.

Gourds can be grown large enough to be used as masks, as they are in some Highland areas. They are often painted and usually worn by dancers covered in moss and leaves, representing bush spirits.

Among the Faiwol people who live near Olsobip in the Western Province it is customary for widows and women who have lost babies to show grief by wearing tasselled mourning bands over their shoulders and across their chests. Attached to these bands are pieces of broken gourd and sometimes other items used by the deceased person. The sound of the items striking together is aimed at constantly reminding the wearer of the deceased person.

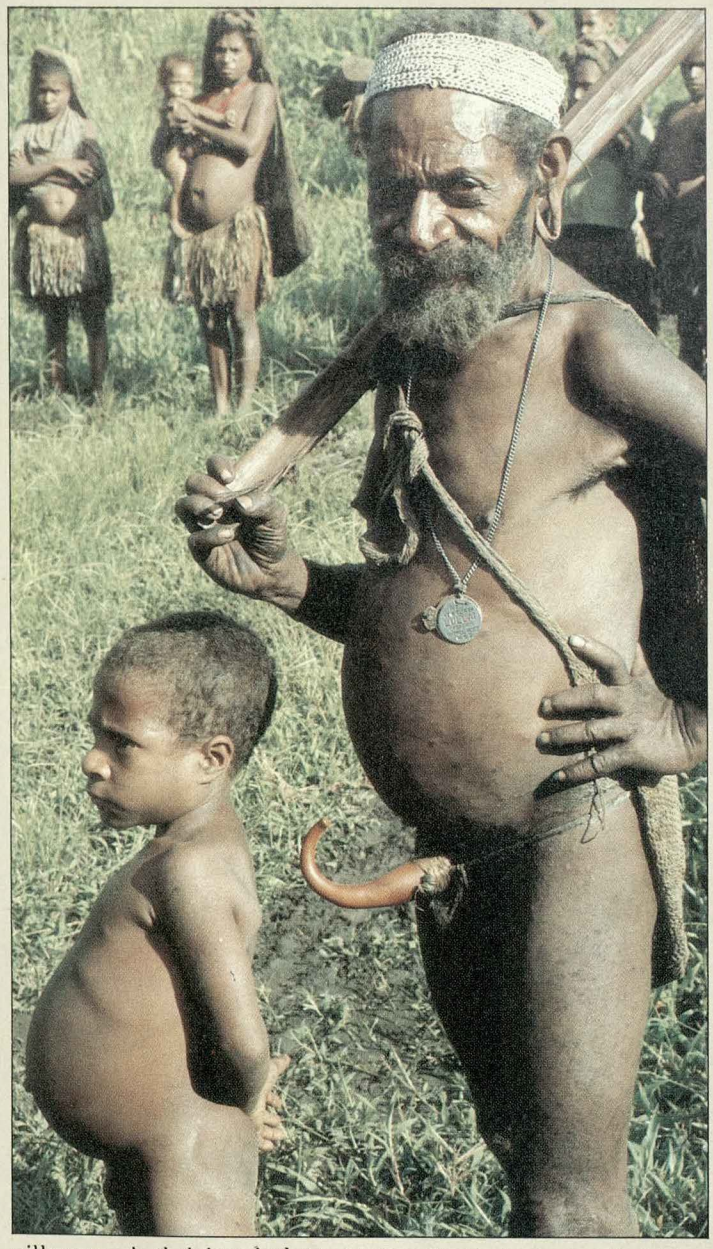
Young Mendi girls often wear two highly polished spherical gourds about six centimetres in diameter suspended on a long string from around their necks as decoration. Kewa men, also from the Southern Highlands are sometimes seen wearing the necks of tiny gourds said to contain magical substances in their pierced earlobes.

The most complex use of gourds in PNG is by the Baruya people from the Marawaka area of the Eastern Highlands.

They use gourds to manufacture salt. Water is poured through a filtering device consisting of a series of gourd funnels containing burrs and ash is produced by burning a special grass from which the salt is made. As the salt is washed from the ash in the gourds, they are emptied and fresh ash placed in them to continue the process. The salty solution produced is collected and heated to evaporate the water leaving the salt in a small hard block.

Gourds were the traditional clothing of men living in the northern part of the Western Province and the inland and mountain areas of the Sandaun Province. This custom was shared with the mountain peoples of Irian Jaya and extended from there eastward into PNG as far as the Strickland Gorge; a major cultural boundary in the island of New Guinea. However the wearing of penis gourds is being abandoned in PNG with only older men in isolated areas clinging to the practice. The custom has been abandoned for various reasons: Western influence, missions, the availability of shorts through cash income and social pressures from other members of PNG society.

Penis gourd souvenirs are popular among tourists and this has brought about new interest in growing gourds by villagers. A thriving industry has developed at Oksapmin and Telefomin in the Sandaun Province where gourds were traditionally grown in gardens. These two outstations are very isolated and only accessible by aircraft, which means the villages need a light and unique product to bring cash into their areas. The production of penis gourds as a cash crop fulfils both these requirements and ensures that the gourd plant will not disappear from village gardens.



Gourds worn by men on display for sale in Port Moresby shop **(top left)** *and one being worn in the traditional way by a Kunanap villager.*

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