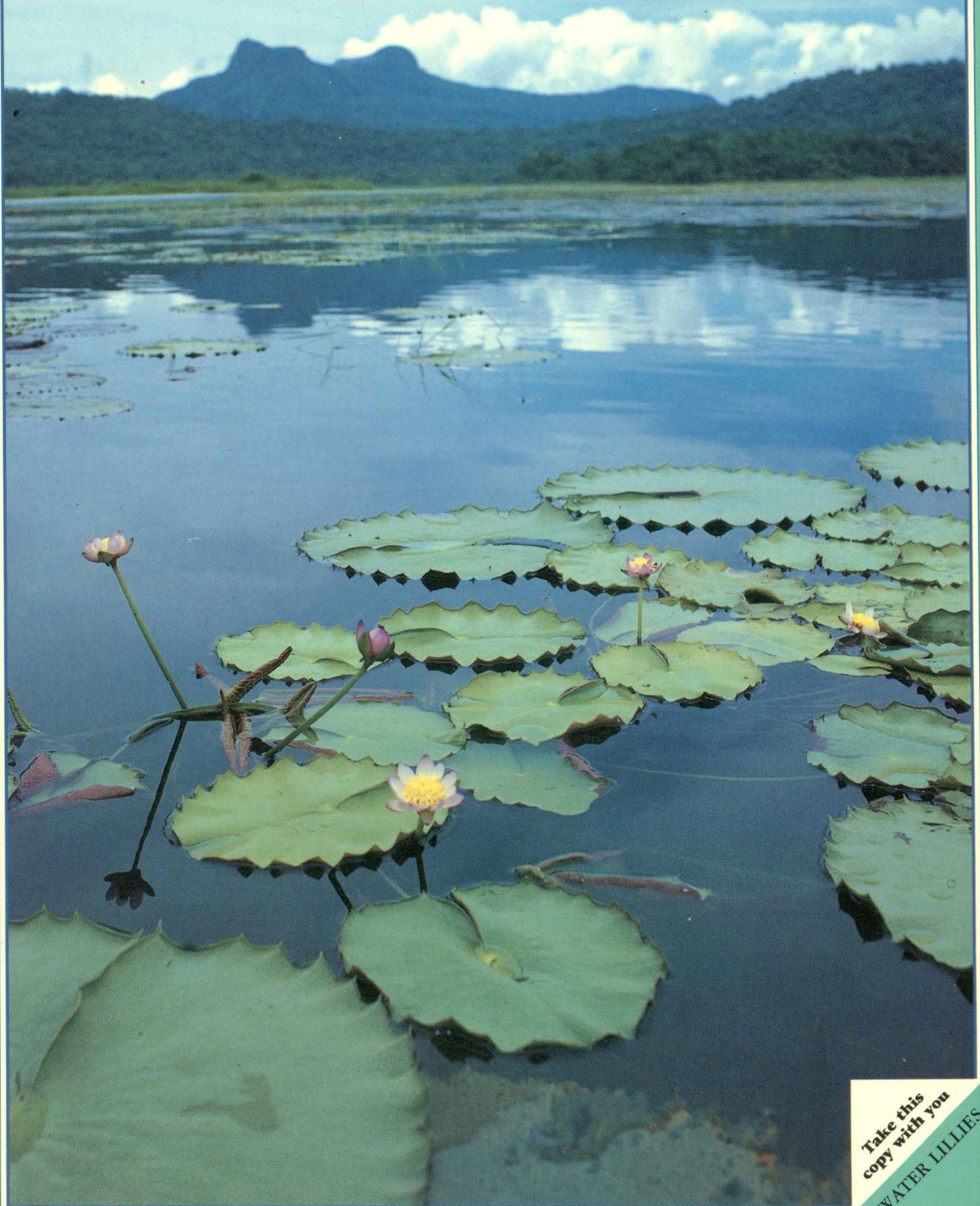


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No 78 Jan - Feb 1990

Paradise is published bi-monthly
by Air Niugini, PO Box 7186,
Boroko, Papua New Guinea
(telephone 273415;
telex NE22225).

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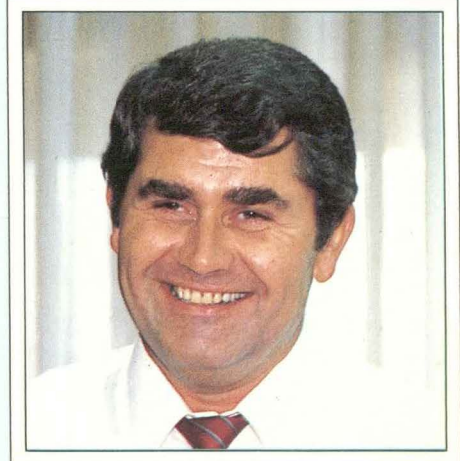
Have you ever noticed the scaffolding around the high-rise buildings in Hong Kong? It may interest you to know that this bamboo scaffolding is nothing more than bamboo poles tied together with bamboo strips and nylon ties.

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Join us as we discover the fascinating traditions of the Trobriand Islands and their 3,500-year-old culture.

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Dieter Seefeld
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Editor - Geoff McLaughlin MBE
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Editorial - Ross Waby
Subscriptions - Maggie Worri

Advertising

Papua New Guinea - c/- The Editor,
Paradise Magazine, P.O. Box 7186,
Boroko.
Australia - Samuelson Talbot &
Partners Pty. Ltd.
236 Dorcas Street,
South Melbourne 3205.
Telephone Melbourne (03)6998677

Subscriptions

Annual subscription rates for six 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 Singapore

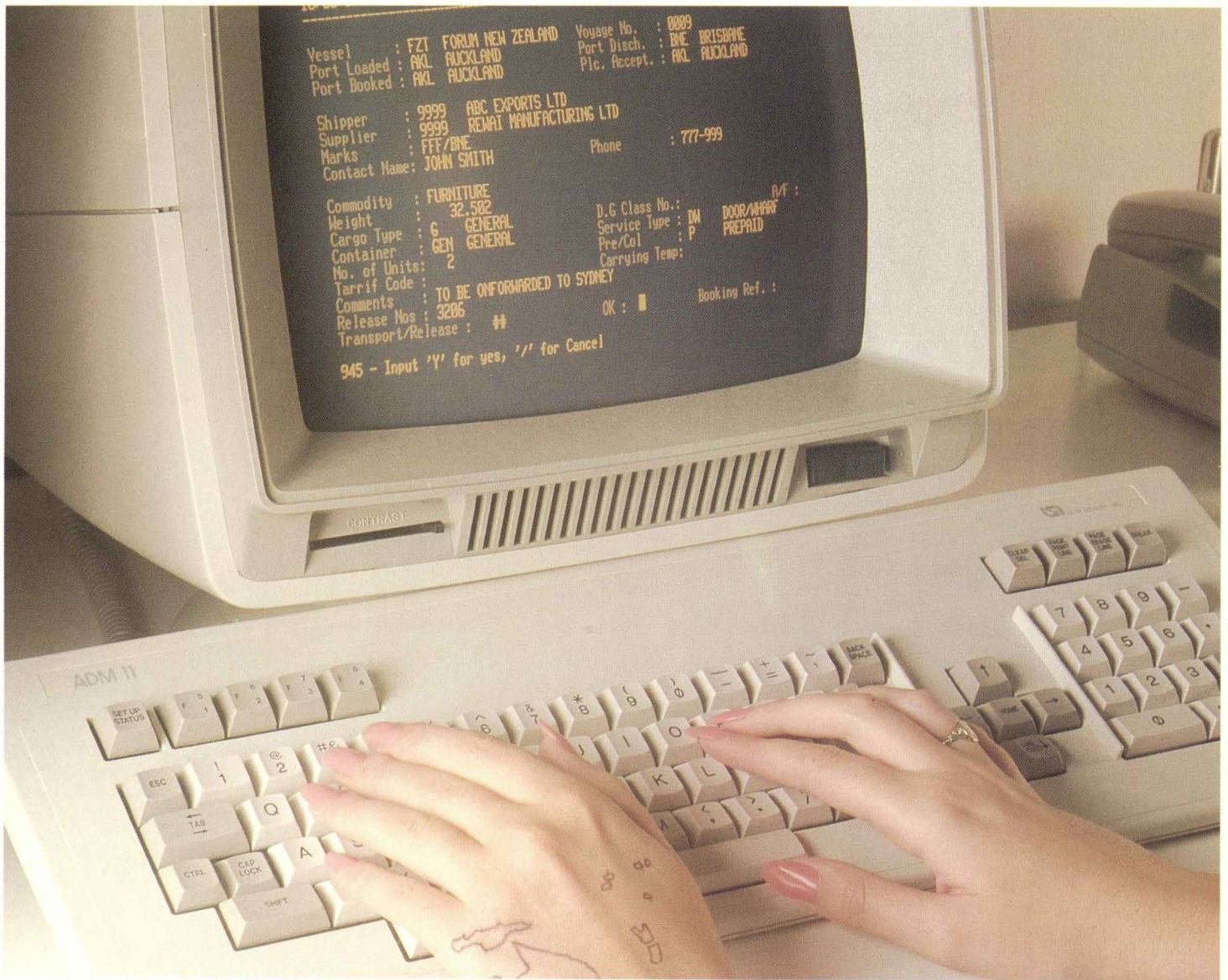
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Cover: Sepik water lillies.

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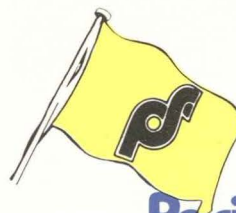
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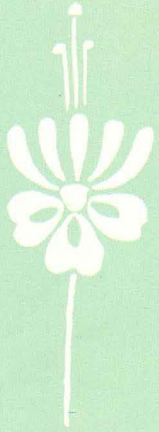
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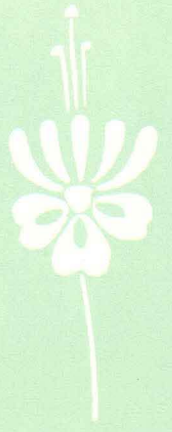


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Wildlife

OVER THE BORDER



Story and Photographs by Pat Woolley

New Guinea, the largest of all tropical islands, is divided into two countries: Irian Jaya, which forms part of Indonesia, to the west and Papua New Guinea to the east. A rugged central mountain range with some permanently snow-covered peaks in the west runs through

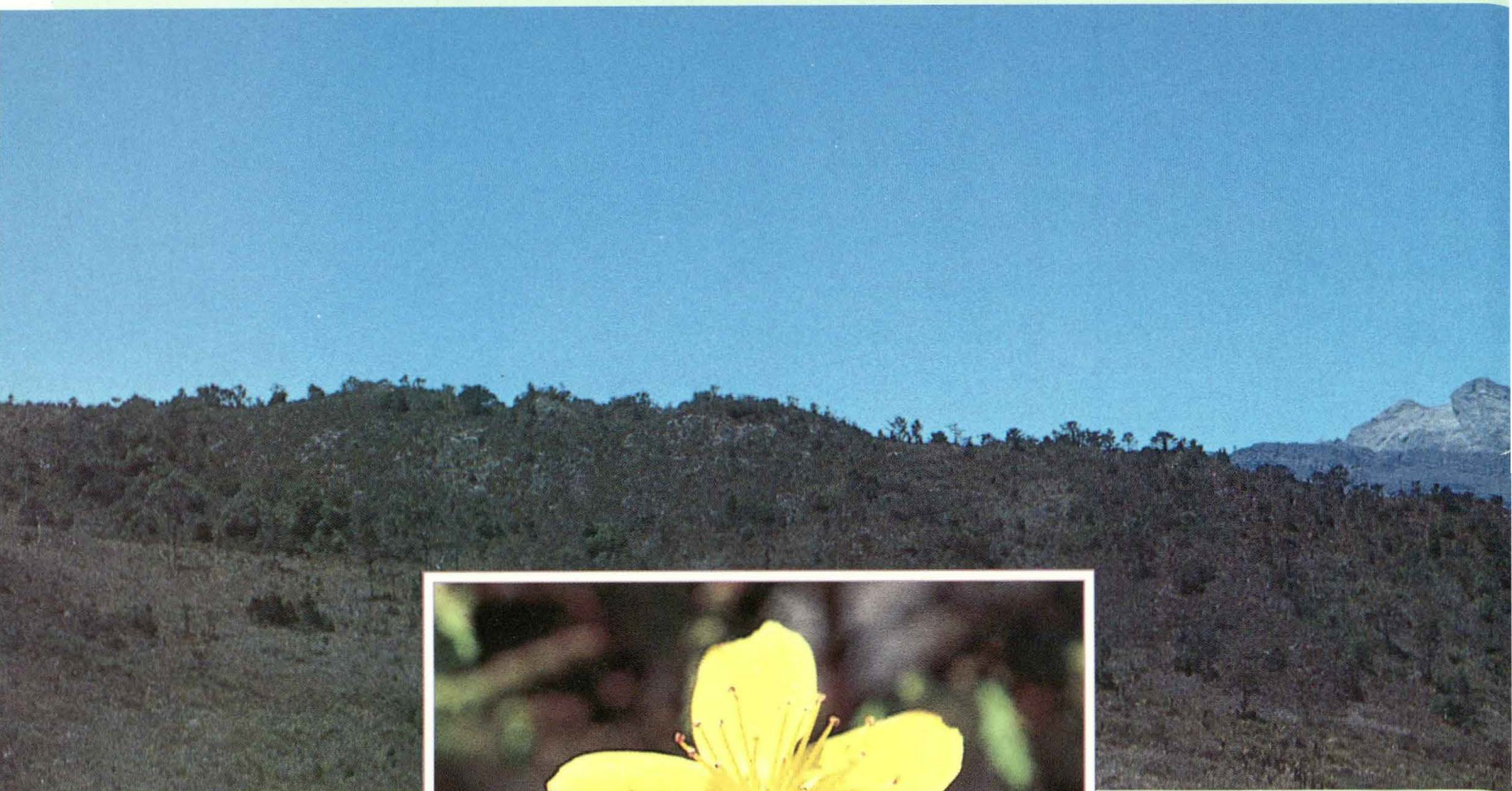
both countries. Biologists have long been fascinated by the diversity of the flora and fauna of the island and serious scientific study of it, which began in the mid-19th Century, has continued to the present day. Collections of plants and animals made on many expeditions to the island can be found in museums around the world.

The last big expedition to Irian Jaya was the third of the six Archbold Expeditions to New Guinea. This Netherlands and American joint expedition in 1938-39 collected in various localities from the middle Idenburg River on the lowland plain north of the central mountain range to near the summit of Mt Wilhelmina



Above Flowers at Porokma camp.





(Gunung Trikora), which rises to 4,730 metres. Most of our knowledge of the flora and fauna of this region stems from the large collections that resulted from the expedition. Fifty years on, with the purpose of collecting small mammals to continue studies begun in Papua New Guinea, I visited one of the areas in which members of the Archbold Expedition had worked.

From Jayapura on the north coast of Irian Jaya I travelled by air to the central highland township of Wamena in the Baliem River Valley. The collecting area, situated in densely forested, uninhabited country at 2,800 metres, can be reached by a two-day walk, or 20-minute helicopter ride, from Wamena. It lies off the Ibele-Lake Habbema trail, used occasionally by hikers and cavers and others in search of adventure.

After a stop at the village of Ndaila to meet the Dani people who would assist me in the field, the helicopter set us down on the northern edge of the plateau on which Lake Habbema lies. Here, at an elevation of 3,200 metres, the



Top of page Mt Wilhelmina in the distance. **Above and facing page** Beautiful flowers of the Lake Habbema area.

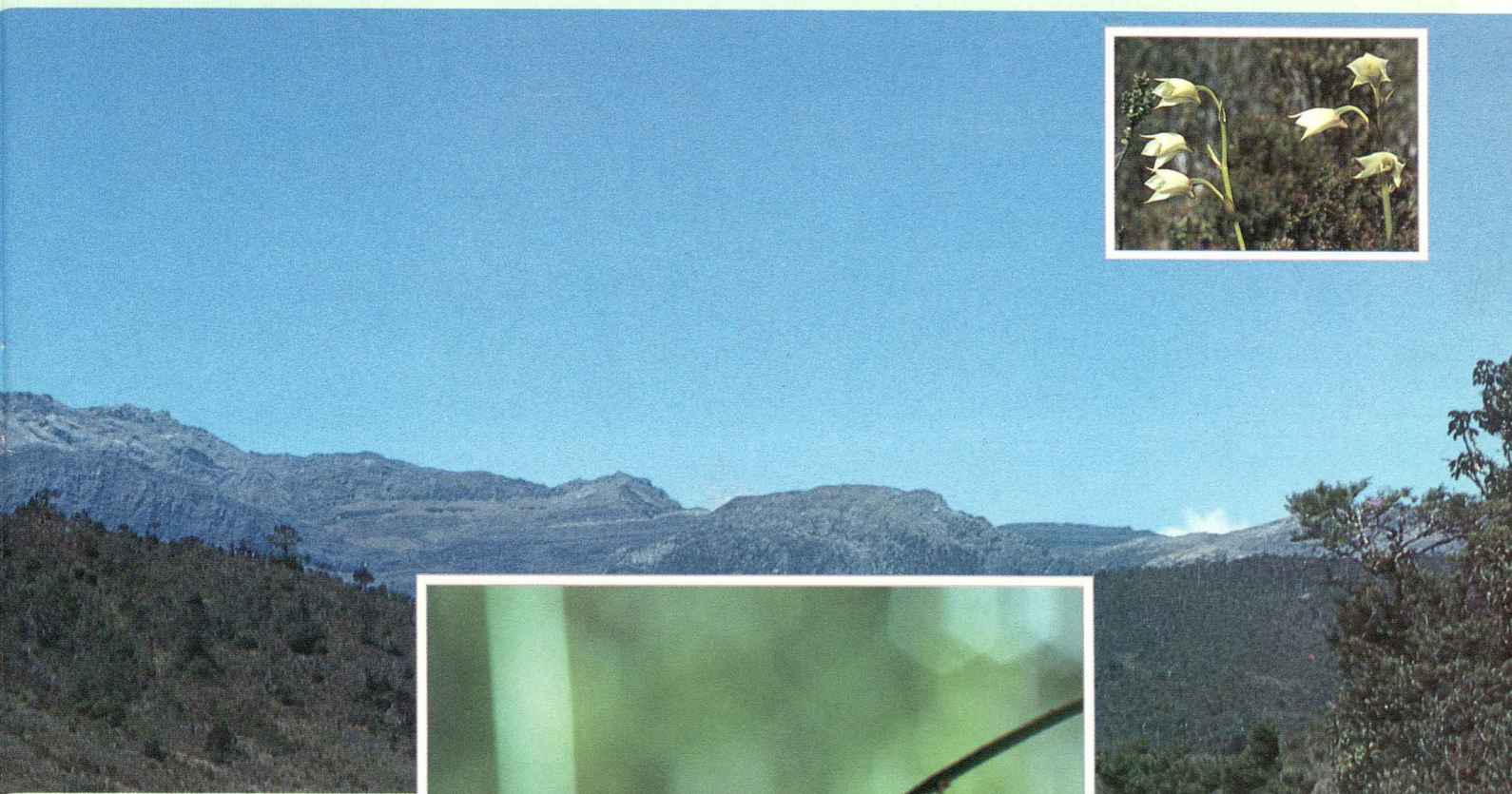
against the backdrop of Mt Wilhelmina, there were low ridges covered with stunted trees and grassland dotted with tree ferns.

Leaving the plateau we made our way down the trail through increasingly taller and denser forest. Camp was made at Porokma, the name given to the place where Dani people from Ndaila have a hut which they use during the pandanus nut collecting season and during hunting forays. The pandanus nuts are dried on a platform above a fire in the hut. The Archbold expeditioners had a camp at another such hut, just a few kilometres away in the forest, as well as one close to Lake Habbema. A photograph taken by them of visitors to their Lake Habbema camp aroused great interest among my assistants and others from their village, who could recognise their kin from earlier generations.

After setting up camp, which included building a field laboratory and organising our water supply (a pandanus leaf conduit thrust into the side of a gully), traps which capture small mammals alive and

air was cool despite the brilliant sunshine. All around us were ground hugging shrubs with tiny, brightly colored flowers.

Among the shrubs were clusters of flower-like lichens and groups of ant plants with bulbous bases that provide homes for ants. To the south,



unharmful were set in the surrounding forest. With the help of my two Dani assistants, Denni and Arinus, the traps were checked each day and from time to time moved to different locations. In the two weeks that we spent at Porokma, eight different kinds of small mammals were trapped. Among them were two species of the curious little moss mice, one of which was not collected by the Archbold Expedition, the narrow-striped marsupial *Phascosorex dorsalis* and large numbers of moss rats (*Rattus niobe*).

During a period when the moon was full, hunters from Ndaila who had roamed the forest all night with their dogs, arrived at our camp each morning to warm up by the fire. Sweet potatoes cooked in the ashes were shared with them. Animals they had killed with their bows and arrows included silky cuscus and coppery ringtail possums. Both species apparently move through the forest in pairs because in each case the hunters had killed a male and female at the one spot. The



females were larger than the males and both were suckling young that were no longer occupying the pouch.

One of the spectacular striped possums also was brought in. These animals use their elongated fourth finger to extract insect larvae and other invertebrates, which they eat, from crevices in wood.

Possum cooked slowly over the fire is very tasty. Moss rats too were relished by the Danis. Singed and gutted they were individually wrapped with some edible fern in a leaf from a ginger plant. The tiny bundles were then tied with bush string and placed in the coals to cook.

Much effort is expended in the search for animals to eat. A huge tree near camp that bore signs of possum habitation in hollows in the trunk high above the ground was felled. Scaffolding was set up around the base and three axemen worked in turns for several hours before the tree came crashing to the ground. There was great excitement as they searched among the smashed vegetation for the quarry, but

none was found. The next day, however, a pigmy ringtail possum that had perhaps been displaced when the tree was felled was found in a sapling near camp. It was returned to the forest.

Deadfall traps, consisting of a palisade of sticks on either side of a runway and heavy logs above, connected to a trip mechanism, are used to catch larger animals such as bandicoots and wallabies. Snares are used for smaller animals. Denni and Arinus set up a demonstration model of a snare in camp and captured an imitation rat, a wooden spoon, with it.

Birds of paradise and sickle-bills were seen in the forest and honeyeaters were attracted to the many flowering trees around the camp. The honeyeaters provided sport for camp visitors but despite many attempts only one was killed with an arrow. On sunny days butterflies flitted through the camp, while skinks came out to bask and capture small insects. Weevils clambered through the shrubbery, some mating. At dusk on clear days

From top Weevils; moss rat; snare; Porokma camp.

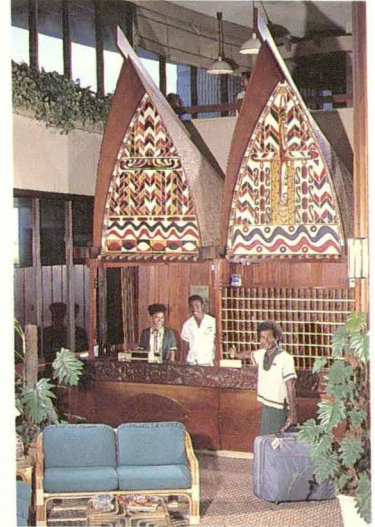
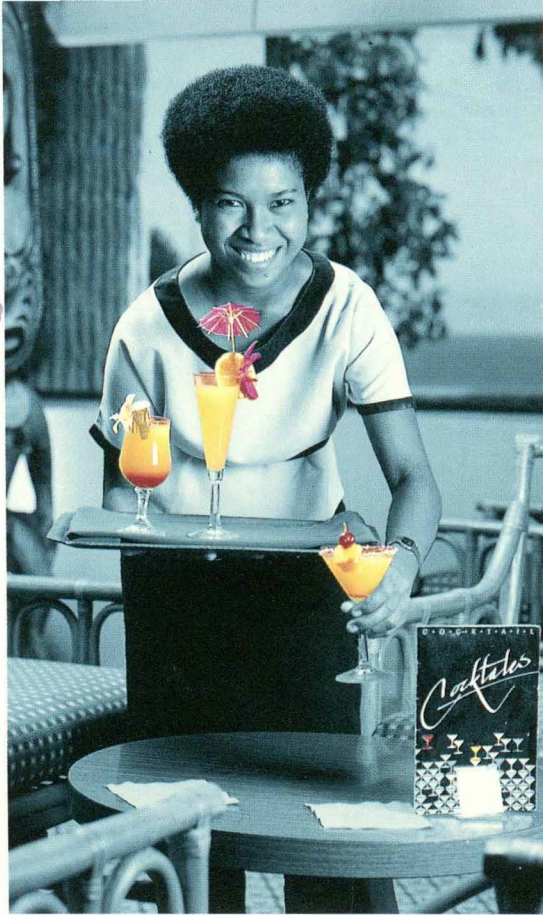
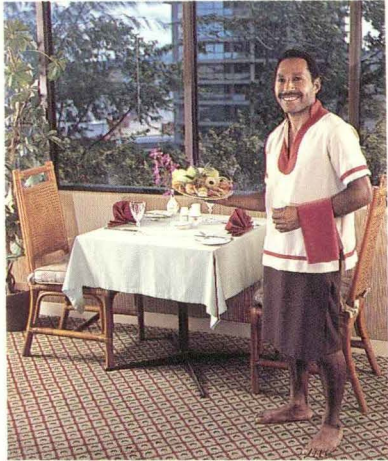


bats could be seen against the sky, flying swiftly over the camp clearing in search of insects to eat. Whenever rain was on the way frogs began to call from their burrows in the moss.

No doubt many more animals remained unseen but the time had come to leave this fascinating spot in the forest and begin the long walk back to Wamena before heading to another collecting site at a lower elevation.

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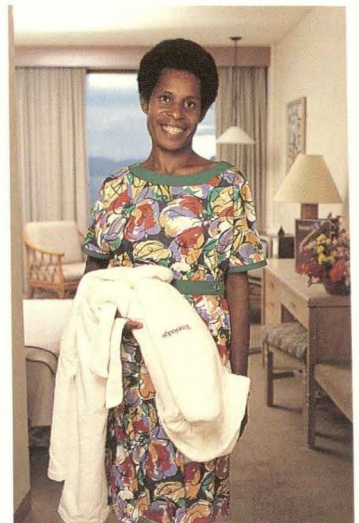
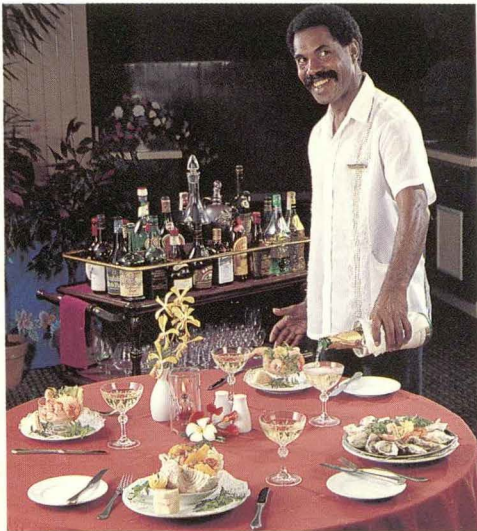
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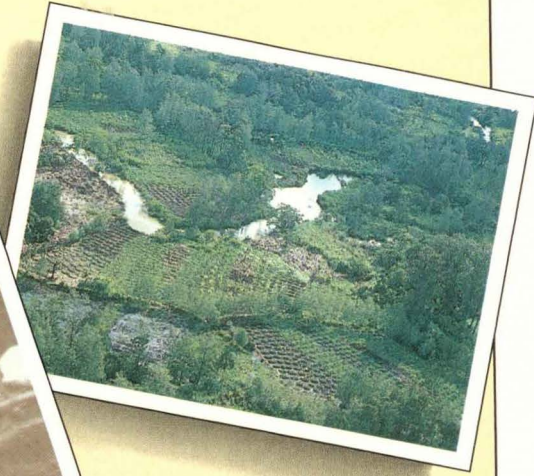
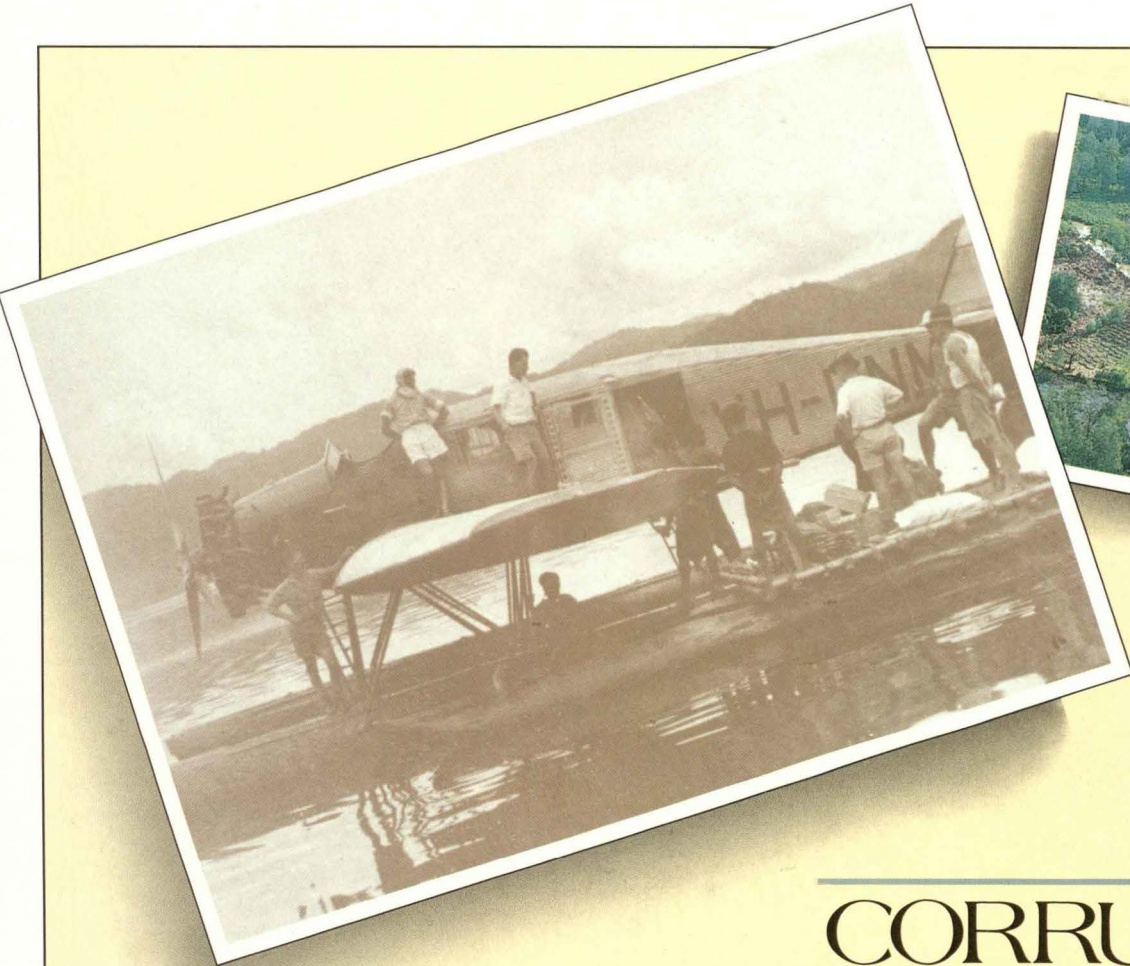


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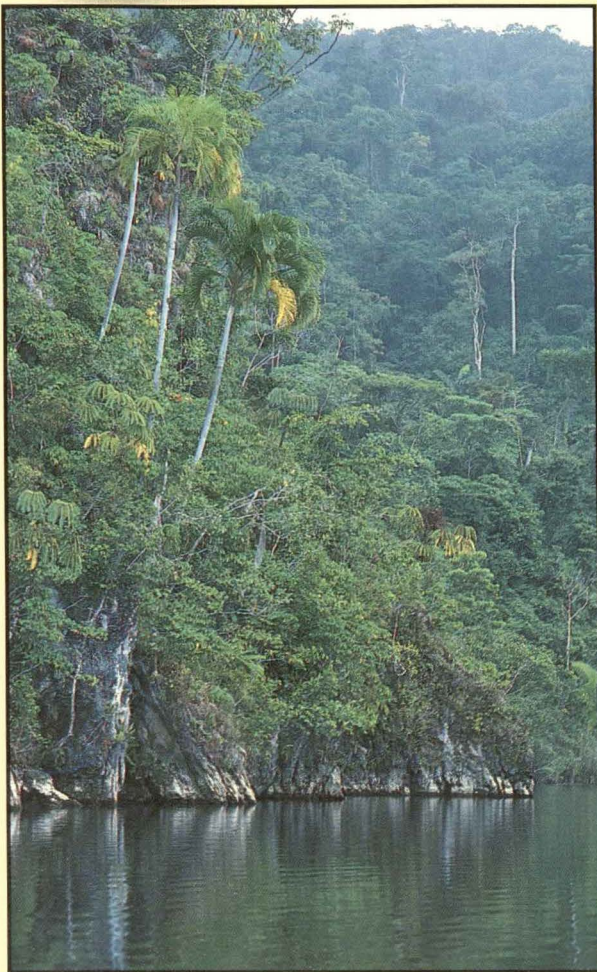


Left Unloading supplies from a Junkers W34 on Lake Kutubu.
bottom left Lake Kutubu, discovered by aerial survey in 1936.
above Tari Basin from air.

CORRUGATED

Kites

Story and photography by David Eastburn

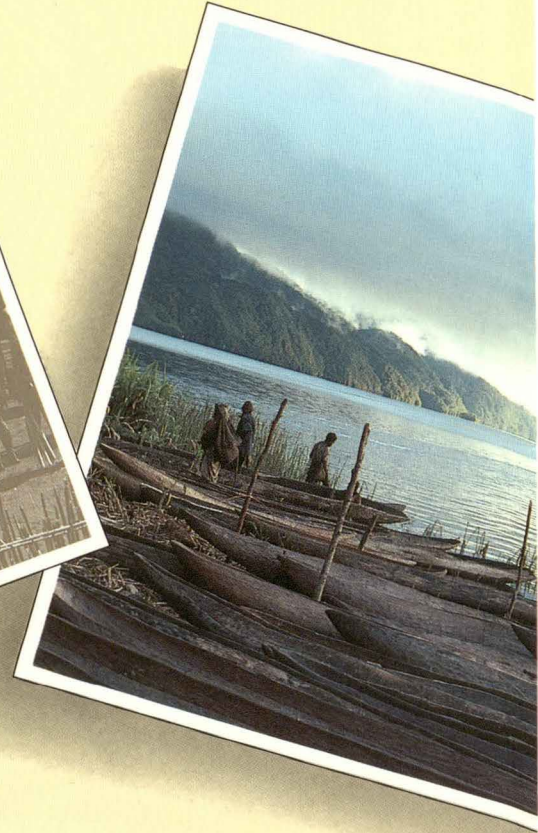
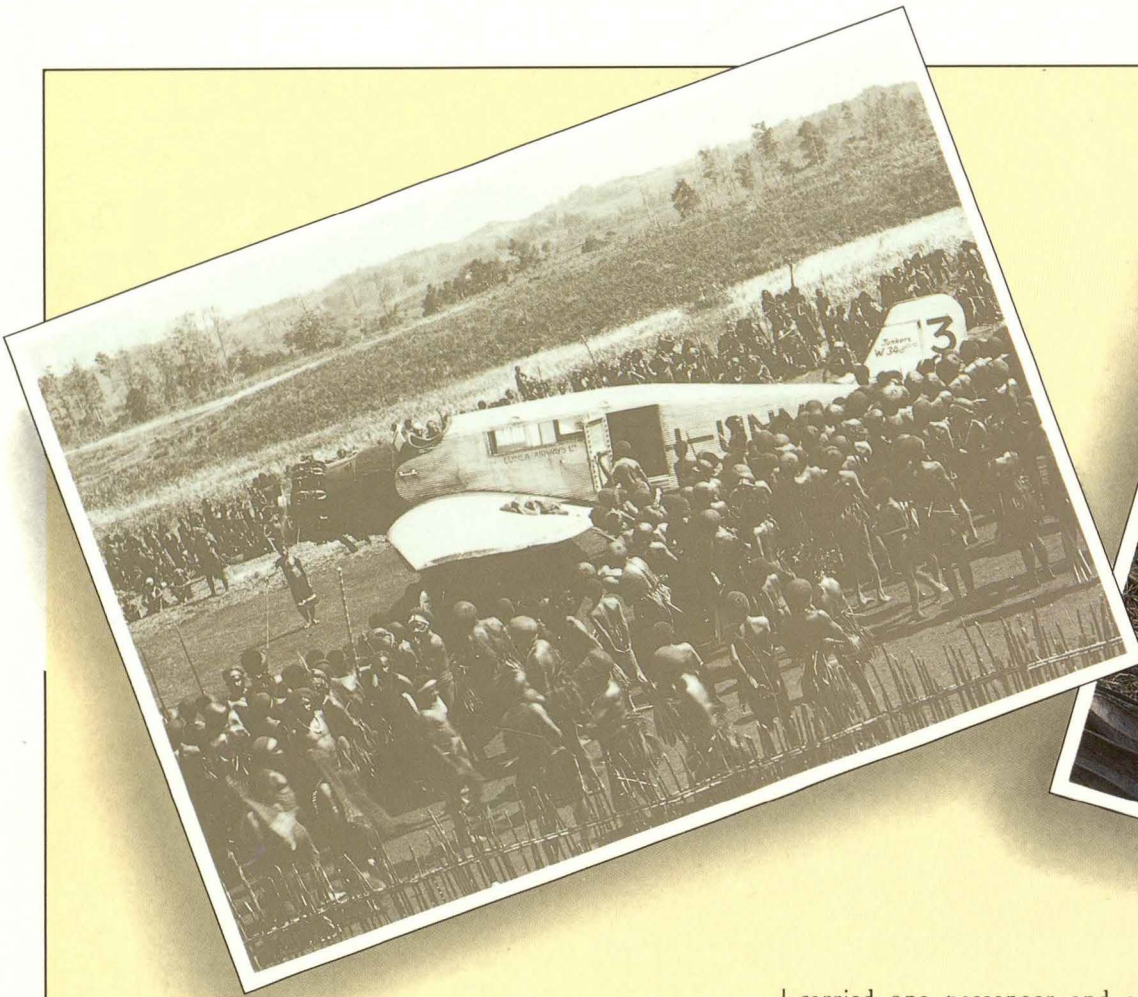


No country owes as much to the aeroplane for its development as Papua New Guinea. This is despite a statement made in the early 1920s by the famous aviator, Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith, that New Guinea was no place for aeroplanes!

PNG's first commercial aeroplane, a tiny de Havilland DH37 biplane, began operating between Lae and Wau on the Morobe goldfields in April, 1927. By the end of the decade, the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, as the northern half of PNG was then known, was a world leader in civil aviation. It maintained that status throughout the 1930s.

Leadership in civil aviation was due to the vision and daring of a few remarkable men who were able to see the potential of aeroplanes as cargo carriers in this rugged land. It was made possible by a remarkable family of metal aircraft, the Junkers.

Junkers produced the most advanced and largest commercial cargo transport aircraft in the world in the 1920s. The trademark of Junkers aeroplanes was their corrugated aluminium skinning, which gave them the appearance of being constructed of roofing iron, but was the source of their great strength and durability. These aircraft captured many world airfreight records



for the Mandated Territory as they transported supplies and materials, including the components of eight huge dredges, into the Morobe goldfields, during the late 1920s and the 1930s.

The first to recognise the potential value of aircraft as cargo carriers in PNG was Cecil Levien, a former kiap (patrol officer) turned miner. He saw that the system of using carriers to transport food and supplies from the coast over the mountains to the Morobe goldfields was both inefficient and cruel.

After the Edie Creek rush in 1926, Levien persuaded his backers, Guinea Gold No Liability, to purchase an aeroplane to supply the goldfields. The aircraft was a success and others soon followed. However, these were wood, wire and fabric biplanes unsuited to tropical conditions and of designs little changed since World War I.

'Pard' Mustar, who had been employed to fly the Guinea Gold DH37, made Levien aware of the German Junkers W34, an advanced, all metal, single-engine freighter aircraft. The W34 would be ideal for the type of work on the goldfields and its metal construction would not be affected by the tropical conditions. Mustar, with strong support from Levien, was able to convince Guinea Gold to buy this expensive aeroplane. Guinea Gold then formed a new company to operate its aircraft, Guinea Airways Limited.

Mustar went to Germany to test fly and purchase a Junkers W34. He found its performance, carrying capacity and ease of loading to be even better than expected. The new aeroplane was shipped from Hamburg and arrived in Rabaul in March, 1928. It was registered VH-UGZ and was later known as Guinea Airways No. 1 Junkers.

On its first flight from Lae to Wau, in April, VH-UGZ

carried one passenger and a tonne of freight. The amount of cargo transported in this 40-minute flight would have taken 100 carriers eight days. In its first 19 days of flying, VH-UGZ earned Guinea Airways the equivalent of K57,000 net, in today's values.

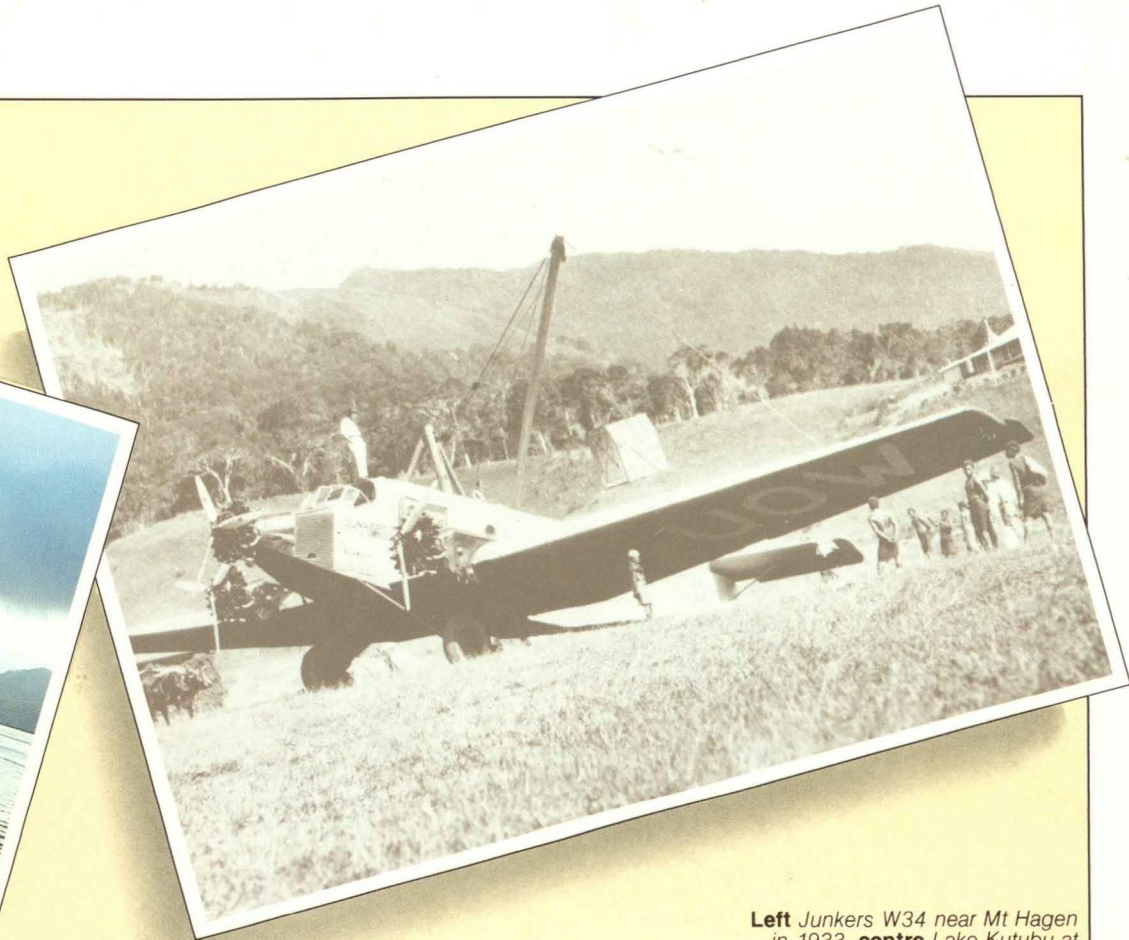
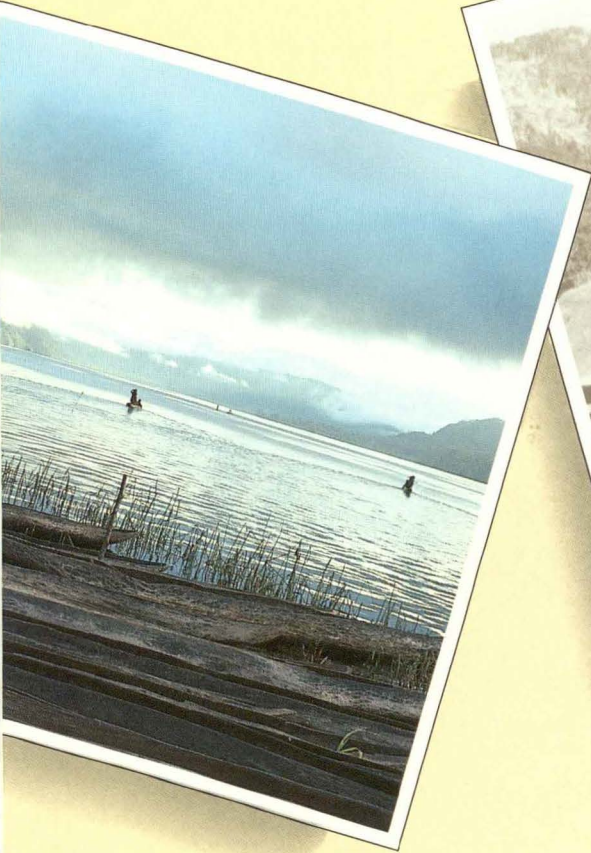
By the end of the year it had carried around 500 passengers and 300 tonnes of freight. So successful was the first W34 that others were soon ordered.

Due mainly to VH-UGZ, more tonnage was airfreighted in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, in 1928, than by all Australian airlines combined. This was the first of many freight records which would fall to New Guinea and Junkers aircraft over the next decade.

The surface gold on the Morobe goldfields was soon exhausted, but vast quantities remained, mixed with the alluvium and gravels in the Bulolo Valley. It could be profitably extracted only by dredges which could quickly and efficiently treat millions of tonnes of earth. Placer Devel-

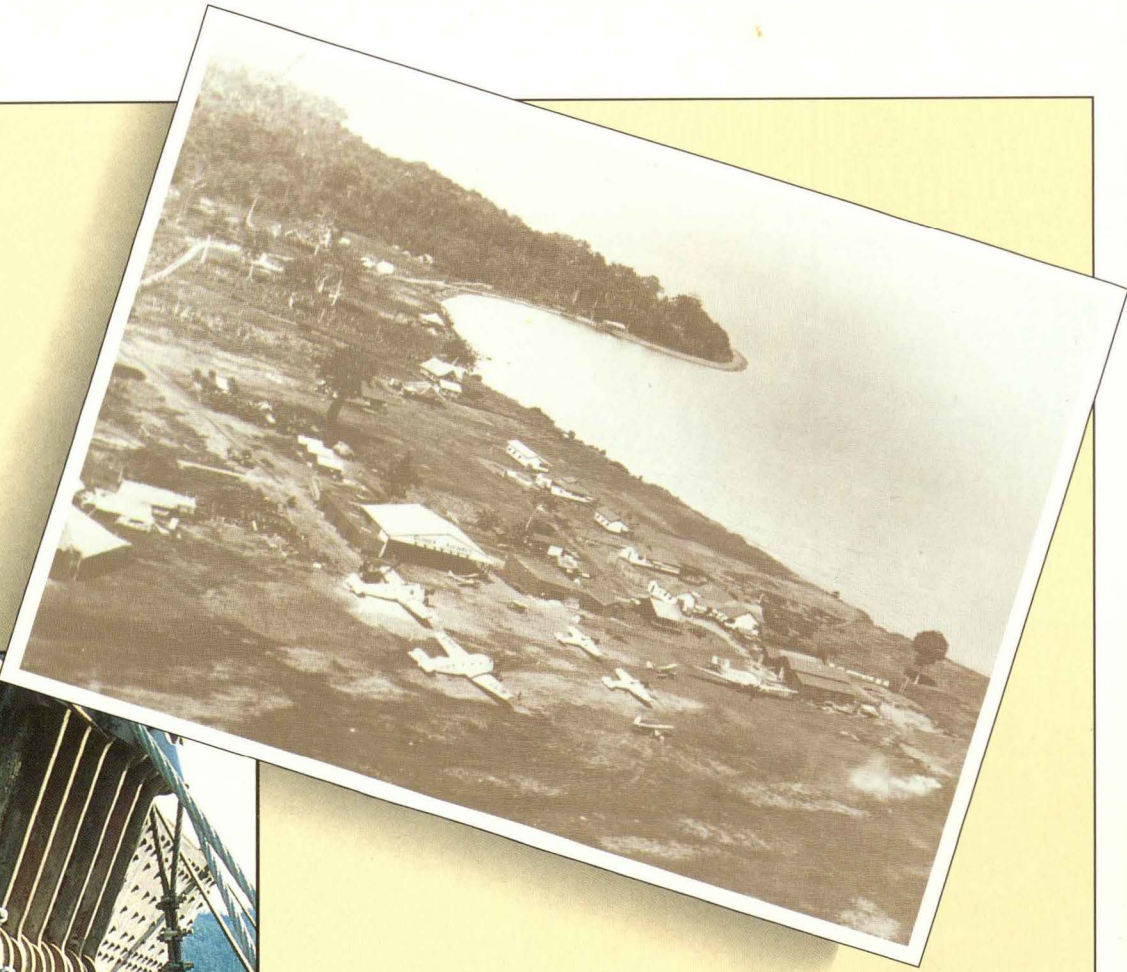
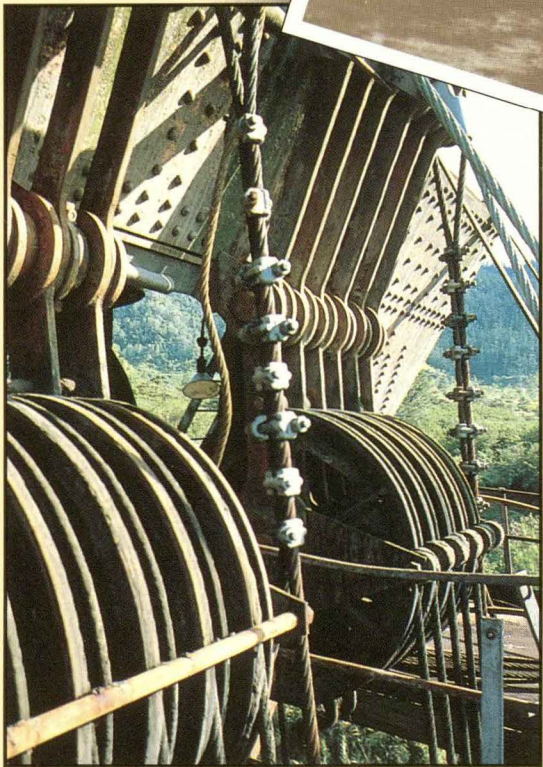
opment Limited was interested in dredging. However, the terrain between the coast and the goldfields was too rugged to build a road easily and dredging equipment was too large and heavy to be transported in any other way.

The managing director of Placer, Charles Banks, made the ingenious suggestion that dredges could be designed so that they could be airfreighted in pieces to the goldfields and assembled on site. However, it



Left Junkers W34 near Mt Hagen in 1933. **centre** Lake Kutubu at dawn. **above right** Unloading Junkers G31 at Wau. **below right** Cricket tournament players at Salamaua in 1933 with their transport, a Junkers W34.





Left Part of a huge gold dredge airlifted to Bulolo. **above** Lae Aerodrome, 1931, with three G31s and two W34s.

was found that the tumbler shaft, the drive shaft of a dredge, could not be made lighter than 3.5 tonnes, much too heavy for the available aircraft to lift.

'Pard' Mustar, who was responsible for the introduction of the first Junkers aeroplanes, was again to influence the history of PNG aviation. He told Charles Banks about the giant G31 tri-motor aircraft being developed by Junkers. Mustar learned of this aircraft while in Germany collecting the first W34. The G31 was capable of lifting the heaviest part of a dredge and the bulkiest pieces could be

easily loaded through a large roof hatch.

Banks convinced his fellow directors to take up the mining leases in the Bulolo Valley. Placer formed an operating company, Bulolo Gold Dredging Limited (BGD) and arranged for the purchase of two Junkers G31s. BGD arranged with Guinea Airways to operate and maintain their aircraft. Guinea Airways also bought a G31, and BGD later added a third to its fleet. The success of this daring operation depended entirely on air transport and specifically on the Junkers G31s.

What followed was the grea-

test achievement in PNG aviation, the famous airlift of dredges into the Morobe gold-fields. Between March, 1931 and November, 1939, the historic airlift transported the components of eight dredges, hydro-electricity plants, workshops, machinery and houses, from the coast to the gold-fields. Two of the dredges weighed almost 4,000 tonnes each and were, at the time, the largest in the world. The first dredge went into service in March, 1932 and the eighth was in operation by November, 1939.

World airfreight records were constantly broken. During one month in 1931, the Junkers aircraft operated by Guinea Airways carried more freight than any other airline in the world for the whole year!

This romantic era in PNG aviation ended abruptly, in a hail of Japanese bullets.

On January 21, 1942, Japanese aircraft attacked Lae, Salamaua and Bulolo, destroying most of the civilian air fleet.

Corrugated tri-motors appeared briefly in the skies over Papua New Guinea again after World War II. Gibbes Sepik Airways bought three Junkers Ju 52/3ms, similar to those flown by the Luftwaffe as troop and freight carriers during World War II. These aircraft were successfully used to service Highland stations for a short time in the late 1950s.



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GROWING



TROBR

UP IN THE

On this special morning, the children of Kiriwina cannot linger over their breakfasts of yam, taro and boiled spinach. It is the day of the week when — as in many Provinces of Papua New Guinea — one goes to school in traditional dress.

The girls tie their grass skirts and soulava (seashell) necklaces, the boys don white pubic sheaths, red belts and fern-fibre armrings. This takes extra care and may require the help of a grandmother, aunt or uncle. That also goes for the face-painting with swirling patterns in black, white and the bright red which requires skilled and artistic attention. Most mothers are busy at this time of day, tending to the youngest and oldest of the family.

Left Traditional dress day brings out the colorful best in these boys.
right Every face pattern is different.



Story by Jutta Malnic and
Rob Scott-Mitchell
Photographs by Jutta Malnic

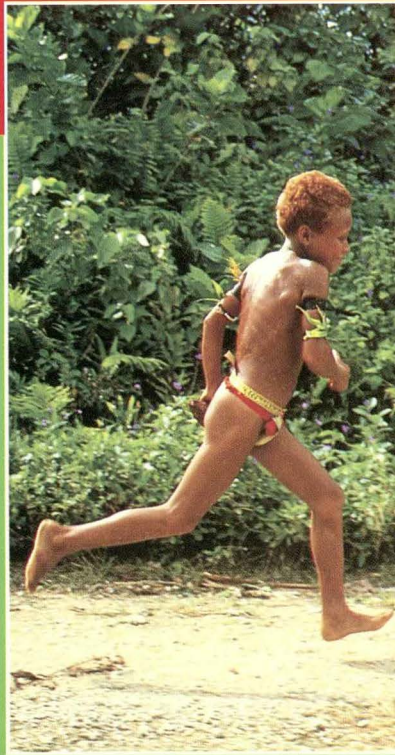
RIANDS

School is part of village life. It implants and strengthens cultural identity. So today is devoted to mythology and the practice of traditional songs and dance.

In the village, each child is shared. In moments of distress, when mother or father is perhaps working in the garden, there are relatives everywhere to give solace.

In the Trobriands, attention to culture is considered to be of great importance, not only by the Milne Bay Provincial Government but by all Trobriand people, and with good reason. They have much to be proud of in a culture that is known to span at least 3,500 years, and which still provides them with an enviable degree of social consensus.

The social fabric begins and ends in the village, among the grass huts and palms, where the yam houses tower as omnipresent symbols of a clan's prosperity. The children are included in every facet of life — canoe building, yam harvest or ritual celebration. Education extends far beyond classroom walls.

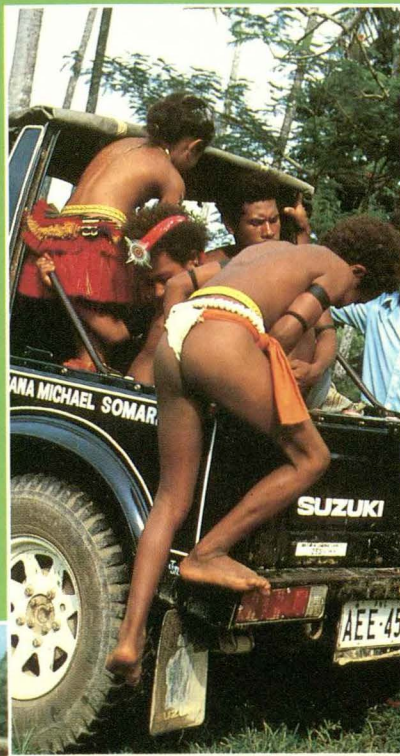


Left A late riser hurries to school. **below** Some forgo face paint. **bottom** A troupe of dancing girls.





Above This boy's headpiece emblem was made from cigarette packets. right School bus Trobriands style.



From the day a child is weaned it is considered a person in its own right. Though protected and rarely unobserved, it will seldom be admonished or spanked, and always listened to.

Children roam and play about in little age-groups, dissolving differences among themselves. At a distance from the mission, it must be said, children will chew betelnut like the grownups. They are left to sexual games, but bad manners and inconsiderate behavior bring a serious taking-to-task.

On this morning, the girls quickly tie a laplap of calico over their grass miniskirts, boys finish dressing with a tuck of fragrant herbs into the armrings. A final touch to the head feathers and everyone runs from the clustered huts to meet up with friends on the way to school.

At daybreak on a Sunday at Wawela Beach, a little band of boys takes to the water in tiny dugout canoes. They pole and artfully

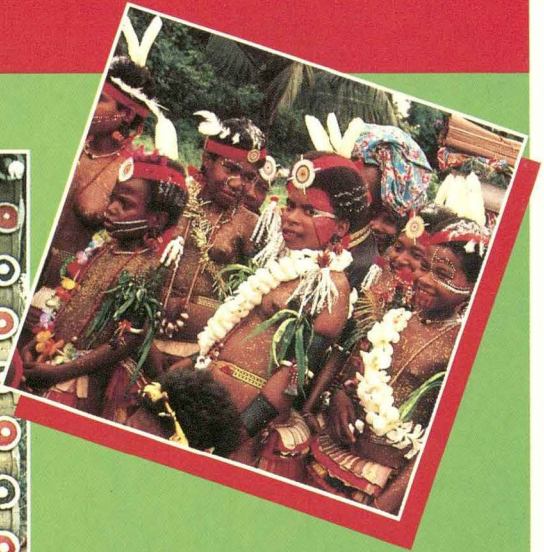
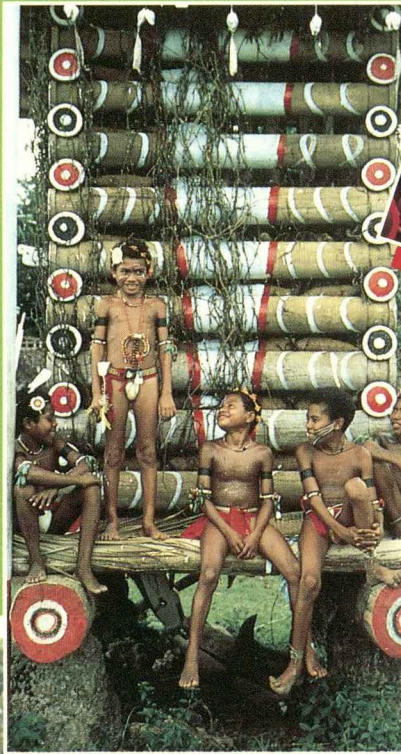


balance their craft into the new day. No sooner are their nets cast than the idyllic calm of a golden morning is shattered by the pounding of the church gong, an old gas cylinder beaten by two young, energetic percussionists.

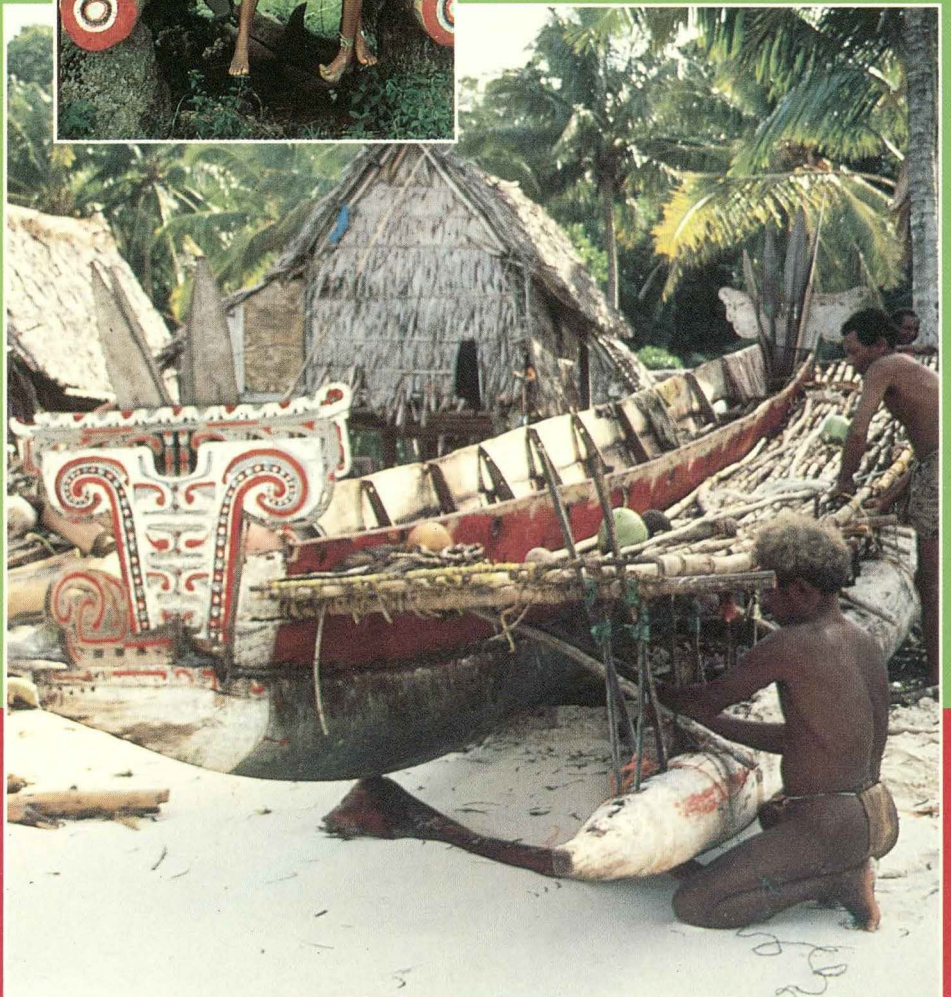
The village begins to stir, pigs shuffle through coconut husks, smoke rises from cooking places. The relentless drumming ends with three thunderous beats on the gong. Time to join the family under the thatch of the church in the back of the village. By now, the fringe reef has given them a good haul of coral trout for breakfast.

But some of the boys are tempted to linger on the beach. There are visiting kula traders who prepare their canoe for the voyage home.

The smoke and smells of fish on the fire slowly pervade the village. They waft into church to the singing congregation, to the kula traders on the beach and into the truant little noses of their onlookers.



Left Outside a chief's yam hut.
above Dancers waiting to perform
below A kula canoe is readied for voyage.



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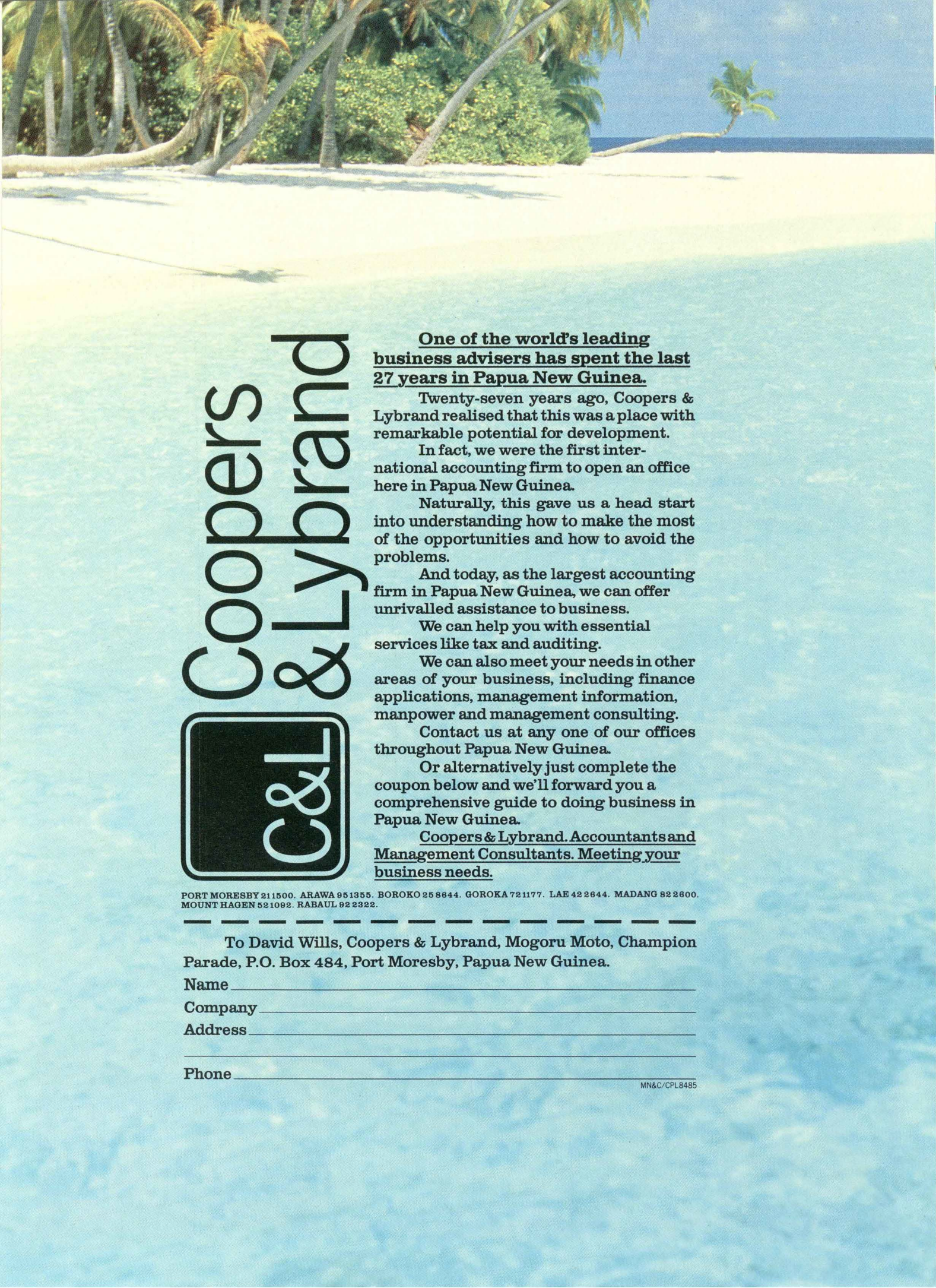
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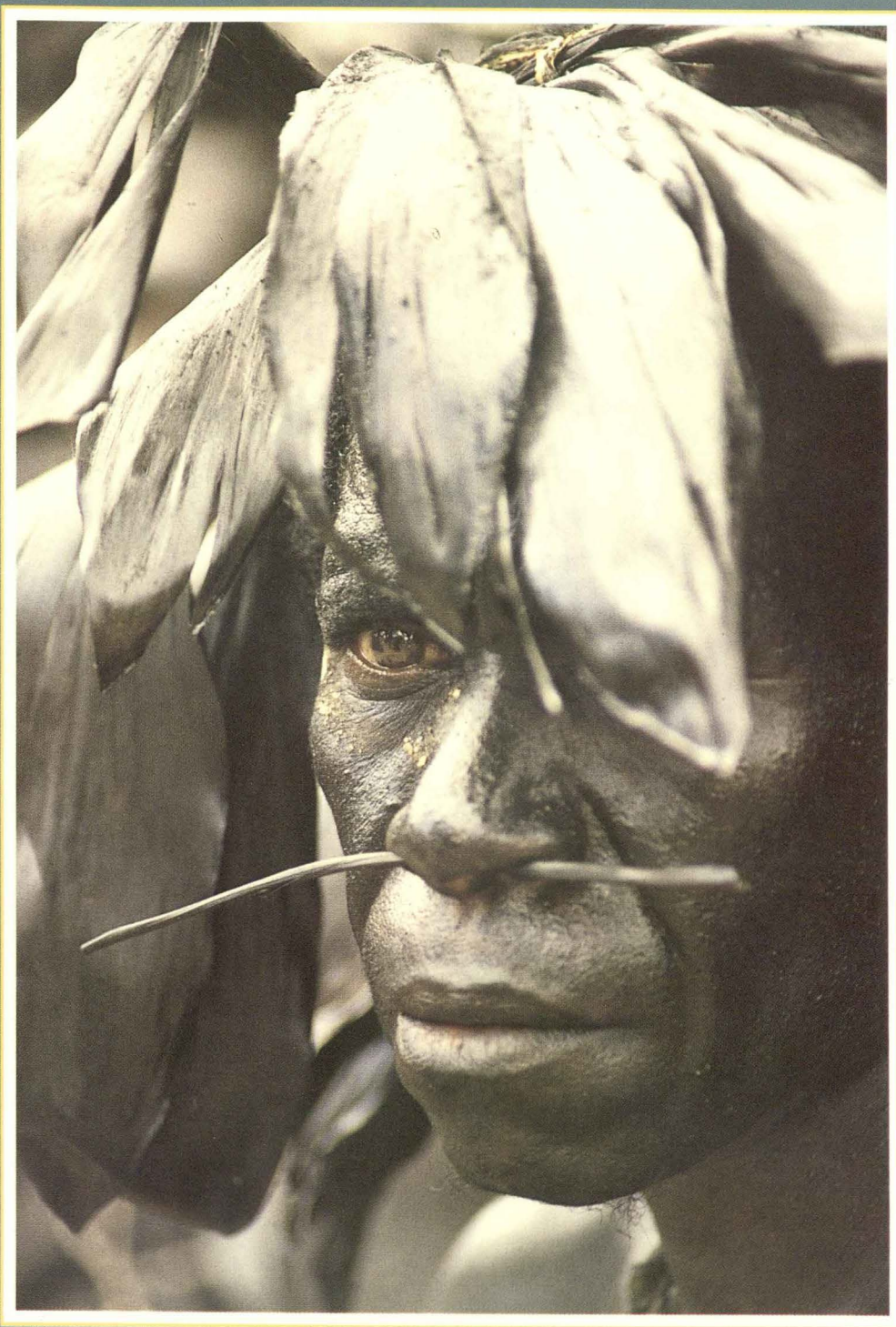
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JEWELLERY

Jan Barter has lived in Papua New Guinea almost 20 years, spending much of that time on the Sepik River, running the Melanesian Explorer and the newer boat, the Melanesian Discoverer. Her incredible jewellery collection bears witness, not only to her appreciation and knowledge of local craft and customs but also to newer, more sophisticated jewellery production aided by modern technology.

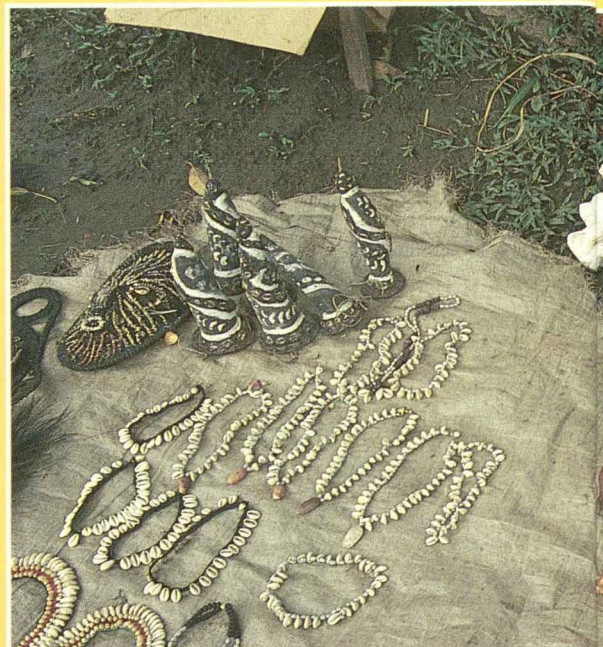
Walking through Tambanum village, surrounded by children, she wears three pieces which represent three, quite different types of contemporarily produced jewellery. On her finger is an old PNG penny, moulded onto a band and worn as a ring. It was made by Kara Jewellers in Port Moresby. Around her neck is a dog tooth necklace made in Soi village on the Karawari River and around her upper arm is a delicately carved boar's tusk made by Jeff Liverseidge. He is a local resident who lives near Ambunti on the Sepik River and produces much of his jewellery using an assortment of fine dentist's drills.

Traditional local jewellery is still produced but more store beads and synthetic materials are being incorporated into the designs. Rather than simply being made for the purpose of self adornment, jewellery is frequently made for sale. It has become a source of income for many villagers.

The Kina shell, or gold lipped pearl shell, is one of the most significant adornments. Usually hung from bush rope made of rolled aerial roots of

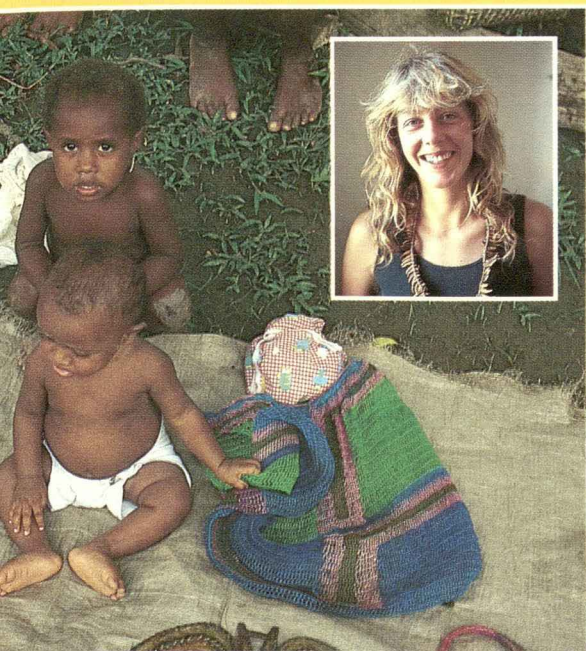
the pandanus palm, the Sepiks wear it dished up, so that the natural curve moves away from the body. Highlanders wear it turned inwards. Small cowries are sometimes sewn to the rope and the shell often displays a wonderful patina from repeated wear, either rubbed a shiny, rich, golden yellow or a deep red as it swings against skin smeared with oil and clays.

Sepik mourning necklaces are still made and sold commercially. Traditionally put on the body of the dead, removed and given to the next of kin they also serve as part of the currency system, representing the toea, PNG's smallest monetary denomination. Small round kina shells represent Kina, the basic unit of PNG currency. Threaded onto bark they are usually worn as belts or bracelets. Often made in Palambe on the Sepik, they are becoming increasingly rare and many have been sold off since coinage replaced shell money.



Title page Goroka woman with decoration. **below** Gold lip kina shell necklace.





As well as shells, parts of animal are often used for decoration. Thin black quills of the cassowary spine, like licorice, are wound around the neck. Swordfish spine is cut up and threaded onto string. One of Jan's most interesting pieces is made from a snake vertebra. Kept whole it has been smoothed and threaded onto a choker. Boar and pig tusks are often used traditionally but usually as nose pieces, not something that would appeal to many from a western culture.

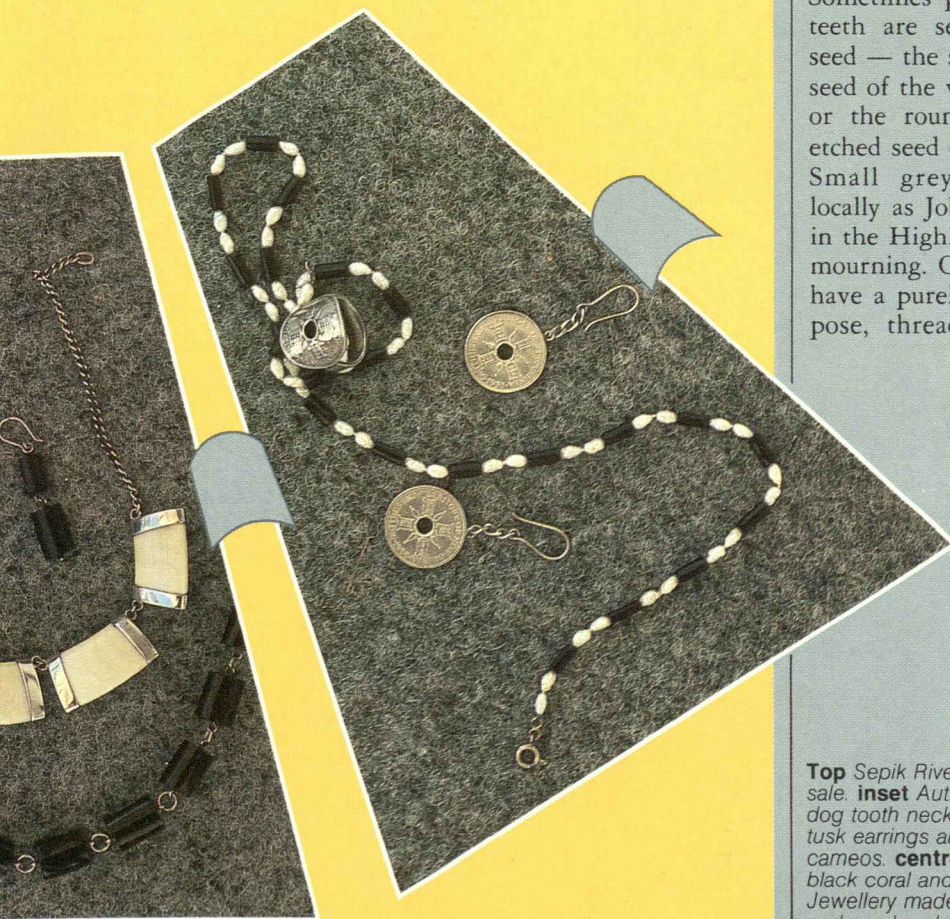
Dog teeth, flying fox teeth and pig teeth are threaded to make necklaces and bracelets. Sometimes pieces of bone or teeth are separated by wild seed — the small, shiny black seed of the wild banana palm or the round, yellow lattice etched seed of the sago palm. Small grey seeds, known locally as Job's tears are used in the Highlands as a sign of mourning. On the Sepik they have a purely decorative purpose, threaded with cowrie

shells and sago seeds to make huge three or four-inch deep chokers.

Quite different but using almost exactly the same 'bush materials' is the work produced by jewellery maker, Jeff Liverseidge. Having been settled in PNG for many years he lives in the bush on the banks of the Sepik. He makes many unique pieces which are becoming increasingly popular despite his obvious lack of interest in advertising. Many of the most beautiful pieces in Jan's collection have been made by Jeff. One of the finest is a cameo, carved from shell and surrounded by tiny green feathers and cowries.

Perhaps the river's most common bird is the beautiful white egret that flies unexpectedly from the surrounding grasslands. Jeff's trademark is the egret he delicately carves from crocodile teeth, mounting them in silver or gold, sometimes using tortoiseshell caps to make earrings or necklaces.

Examples of his work are numerous. Bright, emerald green snail shells from Manus make wonderful earrings. The foot, or operculum (door) of the turban shell is worked onto tortoiseshell tear drops and hang from a necklace. A present Jan received was a piece Jeff called 'A Memory of Sepik and Ramu Art'. A choker made of local bark and covered with tiny cowries, it holds five charms. On the left and right are Sepik hooks or 'wanleg' made of boar's tusk. In between there are three wooden masks; on the far right



Top Sepik River jewellery for sale. **inset** Author modelling a dog tooth necklace. **far left** Pig tusk earrings and whale tooth cameos. **centre** Necklaces of black coral and pig tusk. **right** Jewellery made from old coins and coral and pearl.



one from Swagup, the Upper Sepik, the two others from the Ramu River.

All made from local materials, the choker celebrates local art while being different from anything that was produced by the villagers. He has carved also a figure from one piece of black coral with tiny earrings and a necklace that actually turn. Another was cut from ebony wood, both represent female Sepik spirits from Mindimbit village.

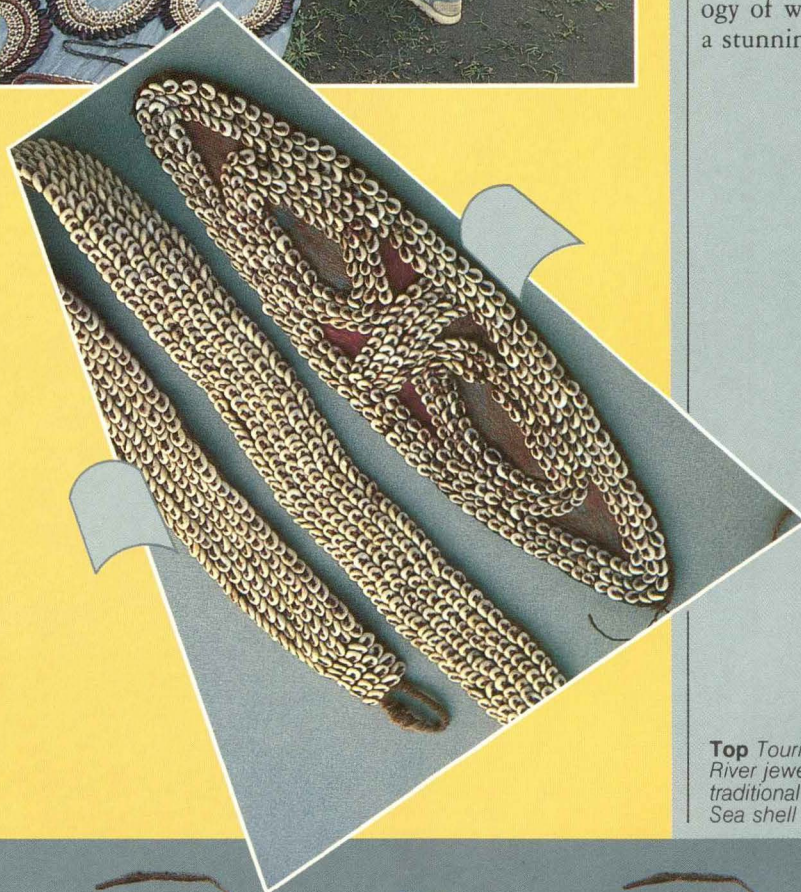
One step further removed and quite different again is the jewellery made by Kara Jewellers in Moresby. Using many local materials, their work is influenced in its design by local product but follows a more western tradition. Necklaces of red and black coral, and tiny pearls line their display cases and sell in many of the country's major hotels. Pig tusk is cut and mounted with silver caps and linked to form bracelets. Jan has commissioned a lot of her jewellery through Kara, including a beautiful cameo, made from whale's tooth, hanging from a thin gold chain. Another commission was a choker which holds a golden bird of paradise, one of PNG's most famous birds, here laced with precious stones. Kara Jewellery, although far away from village decoration and bush materials, incorporates local materials such as corals, pearls, pig tusks and occasionally, as in the case of the bird of paradise, local symbols.

These are not the only kinds of jewellery in PNG, but between them they provide an interesting cross section. Traditional body adornment made



in the villages, some for purely decorative purposes, some for ceremonial purposes, is still produced though more frequently using elements of synthetic materials now available in the stores.

Jeff's work is beautifully intricate and while using predominantly bush materials, the use of fine drills allows him to describe very fine detail. Kara Jewellers display a very much more refined product using elements of local material in conjunction with imported products and occasionally using local imagery as an influence in their designs. Together they illustrate the traditional methods of body adornment and local craft and the changes taking place through the advent of technology of which Jeff's pieces are a stunning example.

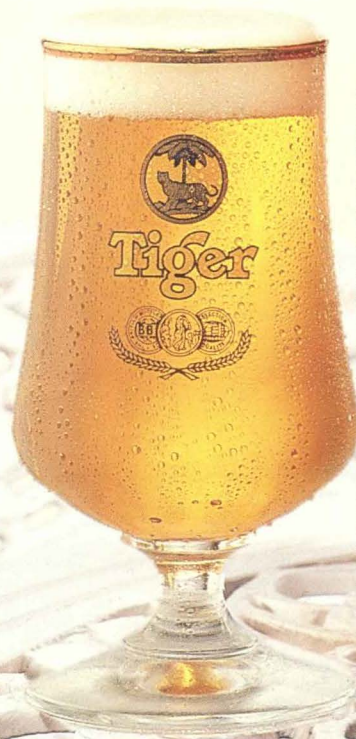


Top Tourists shopping for Sepik River jewellery. **left** Headband and traditional belt of cowries. **bottom** Sea shell belt and bracelet.





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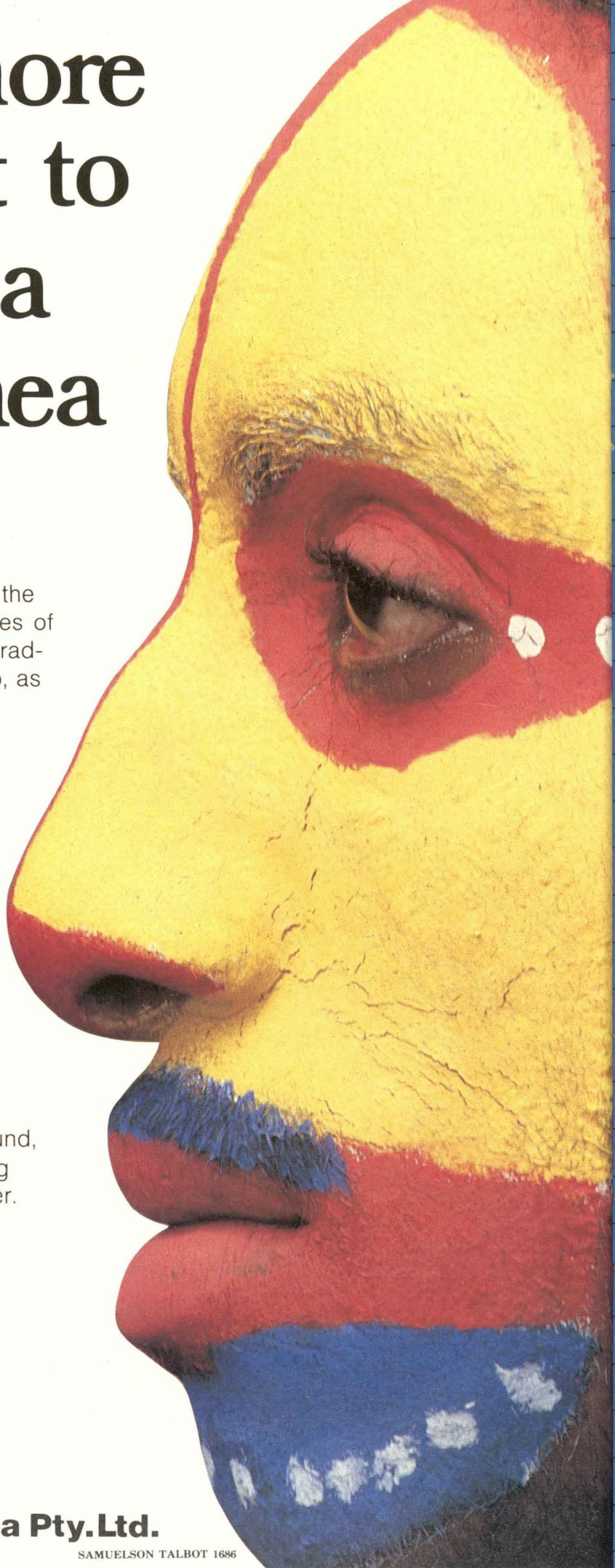
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BAMBOO

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Story by Ross Waby
Photographs by Hong Kong Tourist Association and Ross Waby



Hong Kong's skyline is a vision of the 21st Century, serried rows of gleaming white high-rise buildings crowded together at sea level and perched precariously on the steep and mountainous slopes beyond.

From a distance, the growing cityscape of apartment houses and commercial buildings is a testimony to hi-technology. A closer inspection reveals the startling fact that the speed at which the skyline changes is due in part to one of the oldest construction methods known — the use of bamboo scaffolding. Bamboo scaffolding is reckoned to be eight times faster than tubular steel to erect and 10 times faster to dismantle.

The slender towers that reach for the sky, do so in a cocoon of what is essentially a species of grass. Thousands of bamboo poles form giant wicker works of frames and platforms through which construction workers clamber. Within these spidery networks tonnes of concrete, steel and glass are transformed into multi-storey buildings.

Hong Kong's proud corps of scaffolders insist that their handiwork is as strong as steel and safer. Just to be sure, though, they observe a couple of superstitions. No scaffolder ever expresses a fear of falling. It would be courting disaster to say, even to oneself: "I hope I don't fall today". And no scaffolder who sees a woman in his household comb her hair

will risk going aloft that day.

Skills required in this unique industry usually were handed on from generation to generation among families specialising in the craft. But the lure of well-paid indoor jobs have put an end to many of the small family businesses. Young people, rather than follow their parents in the breathtaking profession of defying gravity, have opted for safer, less strenuous work. Instead of owing allegiance to family, most scaffolders now belong to an 1,800-strong union.

A new generation of bamboo scaffolders is learning the trade at the Construction Industry Training Authority centre in Kowloon Bay. There they are under the direction of the master, Mr Choi Keung, who spent 33 years hoisting and tying poles on building sites all over Hong Kong. Each year 14 of his students graduate from the centre.

Speaking through an interpreter, Mr Choi explained why bamboo was inherently safer than steel. "Bamboo scaffolding joints are closer together and bamboo is flexible," he said. "It is on a human scale; there are many more handholds and the steps you take are smaller."

As a person with a well-founded fear of heights, I put Mr Choi's theory to the test on the scaffolding his trainees were building. What he said was borne out. The network of flexible poles was much more inviting than cold, hard

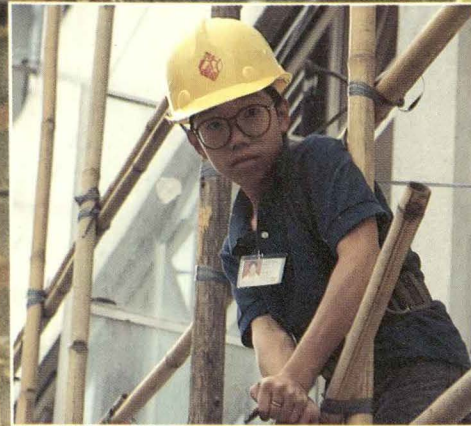
steel; the spaces between the handholds and footholds small enough not to be daunting. But that was only a couple of storeys above the ground. It takes a special sort of confidence and balance to be comfortable at greater heights.

How high could bamboo go? "There is no limit," said Mr Choi. "But the highest building it has been used on is the 50-storey Jardine House in Central District." This is the building which houses, among other tenants, the Hong Kong Tourist Association.

The basis of scaffolding is in two grades of bamboo poles, 6.7 metres to 7.3 metres long (22ft to 24ft) and 7.5 centimetres in diameter (3ins) and 5.5 metres to 6.25 metres long (18ft to 20ft) and 6.25 centimetres in diameter (2.5ins). Thicker poles are used at ground level to support the whole structure; shorter, thinner bamboo is used for connecting material and for securing the poles to the building exterior. Joints are made from strips of bamboo, called splits, but they are rapidly giving way to strips of nylon. Boards for walkways are usually fir.

Most bamboo comes from China's Guangxi Province to the west of Hong Kong and the best of it is called Guangling bamboo. It is barged and shipped down the Pearl River to Canton and usually brought across the border by truck.

Sometimes it is discarded after use on a single site, depending on how long the



Background Nimble workers scale the heights on bamboo scaffolding. **Insets, from left** Nylon strips are replacing traditional bamboo ties; a trainee checks his handiwork; fellow students 'learn the ropes'.

project takes. Bamboo, for all its advantages of flexibility and strength, is useful only for about 12 to 18 months. As it dries it becomes brittle and prone to breakage.

An interesting comparison in the relative merits of steel and bamboo was provided several years ago when two 25-storey buildings were going up in Central District. One was sheathed in bamboo scaffolding, the other in steel. When a typhoon hit, it blew away the steel poles, causing considerable damage; the bamboo bent and swayed but stayed put. Weather is one of the hazards for scaffolders and none work if it is too windy, too wet or if there are thunderstorms around.

Women, who once were numerous in the trade, are becoming fewer. Their traditional role was to pass up the poles to the scaffolders and to catch them when they were being dismantled. Hong Kong visitors were often amazed to see middle-aged and elderly looking women catching poles dropped from heights of up to 12 metres. In recent years only two girls have graduated from the training centre.

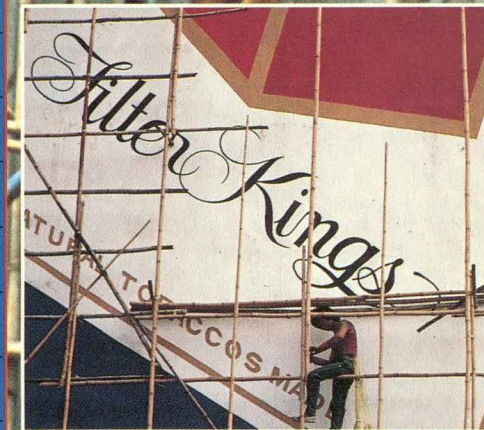
Bamboo scaffolding is everywhere in Hong Kong, not just on new buildings but on those undergoing maintenance. It seems every street in the built-up areas of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon has at least one building enclosed with it.

It is easy to pass by and not

realise that workers are scaling the dizzy heights above. Bamboo scaffolders tend to work silently. "They are skilled in what they do and they know exactly what is needed at every moment," said Mr Choi. "They understand each other and its almost as if they communicate without speaking. When they do speak, you wouldn't understand anyway. They use their own language."

The author was a guest of the Hong Kong Tourist Association.

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Above No job is too big or too small for bamboo scaffolding, as these scenes show. But those who build and work on the soaring structures need a sure grip.

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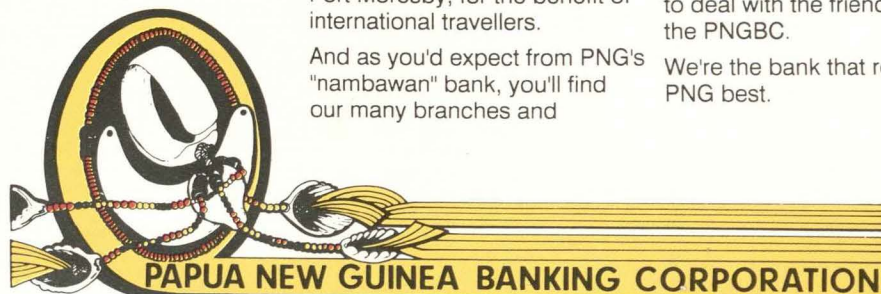
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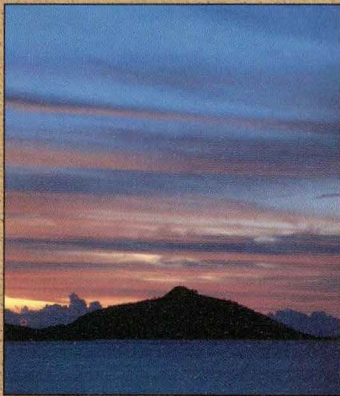
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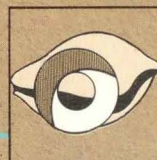


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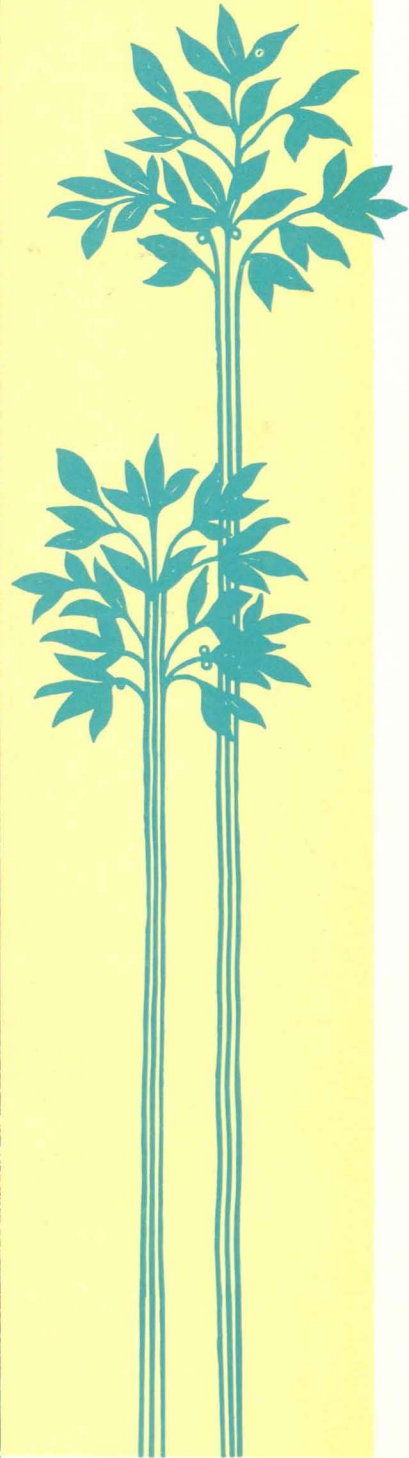
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Story and photographs
by Keith Briggs

TREE OF LIFE

The sago tree provides more of the essentials of life for village people than any other single tree in the bush. Although looked upon primarily as a source of food, during the 15 to 20 years it takes to mature to the stage where it can be processed into sago flour, it contributes many of life's necessities.

Left *Mature sago tree.*





Inset above *Paring sago pith. top*
Sago making trough.
bottom *House with sago thatch*
roof and plaited sago frond walls.

As a young tree, even before a definite trunk forms and while it is still a maze of spiky fronds or limbs, the leaves are selectively pruned for use as roofing material for dwellings. Apart from the Nipa palm on the coast, there is no substitute for sago thatch on the lowlands. At higher altitudes kunai grass provides the roofing. House gables are usually closed in with sago leaf that is first fixed to thin sticks and then held in place with cane binding.

The lower limbs of the sago

die off as the trunk grows. These are fairly straight and are cut to form vertical outer cladding for house walls. If cut while green the hard shiny skin is peeled off in long thin strips and plaited into a pleasantly patterned wall lining or floor covering inside the house. Our house in Tari has two walls in each of six rooms lined with this attractive material.

Boys use the ribs of the leaves as toy arrows with a small square of leaf left at the end as a 'feather' or flight.

People working in the swamps invariably get a thorn or two in their feet, so two hard, dry sago leaf spines are used as needles to remove the offending piece from the tough sole.

When the new leaves are unfolding from their sheaths they are stripped and twisted into a fine string by rolling on the thigh in the same way as bilum (carry bag) twine is made. The outstanding skirts worn by married women are made from this string. At this same stage the new, almost white, filmy fronds are often



Inset Sago grubs. above
Celebrating a successful sago harvest.

used as bunting to decorate a new church, classroom or aid post or to line the path down to the river where baptisms will take place. From this too, men make the spectacular waterfall effect and the small skirts they wear as part of their elaborate dancing regalia.

Boys make toy aircraft from the balsawood-like pith of the limbs.

Thin sheets cut from the edges of the frond butts are made into dishes and tubs, the most common being those in which the bright red pandanus

soup is prepared. They are very durable and the dogs always lick them nice and clean after use! The flat, wide frond butts make excellent sleds for the children, which bigger boys pull down steep slopes at high speed.

When the sago reaches maturity and the seed bearing antlers appear at the top, the tree is felled for the sago making process. Two large limbs are prised off and their butts joined to form a trough supported by forked sticks and other framework. The hard

bark is laid back from the trunk and the women sit and pare or shave off the pith with deft and powerful strokes of their sago adzes fitted with sharp edged stone bits mounted in black palm handles. The resultant coarse sawdust-like material is beaten and washed in the trough to separate the fine white powder which is carried down by the water into bark tubs.

The damp flour is packed into large tubular containers made from sago leaves, pinned together with short pieces of



Above *Kaukau and wild sugar cane supplement the sago diet.*
top right *Skirt made from sago leaf.*
bottom right *Sago flour going into a leaf, to be tied and cooked.*

leaf rib. The sago flour is the staple diet of most people in Papua New Guinea who live at altitudes below about 650 metres. The innumerable ways in which sago can be cooked would fill a book, but one common method is to make a long parcel of flour in a sago leaf and cook it over a low fire.

Another edible portion of the tree is obtained from in the crown where the top branches join. The head and top section of the trunk are left for large black beetles to lay their eggs. These develop into the plump fatty grubs so prized as a

delicacy. As the grubs mature the men enclose the tree head in a high fence of sapling stakes securely bound with cane. A portcullis type trap-door of hard, heavy sago tree bark is suspended in the narrow door way with a trigger set at a suitable point within the enclosure. Wild pigs who smell the grubs and come in to enjoy a feast trip the trigger and are trapped inside to become a feast themselves.

Once the pigs have been given the chance to be caught, the last thing the tree does is to give its harvest of grubs as

the whole rotting head is broken up with axes and knives in the search for them.

Nothing is wasted, so all that remains is an abandoned trough and the long slabs of bark where the tree lay to give up its life-giving sustenance.

It is not a tree that features on calendar pictures or travel brochures, framing sunsets and blue bays as does the coconut. Hardly seen in its swampy home, unheard of and unsung by the outside world nevertheless throughout its life and in its death it serves mankind well.

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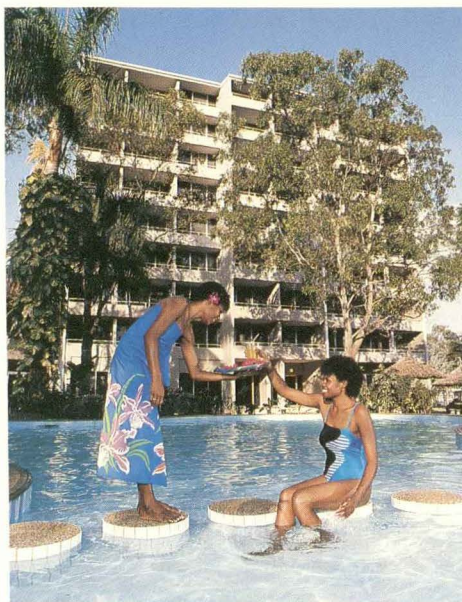
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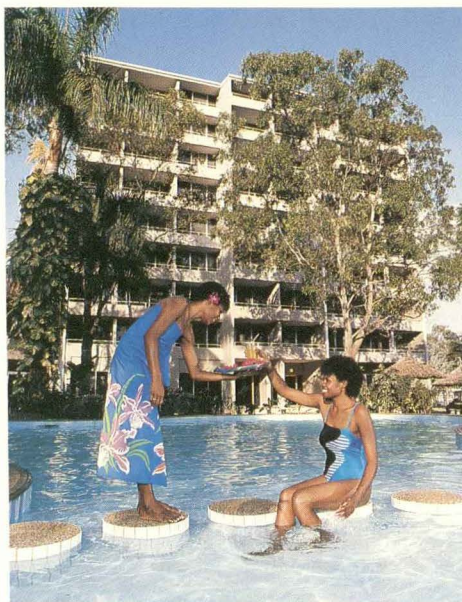
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