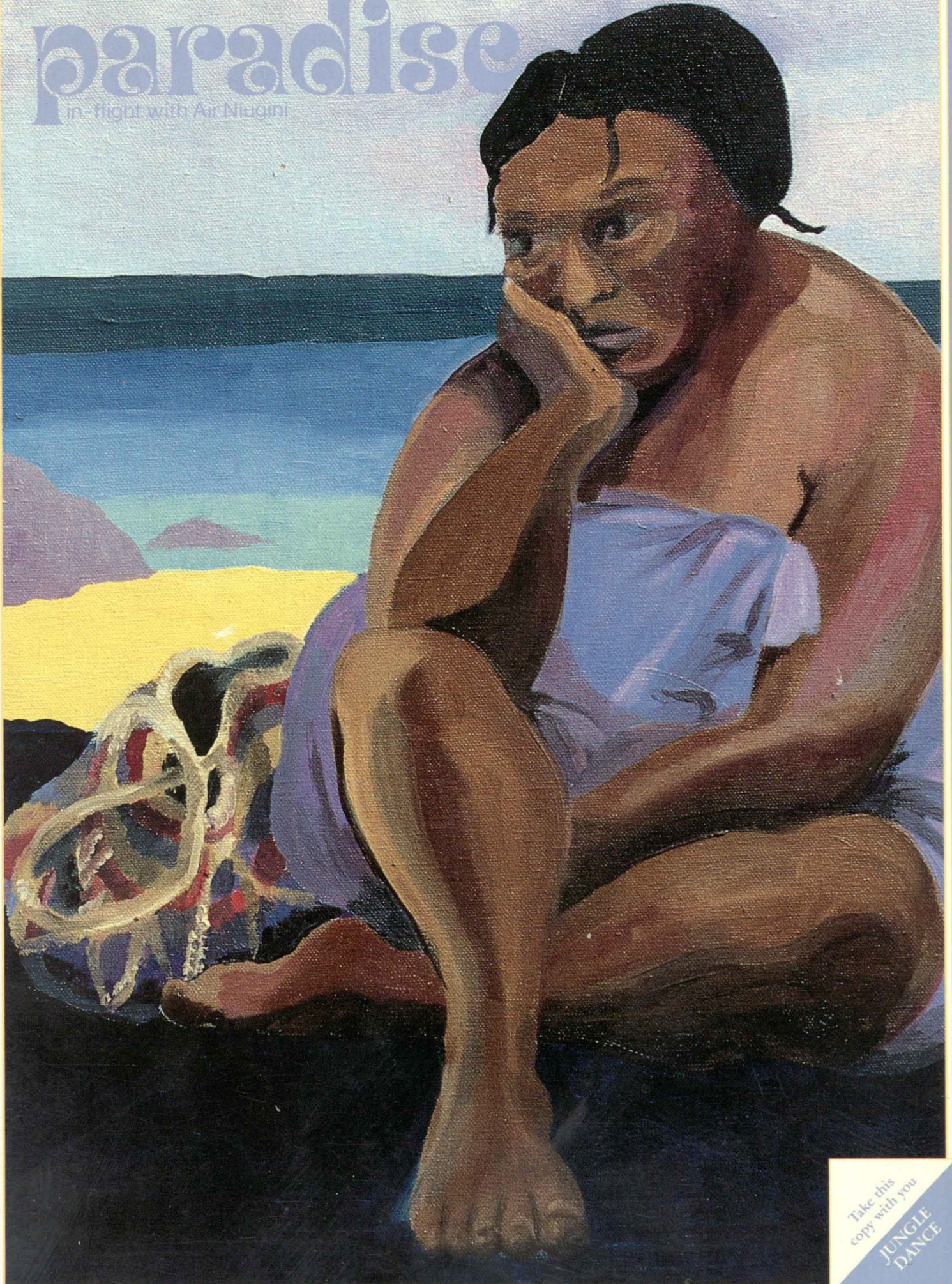


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Welcome Aboard,

Another of Papua New Guinea's secrets is the wonderful fishing in and around the rivers of the Gazelle Peninsula. Keith Graham spent a week fishing for the legendary black and spot-tailed bass in that area with great success.

Madang Teachers College sets aside the last week of its third term each year as Cultural Week to enable students to present to others the colorful culture of their home provinces. David Lake explains how story telling, legends and traditional drama highlight these festivities.

Enjoy these and other articles and have a pleasant flight.

Dieter Seefeld
General Manager & Chief Executive

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 5 MELTING POT**
Encouraging pride in cultural variety.
- 11 DOMINIQUE MARTIN**
French artist finds inspiration in the vivid colors of her adopted country.
- 18 FISH TALES**
Anglers discover rich fishing grounds in the waters of the Gazelle Peninsula.
- 21 ERUPTION BELOW**
Exploring the geothermal vents which bubble beneath the waves of Milne Bay.
- 26 MOTMOT**
A new volcanic island stirs with life.
- 31 STUDENT SAFARI**
High school students make the Sepik River their classroom.
- 39 TOK PISIN RADIO**
Papua New Guineans who are the voices of Radio Australia's service to the South-West Pacific.



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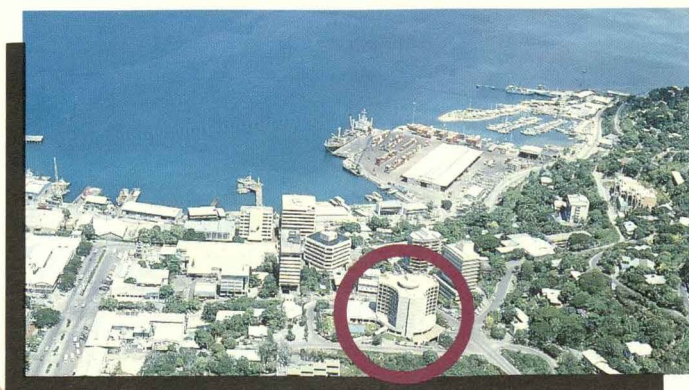
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MELTING

POT

Story and photographs by David Lake



Throughout Papua New Guinea singsings have been an important part of traditional life for thousands of years. They have been held for many reasons — to celebrate weddings, harvests, funerals and the end of feuds. In modern times singsings often are used to demonstrate pride in tribal culture, such as the displays at the Highlands Shows in Goroka and Mount Hagen. Many educational institutions also hold a cultural day when students stage their own singsings.

Madang Teachers' College sets aside the whole of the last week of third term each year as Cultural Week. The college, the largest in PNG, is a melting pot, educating students from every province. These students bring with them the diverse and colorful cultures of their home provinces.

In a nation of 700 languages and as many cultural groups, students consider it a matter of personal pride to present their cultural heritage to fellow students and visitors. The college has four regional groups, Papua, Islands, Highlands and Mamose. Mamose includes the northern coast provinces of mainland PNG.

Left Woven pig's head mask of cowries, tusks, shells and dog teeth from Bogia in Madang Province.



Above Eastern Highlands girl and headdress. **below** Children from Mis village near the Madang Teachers College.

In 25 years, about 4,000 graduates have completed the two-year course to become qualified community school teachers throughout the country. All have gained an awareness of PNG culture through Cultural Week. They pass on this experience to the children they teach so that they too will value the richness of their heritage.

The week begins with evenings of story telling, traditional drama and singing. Story tellers relate legends of their regions, such as how the coconut came into being or why the wallaby hops. Traditional dramas may act out similar stories. Others tell of bride prices, funerals and other events of village life. The choirs are not strictly traditional but display the unique harmonies for which the South Pacific is famous.

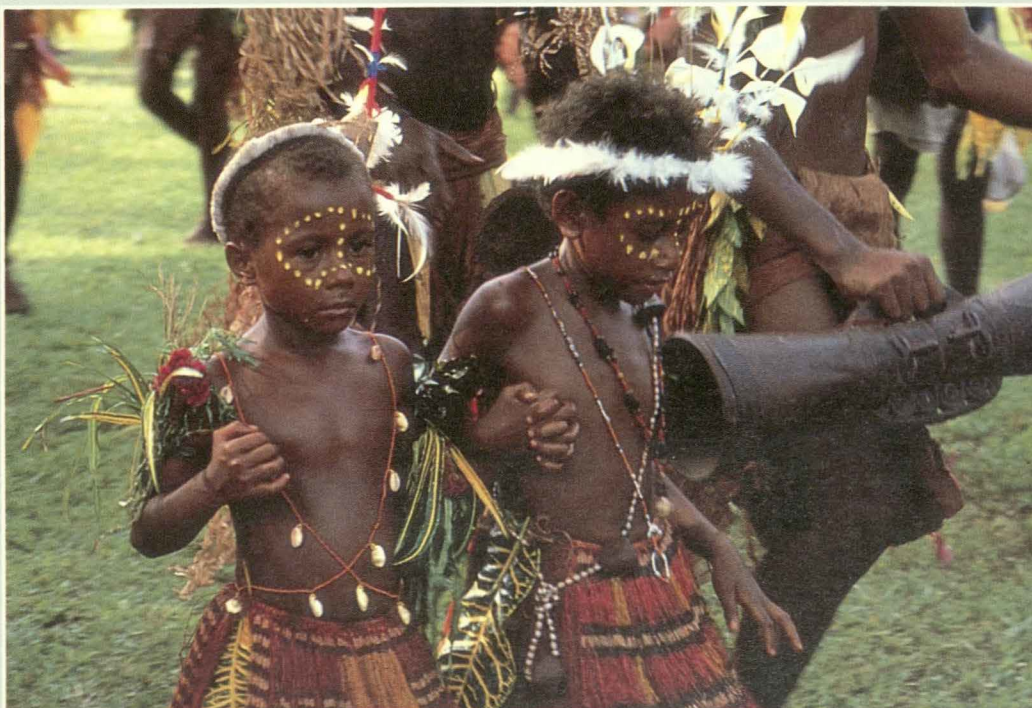
During the week, students from each region visit nearby schools demonstrating some of the village games played in their home provinces. Other students, in cooperation with a nearby coastal village, go fishing to provide the seafood for the feast on the final day.

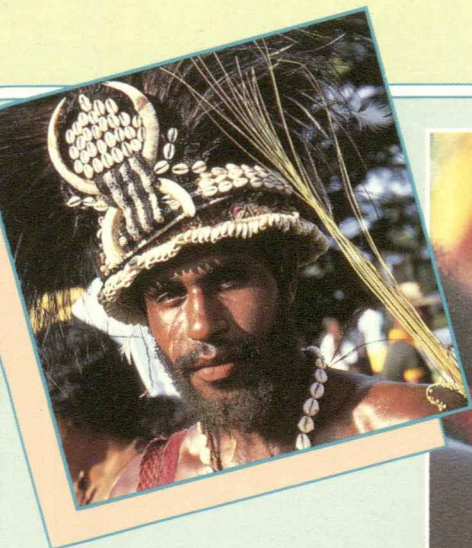
Back at the college the excitement mounts. Friday is the big singing day and preparations are well underway. On Thursday night the mumus are built. Pits are dug, round or square depending on the region. Round stones are brought from a nearby river. Firewood is added and the cooking fire started using not matches but the traditional fire plough. Meat, fish, yams, taro and many other delicacies are wrapped in banana leaves and placed on the hot stones. If you are lucky enough to be sharing a meal with a coastal group it will be cooked in coconut milk. Finally leaves and earth are placed over the top and the mumu is left to cook slowly overnight.

During Cultural Week contingents from outlying villages arrive in their traditional costume, called bilas. Some have come from up to 150 kilometres away for the occasion. The dormitories are the scene of frantic activity. Parents and uncles arrive to ensure that the bilas is arranged correctly. They sleep on the floors in the dormitories.

Much of the bilas is very valuable. Some birds of paradise plumes are generations old. Some cost up to 100 Kina for a single feather. They are carefully housed in bamboo containers only to be removed for important occasions such as this.

Mothers will spend hours arranging their daughters' bilas. Fathers do the same for their sons.



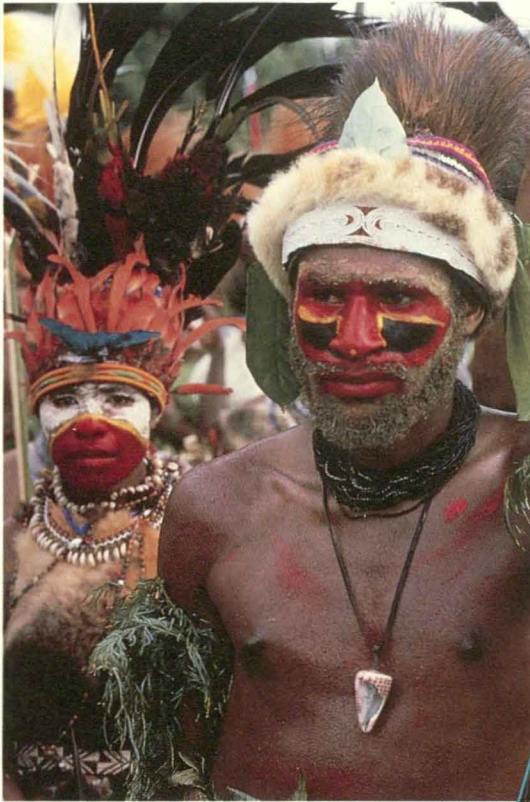


The official program starts with the opening of the mumus to reveal the steaming banana leaf packages. Then follows a ceremonial food exchange between regional groups. As soon as the food has been shared the dances begin.

Here the real depth and diversity of PNG culture becomes apparent. First into the arena are the whip dancers of West New Britain covered in green and yellow clay. The boys remain motionless and expressionless as their outstretched limbs are lashed with canes. Each lash sounds like a gunshot. To show pain would be less than masculine. But the proof of the force of the canes can be seen the next day in the welts left on their arms and legs.

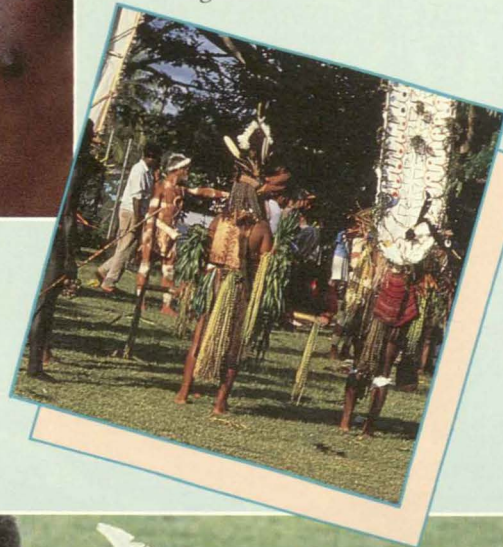
Top Sepik student with headdress of cassowary feathers, cowries and pig tusks. **right** Milne Bay girl with thick grass skirt of the region. **bottom right** Teptep youth from Finisterre Mountains in warrior garb of black paint and penis gourd. **below** Huli wigmen from Southern Highlands with hornbill neck pieces.





Above Students from Chimbu Province. **right** Eastern Highlands student dancing with distinctive back panel.

Highlanders respond with their first group of dancers. They are from Chimbu. Headdresses flash with the luminous blues and yellows of birds of paradise plumes. Often the whole carcass forms part of the display. Headdresses may contain over a dozen birds. Beside them are red lorikeet plumes, rows of iridescent scarab beetle shells and wings of owl and parrot. Girls frequently wear cuscus skins and kina shells. The latter are often an important part of bride price. The dancers jump and shake their plumes, joining in a chant which would normally echo through the valleys of the Highlands.



Dancers from the Trobriand Islands follow. Their thick multicolored and multi-layered grass skirts are as distinctive as the black and white facepaint. Their display is called 'the mating dance'. The provocative movements as the rows of boys and girls gyrate towards each other make its meaning quite clear.

Each group is distinctive and exciting in its own right. There are the mud men of Asari with their grotesque clay heads. The Huli wigmen have headdresses of human hair, daggers of cassowary bone and hornbill beaks on the nape of their necks. Visiting villagers from the Rai coast dance in charcoal painted bodies sporting only woven masks and penis gourds. They lunge towards bystanders with lethal bows and arrows or spears aimed, their release halted only at the last heart-stopping moment. Kundus (drums) from a Papuan group keep time for a graceful dance while Eastern Highlanders carry 10-metre high decorations looking like gigantic white banana leaves strapped to their backs.

As the afternoon sun starts to disappear groups start to mingle and merge. There is a general feeling of happiness and friendship between students from every part of the country and every cultural group. They are happy to be together. As the assembly splits up, the holidays start. Students have been a showcase of PNG culture for themselves and for the fortunate visitors.



Left Papuan students beat out rhythms on their kundus (drums).



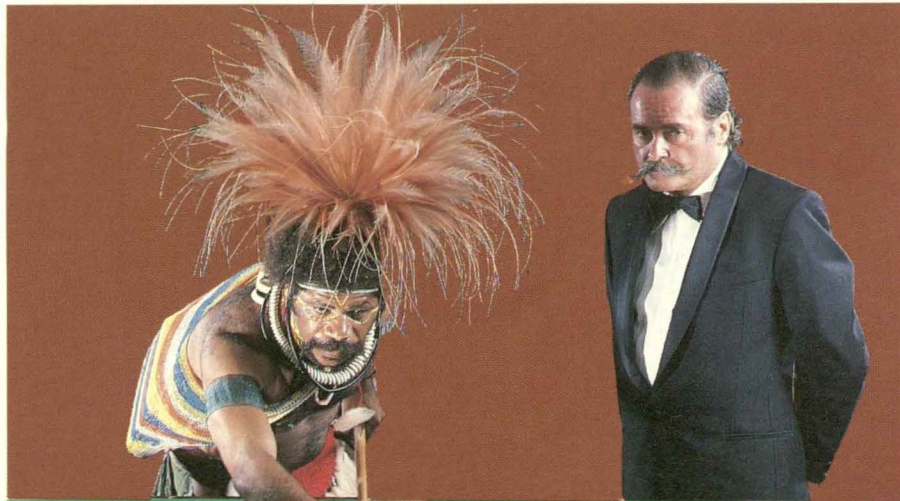
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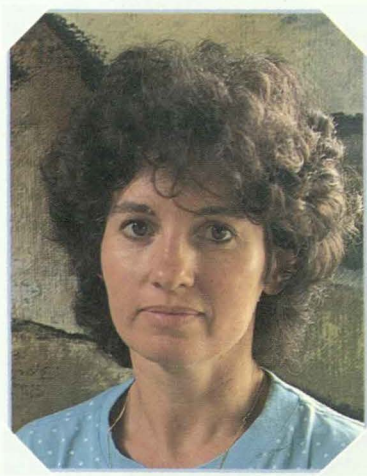


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Dominique Martin

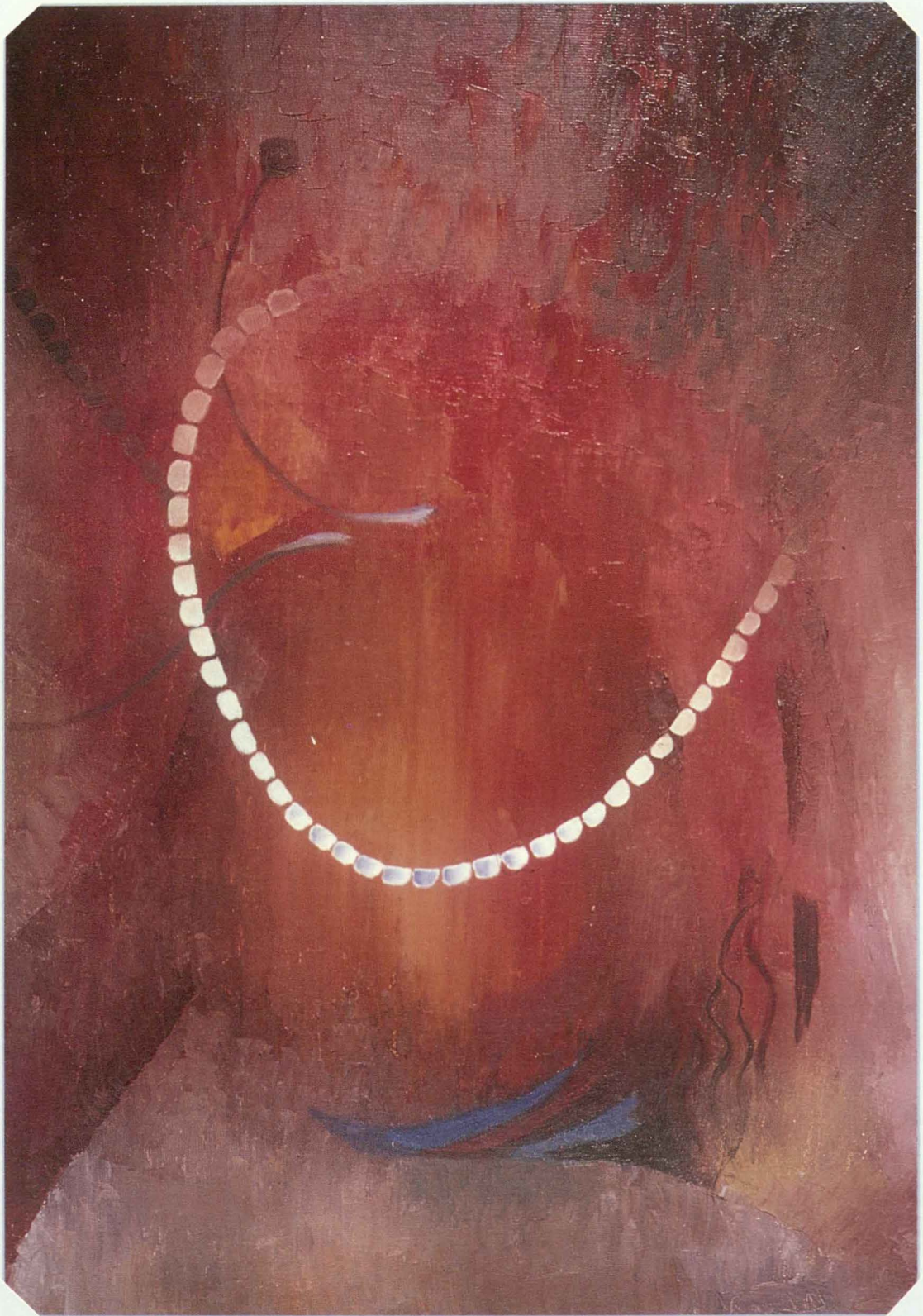
Story and photographs
by Liz Thompson



Above The artist, Dominique Martin.
right 'Bilas' (finery), oil on canvas.

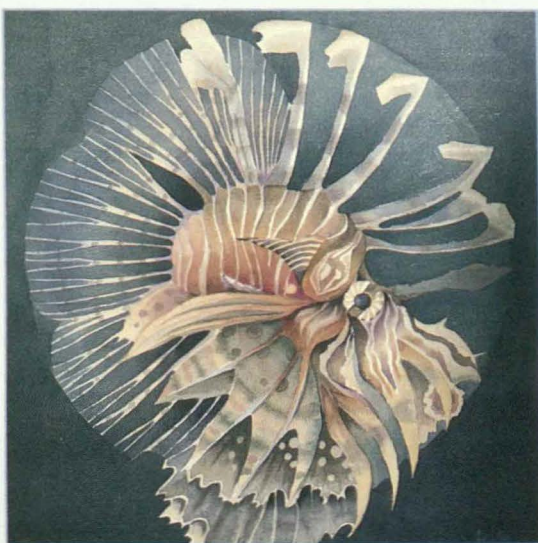


Dominique Martin has lived in Papua New Guinea for nearly seven years and during that time has become very involved in the promotion and the encouragement of Papua New Guinean artists. Now president of the Arts Council of Port Moresby she continues to be instrumental in the organisation of Moresby's annual Arts and Crafts Exhibition and continues to be involved with the students working their way through the National Arts School where she taught part-time for three years.





Facing page Untitled oil rendition of bilas. **this page, above** Untitled watercolor of bilas. **top right** 'Plumage' watercolor. **right** 'Fish' watercolor.



In addition to her deep involvement in the official structures surrounding contemporary arts in the country she is also a highly talented artist in her own right and is a prolific painter. Since arriving in PNG she has created consistently, inspired by her surroundings. In 1985 she exhibited her work at the Waigani Art Centre, in 1988 at the Lae Lodge and she regularly puts work into the Arts and Crafts Exhibition.

She is dedicated to improving the conditions for artists and raising the

profile of contemporary arts in the country. One of the problems she points to in encouraging young artists is the complete lack of arts education in primary schools and the limited amount available up to grade 10.

"When students come to the National Arts School many of them have had no art education whatsoever," she said. "The exception are those who come from the National High School. Lecturers find it necessary to go out recruiting sometimes, touring the country,

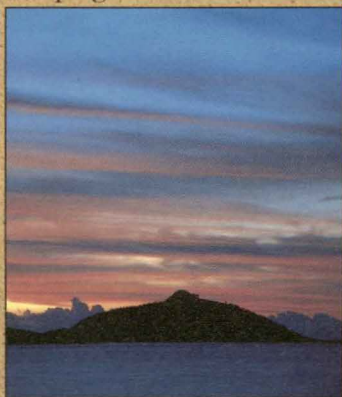
looking at students and trying to find people interested in developing their art education."

Originally from Paris, where she did a Diploma of Drawing and Visual Arts, she has travelled widely, living for five years in Tanzania and 18 months in Denmark. Her husband, an Australian, wanted to return to this side of the world but Australia did not appeal to Dominique. PNG did and that was where they decided to live. "The color was the thing that interested me most," she said. "When

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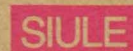


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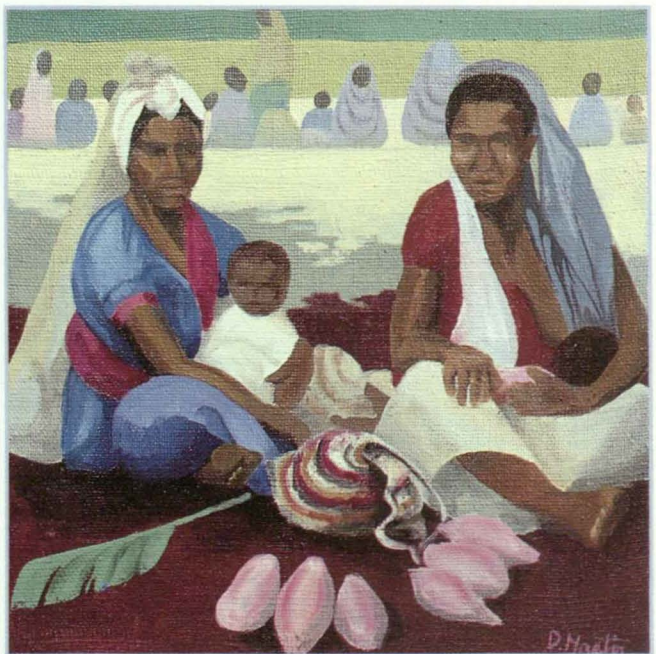
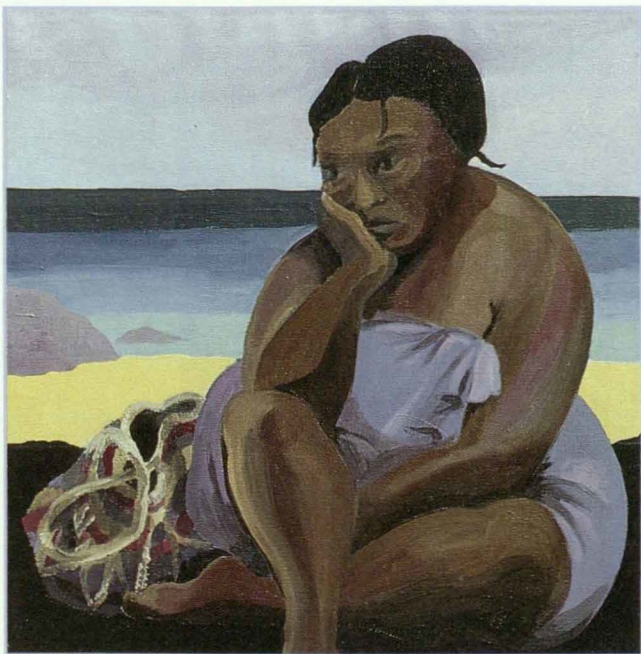
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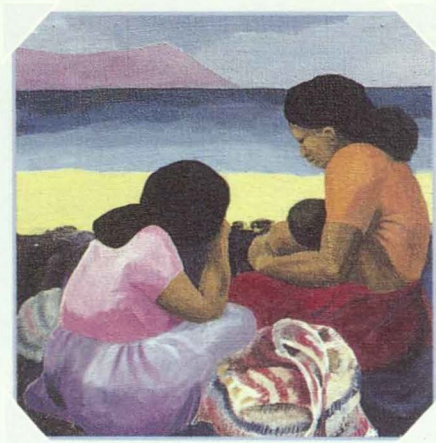
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Above 'Nellie' 1985 oil on canvas. top right 'Untitled' oil. right 'Ela Beach' 1984 oil on canvas.



I started to travel around the country, to Woitape, the Port Moresby Show, Yule Island, suddenly I started to see all the exciting color, the dance and the life this country had to offer.

Brightly colored and often 'exotic', her work is, in some instances, almost Gauguinesque.

"The people on the coast are the same as the people that Gauguin painted; the color and the light are the same as in Tahiti. I was from that kind of background, that was what I studied, so it's obvious my first

instinct was to paint like that."

Her painting has become more focused, more abstract as she has become more familiar with her surroundings and able to pick out the details of things she sees around her. Her work is wide ranging but among her most characteristic paintings are those of bilums, large and small in subtle washes of watercolor. Depicting the varying designs of traditional bilum bags made of rolled bark and colored, traditionally with local ochres, they are painted in watercolor washes.

Originally she painted with oils and started to use watercolors only after arriving in PNG. Oils were a problem. "Using oils here is disappointing because of the climate," she said. "You spend months and months working on a canvas and then, months later, it's covered in fungus. A watercolor dries much faster. I'm trying to get the same results out of them as I had been getting with oils."

The free-flowing, expressive paintings hardly hint at her formal training as an architect, though the



Above *Untitled market scene in oil.*

two interests, painting and architecture were, she says, in conflict. "Training in architecture has very directly affected my painting. I can't do both. I have to choose one or the other. Architecture is very stiff; it's creative in a very formal way, so it sort of stifles me. A lot of my work is geometrical and broken into geometrical areas and I think that's a direct influence from my training. But eventually I had to stop architecture in order to paint. I tried to do both for a while and my painting became really

tight and my architecture and drawing became really loose."

Her work bears witness to her choice — easy, free flowing and a legacy to the color and vitality she obviously draws from her surrounding environment and the other artists she has contact with. As an expatriate artist, it seems PNG does for Dominique Martin what Tahiti did for Gauguin.



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Story and photographs by
Keith Graham

It was an opportunity not to be missed, to spend a week fishing for Papua New Guinea's legendary black and spot-tailed bass. We were about to embark on a fishing adventure, exploring virtually untouched rivers on the Gazelle Peninsula, East New Britain.

I had come to Rabaul with my fishing companion John Cross, and our floating home was a comfortable 12-metre boat fully equipped for extended chartering. Two aluminium dinghies, with electric and petrol outboards were safely stowed, provisions loaded and the engine fired up.

As we left Rabaul I put a trolling lure out the back. Within 100 metres the reel screamed off, followed by a 10-minute fight with a giant trevally of about 10 kg. Not a bad start. The inner and outer harbors of Rabaul have a variety of sportfish including sailfish, trevally, wahoo and barracuda, and the occasional blue marlin and yellowfin tuna in season.

As we rounded Cape Gazelle and headed south both rods arched as pick handle-sized wahoo took the lures. Leisurely we reeled them in then prepared them for dinner.

By dusk we had reached our overnight anchorage, with a freezer box half full of fish. We entered Runge, or as the locals prefer to call it, Putt Putt Harbor. We anchored and our fresh fish feast was soon cooking; inquisitive villagers pulling alongside to pass the time of day.

Unable to resist the opportunity to wet a line I baited up with a strip of local baitfish called murumburr. Our host, Allan ('Jamo') Jameson, had

Fish

assured me it was the most successful bait to use. Leaning the rod against the gunwales, I continued to enjoy the meal. Then the rod jumped into the air, the reel drag humming. When the fish surfaced it turned out to be a mangrove jack of around 2kg. Within the next two hours we caught 10 more jacks, the biggest 2.2kg.

Our destination next day was the Powell River which feeds Henry Reid Bay, a shallow inlet that drops off to more than 1500 metres depth within a kilometre of shore. Permission was sought from the nearby plantation owner and villagers before we ventured near the river mouth. Here all the fish belong to the nationals and as a matter of courtesy the correct approaches have to be made.

Formalities taken care of, we anchored in the river mouth, unloaded the dinghy and prepared to make our first sortie into this virgin territory. Magnum graphite baitcasting rods

were complemented by heavy duty reels, loaded with 10kg breaking strain line. We knew only too well the tackle breaking capabilities of these bass. Lures were mainly handcrafted hardwood timber with stainless steel fittings and oversized heavy duty hooks.

Five kilometres upstream we noticed fast water movements on a deep log-covered bank. I made the first cast. Nothing. Next cast seemed unproductive, until I went to lift the lure out of the water. Just then about 5kg of bass tried to engulf the lure right at the boat. I tentatively cast back into the same area and this time he connected and led me upstream. I had the reel drag fully tightened up and this fish pulled line off as if there

Tales

was no pressure at all. I locked my thumb on the spool and the fish began to turn. Then he decided that he did not want to play and took me straight into a sunken pile of debris. Exit one lure, and I was left with a burned thumb and aching arms.

Next time we tightened the reels drag with a pair of pliers and had the electric outboard ready to go flat out in reverse once the fish was hooked. Back to the same spot, I cast again, and a fish struck. I held the rod high and with the motor going in reverse, I gritted my teeth waiting for something to give. It worked and soon we netted our first bass of the trip, a 4kg spot-tail. This was exhilarating and

during the afternoon six more were caught.

But now came the real challenge — to find the elusive black bass which apparently fought twice as hard as its cousin the spot-tail. It took two days to work out the whereabouts of the black bass. In the process we took spot-tails on fly gear and found other species in this river system such as mangrove jack, trevally, bream, tarpon and jungle perch.

Near the saltwater inflow of the river mouth there was considerable current. I placed my lure in among a group of sunken logs when it suddenly stopped, as though caught on the timber. But timber doesn't pull and I

realised this was a fish of incredible strength. This virtual 'hand-to-hand' combat ended when I locked up the reel with my thumbs and to our elation a 6kg black bass popped to the surface. John cast straight back into the same area and hooked an equally good fish. Two black bass in five minutes was amazing! We had been told that only spot-tail inhabited this coastal region, so to find these prized sportfish was an added bonus to the trip. This was fishing at its very best.

We continued to enjoy bass fishing on the Powell and on other, smaller rivers in the area. In several rivers on our return leg we caught bass. The most

noteworthy was Warangoi River which is the closest major outflow to Rabaul. Here we managed to haul two black bass from their hide. They weighed 3kg and 5kg. Again the point was proved that black bass were plentiful in the Rabaul area, and no doubt will be fished for more often in the future.

On the scale of a kilo of fish per kilo of line breaking strain, in my opinion there is no fish that compares with the sheer power of the PNG black bass, closely followed by its cousin the spot-tailed bass. Both species are unique to New Guinea and are fast gaining a reputation among international sportsfishermen as 'the ultimate challenge'.



Above John Cross, using fly fishing tackle, casts and latches on to a 4kg spot-tailed bass.

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Story and photographs by
Bob Halstead

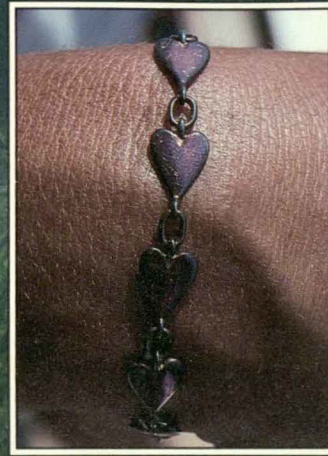
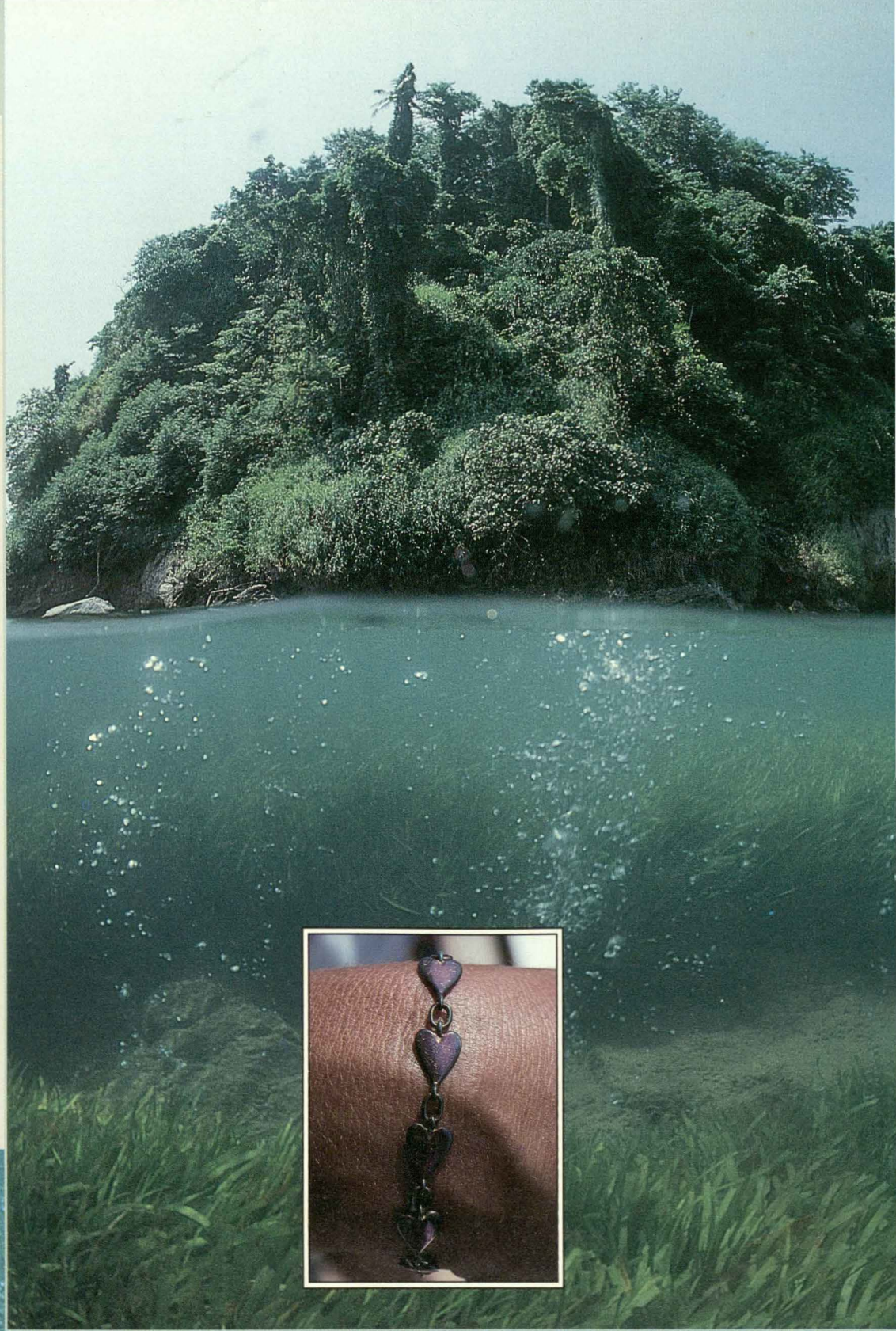


Title page Vents and terraces of geothermal springs at Kedidia, Fergusson Island, form a background to the underwater activity (inset) in the nearby sea.

Volcanoes in Papua New Guinea are fond of erupting. They also like to growl and threaten and smoke and flare up and generally carry on like spoilt teenagers, which, in terms of the Earth's lifetime, they may well be. I have always been wary of the terms 'dormant' and 'extinct' volcanoes. If it looks like a volcano, watch out for trouble, and if there are several grouped together — well, would you ever trust a group of teenagers not to get up to mischief?

So I was not too surprised when I found out that the 'extinct' volcano called Dobu Island, between Normanby and Fergusson Islands in Milne Bay Province, had an underwater vent that was still active. We knew of the hot springs a few miles away at Kedidia on Fergusson Island, which have geysers and bubbling mud pools, but this was the first time that we had heard of an underwater vent.

It is a strange sight. On one hand you imagine the turmoil beneath the sea bed causing the venting of the gas, one the other you witness an idyllic reef scene

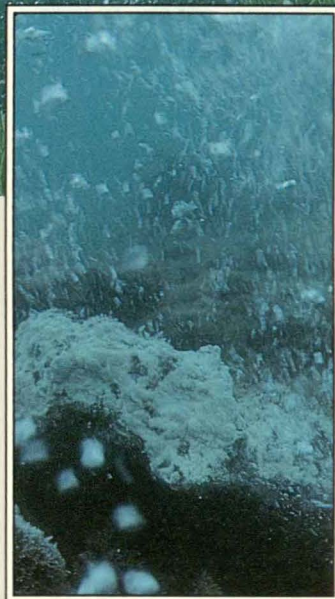




with corals, sea grasses, fishes, sea stars and anemones. All the usual residents of our underwater world are diffused through a curtain of bubbles emerging from the bottom.

In some places a mist of fine bubbles fogs the view, in others large vents belch great balloons of gas which break up and bob their way to the surface.

The gas, presumably from its hydrogen sulphide content, has a foul smell. Because of this, even though the vents are in shallow water, we prefer to use scuba gear and breathe the fresh air from our tanks rather than snorkel. Even so we did not escape totally the effects of the



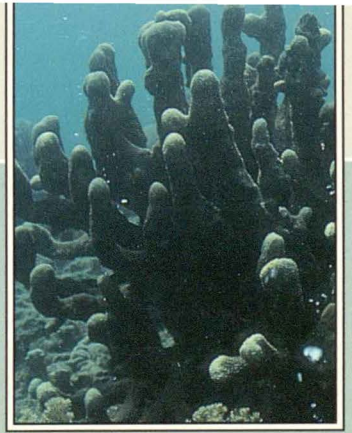
Facing page, main photograph
Hot volcanic gases bubble to the surface of the sea near Dobu Island.
inset *Dinah Halstead's silver bracelet tarnished by sulphurous gases.*

gas. My wife Dinah emerged from the water dismayed because her favorite silver heart bracelet, a Valentine's gift from me, had turned black! Fortunately a few weeks swimming in clean ocean restored its natural color.

We expected to see a barren and dead reef surrounding the vents but this was not so. In fact the sea grasses seemed to thrive and were as rich as I have ever seen. Although the biggest vents bleached the rock around their bases, smaller vents were seen emerging right through living reef. Fish and other marine creatures seemed unaffected.

We returned to the vents





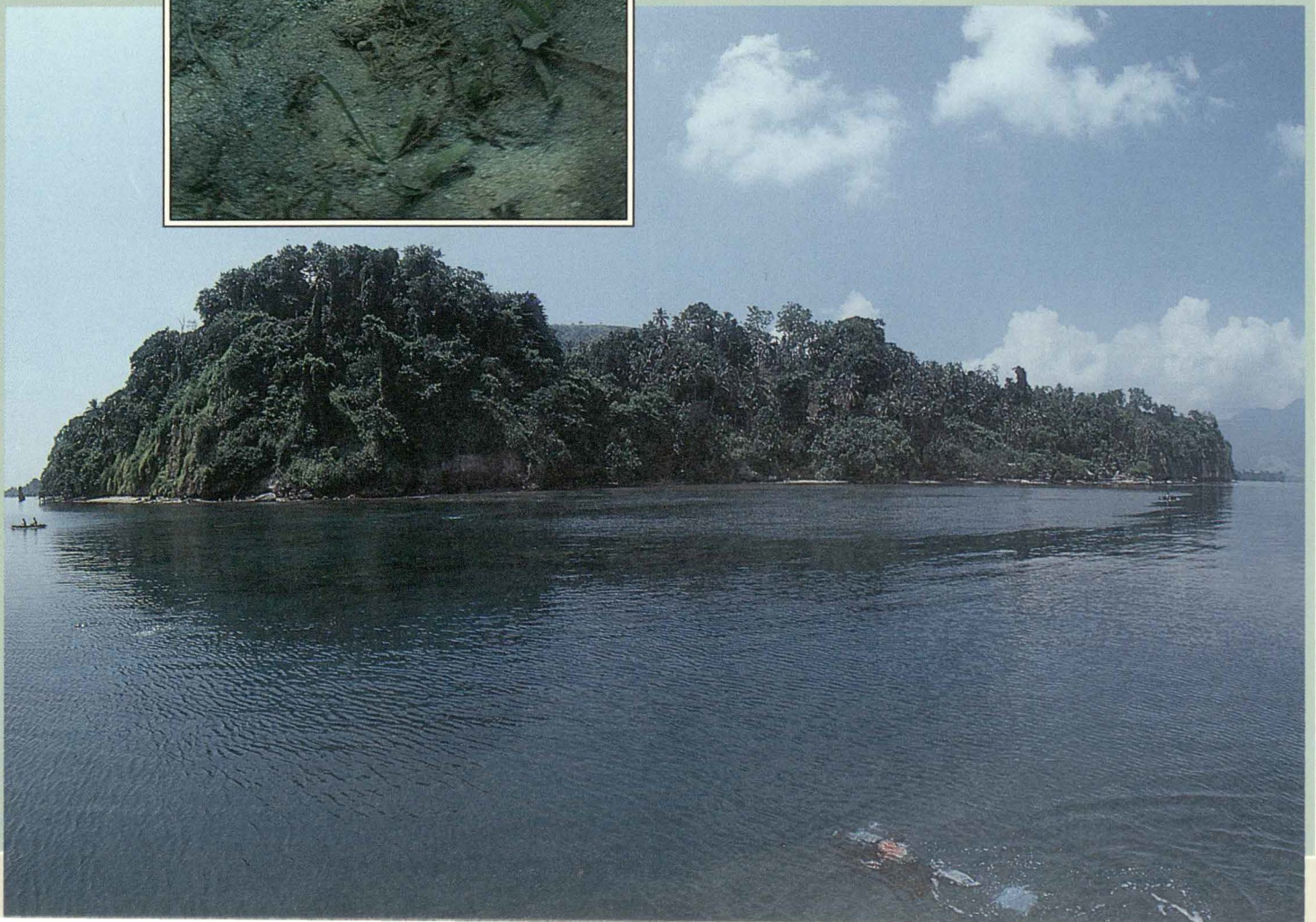
later and with clear water about I took some photos. Some divers even made a night dive and reported excellent sightings of molluscs and lion fish. We returned again in November and December. Each time the water was dirty and I was at a loss to explain why since there had not been any recent heavy rain. Our divers entered the water and examined the vents but returned with uneasy feelings and reports of patches of very warm water and strange vibrations. Ian Chapman, a diving instructor and former resident of PNG who now works with the Cousteau Society, decided to try a night dive but he returned after 15 minutes not at all happy with the experience. He could not describe exactly what the matter was but said he felt menaced. That, coupled with the creepy feeling as the unseen

Left Marine plants grow right to the edge of geothermal vents. **above** Coral on top of a vent. **below** Peaceful Dobu Island gives no clues to the volcanic cauldron below.

ascending bubbles tickled his body, made him decide to give up the dive.

Two days later the area was put on alert as clouds of smoke were seen emerging from the sea nearby and the area experienced a 'seismic swarm' of earthquakes. That explained the dirty water. Nothing like a good shake to stir things up.

Now all is quiet again. Must have been a teenage tantrum.



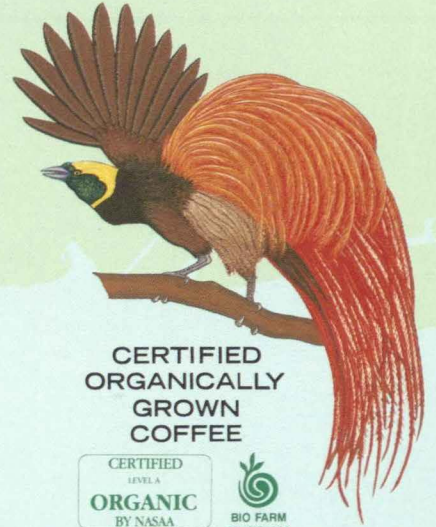
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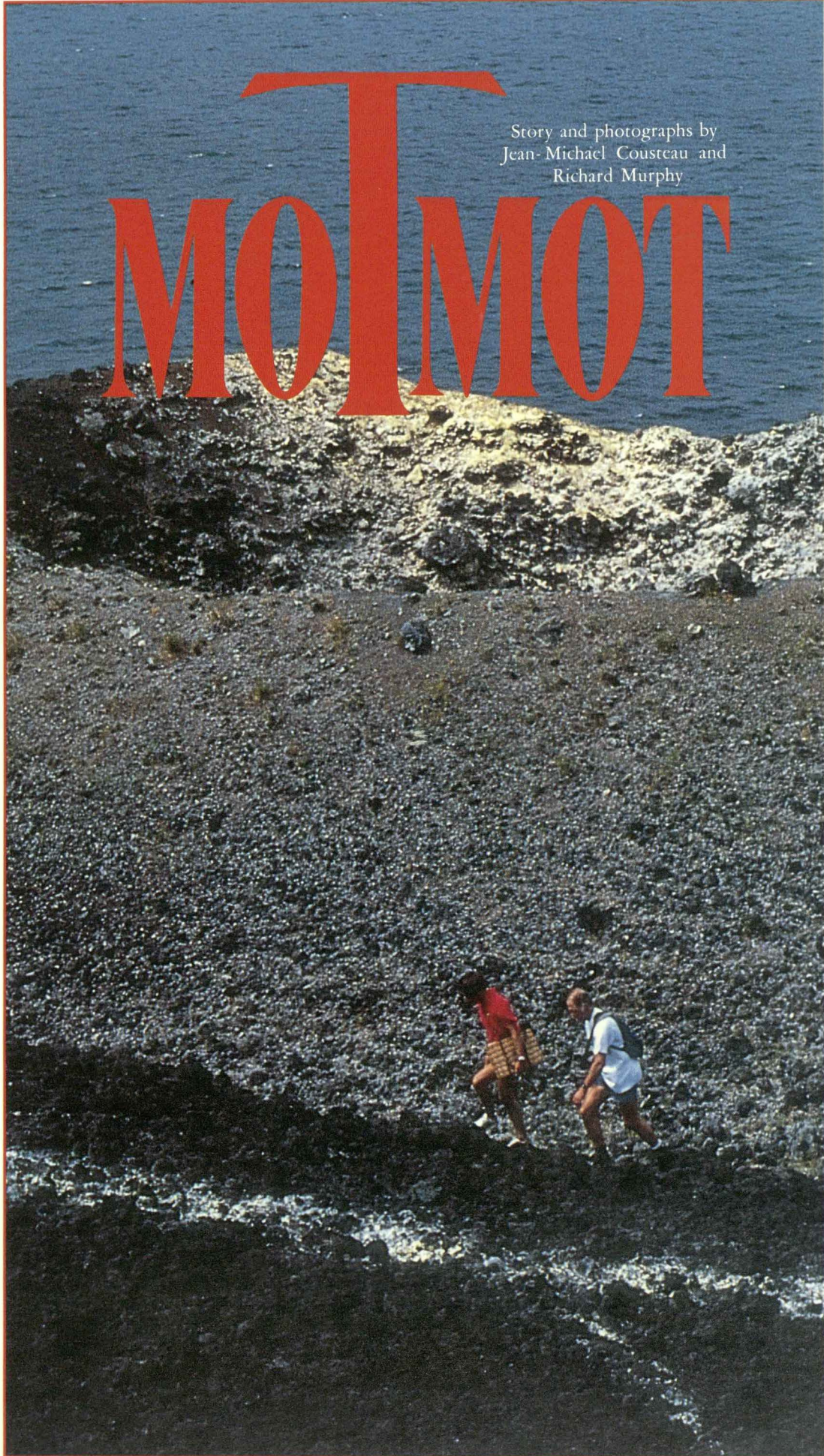
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MOTMOT

Story and photographs by
Jean-Michel Cousteau and
Richard Murphy

Anyone who has begun to learn about the history of Papua New Guinea has probably come across the story of the 'time of darkness'. This legend is told in many villages south of Madang and describes a period when the sun did not shine and ash fell from the sky. Depending on the area, the consequences were catastrophic with the death of crops, domestic animals and even humans. After some days, the sun emerged and fertility of the soil was improved for a number of years after. Geologist Russell Blong investigated these stories and correlated them to the volcanic explosion of Long Island about 300 years ago. His calculations estimated this violent eruption to have been equal to that of Krakatau in 1883 and four times greater than that of Vesuvius in 79 AD.

The crater left from the Long Island explosion is now filled with water and is called Lake Wisdom. But the volcanic activity did not cease with the explosion. Subsequent activity between 1943 and 1973 produced a series of islands in Lake Wisdom, some of which were eroded by wave action and weathering. Motmot Island, created in 1968, has remained



and since 1974 has had only slight geothermal activity. Consequently, new life has gradually colonised Motmot.

We assume that the processes of biological colonisation and ecosystem development occurring on Motmot are likely to be the same as those which created the lush forests and ecosystems on other larger islands and even on PNG itself.

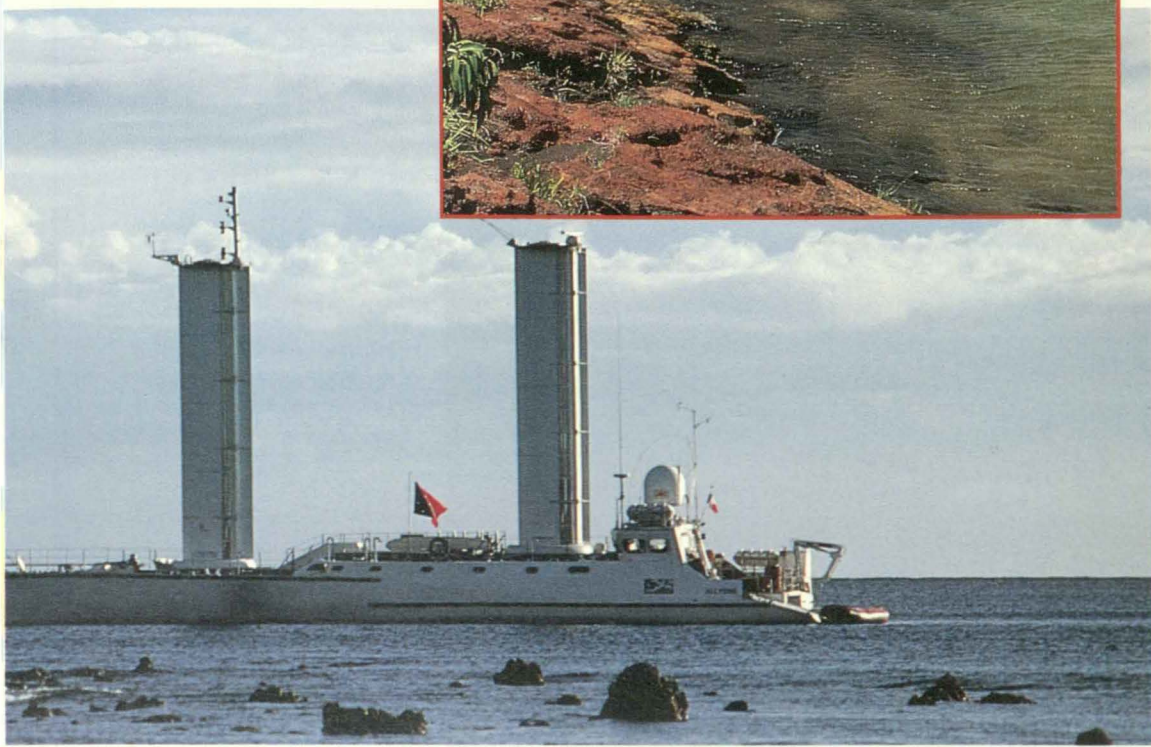
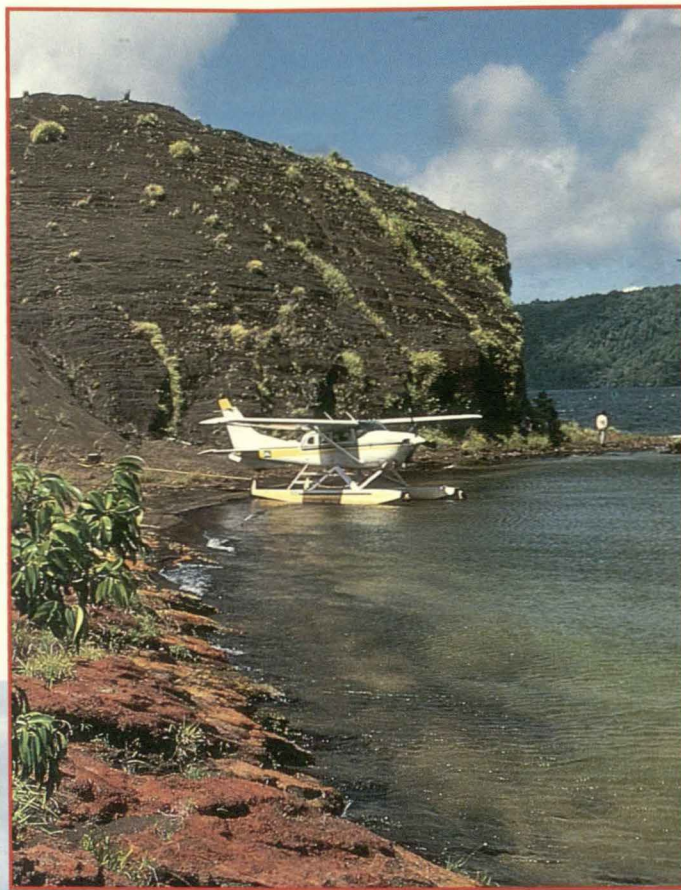
Consequently, a better understanding of the processes underway on Motmot is likely to have relevance to other areas of PNG. With this in mind, scientists have periodically visited Motmot to record the sequential colonisation of life there. Since surveys were discontinued in the 1970s, Cousteau teams took the opportunity to continue the biological assessment during our PNG expedition.

Lake Wisdom is a protected area and permits were required from the Madang Provincial government to ensure that people who visited the lake would not be carrying any exotic plants, animals or seeds to alter the natural successional development of life there. The support system for the expedition was of great value since a seaplane enabled Drs Paddy Osborne from the University of PNG

and Richard Murphy from the Cousteau Society to have easy access to Motmot and the equipment necessary to take samples of plants, aquatic life and water for nutrient analysis.

Team members were shocked as they stepped off the seaplane's pontoons. Their legs were scalded at the water surface while their feet remained cool. The hot springs at the shoreline pumped out hot, 80°C water which floated on the cooler, 30°C lake water. In the

Far left Scientists find plant and animal pioneers well established on recently formed Motmot Island. **centre** The Cousteau windship, *Alcyon* at Long Island. **right** Expedition floatplane at Motmot Island.





regions of geothermal activity, vertical chains of gas bubbled up through algal-bacterial mats carpeting the sand. These bacteria may derive their energy by breaking down the chemicals from the geothermal springs, as do the hydrothermal vent organisms recently discovered in the deep sea. Nearby on the bottom, small aquatic snails and dragon-fly larvae were abundant. No fish were observed.

On land, ferns, tussock grasses and sedges were most common. In general, we found plants that what would often be called weeds, in other words plants which were hardy, easily dispersed and inhabited disturbed ground. The means of dispersal of these plants was most likely wind and birds, particularly the Pacific black duck. There was evidence of the excavation of moist soil by either megapods or Pacific black ducks, possibly for nesting. Direct evidence of birds (some with eggs which had been abandoned) and skeletons. One hawk was observed flying above the island. The most common animals were wolf and orb weaving spiders which, during juvenile stages, were probably carried by the wind on silken threads or rafted on bits of vegetation to Motmot.

Although some new species of plants were collected, the evolution of tiny Motmot does not appear to have taken any giant ecological strides toward greater diversity. This fact illustrates the slow pace at which life disperses and creates new ecosystems — a timely lesson for those would destroy or over exploit the natural resources of PNG and expect nature to heal the wounds quickly. Such an attitude would only lead to a more fearsome 'time of darkness'.

Left Motmot Island. **insets** Spiders borne on the wind of floating vegetation have found homes among grasses, ferns and shrubs now breeding on the island.



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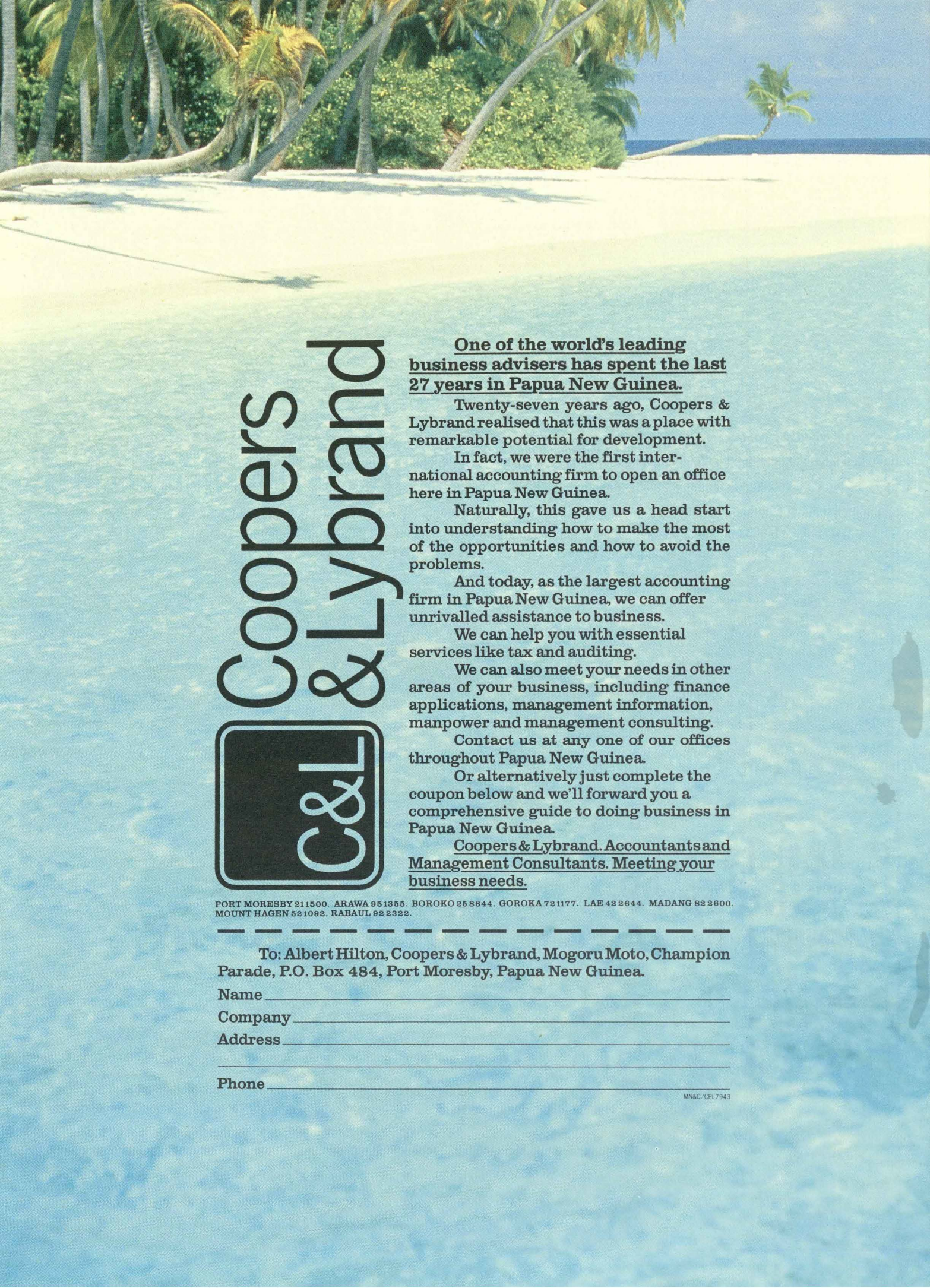
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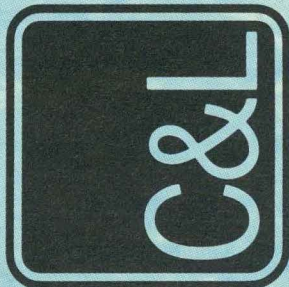


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Student



Story and photographs by Peter Van Fleet



Slipping, sliding and shrieking, the three girls slid down the mossy, glass-like rocks until they splashed into the deep, cool pool at the bottom of the waterfall. As they surfaced and swam to the side another group cascaded into the inviting water just behind them.

Tall rainforest trees echoed the laughs and shouts of the 24 girls and boys from the Mt Hagen International High School. With them, dozens of excited children from Govermas village yelled and shouted in unison, taking their turns with the high school students. Halfway through a canoe safari of the Sepik River and some of its tributaries, the

afternoon in the cool water came as a respite from the long days in the canoes and the warm nights in the tents.

Taking 24 students and six teachers on a seven-day safari into the Sepik River region was the first large student group for Tribal World New Guinea, but experience with smaller groups made it seem reasonably easy to organise.

Departure day saw excited students, apprehensive teachers and one slightly confused but confident escort gathered at the airport with packs, sleeping bags and hats ready to go. The weather was good and we could see the winding brown serpent of the Sepik River as the Air

Niugini F28 jet made its descent to Wewak after the mountains.

First stop on the canoe trip was Yentchenmugua, a large river village right on the Sepik's edge. Tents were erected on the large flat grassy area in front of the awesome spirit house. The two Highlands-born cooks, on their second trip to the river, prepared dinner while the group met for the first of many short lectures and seminars held on the safari. Everyone remembered, with just a little prodding, that it was a school excursion and not a holiday — in fact they had a seven-page list of projects and questions to tackle.

Next morning, most students



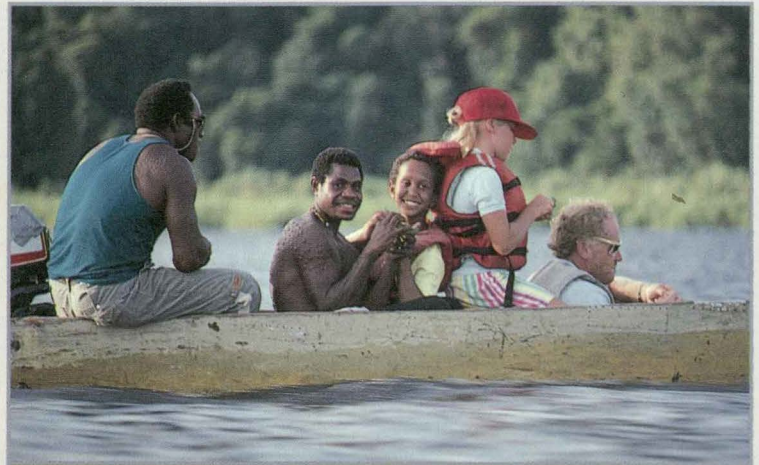
had a swim in the river after checking for crocodiles. After breakfast, the group boarded four dugout log canoes and swooped downriver to Palambeï village, which lies about two kilometres' easy walk from the edge of the river. Palambeï's houses are huge structures mounted on tall, intricately carved tree trunks which protect them from yearly floods. The men of Palambeï invited the students upstairs into the secret area of their magnificent soaring spirit house, where they played the sacred garamut slit drums and told stories of the not-so-old head hunting days.

Back in the canoes, Aibom, the famous pottery village in the

Chambri lakes region, was several hours away.

At Aibom many students collected shards of discarded pottery in the muddy shores of the river for interesting souvenirs. At a pottery demonstration next day, everyone was amazed at the skill and dexterity of the women.

Next stop was Kaminabit. Everyone climbed out of the canoes, stretching muscles and groaning, but recovered after a short walk to the sago frames. Five girls clambered down the steep bank to watch local women make their staple food, sago flour. The women were happy to let the girls join in and soon five pairs of hands were pound-



ing and rubbing away at the coarse sago pith, laboriously chopped from the logs collected by the men.

Some girls rubbed the sago pith in the bark troughs and others inexpertly collected water from the river in ingeniously designed pole and coconut shell collectors. Soon everyone was covered with water and sago pith, but not much flour was being produced. Finally a happy shriek indicated their efforts were being rewarded and soon each frame was producing a thin stream of pinkish water that poured down through a palm frond sieve, into an empty canoe.

The girls thought the pith

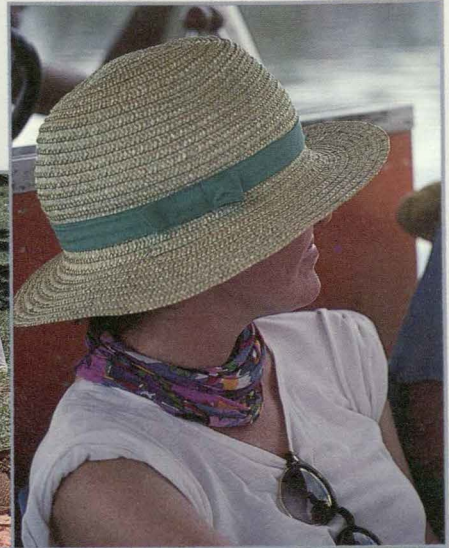
was the edible part until an instruction to feel around the bottom of the canoe revealed a sticky pinkish paste collecting there. Everyone thought the work looked easy until they were reminded that it took the women several hours a day to keep their families fed! Boiled into a sticky glue, fried into thin, dry pancakes, mixed with coconut and sugar cane juice then steamed in an earth oven or grilled inside a strong leaf on the fire, sago is the staple diet of the Sepik River region.

Our next destination was Govermas, on the famous Blackwater River. Stained by its trip through swamps, the water was cool and inviting and two dozen

hot bodies threw themselves into it with vigor minutes after reaching what everyone considered the friendliest village in the whole Sepik region. Govermas is a tidy, well set up village with a unique but dilapidated spirit house featuring a huge grinning gable mask.

When we arrived, the village was deeply involved in an initiation ceremony for a group of young men. The secret ceremony and ritual involved a special bath and meal at the river which prevented our group visiting the waterfall, so the morning was spent studying the village and its unique ways.

During the next two days, close friendships were formed



Facing page & this page, bottom
Canoes as travelling classrooms. left & centre Tasting raw sago, the local staple. right Standard dress for Sepik travellers.



between students and villagers, and leaving Govermas was a sad event for many.

Downriver from Govermas and into the Karawari River, we stopped at Mindimbit village, the home of a people extremely skilled and prolific in the production of superb ancestral figurines. One person bought 20 of the small male and female figures. At Tambanam, the largest village on the Sepik River many of the students also bought fantastic masks and woven basketry items.

At Tambanam, tents were pitched outside one of the huge and unique village houses. Yentchenmugua, Palambe, Aibom and Govermas all had their

spirit house but Tambanam had none — not enough young men to support and build one, the old men said sadly in reply to our questions.

Departure next day was with the knowledge that Angoram was the last stop. At Angoram, a traditional singing group welcomed us and soon the pounding rhythm of the kundu drums and the falsetto singing of the men and women filled the clearing.

A couple of hours' work next day back at Wewak had the tents cleaned and packed, the sleeping bags shaken out and all the camping gear put away. After a final swim in the sea, the group left for the airport. At the end

of a short Air Niugini flight we could see the apprehensive faces of parents through the fence and windows of the arrivals areas at Mt Hagen airport. Parents smiled as they saw their tired but happy offspring filling the arrivals area.

"It was great Mum, I saw a crocodile Dad, Gee I'm glad to be back Mum, I'm going back one day Mum," were typical comments as the students and their parents and families reunited.

Clockwise, from far left *Readying for the day's canoe journey; evening traffic on the river; safari students study artefacts while village children study them; on the front steps of a stilt house.*



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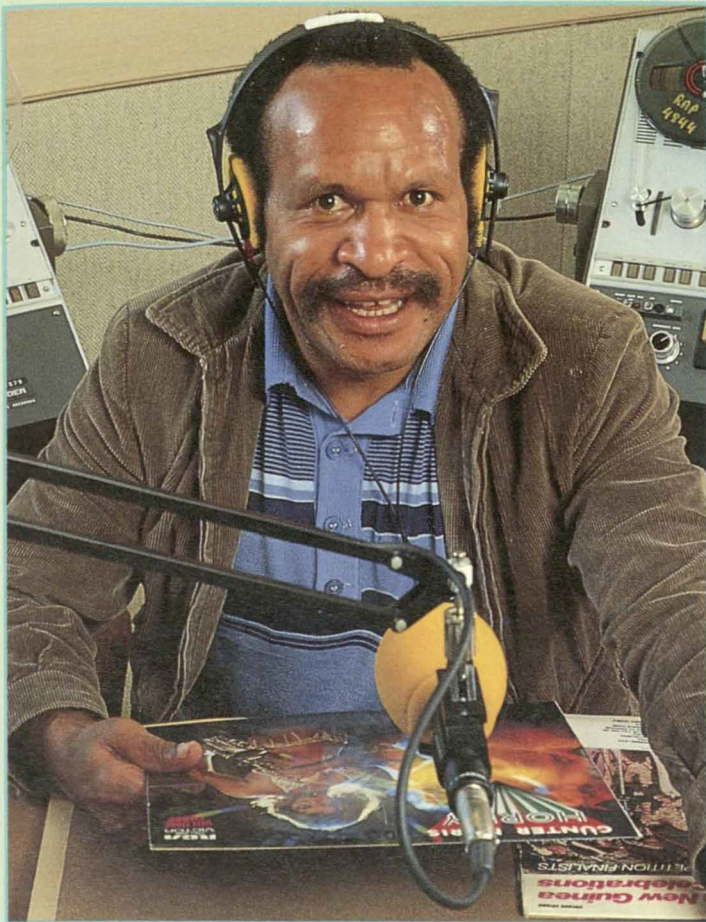
TOK PISIN

Story and photographs by
Don Hook

It is already dark outside as Warium Benson enters the broadcasting booth at Radio Australia's studios just before 6pm on a cold, bleak winter day in Melbourne.

Within a few minutes, as he's done on hundreds of occasions, Warium is 'on air' introducing Radio Australia's Papua New Guinea service to listeners in the South West Pacific.

r a d i o



Left Paulus Kombo, from Southern Highlands Province, a favorite story teller, especially among the Highlanders. **above** Warium Benson, from New Britain, the longest serving member of the PNG Service.

What follows is three hours of news, interviews, sport and information programs along with modern and traditional music from the Pacific Islands plus, of course, the ever popular Australian 'kantri an western' singers.

The first hour of the PNG Service is in English. Then, for the next two hours, the announcers switch to 'tok pisin' during which there are two major news bulletins focusing on the South West Pacific.

Warium Benson is the longest serving member of the PNG Service. He joined in January 1974, about one month after the service started at the time of PNG self-government.

Self-government on November 30, 1973, coincided with the handover of the responsibility for broadcasting in PNG from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to the National Broadcasting Commission of PNG (NBC).

Warium, who comes from Nodup Village near Rabaul, joined the ABC in Port Moresby in 1962 after attending Nodup Primary School, Kerevat High School and the prestigious Sogeri Senior High School.

A number of his classmates at Sogeri also joined the ABC — Ovia Toua, Boe Arua, Mark Auhova, Carolus Ketsimur and Frank Miro. They too became



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Above Caroline Tiriman, from East New Britain, best known for her programs *Pacific Rhythm*, *Australia Today* and *Friday Magazine*. **left** Documentary maker Douglas Gabb, from Karkar Island, Madang Province, with his wife and family in the 'PNG room' of his Melbourne home. From left, Christopher, Douglas, Rachael, Louisa and Solomon.

prominent in the media with the exception of Frank Miro who quit the ABC to go into government service and is now PNG's Deputy High Commissioner in Canberra.

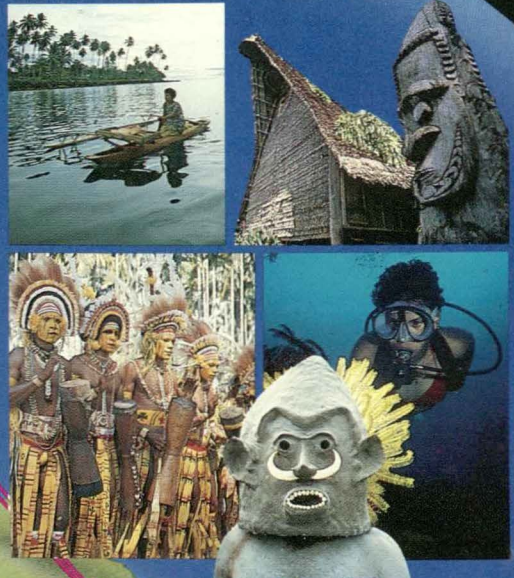
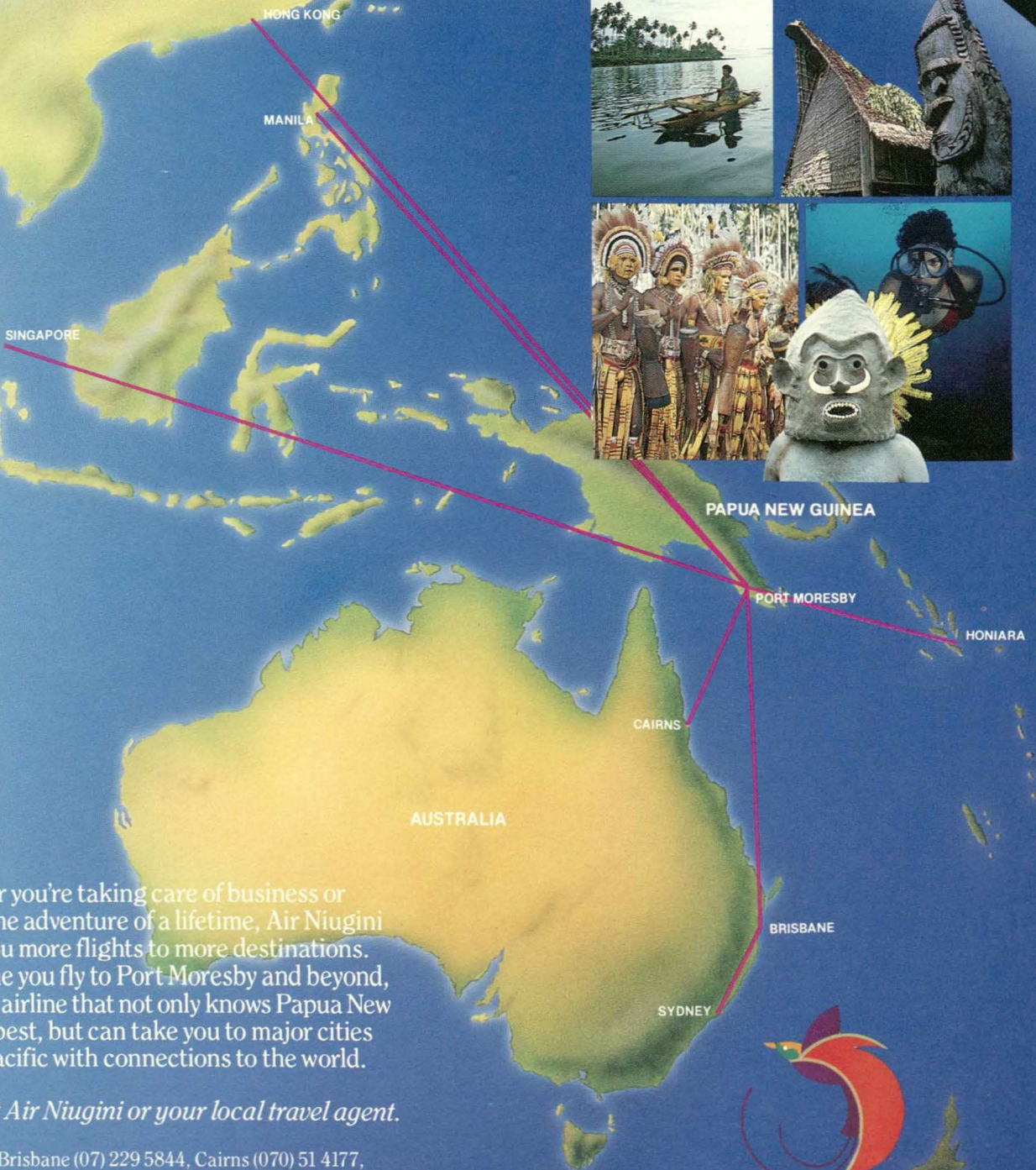
Warium started his career with the ABC as an assistant in the sound record library. From there he became a specialist program officer and in 1973 he studied international public administration at the then Australian School of Pacific Administration at Mosman, Sydney.

Warium says it is very difficult to estimate the number of people who listen to Radio Australia's PNG Service.

"I know that we have a large and widespread audience but I can't put a figure on it," he said.



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"There is no doubt that it runs into many thousands in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

"When I go home to PNG every three years the people talk to me about our programs. The same happens to my work colleagues. The village people listen but do not write to us. Writing does not come easy to them.

"Most of the 300 to 400 letters we receive each month are from schoolteachers and students requesting visual aids for their classrooms. We try to meet these requests with the help of Australian tourist organisations and the airlines. The other requests are for program guides and calendars."

Over the years the letters have also brought some unusual requests with people asking for watches, radio sets, clothing and even motor vehicles.

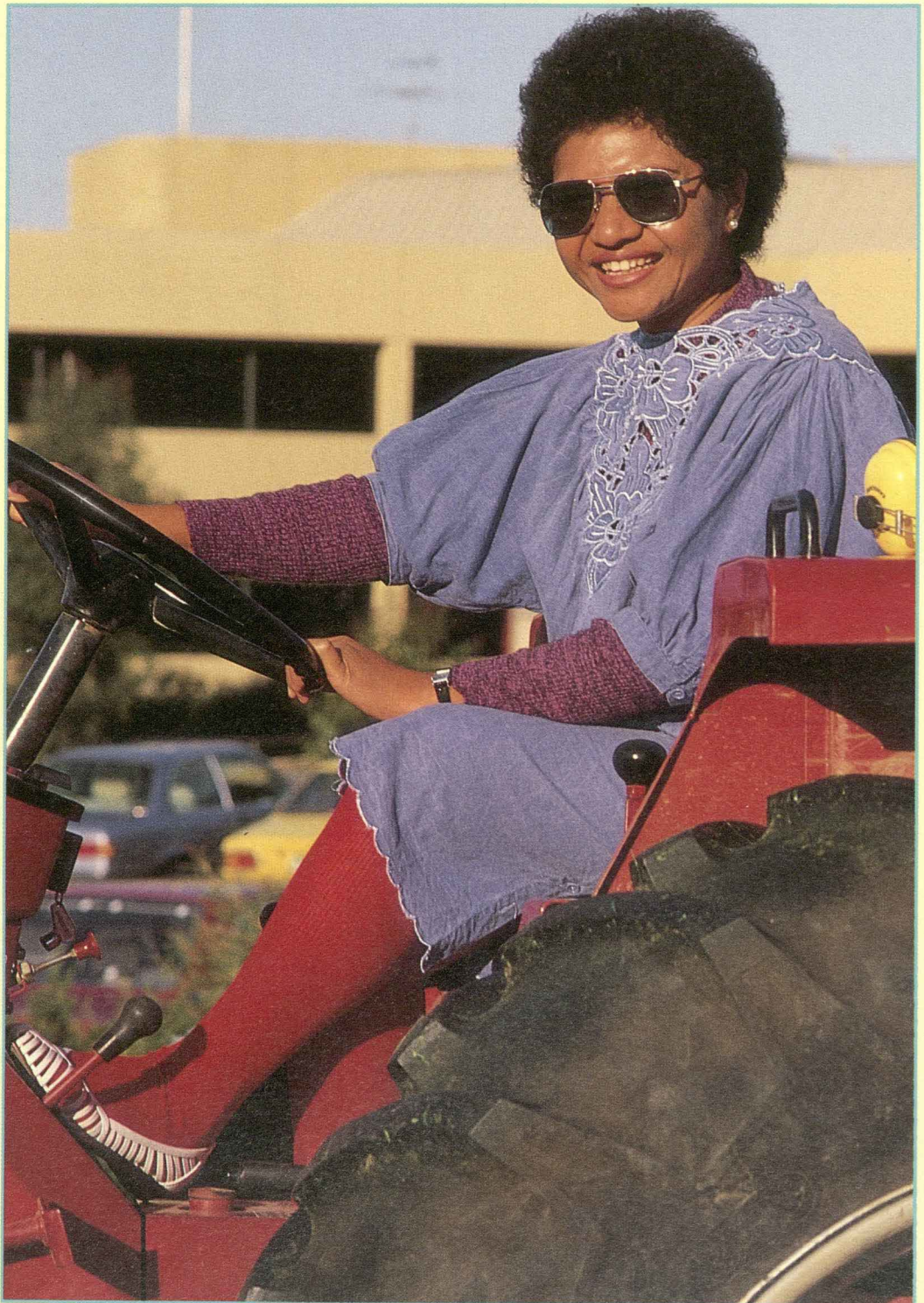
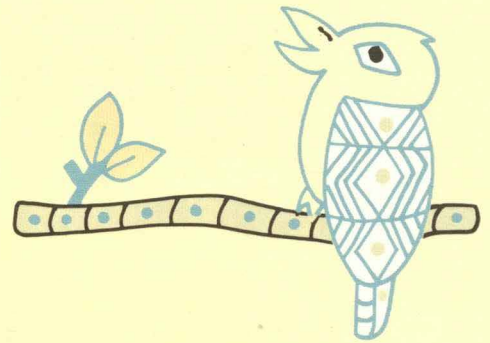
Warium says there are people who think that he and his colleagues must be wealthy because they live in Australia.

The PNG Service attracts many visitors to the Radio Australia studios set in rural surroundings in the Melbourne suburb of East Burwood. Some go there to be interviewed, especially politicians, while homesick students often pop in for a cup of coffee and a chat about what's happening at home. Sometimes, they too end up being interviewed!

Altogether, there are 10 staff in the PNG Service which is headed by George Sivijs, a Latvian-born Australian who spent several years as a schoolteacher in the Southern Highlands and East New Britain provinces of PNG before joining Radio Australia in 1978.

The PNG Service can be heard on 9.71 MHz in the 31 metre band and on 6.08 MHz in the 49 metre band.

Below Kenya Kala, the only Papuan in the Service, is from Central Province. She is seen here at an agricultural show, making a documentary on Australian life.



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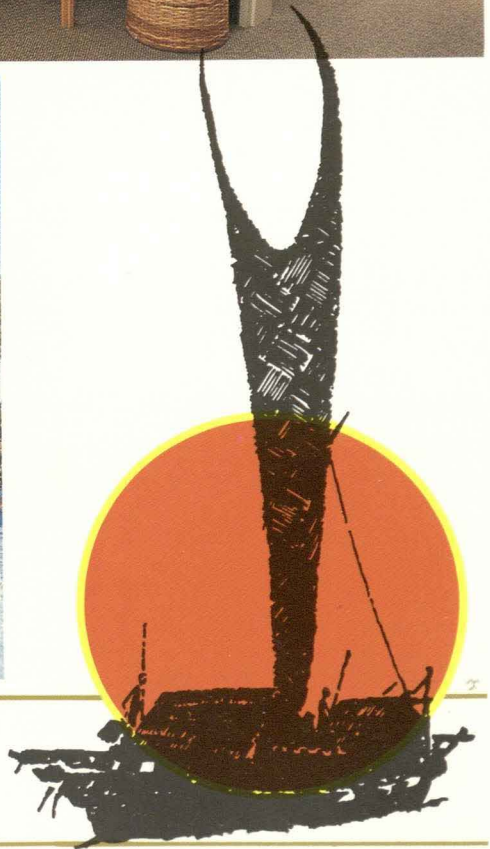
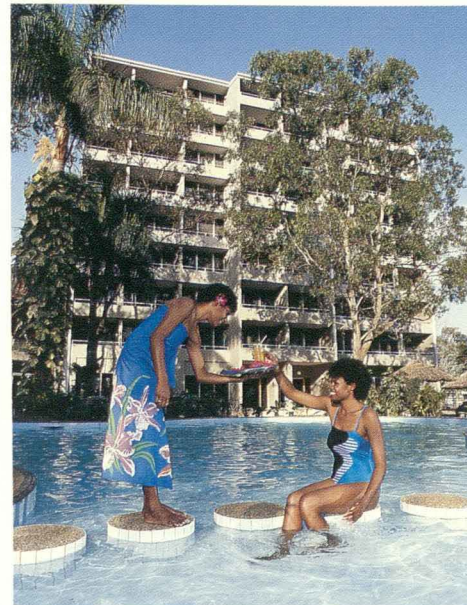
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