

paradise



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Welcome aboard,

There's truly a warm welcome waiting for you in Paradise. One of the many fascinations of Papua New Guinea is the Bismarck volcanic arc. This is a chain of active and dormant volcanoes running from the Schouten Islands near Wewak to Rabaul in East New Britain. In the chain are more than 100 volcanoes, of which 35 are active or capable of activity. Six have erupted in recent years. One of the most imposing is *Mount Ulawun* which has oozed steam for 20 years and burst into violent eruption three times this decade. The 2600 metre Mount Ulawun is on the Air Niugini route from Port Moresby to Rabaul. Passengers are able to see it at various stages of activity, from palls of smoke to incandescent lava jets. (From a safer distance, of course, than the survey flight from which our cameraman took the cover shot).

Our Kieta-Buka service overflies *Bagana*, Papua New Guinea's most active cone. *Kar Kar Island* (above) is near Madang. It erupted in January this year. The eruption was predicted with accuracy by a team of volcanologists, who camped on the island for six weeks and waited for the event.

C.B. Grey
General Manager

PHOTO CREDITS

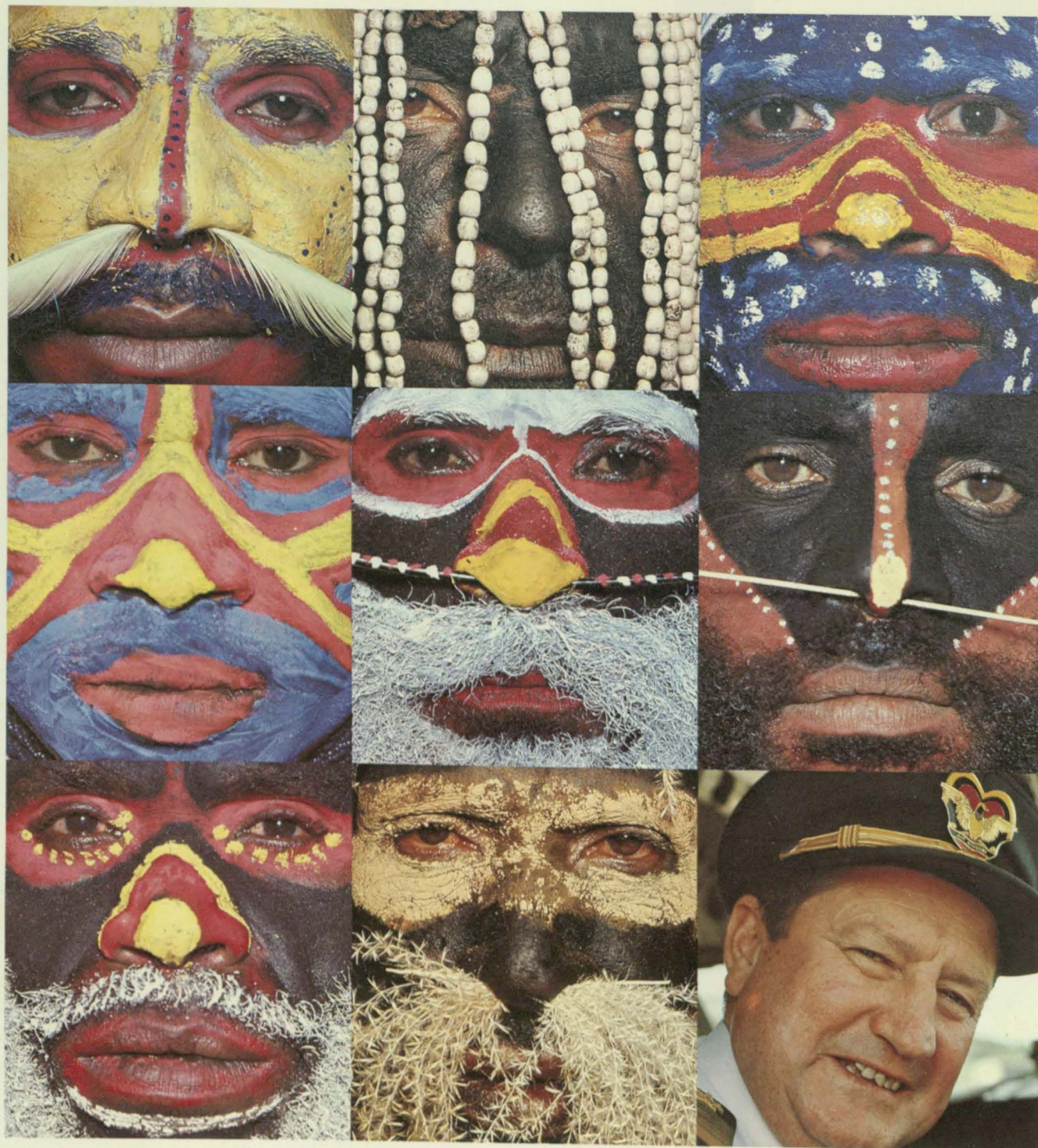
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COVER

Crater of one of Papua New Guinea's many active volcanoes, Mt. Ulawun, was photographed at close range by an Office of Information photographer, Maurice Bryan, who joined a party of volcanologists during a regular inspection flight.




Quality in Air Transport



some of our chiefs

In Papua New Guinea there are 717 different cultures, each represented by its own language and its own "chief". Few men know this country better than our chief pilot, Captain John Regan. He's logged more than 16,000 hours flying, much of that in Papua New Guinea.

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bulldog trail

They toiled, sweated and froze in surroundings of indescribable difficulties, with short supplies of all commodities and cut off from the amenities and associations that make life worthwhile. — W.J. Reinhold writing about the men who constructed the Bulldog-Wau road in Papua New Guinea's Morobe region in 1943.

What prompted a group of Papua New Guineans and an ethnically mixed bag of expatriates last year to cross Papua New Guinea's tortuous Owen Stanley Range on a route made famous by World War Two? Officially, the eight-man party, including the then Minister for Transport, Bruce Jephcott, was on a road reconnaissance. It set out from Wau in the Morobe Province to walk the old Bulldog road into Gulf Province in September last year.

The Minister's own interest in the arduous walk dated back several years to the idea of a utility corridor to take electricity across the PNG mainland from the Kainantu area in the north to energy-hungry Port Moresby in the south. Since that time, other considerations have influenced his thinking:

A road is needed for freight and passenger service, which are cheaper than air services, and more flexible than shipping.

The tourist potential of such a road would be enormous.

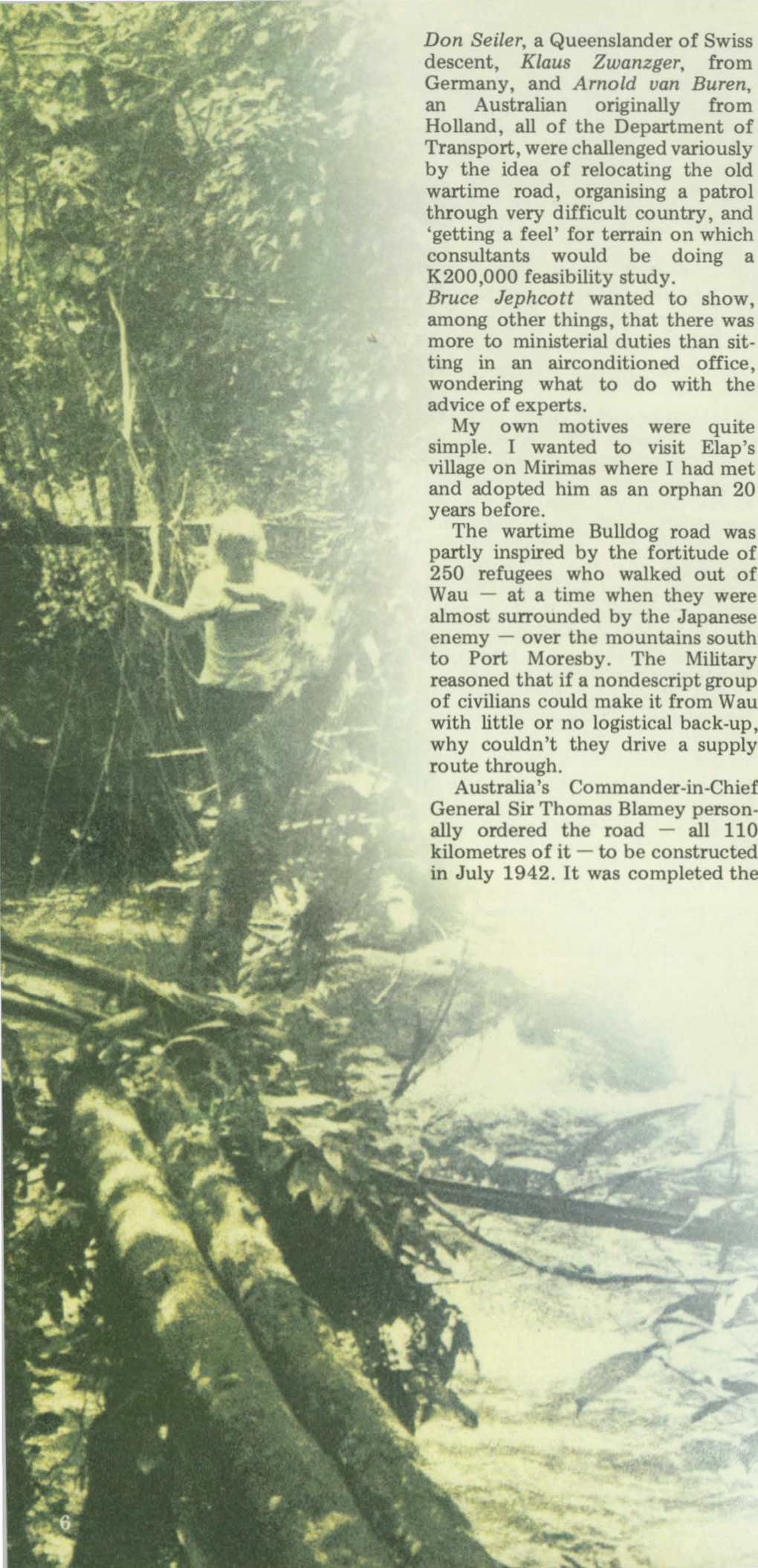
A road linking north and south would make a significant psychological contribution to the government's stated policy of promoting a spirit of national unity.

Privately, the motives of the trekkers varied considerably.

Mariouso Avosa flew in to Wau from Kerema in the Gulf Province where he is a research officer with the provincial government. He was interested in the implications of the road for his own province.

Jeffrey Awai comes from the upper Markham Valley, not far from Mr Jephcott's home. Representing the National Broadcasting Commission, he was stationed in Port Moresby at the time.

Elap Ari was wanting to walk across the mountains to his own village of Mirimas in Gulf Province to visit relatives he hadn't seen for 12 years.



Don Seiler, a Queenslander of Swiss descent, *Klaus Zwanzger*, from Germany, and *Arnold van Buren*, an Australian originally from Holland, all of the Department of Transport, were challenged variously by the idea of relocating the old wartime road, organising a patrol through very difficult country, and 'getting a feel' for terrain on which consultants would be doing a K200,000 feasibility study.

Bruce Jephcott wanted to show, among other things, that there was more to ministerial duties than sitting in an airconditioned office, wondering what to do with the advice of experts.

My own motives were quite simple. I wanted to visit Elap's village on Mirimas where I had met and adopted him as an orphan 20 years before.

The wartime Bulldog road was partly inspired by the fortitude of 250 refugees who walked out of Wau — at a time when they were almost surrounded by the Japanese enemy — over the mountains south to Port Moresby. The Military reasoned that if a nondescript group of civilians could make it from Wau with little or no logistical back-up, why couldn't they drive a supply route through.

Australia's Commander-in-Chief General Sir Thomas Blamey personally ordered the road — all 110 kilometres of it — to be constructed in July 1942. It was completed the

following April, with Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Reinhold in charge.

The story of the building of the road is one of hardship. Soldiers and Papua New Guinean helpers had to toil up and down extraordinary gradients. Usually the carriers humped heavy loads and the troops full kit. Rainfall in the area is between 3800 and 5000 millimetres a year. The dry is only dry when compared with the wet. Clothing was never dry. Long hours were worked — seven days a week.

On June 2, 1943 the Bulldog airfield was attacked by 16 Japanese planes. Many workers ran off, never to return. Who could blame them? It wasn't their war.

As work progressed it became possible to roster the men to work on the road for five days, with one day rest and one day carrying. Food was often short. A unit existed for days on nothing but rice — and not much of that. Any game that could be shot went into the pot.

Considering so many men were working so many hours and in such incredibly hazardous conditions, there were remarkably few accidents. One man was killed by a landslide, another by a falling tree and two through careless use of explosives. Sickness was much more of a problem. Among the Europeans malaria was the major ailment; among the Papua New Guineans, particularly the coastal people, it was pneumonia. Dysentery, surprisingly, did not develop.

Continuous heavy work under wet conditions, with rations often meagre and not properly adjusted to local conditions, contributed no doubt to lowering of resistance.

In all, 17 bridges were built. One, over a 30 metre gap, was of three spans, three were of two spans over gaps ranging from 20 to 30 metres, and the rest, of a single span, over gaps to 20 metres.

On August 21, 1943, a triumphant procession of four-wheel drive vehicles made the trip from the former mining settlement of Edie Creek to Bulldog. The final touches to the road were made by August 31.

Building 110 km of road in the time, over some of the toughest country in the world and in the face of so many frustrating difficulties — not the least being pilfering by the feared Kukukuku (Kamea) people, members of which on one occasion decorated themselves with detonators through their noses — was a triumph for the troops (numbering 1038 on July 31, 1943) and Papua

New Guineans (numbering 2349).

The road was finished, but the Allied offensive had moved too rapidly for Wau to be of any strategic value to the Allies, who were pursuing the Japanese in a northeasterly direction. After all that effort, the reason for the road had evaporated. Within a few months the heavy maintenance that the road required ceased, and it was closed in mid-1944.

Parts of the road are still clearly visible from the air. And it was on a miserably damp Tuesday — September 12, 1978 — that a convoy of three government vehicles left the Wau Ecology Institute to drive in search of the Bulldog track.

We eventually found the track which took us to a small settlement. The people there treated us to sugar cane and gave us some sweet potatoes for our journey.

In good spirits, despite the incessant rain, we were already strung out by this stage. We had no idea of the mammoth climb immediately ahead of us. The track away from the settlement took us through a new garden with a tangled mass of fallen trees, and then up a steep-like mountain, which took nearly three hours to climb.

Wearily, we reached a height of about 2100 metres and then began a gradual descent through rolling grasslands and swamps to another village, Kudjeru, the site of a wartime airstrip. We could only curse Air Niugini's big birds and Talair's and Douglas' smaller ones as they flew over. We were greeted by villagers in bark cloaks. We were in homemade raincoats, cut from sheets of yellow plastic and looking like mediaeval peasants.

The houses were comfortably built from bark and pandanus leaves with small poles as supports. Bathing in the nearby river was a chilling experience. Members of the patrol continued to stagger in until nightfall. By this time we were conscious that our footwear and training were not altogether adequate for the task at hand. As we hugged the fire all night (some of us without our sleeping bags) we became painfully aware too of the inadequacies of our bodies and our inability to withstand the cold of the raw mountain air.

Next day we gingerly negotiated log-strewn gardens and trudged over two mossy crests above 2800 metres. We finally tumbled and slid down a precipice to another Aseki-people village, Yeninau. We were exhausted but happy to be over the top. We



were deprived of a good view of the valley by swirling clouds, but we joyfully washed in the foamy swollen Eloa river. From now on we would be following the Bulldog road proper — where gradients, but not other obstacles, promised to be much more tractable.

At dawn the Minister, anxious to return in time for independence celebrations in Madang, urged us to rise and leave our uncomfortable beds on the floor.

On this section not only did we still have leeches, nettles, slippery roots and boulders to contend with, but also with what were euphemistically called 'bridges'. These structures took the form of horizontal, greasy tree trunks, without handrails, and swing bridges made from cane and vines and suspended between trees and boulders. The river, wildly tumbling below us, was singularly uninviting as we clumsily groped our way across these obstacles.

The road bench was remarkably well-preserved for very long stretches (except for a few landslides), making very easy grades for walking. All of the military's bridges had long since disappeared but amazingly, after 35 years, pipe and 44-gallon fuel drum culverts were still working.

We pushed on, and the following day found us crossing the Morobe-Gulf, New Guinea-Papua borders at a fast, painful pace. We initially followed the boulder-strewn Eloa river which feeds the mighty Lakekamu river further down. The Bulldog road route lay in a southwesterly direction, but instead of following it to Bulldog, where there now exists only a Catholic mission trade store and a few houses, we headed toward Kakoro, which has an airstrip.

On this fourth and last day we covered about 27 km in eight hours, the longest distance out of the cumulative total of 90 km. The rainforest with its many cockatoos, was warm and dark, but the cool clear waters of the streams were beautiful on the ankles and for drinking.

We arrived at Kakoro at 3 pm. The children from the community school were assembled to welcome us. However, official decorum temporarily went out of the window as we straggled out of the bush and headed down to the soothing, cool waters of the Oreba river. After shedding our now accursed, pinching, gritty, tattered footwear and sweaty clothing, and washed, we were in a better mood to fraternise with our Kakoro and Mirimas hosts who provided us with a snack, tea and comforting words.

Bruce Jephcott's chartered plane arrived on time. He and the transport department contingent departed, but not until all obligations to our faithful Kunimaipa carriers had been met.

The Mirimas villagers welcomed Elap, their long-lost son. A pig was killed and we were loaded with pig meat, fish and vegetables to take back to Port Moresby.

Another plane picked us up in the afternoon and as we flew off and dipped in a circle over the old Bulldog strip, which is fast being eroded by a shifting river, I silently remembered the pioneers who, like us, had burned themselves out while passing through that umbilical cord which one day will link Papua with New Guinea. — *This article was compiled by Colin De'ath and others, and sources used were W.J. Reinhold, C.F. Coady and Colin Freeman.*




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*Coral shrimp feeding in the depths
photographed during a night dive in
Bootless Bay*



BOOTLESS BAY

Story and pictures:
Bob Halstead

'Bootless', said Captain John Moresby when he sailed into an inlet a few kilometres east of Papua New Guinea's capital city named after him. In naval terminology, Captain Moresby had decided the inlet was 'useless' — good for nothing. Presumably the expression stems from the inadequacy of a seaman without his sea boots.

The name stuck — Bootless Bay it became and remains so to this day, a century later. But useless? Moresby was wrong. In the intervening years Bootless Bay has been the location of the country's first railway — along which was hauled copper ore from mines inland to smelters at the water's edge. The mines have long been exhausted and the railway hauled away for scrap.

But today Bootless Bay has a new activity, having been developed into a thriving recreational and educational centre.

Behind the activity are Ron and Lilian Prior. Getting away from Port Moresby for a weekend, they explored the Bootless Bay area, discovering some of the old railway tracks and following them down to the abandoned wharf. Captivated by the charm and atmosphere of the bay, the Priors acquired land and built a weekend hideaway.

At first that's all it was. But the lure of Bootless Bay grew stronger. One day they decided to abandon city life completely and moved to fulltime residence at their 'weekender'. They established the Tahira Boating Centre — 'home of little

boats'. Today Tahira has its own boat-building industry and marina with jetty and hauling facilities.

Nearby is a village listed in the official directory as Tubusereia but known by the people who live there as Tupusulei. Here Ron found willing students of boat-building. He now boasts of his team of local craftsmen and of the character boats they build. The marina, under the watchful eyes of Ron and Lilian, provides safe mooring for many a vessel owned by city-dwellers.

Just a 10-minute ferry ride from Tahira is the island resort of Loloata, recently taken over by two enterprising young Papua New Guinean women, Kila Numa and Bonnie Kinder.

Kila and Bonnie offer full board

holiday accommodation in a very relaxed atmosphere.

One of three islands in Bootless Bay, Loloata is almost a kilometre long. It offers a dramatic walk to the island's highest point from where there's an all-round view of the islands, reefs, villages and the mainland.

Tucked away near the beach at one end of the island is the resort. Visitors can take their choice of activity — they can lounge under a shady palm with a good book and an icy cocktail or do something more strenuous such as swim, play volleyball or table tennis, beachcomb or snorkel and explore on the reef surrounding the island. Boats can be hired, the fishing is good. For the more adventuresome there's the challenge of an outrigger canoe or a scuba dive.

At weekends, guests can watch spectacular canoe racing staged from Tupusulei. Rigged with modern, brilliantly-coloured sails, the two-man canoes have been developed from traditional designs. Expertly handled by the villagers, competition is fierce. As many as 50 canoes will battle for substantial prizes.

The wealth of life in the reefs of Bootless Bay is breathtaking and varied, from the mangroves and beaches, through the sand flats and shallow reefs out to the reef slopes which rapidly develop into dramatic coral canyons and vertical drops plunging far deeper than any diver can explore with orthodox gear. Close to shore the water is rich in nutrients washed down streams and rivers. This reduces water clarity but soon, a little further out, the water clears until, at the outer edge of the reef, it runs Coral Sea blue.

Realising the treasures at their doorstep, the University of Papua New Guinea has established a marine biology research station on the island of Motupore, also in Bootless Bay. Under the guidance of Professor John Munro, students are gathering a wealth of valuable information while they study. Among more obvious attractions for scientists invited to visit Motupore are valuable black corals in shallow water and other species which are considered rare elsewhere.

Research taking place on the island is no mere academic exercise. Giant clams are the centre of attention. Once established on Papua New Guinea's shallow reefs they flourish. But, because they are popular food, are easily captured, are

heavily over-fished, and take a very long time to grow, the giant clams are in need of protection. The UPNG is working on the problem. It is looking into ways of making the clams spawn on demand in protected conditions. If young clams can be produced to order they can then be distributed to villages along the coast, placed on the reef to grow and 'farmed' in controlled fashion.

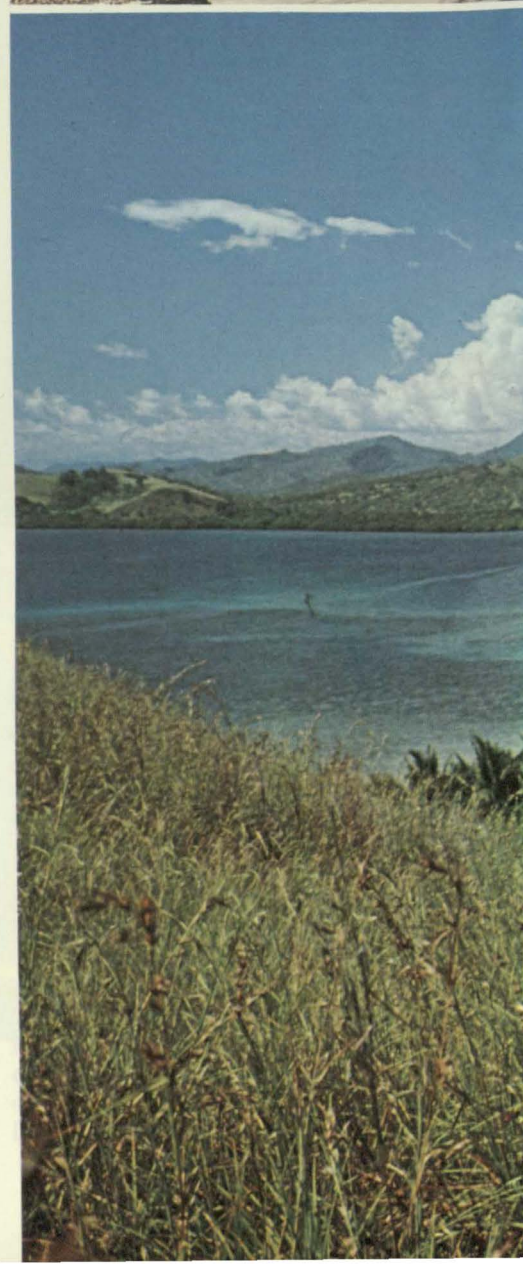
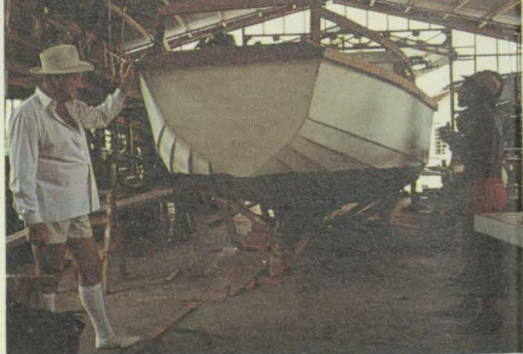
Giant clams are fascinating creatures. Far from being the man-eating monsters which trap divers in cheap novels, the clam is a docile animal which has great difficulty in snapping itself shut. It derives much of its food from an algae — an underwater plant — which lives symbiotically in the clam's flesh. The algae is responsible for the colouring in clams which can be clearly seen by snorkellers in Bootless Bay.

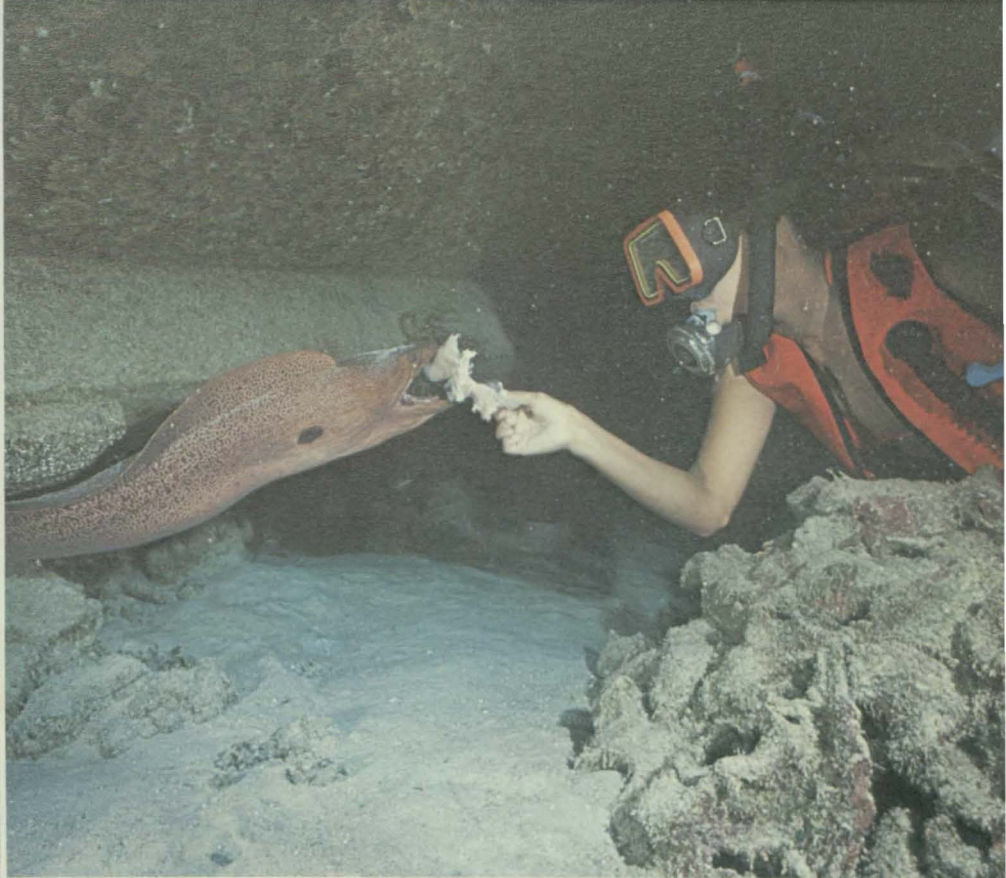
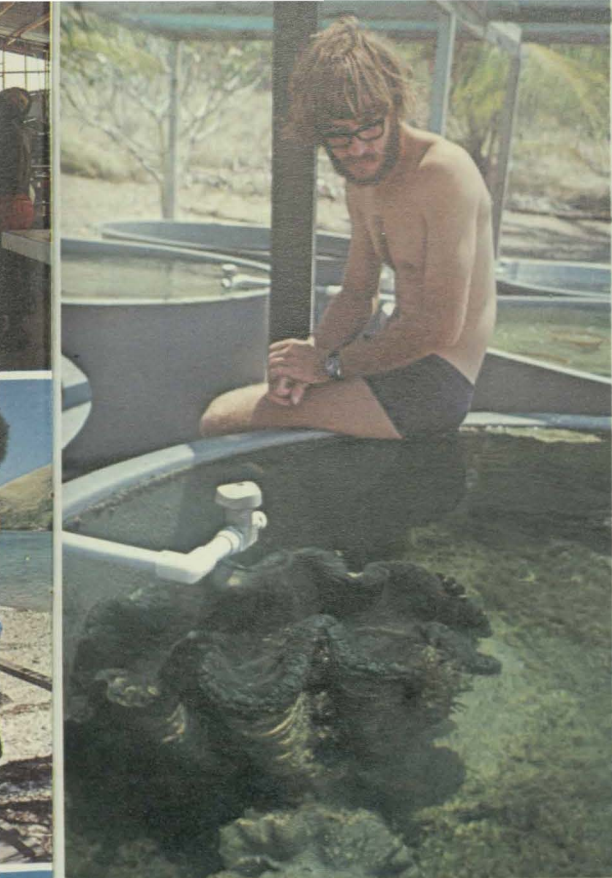
Bootless Bay is also home to Tropical Diving Adventures (TDA) for whom I am scuba instructor. TDA is PNG's first sport diving school. It offers short introductory courses in snorkelling and scuba diving or a longer course leading to the award of an internationally-recognised certificate of proficiency. More advanced courses are also available. Experienced divers can use the diesel launch *Solatai* to cruise the reef and go night diving. TDA has a wide range of equipment for hire and all trips are supervised by an instructor.

In co-operation with the Port Moresby sub Aqua Club, TDA has started a programme of sinking small ships which have reached the end of their seagoing lives. These wrecks form artificial reefs. The advantages are several: the vessels are preserved, they provide homes for fish and a base for corals to grow.

Soon tame fish greet the diver exploring the wrecks. (They have been tamed by regular feeding.) One particularly gentle favourite is a large moray eel named Nessie which has made its home under the keel of the wreck of the *MV Panama*.

Steps are now being taken to have the area declared a national marine park. Some argue that in time the spreading capital of Port Moresby will encroach on Bootless Bay. Steps to preserve its natural beauty and seclusion as a haven from the hassles of everyday life in the city should be taken sooner rather than later. — *Bob Halstead is a SCUBA instructor for Tropical Diving Adventures of Port Moresby.*





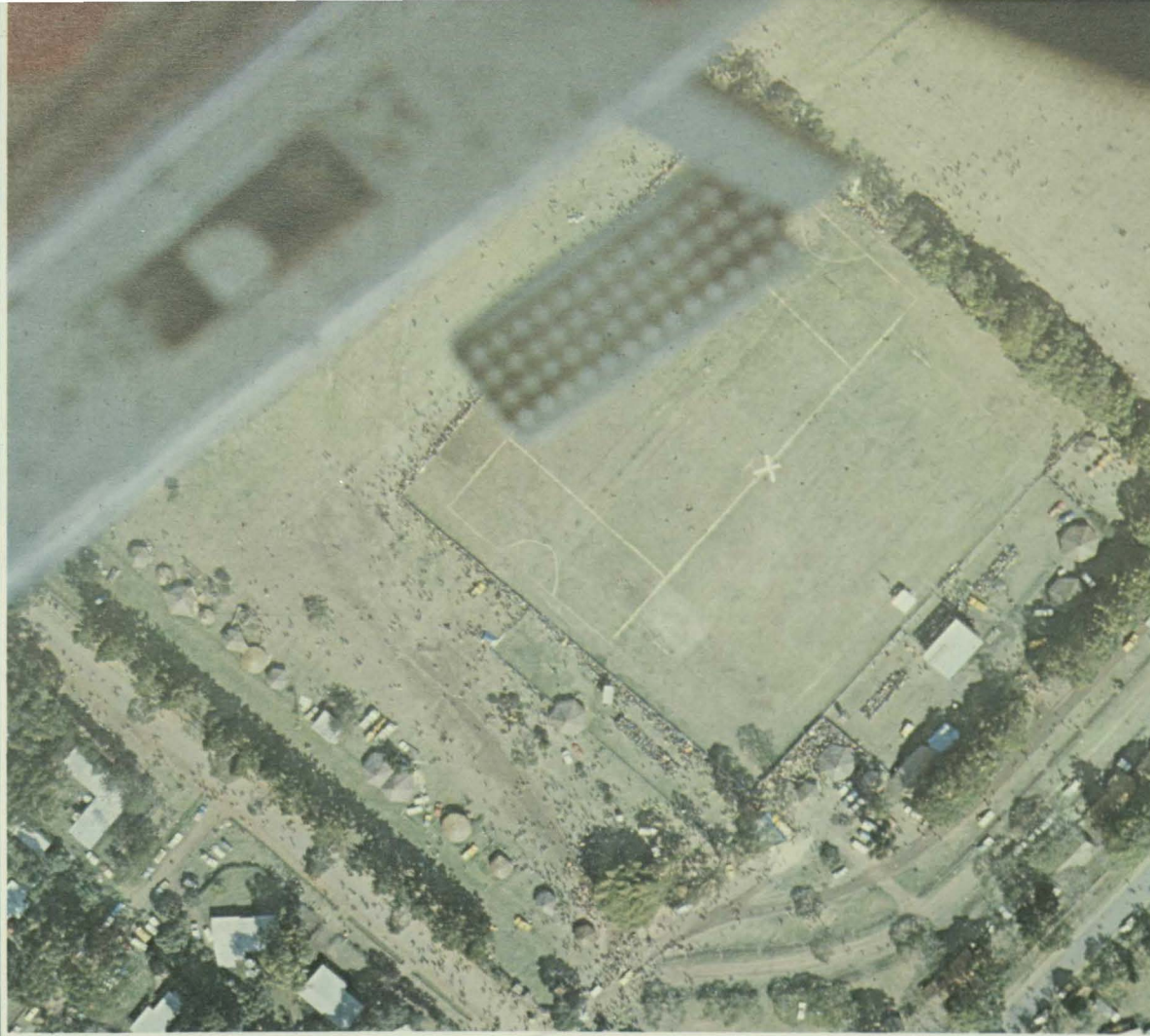


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SHOWJUMP

We're going to tell this one from the top down, through the eyes — and the words — of 'show-jumper' Geoff Sadler.

'Five degrees left . . . and again . . . five left.' The small Cessna jerks twice to the left. The instruction, shouted from the open door, is barely audible above the roar of the wind and an engine straining for altitude. Behind the pilot, who is struggling to maintain heading, are five cramped bodies, muscles tense. They stare at the 'spotter' hanging out of the door, shouting orders.

Thoughts: Don't blow it now. Where did that drifter land? Where's that cloud going? Hang on to your heading, pilot. Wow, there's a lot of people down there! And power lines. And goal posts. And Steamies' balloon.

A shout: 'Power off!' I light my flare. Out I go. The whine above me fades. Below the crowd watches. I'm a dark dot streaming orange smoke, falling away from the Cessna. Behind me appears another dot. And another. Then! A triple explosion of colour and sound. Our parachutes burst open. From 190 kilometres an hour descent we are snatched to a comparative standstill. We're flying at 600 metres.

Thoughts: Where's that wind indicator?

Watch those trees. Power lines. Keep away from the balloon. Two hundred metres. Okay. Turn her in. On final approach. Watch the overshoot. Left a little. Brake now. Ouch. The ground's hard. On your feet quickly. The crowd sounds great. They're enjoying it. No zaps. We've done it well.

That's it. No horses or mock-brick walls. But still it's 'showjump'. Our target is 'the spot'. Our environment is 'wind drifters', slipstream, 'opening shocks', cross winds — and, that vital element — the crowds. We find them at Moitaka and Bomana just outside Port Moresby, right in the capital on Ela Beach, at Lae 320 km to the north, or at Goroka where, when we hit 'the spot' we are still 1500 metres above sea level.

Are we death-defying skydivers? Not death-defying, but the crowd thinks we are and that adds to the thrill of the 'demo' jump — the ultimate act.

But there's a lot more to it than the 'demo' jump. Just to get the Federation Aeronautical Internationale Parachutists 'D' licence, a jumper has to do it 200 times from 2000 metres, landing at least 20 times within 10 metres of a 10 centimetre target. Without that you can never be a 'demo' jumper.

And that only enables you to do it by



yourself. Next come the hours of team work, co-operation and split-second timing which eventually add up to a group 'demo' team.

Even then, when the act has been put together, showing it to the people demands much more organisation — transport, accommodation, aircraft hire, smoke flares, the co-operation and go-ahead from aviation authorities.

In Papua New Guinea most demonstrations over the past decade have been done by the Port Moresby Skydivers, a non-profit club that charges a fee which covers only costs including the maintenance of equipment. There's no payment for the jumper.

PNG's Civil Aviation Agency maintains as strict a standard for 'showjumpers' as it does in every other department of the aviation scene. Its regulations stipulate the minimum and maximum altitudes for demonstration jumps. If a venue does not exactly suit regulations, special CAA approval must be sought. Because of the spirit of co-operation which has grown between the Skydivers and CAA, the show usually goes on.

Timing of the jumps is critical. No demonstration can interfere with commercial air traffic. Demonstrations must take place when winds are light and there is a minimum of cloud.

Success or failure of a 'demo' team's performance rests largely with the support team. The pilot must be able to hold his heading, make flat rudder turns, keep his aircraft stable as bodies hurtle out the door, and respond quickly to terse instructions. Ground controllers have to clear the arena, accurately signal wind speed and direction to the jumpers, and keep the spectators entertained with lucid commentary. CAA demands that ground controllers are experienced parachutists. They can make or break a 'demo'.

I said before we are not 'death-defying'. But it's true it is the jumper who takes the big risk. The linch-pin of the 'demo' team is the 'spotter'. He must interpret ground signals, throw the weighted crepe paper drifter, estimate wind strength from where the drifter lands, and keep the pilot on course.

The spotter has to do as his name suggests — pick the 'spot'. Not the 'spot' on the ground but the exact 'spot' in the sky for exit from the aircraft. If his choice is good the team will land safely on target. If it's bad then they will 'zap', the cardinal sin for any jumper when he's on a 'showjump'.

That's 'showjumping' — not quite death or glory, but, if poorly executed, potentially dangerous. Done properly, the crowd gets a great kick out of it. But not as big a kick as there is for the jumper.

MAPRIK

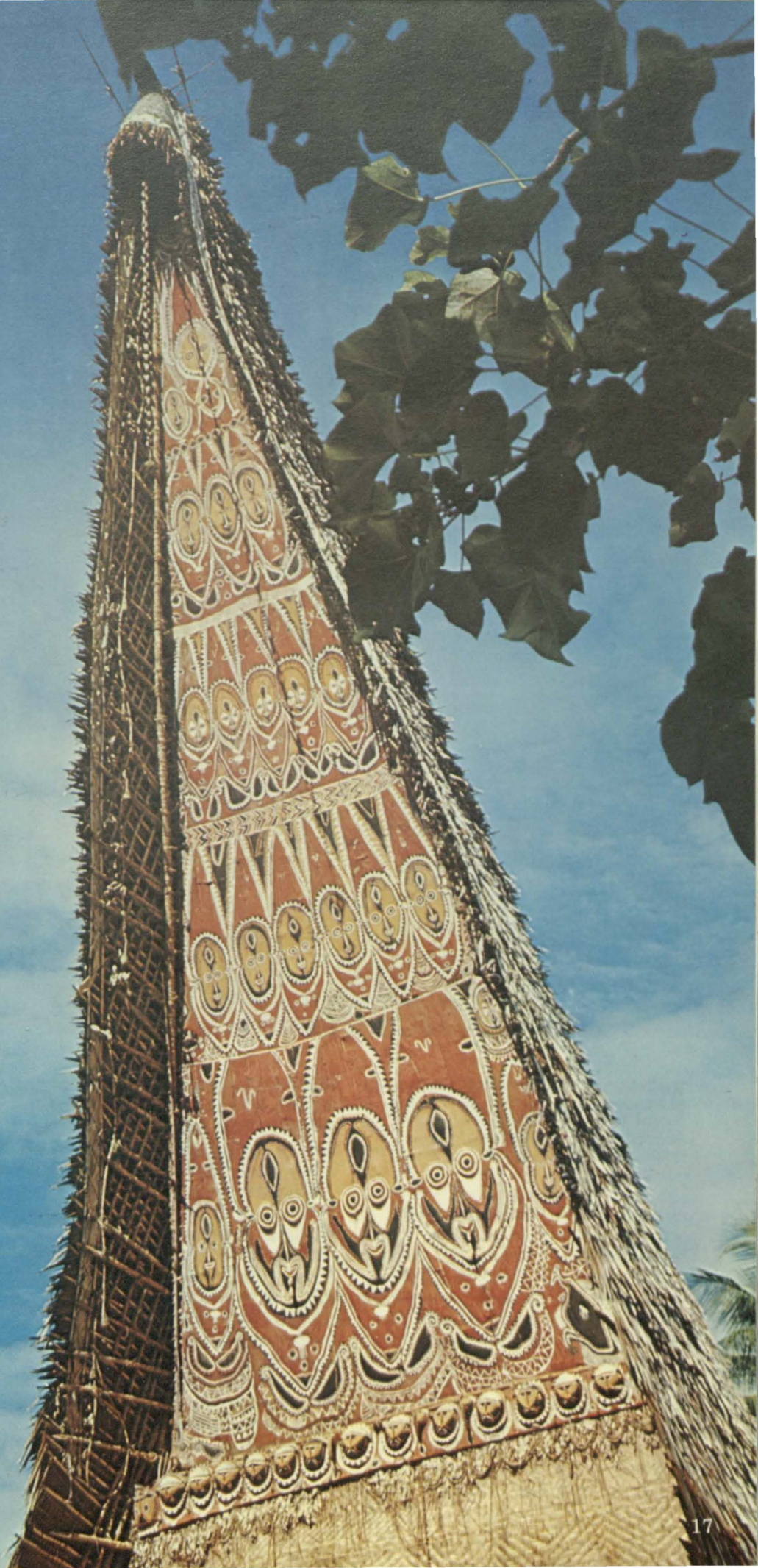
By Bruce D. Lawes

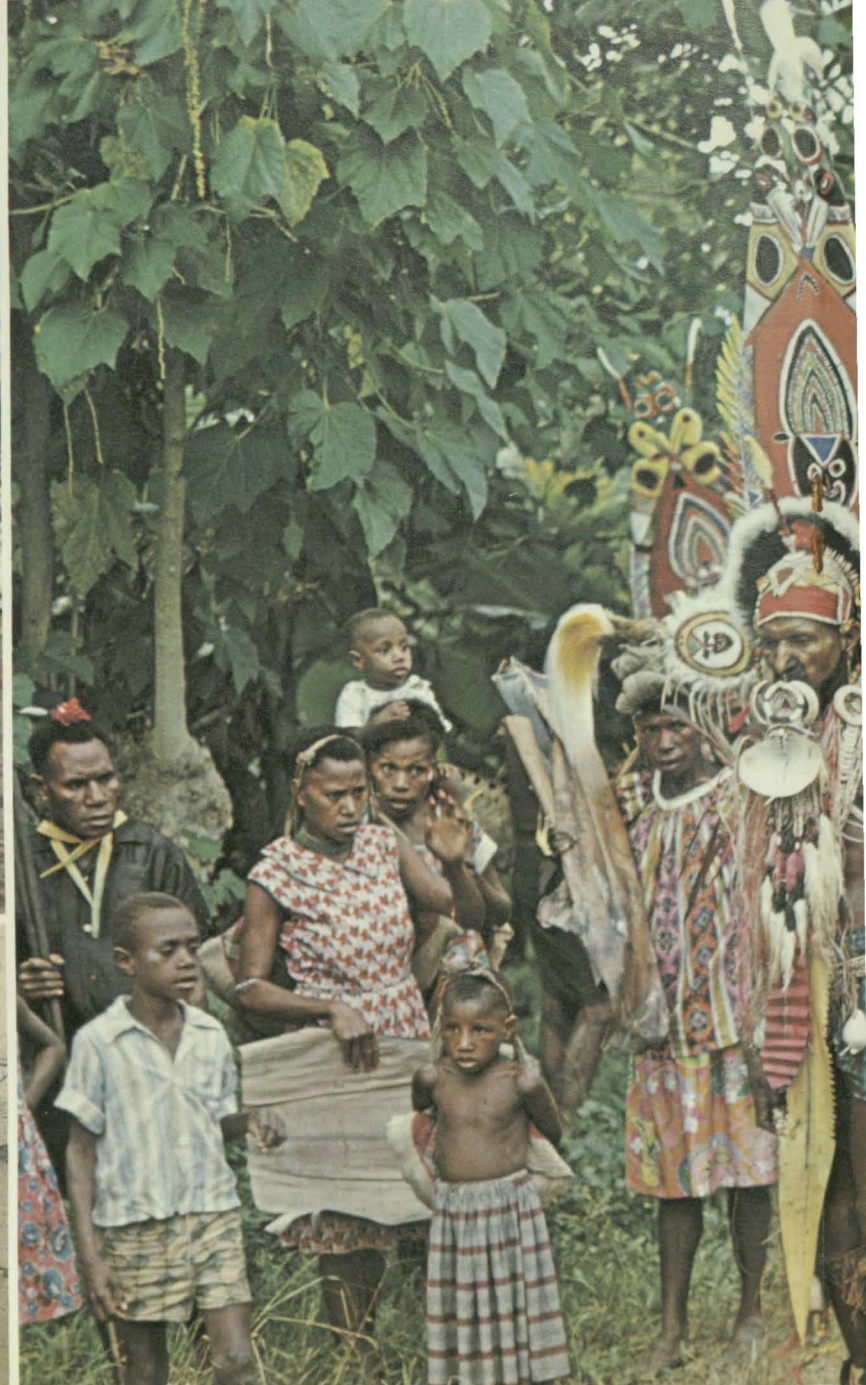
Maprik, the home of the Abelam tribe and my home from 1955 to 1963, was not far away. My excitement was immense, if tempered a little by a gnawing feeling that I might be in for a disappointment. So many times you hear people say: 'But you can never go back' — meaning that things can never be the same as you happily remember them.

I remembered: Maprik, scene of towering *haus tambaran* (spirit houses); dances, ceremonies filling the night air with the 'thumppppp, thumppppp,' of the *garamut* drums and the sharper, more rapid beat of the *kundu* drums; the wail and shouts of dancers who would press on through the night until the first light when they could trudge homeward without fear of attack from a *sanguma* spirit.

Would it be the same? Had the coming of commercial cropping of rice and coffee interfered with the Abelam people's routine of life? Was the yam vanquished as the symbol of social, political and economic power? Had high schools led to a rejection of the village elders as the source of great wisdom?

Of course there had been change. It was not possible that everything could remain the same. The first point to hit me was the way in which the coffee gardens, with their dark green shade trees, had replaced huge areas of primary forest. Dozens of





Clockwise from above: Wapi Saki, the lining up of decorated yams, reflects the pride of the farmers; Biggest yams bring more prestige; Wosera clansmen enter the sing-sing area before initiation ceremony

children, greatly outnumbering mature adults, spoke loudly of the success of the health programme; of how malaria, tuberculosis, yaws and many post-natal problems had been brought under control.

Where I had trudged on foot, along slippery tracks, too steep and narrow for even a World War Two Jeep, I now sped along on gravel roads in a rented Corolla wagon. I covered in half an hour what had been a full day's sweaty toil little more than a decade previously.

But during my three-week stay in the area I found much to reinforce my opinion that Maprik is still the most exciting area in Papua New Guinea. Many colourful ceremonies and customs are still intact

and every day I found stimulating, new experiences. Initiation ceremonies; colourful *kangal* singsings; giant yams being decorated for harvest festivals, and their later presentation to allies to bolster old economic and political ties or to create new ones; negotiations between clans on 'bride price'. This latter get-together is accompanied by a full array of story-telling and argument. One clan will parade its past glories to better bargain the matter of the moment.

On other days I revelled in the more mundane daily activities of the Abelam. I saw the sacred planting of the giant yam where strict adherence to ritual is vital if the benevolence of the yam spirit, *Bapa*



Tagwa, is to be retained. Normally the presence of anyone except initiated members of the cult, observing strict rules of diet, sexual abstinence and ritual cleansing, is not permitted. I was required to observe strict silence and stay beyond the fenced enclosure rather than risk the wrath of this powerful spirit. The grower, alone, and with a great sense of piety, used a long black palm digging stick to prepare the ground for the sacred tubers. I was also able to help villagers harvest small yams. Although this too involves ceremony, the protocol is not so rigid and much of the work is done by women and children.

The Abelam people were as I remembered them — friendly and helpful — but I did find at the odd

hamlet on the main Maprik-Wewak road an uncharacteristic eagerness to relieve me of my tourist dollar for such simple privileges as taking a photograph.

On many of the reasonably-gravelled roads I found I was most welcome and noticed very little change in the day-to-day way of life since my first visit in 1953.

Most singsings take place at night, starting as the sun goes down, leaving very little time to take non-flash photographs of dancers. However, I was readily welcomed into the make-up area to photograph this stage of the operation.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that while alcohol is proving a problem in PNG's main towns, it seemed

to be almost entirely absent from traditional ceremonies in the Maprik area, even though the ceremonies were being held mainly at weekends to allow town workers to come home for the festivities.

You can find out what is going on in the area simply by asking. Local guides will put you straight and warn you if you find yourself trying to get in on a 'secret' ceremony.

I found it good policy to visit a village ahead of a ceremony to check the date and exact location. Experience soon taught me that it is no fun, as sundown approaches, to hear the drums start up in the distance and find that a half-hour's walk is still required on a slippery track to reach the main dance site — or to



Clockwise from above: Decorations on a trade store wall; Mud-smeared elder displays the scars of his initiation; Wosera youngster prepares for a sing-sing

find out that the main event had been held days before.

A Polaroid camera is a great help on a trip like this. An instant photograph, as a proffered gift, is worth more than hard cash to all but the most tourist-conscious. It causes a great stir for a dancer to see himself in action seconds after he has performed. The still wet print may pass rapidly from hand to hand as eager viewers snatch it. Yet some survive for many years.

While I was to some extent known in the area and my 'pidgin' was fluent, I think anyone willing to take a little trouble and take life as it comes, will feel well rewarded after visiting Maprik. The 'dry season' — roughly between May and October — is the active time of the year and, also, the best time to travel by car.

I travelled in late October, early November, and for the most part

had no weather problems. In less than three weeks I attended four *kangal* ceremonies, bought head-dresses at two villages, saw the healing backs of a dozen initiates, attended two yam festivals, one pre-marriage bargaining session, and a variety of small rituals that I had not bothered to find when I was resident in the area.

If you want to avoid the 'organised tour', fly to Wewak, capital of the East Sepik Province, hire a four-wheel drive (or even an ordinary sedan) and head out toward Maprik. If you don't want to spend all your nights in the back of the vehicle or in a tent, there is a hotel at Maprik. For the more fastidious, there is air-conditioned comfort in at least two motels in Wewak — but that's a four-to-five-hour drive away from the remote villages of the Abelam.

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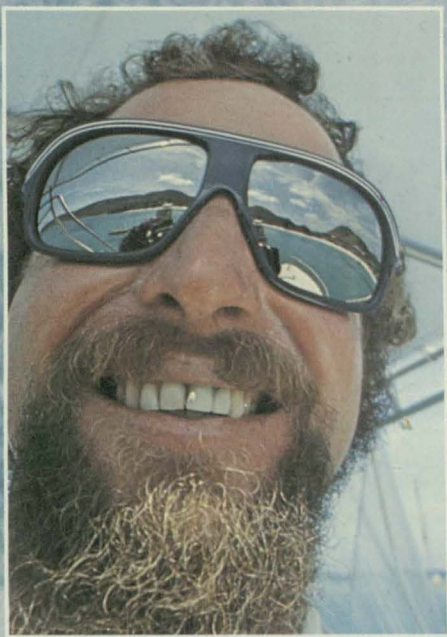


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Lizard Island

Story: Lauri Kavanagh pictures: Jim Fenwick

Hollywood stars, Arab oil millionaires, international sportsmen, and an affluent 'rest' rub shoulders on Lizard Island, one of the larger pieces of real estate on Australia's Great Barrier Reef. They're all there in search of the fabled black marlin.

In fact, so the story goes, Jack Nicklaus might not even bother to go to Australia to play in international tournaments if it weren't for Lizard Island and the prospect of catching a world record black marlin.

Lizard Island Lodge (22 beds — the only ones on the island) is the fishermen's base on an island which is rapidly asserting itself as one of the black marlin fishing capitals of

the world. Jack Nicklaus's 616 kg catch a few months back is going to do no damage to that reputation at all.

Lizard Island is nearly 250 km north of Cairns. An Air Niugini Fokker F28 jet flight from Port Moresby to Cairns and a Bush Pilots hop up the Great Barrier Reef will have you on Lizard Island in about three hours.

Although it is relatively new as a holiday resort — having been opened in 1975 — Lizard Island has a long history. It is believed to have been used for centuries by Aborigines who apparently crossed from the mainland in what is now the Cook-

town region. It appears they used it to celebrate seafood festivals.

In August 1770 Captain James Cook found himself in trouble on the Great Barrier Reef, being unable to find a way out to the Coral Sea. Twice he climbed the peak of Lizard Island to see if he could see a gap. From where he stood, he could see the surf crashing on the outer reef and he spotted several breaks, one of which was to allow his vessel to escape to the outer ocean. This has become known as Cook's Passage.

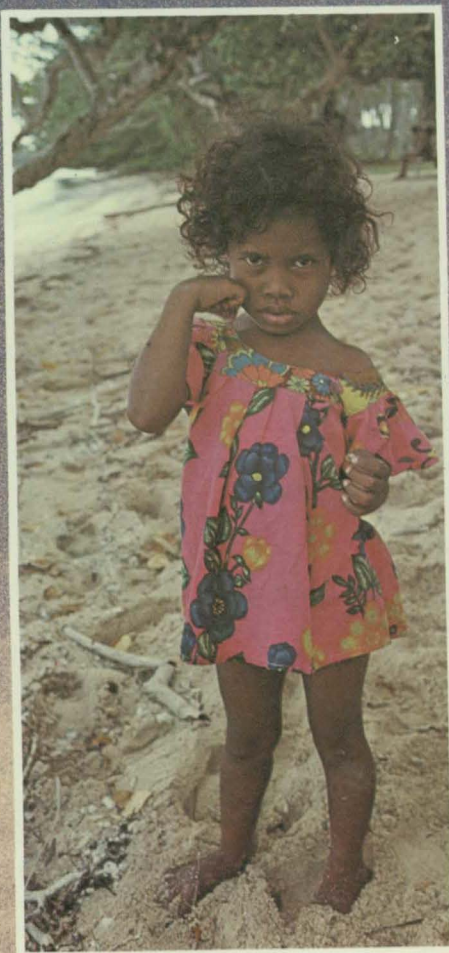
Cook found great piles of opened shells on high ground, evidence of the Aborigines' use of the island. It was perhaps on one such tribal

pilgrimage to Lizard in 1881 that Aborigines came upon a European woman who was living there with her three-month-old baby and two Chinese servants. She was Mrs Mary Watson, wife of a *beche-de-mer* fisherman, who lived in a hut on what is now known as Mrs Watson's Bay, not far from the lodge.

The Aborigines killed one of the servants and wounded the other. Mrs Watson decided to leave the island in the only 'boat' available, a small square iron tank, about 3.2 m square and about 0.6 m deep. For 11 days they drifted around the reef islands, hoping to find fresh water or to attract a passing vessel. They

failed on both counts and it seems that Mrs Watson died on October 11, 1881. The record of their ordeal is in Mrs Watson's diary which is kept at the Oxley Memorial Library in Brisbane. The iron tank is kept in the Queensland Museum, also in Brisbane.

Even without an inclination to marlin fishing, Lizard Island is still well worth a visit. The lodge is built in the wide-verandah Queensland homestead style and sits on the shores of a small bay. The water is permanently crystal clear and the sand is so white and fine it could be table salt.



Wuvulu is just about the end of the line as far as northwestern Papua New Guinea is concerned. Beyond it there is nothing — from northwest to northeast — until, hundreds of kilometres north across the equator, open Pacific ocean gives way to the scattered chain of the Caroline Islands of Micronesia.

South-southeast of Wuvulu, about 220 kilometres away, is Wewak, capital of the East Sepik Province, on the mainland, from which Wuvulu is administered for convenience even though it is part of the Manus Province.

From the air, Wuvulu appears first as a dot in a wide expanse of Bismarck Sea. Only six by three kilometres, it impressed me as a jewel on a turquoise backing.

Wuvulu today is peopled by an easy-going group, seemingly concerned only with the upkeep of their

copra plantation and meeting their basic daily needs of life. In no way do they resemble the description given to their ancestors by a passing ship's captain who called them 'Tiger people'.

The first recorded European sighting of Wuvulu was in 1543 by Ortiz de Retes who wrote in his log on August 19: 'A low island was sighted and from it came several canoes which attacked the ship and did not desist, in spite of heavy losses and much damage, until their entire supply of arrows, spears and stones was consumed. The crew of the canoes were light-skinned men, good fighters and brave.'

Two centuries later the British vessel *Swallow* came by. The crew watched large numbers of islanders running back and forth along the shore, waving flaming torches.

It was in 1817 that the Wuvuluans

were called 'Tiger people' by a Captain Bristow who described the island as 'low, covered in a dense growth of coconut palms and is peopled by a ferocious race of savages'.

When we flew in from Wewak, the people came to meet us — in friendship. As we circled we could see the islanders making their way to the airstrip, some walking, some on cycles and motorcycles. The island councillors were there to greet us. Soon our equipment for a month's living and diving on the island was on its way to the now-deserted plantation house which was to be our home.

The early days of our stay were spent arranging for a boat, unpacking gear and setting up our precious

photographic equipment which was to record this tropical paradise — from above and below.

Everything ready, we ventured out of the shallow harbour and along the reef edge which we knew plunged nearly 1000 metres into darkness. Our first dive was a formality as we were testing modifications made to our underwater camera housings. The spectacle that confronted us was breathtaking. We could see the almost vertical wall of reef which plunged into a dark blue void beneath us. Above, sunlight filtered through a crystal surface; the rays danced about, a kaleidoscope of colour.

Corals, fish, sponges and other marine growths argued visually, one

with another. The contrasting colours were almost shocking to the eyes. In the shadows were more subtle hues; it was like looking into a misty dreamworld.

As we surfaced to replenish our tanks it was already apparent to all of us that our expectations of Wuvulu underwater had already been exceeded.

The following weeks saw us diving regularly. The ever-present sharks never bothered us, even when they greatly outnumbered us. Perhaps it was because sharks in that part of the oceans have never found man to be a threat. We also encountered huge turtles, some over 100 kg.

Every dive offered new adventure. At times we ventured into the dim twilight of huge caverns where forests of black coral reached out for sunlight, their polyps forever feeding on the suspended matter in

the reef waters. Hugh sponges clung to the walls in the deeper gloom, offering sanctuary for smaller, lazy fish.

The diving was so good we were neglecting our intention to record Wuvulu above water. For a few days we resisted our watery pursuits and set about recording the lifestyle of the people.

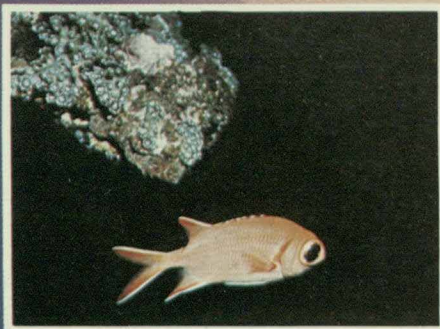
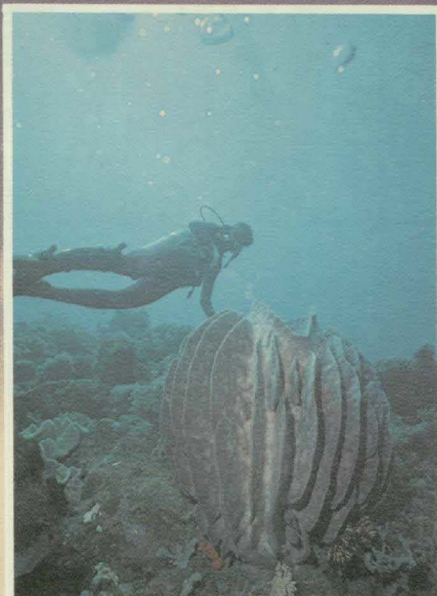
The people on Wuvulu live basically in two villages — Onei and Auna — on either side of the island. Sometimes they are romantically described as 'Sunrise' and 'Sunset'.

Sprouting from white coral sands, huge coconut palms encircle the villages, some of them leaning precariously out over the blue waters washing the shore.

Since Papua New Guinea gained its independence from Australia in 1975, the Wuvuluans have become shareholders in the copra plantation.

WUVULU

By Peter Watling



Now, with a reason for doing it, they spend some of their daylight hours clearing the land beneath the palms and husking nuts. The plantation is their only source of revenue.

But despite their new responsibilities, there's still plenty of time for domestic pursuits. The menfolk are the fishers and they can be seen at work at all times of day and even into the night. They paddle their small outrigger canoes out over the reef shallows and into the deep water where they fish for snake mackerel, barracuda, trevally and other schooling species.

The women look after the routine household chores of cleaning, cooking, gardening and tending to their children.

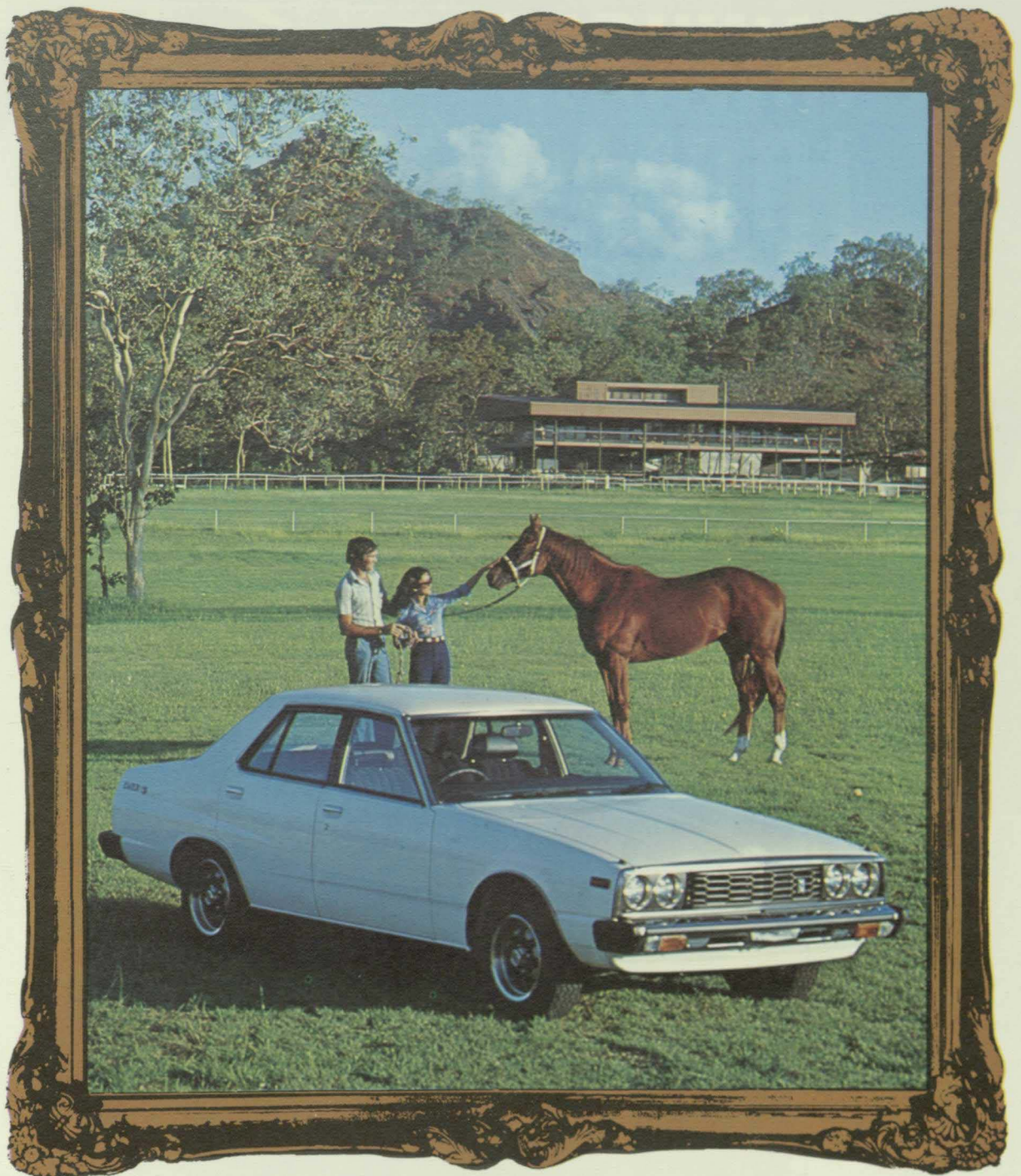
The elderly, excused routine

duties, spend many hours carving and basket weaving. The abundance of coconut fronds provides an endless supply of materials for baskets and mats. The carvings are worked by the men from driftwood. They shape exquisite figures of birds, sharks and dolphins with only the most rudimentary of tools.

A highlight of our stay was an invitation to a wedding. On the day before the marriage, the people bustled around in preparation. Next day, the ceremonies began at nightfall. The bride and groom passed under an archway of coconut fronds into a small enclosure where the head councillor performed the rites.

Then came a feast of fish, taro and rice, coconut milk and tea. Everyone ate their fill before adjourning to their huts very late in the evening.

We had witnessed the beginnings of yet another family in an environment untroubled by international concerns. The affluence of Wuvulu may not be worth counting in money, but in terms of the basic requirements of a simple but satisfying existence, it has everything.

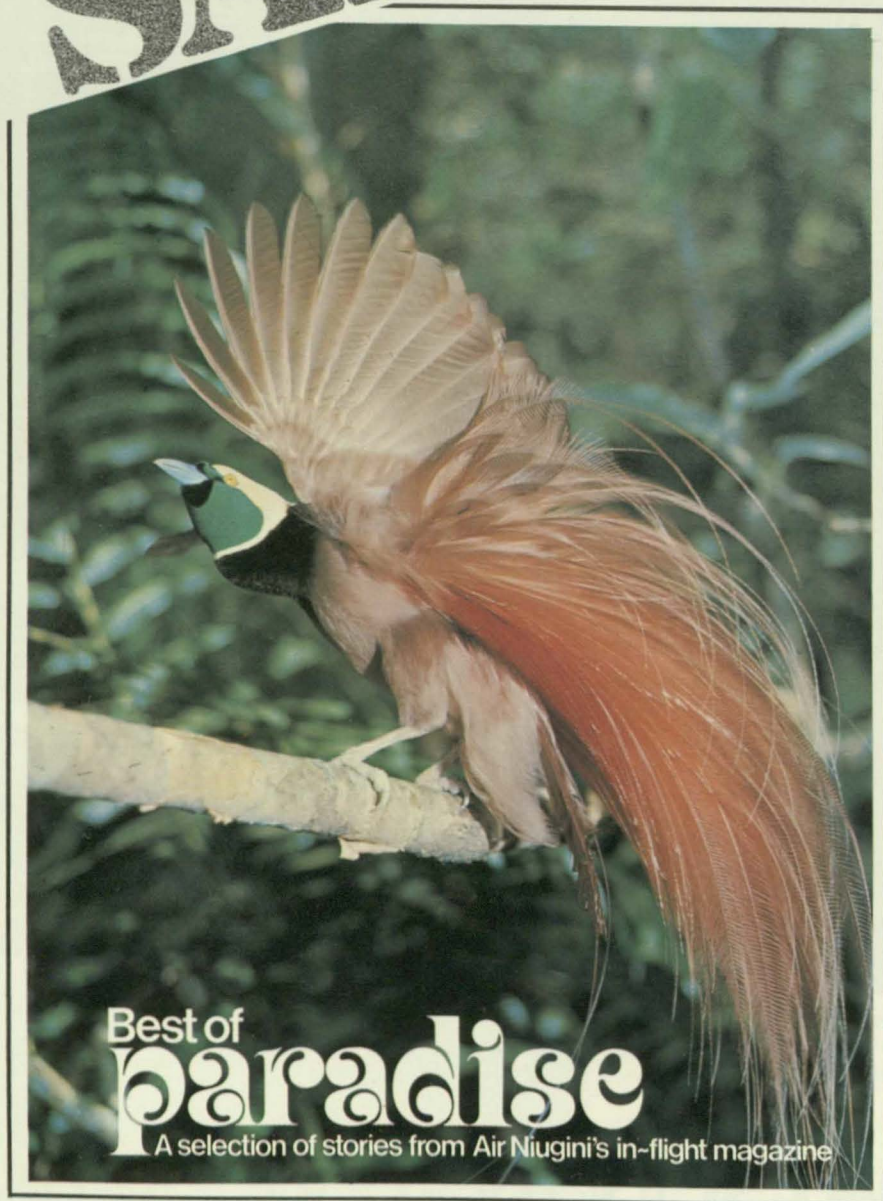


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HIGHWAY PATROL

England had Dick Turpin and Captain Starlight. Australia had Ned Kelly and Thunderbolt. America had the James Gang and a host of others. Papua New Guinea never had that kind of problem — perhaps it was because it did things the other way around: while the rest of the world was trying to get its cargoes up, up and away, Papua New Guinea was trying to get its cargoes down to the ground.

Let us explain, briefly. For centuries no one really went anywhere very far in New Guinea. But when travel did come into vogue the skyways were tamed long before the highways. And it's a bit difficult to be a successful highwayman when all the booty passes way out of reach overhead.

But, eventually, roads began to be pushed through some of the most forbidding country in the

world. And, while the rest of the world was becoming accustomed to highwaymen in the sky — which PNG has never experienced — a spot of bother was developing up in the Highlands.

A highway linking coastal Lae in Morobe Province with Mendi, deep in the Southern Highlands Province, brought many benefits to the people along the way. But, as is the case with all 'progress', there are debits. Death on the road was an unavoidable development in a country which had never known there was such a way to die. That was bad. But it was predictable. So too was the coming of the successors to Dick Turpin, Ned Kelly etcetera. By the sixties, highway robbery became a reality but with rather different methods.

Not for them the flintlock or Colt 45, the Winchester or Browning. No





sir. Just the simple bow and arrow, the wooden spear and a high degree of agility.

The *modus operandi* was also very enlightening. Bows and arrows don't match up too well against a massive semi-trailer. But, if that monster was grinding up a tortuous mountain pass in about tenth gear, not even giving 10 kph a nudge, the sight of the most primitive weapon is enough to make the bravest of drivers think twice.

So, the idea was to pick a nice secluded spot on a steep incline — and there's plenty of them on the road from Lae — and make threatening gestures at the first heavily-laden truck that comes along. Even if it didn't stop the fleet-of-foot could clamber up on to the tarpaulin-covered load and help himself to the goodies, throwing them off to accomplices. Rarely would a driver stop to argue. He'd just keep plugging on to the top in the hope that all they wanted was his cargo. Usually, the episode was bloodless.

Highway robbery by the early seventies had become something of a problem in the Highlands. By 1975 it was serious — an everyday occur-

ence. The thieves would strike. The driver would report. By the time the police got to the scene there was no sign of villains or cargo.

Drivers were refusing to travel on certain sections of the road without escort. Even travelling in convoy didn't really work because 'tail-end Charlie', the slowest rig in the line, was vulnerable. At that time, police in the Highlands were pretty thin on the ground and unable to cope with the problem. Few bandits operated within reach of a police station, anyway.

The tables started to turn in 1976 when the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary introduced the first of its highway patrols. Initially men were taken from other duties and vehicles were gleaned from stations along the highway.

Obviously, no police commander worth his salt would give away a good vehicle. Consequently, the first patrol 'fleet' looked something from a 'demolition derby'.

The solution had not been found

but the groundwork had been laid, sufficiently so that the Somare Government's Cabinet approved a budget, somewhat watered down, which was to begin to streamline the highway patrol.

From a main base at Goroka, in the Eastern Highlands Province, with sub-bases at Masul and Chuave in the Chimbu Province, and at Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands, five vehicles with hand-picked crews began patrolling.

A stormy period followed. The villains did their utmost to discourage this threat to their domain. For a while the patrols found themselves under direct attack — by highway men, drunken louts, and anyone else who cared to join in.

The score after three weeks was 41 arrests for 5000 man-hours worked. The battle had been joined. Progress was being made. Drivers were encouraged. They began to co-

operate with the police. And those who did not, felt the wrath of the then police chief, Pious Kerepia, who branded as 'sheer stupidity' drivers who continued to drive the steep sections at night.

Co-operation came too from villagers who withdrew traditional protection normally available to the criminal elements of their societies. In one raid where known robbers live, police found the local government councillor's house equipped for modern living with half a dozen electric fans, toasters, an electric stove and a refrigerator — but there was no electricity supply and the house was made of grass and bamboo.

In another case, a driver managed

to draw on unknown reserves in his truck and achieved a speed which had three young thieves hanging on for their lives — until he handed them over to a patrol crew, eager and willing to be delivered from their terrifying experience into the hands of the law.

More money was budgeted. Patrols were upgraded, more equipment and logistical support became available. Vehicles were specially designed. Today, 12 vehicles, clearly identifiable and equipped with an assortment of arms for the protection of the four-man crews, move quickly along the highway.

Daily pilfering has ebbed. The gangs have fallen apart. A few drunks still venture where the professionals

now fear to tread. Plans are in hand to extend the patrols over the full length of the highway from Lae to Mount Hagen in Western Highlands Province and back down the highway from the Eastern Highlands to Kaiapit in Morobe Province where the road levels out onto the Markham Valley plains.

No facet of police work can ever be a total success as long as criminal minds remain active. But 'Dick Turpin' on the Highlands Highway has done his dash.



Operation Drake

In 1974 the Zaire River Expedition was launched, probably the largest and most ambitious project of its type ever conceived. On this great African venture were two young men from my home island of Jersey, U.K., who had been selected from several hundred youngsters after a series of gruelling selection procedures. I do not believe any members of the expedition, including myself, could have foreseen the tremendous contribution these two teenagers were to make.

Under the most taxing circumstances they helped international teams of scientists to carry out their varied research projects. It was from this small beginning that the idea began to form of providing an opportunity for involving not just two British youngsters on our next major exploration, but hundreds from all over the world.

It took three years of intensive planning and fundraising to get the project off the ground but in October last year the first team of 24 Young Explorers (aged 17-24, fit, compatible and able to swim) set sail from England on the initial phase of 'Operation Drake'.

They are some of the lucky ones chosen from 38,000 volunteers from many lands to join this great voyage. Selection went on in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Britain, USA, Hong Kong, Iceland and many other countries for over a year. All of us involved have been particularly impressed by one result — the incredibly high standard of the girls. In fact in New Zealand's contingent of 10 Young Explorers, the girls outnumber the boys three to two.

It would be wrong to consider Operation Drake as one expedition, it is a series of expeditions which will take place in Panama, the Galapagos Archipelago, the Pacific, Papua New Guinea, Sulawesi, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Sudan.

All of these projects are of a scientific nature or of assistance to local communities and many are closely linked with each other. It would also be incorrect to think of Operation Drake as 'kids stuff'; far from it, this is man-sized work in some of the world's most difficult regions.

The Young Explorers comprising both boys and girls will travel from one expedition site to the next on board the 150 ton Brigantine *Eye of the Wind*. While on board this strikingly beautiful ship they will not only learn the art of sailing a square-rigger but also undergo preliminary training in preparation for the research projects they will be assisting with on the land phases. A marine biologist, travelling on board

Eye of the Wind, will use the unique facilities of a 'clean' sailing ship to sample atmospheric and marine pollution. This survey and those on land have been designed to use standard repeatable techniques, enabling different groups of scientists and Young Explorers to carry out comparative environmental surveys. In each host country, including Papua New Guinea, local young people are to join the project.

Operation Drake's scientific committee has consulted governments and scientific institutions of host countries to boost involvement of their youth and scientists and to ensure exchange of ideas and expertise.

During my reconnaissance trips to Panama, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia I have been overwhelmed by enthusiasm and support. Now over 200 volunteer 'staff', working in 20 countries are helping to organise what is probably the world's most ambitious large scale expedition. In Papua New Guinea much valuable work has already been done by Colonel Ken Noga of the Defence Force and Mr Louis Varo of the Prime Minister's Department.

One of the major scientific projects being carried out is an ambitious comparative survey of tropical rain forests and tropical coastal and riverine environments of Panama, Papua New Guinea and

Sulawesi. In the light of the considerable threat to these forests from commercial logging and shifting agriculture, we hope to focus world attention on the need for their conservation. These forests represent one of the earth's most valuable remaining natural resources, but with their destruction proceeding at the rate of 50 acres a minute, it is likely that within the next few decades most of the world's accessible tropical forests will have been destroyed.

All our talks throughout the countries Operation Drake will be visiting have given me a far greater understanding of the problems their governments are facing in this direction.

I have been impressed by the search for the solution to the universal problem of compromising conservation and economic development. One of the areas of the tropical rain forest, about which very little is known at present, is that of the life in the forest canopy, some 45 metres above ground level. This delicate environment is the 'powerhouse' of the forest, where many rare and unusual plants and animals have specially adapted themselves for survival. I have only glimpsed the fleeting dash of brilliant colour as a Bird of Paradise flits hundreds of feet above my head, during a recent trip to Papua New Guinea; and when look-

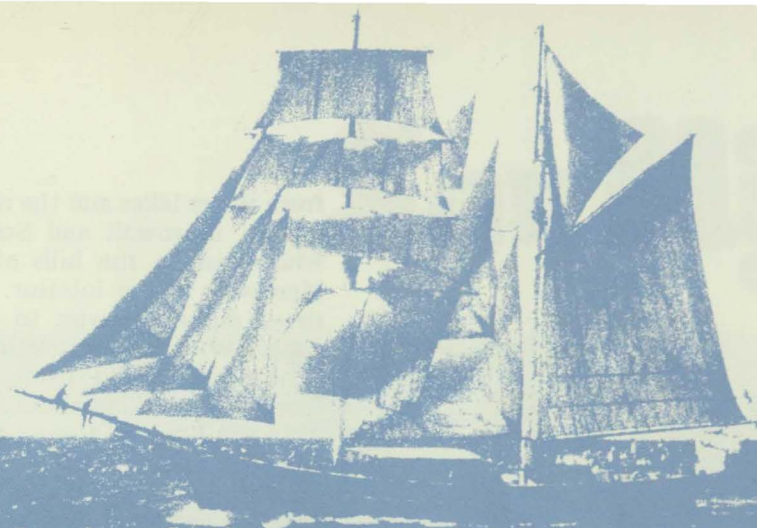
ing down from a light aircraft I am reminded that the carpet of trees below me contain about seven hundred species of birds and a variety of insects, which defies the imagination.

Some of the areas to be visited in Papua New Guinea and Sulawesi are mainly unmapped and little-known. There are isolated tribes to be contacted and scientific knowledge to be gained. During my reconnaissance trips to Western Highlands I was daunted by the remoteness and magnificence of the country and I am determined to find a way of taking a team of scientists into the interior to carry out a series of multi-disciplinary studies. As in any far-flung area, communications present an almost insurmountable problem, but the interior of Papua New Guinea is pierced by the oldest highway known to man — rivers.

It is not the first time that I have been set the problem of reaching a remote area with a scientific team. As long ago as 1968 I found that rivers offered a fast, and on the whole, reliable means of transport, when I led the Great Abbai Expedition down the Blue Nile in Ethiopia. From all I have seen of the Strickland and Sepik rivers the challenge they offer is unmatched by even the mighty Zaire.

After leaving Papua New Guinea the *Eye of the Wind* will set sail for Sulawesi, crossing the Banda Sea and dropping anchor in Tomori Bay, exactly 400 years after Sir Francis Drake sheltered there, in the *Golden Hind* during his great circumnavigation. A totally new set of problems will face Operation Drake's scientists and Young Explorers in this area of tropical rain forest when they begin a survey of the proposed Gunung Morowali National Park. Using a process known as 'Remote Sensing' the scientific team will conduct research into the geology and geomorphology of this area. This process uses some of the most advanced techniques of space technology, involving the use of satellite images beamed to earth by NASA's Landsat programme. These images will be computer processed to reveal patterns related to vegetation, land use, topography and other features of the environment. Ground verification of the computerised pictures will be carried out by teams of geographers and Young Explorers, who will have to penetrate the largely unmapped interior of the country.

The area of the proposed nature reserve includes an unusually wide spectrum of ecosystems, ranging from magnificent coral reefs along the shoreline and the beautiful forest covered islands of Tomori Bay, to



Eye of the Wind under full sail



fresh water lakes and the almost unknown Morowali and Solto rivers which rise in the hills of Gunung Morowali in the interior. Some of these mountains rise to over two thousand metres, providing a wide variety of habitat from mountain forests to humid lowland forests.

In the lowland forests the engineers and Young Explorers will build an aerial walkway, high in the forest canopy, and study the relationship between animals and plants that live there. This information will be especially useful when compared with findings in Papua New Guinea, where animals and plants of the canopy are not in competition with species from South East Asia, as they are in Sulawesi. By looking at the similarities and differences between these areas, as well as that of Panama, it will be possible to see how their species composition has evolved in response to competition from outside areas over the centuries. Scientists will be able to see how different species have evolved into similar roles in what is called convergent evolution. In this way we know that humming birds pollinate flowers in the forests of Panama, whilst it is sun birds that do so in Papua New Guinea. But of Sulawesi we know nothing until we have been there.

The Prince of Wales summed up the objectives of the expedition when he commented at its launch that: 'Many young people long to have the chance of tasting adventure, of achieving something through personal endeavour, or simply giving service where it is needed. Operation Drake will provide many young explorers with the adventure of a lifetime and they will return from their expedition, after experiencing the satisfaction of working alongside people of many nationalities, in arduous surroundings, towards a continuous end.'

I have visited many lands and enjoyed meeting many people; but never have I received such great hospitality and kindness as I have in the paradise of Papua New Guinea. This exciting and fascinating land has clearly a wonderful contribution to make to international understanding. — *Lieutenant-Colonel John Blashford-Snell is vice chairman and director of operations of Operation Drake.*

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