Sky Pilot News March 1971

Marella Mission Farm
Sky Pilot Fellowship Ltd., Marella Mission Farm

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WAYNE
GEORGE'S DOG: From the Sky Pilot's Log 2CH Broadcast.

When I was at the Mission in Arnhem Land George visited me so often that I think he had begun to look on it as his second home. I was usually kept too busy to spend time visiting him, but one afternoon I felt that I needed a break and so I rode down to his hut for a change. As I explained previously, the hut was built of paper-bark fastened to rough bush timber. It was quite a good hut, as huts go, but it was awkward at this time because there was no door. Of course, there had been a door originally but it met with an accident. It happened this way: George used to fasten the door at night in order to keep the dozens of camp dogs on the outside. These dogs were camp-mates in one sense, but at other times there was a good hut, too. I made it out of saplings and covered it with paper-bark. It kept the dogs out all right, too.

"Well, where's the door now? What made you take it down?"

"That was just an unfortunate accident. You see I had fastened up the door for the night and was just gettin' into bed — it was dark, you understand. I pulled off my elastic side boots and put me feet down in the blankets and — strike me dead, Smithy — I put'em right on top of a thunderin' big snake."

"I guess that shook you up. What did you do?"

"What did I do? What'd anyone do? I shot out of bed and was half way down to the billabong before I pulled up."

"I don't altogether blame you. But that doesn't explain about the door."

"Doesn't it just! Didn't I tell you I fastened up that door before I got into bed? Well, for months I didn't have no door and I got used to wanderin' in and out. This time I was in a heck of a hurry and I clean forgot about the door. It was real dark and . . . well, I took the door with me. Went clean through it. Since then I've never had the heart to make a new one."

"But don't the dogs still worry you at night?"

"Nope! I fixed 'em. You know that there cattle dog of mine — Pincher? Well I tied him under my bunk at night and if ever a camp dog put his nose in that door Pincher had a bit outer him. He's an intelligent dog, that; he soon learned 'em."

"I don't know about intelligent; he's a savage brute. The first time I came here to see you he nearly had the seat out of my pants."

"Maybe he did, maybe he did, Smithy, but that was my fault. I forgot to tell him you was comin'. You can't blame Pincher for that."

"Do you mean to tell me that the dog would have understood you?"

"Of course he would. That dog understands every word I say. Some people think that because a dog can't talk he can't understand what we say. I had that dog since he was a pup. I paid a quid for him and carried him home in me pocket."

"Who did you buy him from? I can see he is a thoroughbred even if he's savage. Where did you get him?"

"I bought him from old Boozin' Bill at Pine Creek. You remember old Bill, don't you?"

"I certainly do. Poor old Bill! In over ten years I don't think he ever went more than a hundred yards from the pub. I don't know how he got the money to live — let alone to buy the drink he did."

"Oh, I like dogs all right, don't get me wrong, but I reckoned I'd had enough of dogs at night so I put a door on me hut to keep 'em out. It was usual to keep too busy to spend time visiting him, but one afternoon I felt that I needed a break and so I rode down to his hut for a change. As I explained previously, the hut was built of paper-bark fastened to rough bush timber. It was quite a good hut, as huts go, but it was awkward at this time because there was no door. Of course, there had been a door originally but it met with an accident. It happened this way: George used to fasten the door at night in order to keep the dozens of camp dogs on the outside. These dogs were camp-mates in one sense, but at other times there was a good hut, too. I made it out of saplings and covered it with paper-bark. It kept the dogs out all right, too.

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"Oh, he was one of them 'remittance' men. Left home for the good of the family name. The Bank in Darwin sent along a cheque every month from the old man at home. He's been well educated, too, though you wouldn't have guessed it by the look of him. Sometimes when he was drunk he would talk some foreign language by the hour. The doctor said he talked Homer, but I never heard of that language, did you?"

"That would be Greek. Homer was one of the early Greek poets. So Bill used to recite Homer, did he? Well, there are some strange wrecks in this country. I remember he used to live in a bag and tin humpty near the pub."

"That's him. Well, he owned Pincher's mother. Supposed to have brought her out from England with him. Anyone would have given him a fiver for her any day. You know, Smithy, I've known Bill to sell his boots for beer at the end of the month. Then he'd sing songs or stand on his head or cadge a few coppers from anyone soft enough to listen to his story. He sank pretty low, but drunk or sober, he'd never sell his dog. You know that dog used to go into the pub with him and Bill would share his beer with her. And, Smithy, I reckon that dog had more sense than a man. She knew when she'd had enough. She'd drink everything that was offered to her till she'd had enough, and then not another drop would she touch. Carried her drink like a lady, too! She'd walk out of that there pub without a sign of a stagger. Not like Bill."

"Well, you must remember she had four legs to balance on. That might have made a difference."

"Oh, I dunno. Bill couldn't manage two legs; heaven knows what he'd of done with four. But as I was sayin', that there mother of Pincher used to take Bill home when she reckoned he'd had enough. She'd take him by the trouser leg and drag him home and then sit by him till he sobered up."

"There's no doubt dogs are intelligent, and faithful too."

"That's what I'm tellin' you. Well, one day Bill got tired of bein' dragged home afore he was properly soused and he chained the dog up and went to the pub on his own. He got properly full that day and went to sleep in the sun on the doorstep of the pub."

"Well, what happened then?"

"That there dog of his strained at the chain till her neck was all raw and bleedin' from the collar. But she broke the chain and came down to the pub at the gallop. She stood guard over Bill because he was too drunk to shift and wouldn't let anyone go into the pub or come out in case they trampled on him. A couple of us tried to shift Bill into the shade and she nearly cat us; we had to leave him there."

"Well, no, but the customers had to climb in and out of the windin'. She was a faithful animal, was Pincher's mother. A couple of days later she had pups but all of 'em was born dead except Pincher. I reckon she had injured herself breakin' the chain."

"And how did you come to get Pincher?"

"I waited until Bill was properly sober then I gave him the father of a hidin' and made him promise never to chain up his dog again. Then I gave him a quid for Pincher as his mother was too busy mindin' Bill to be able to look after a family of her own. And Pincher's been a good dog too; he's never failed me yet."

As George finished speaking Pincher came over from the camp and rubbed against George. George suddenly looked embarrassed, and as the wind blew my way I noticed a terrible smell — Pincher had been rolling in something dead. I felt sorry for George as he ordered the dog away in disgrace.

"I can't make it out," said George. "I've trained Pincher since he was a pup and he's an intelligent dog, yet I can't break him from that habit of rollin' in anythin' dead he can find. It just don't make sense. Why on earth would he want to do it?"

"I don't know, George. But dogs are hunters by instinct — it's bred in them — and I can make a guess. A dog's scent carries a long way and the wild bush animals they hunt can scent them a long way off and so make their escape. But if a dog rolls in something dead it hides the scent of the dog. Instead of scenting the dog the animals would scent something dead and would not be alarmed even though the dog stalked close to them. Anything dead completely disguises any other odour."

"Well, now, I never thought of that. Maybe you're right, Smithy. There's nothin' smells as strong as somethin' dead. I guess we men have lost most of our sense of smell. I couldn't scent game at a distance, like Pincher can, but if I pass anythin' dead — well, I reckon I can smell that all right and I shoo off quick and lively."

"I'm afraid that's why a lot of people sheer off some of us Christians and we wonder why. When we become Christians our old self dies. That is only right and proper. But often we are so eager to go out and help someone else that we don't wait to see that the old self is not only dead but buried. When we approach others they are unable to detect the scent of our new life because the smell of something dead still clings to us. It even
hides the sweetness of the new life that is in Christ Jesus. And so we can learn a lesson from Pincher and make sure that we never roll in those things from our dead past that will spoil our new life and cause others to shrink away in disgust. Pincher is a good dog and a faithful one, but at the moment he doesn’t smell like a good dog but like something dead. It would be a terrible thing if the same could be said of us.

Well, the years have gone by and Pincher has been gone for a long time now, but I still think of him and the lesson we learned from him whenever my own dog rolls in something dead.

And the final entry in today’s log is taken from the fourth chapter of Ephesians: “Put off ... the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

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THE DARK CHILDREN: In February we accepted the care of four more small boys, brothers, aged from six to ten. They had been allowed to run wild in the city and had not attended school for some time. The ten year old had been before the Court charged with breaking, entering and stealing. He was remanded for a month and during this time he stayed with us; later he went back to the Court and was placed on a bond for three months and his mother was to look after him. The other three boys remained with us. Mrs. Warwick took the four boys to the doctor for a check-up and the usual needles. She and the doctor chased one boy round the room and finally dragged him from under the couch. The doctor had to sit on him while Mrs. Warwick held his legs — but he had his needle. The boys were rather a problem at first but they seem to be settling down reasonably well.

Our children do very well at sport and this makes them popular at School. In swimming Greg represented the Primary School in the area and zone; Mervyn represented the school in the area and zone and will shortly represent it in the State. In the High School Geoff represented the School in the zone and has been chosen to represent it in the State.

Colin has been doing well on the dairy where he is working and the manager is so pleased with him that he agreed to take another boy and Les was given this position. Rita is also doing well in the factory where she is working. She phones us every week and comes out to see us when she can. Colin does likewise.

Marj came to us when she was five years old. At about fifteen she left School and worked on the domestic staff for about five years; now she has gone to a position in the country. It was her own wish to go to the country but there were tears when the time came for her to leave. This has been the only home she has known and it is only natural that she should feel the parting.

Anne is still waiting for a position. She is a State ward and we have to wait for the Child Welfare Department to find her a position and this means some delay. She has been waiting for a considerable time for a position in the country.

Eddie is now working with the P.M.G. Department and seems to like the work. He comes out to see us frequently. He had the misfortune to have his utility stolen recently. It was recovered by the police but it had been stripped. The Insurance Company treated it as a write-off and Eddie has bought another utility with the insurance money he received.

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BRUCE LANGFORD-SMITH: The constant wet weather has been a great handicap on the farm. Bruce had paddocks of beautiful Japanese millet ready for hay; but every time he cut this and tried to make hay there was heavy rain and it was lost. However, he has made a temporary silo and has chaffed up a lot of maize for silage; this should help through the winter months to provide feed for the cows.

Our dairy herd is doing very well and we have had more milk than the children can use. We are also making most of the butter used for the children and staff.

Bruce expects to be married in August and the Mission Council is planning to build a small cottage on the Mission Farm for him and his wife.

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CONCLUSION: We have much cause to praise God for His wonderful provision in the past. This is His work and to Him be all the praise, honour and glory. We can look forward in confidence to His continued blessing.