

A DREAM CAME TRUE!

Our Singing Ambassador

TWENTY years ago a barefooted little aboriginal boy ran laughing and playing on the Murgon Aboriginal Reserve in Queensland. A happy, carefree youngster, with a heart full of childhood happiness and his voice full of song, he never dreamed, even in his wildest flights of imagination, that one day he would stand on the concert platforms of the world, to receive the enthusiastic applause of tremendous audiences.

When an aboriginal child is born in Australia, it is traditional for the grandfather to prophesy the future of the child. On 13th September, 1924, when Harold Blair was born on the Murgon Reservation in Queensland, his grandfather inscribed the future of this male child on a roll of bark from the gum tree. He predicted that young Harold would have four wives and would live to the age of fifty. He also wrote that Harold would become a great chief and leader of his people. It is doubtful whether or not Harold will have three more wives to fulfil his grandfather's prophecy, as he's very much in love with his present wife, but he has managed to become a great leader of his people through perseverance, determination and the love of singing.



Harold Blair and his charming wife.

To-day, Harold is recognised as an outstanding example of aboriginal courage and fortitude and his ambitions reflect the excellent aid offered to his people by the governments of Australia.

When he was four months old, Harold's mother moved to another reservation where Harold has fond memories of his earliest years. When he was seven years old, his mother remarried, moved away, and left him on the reservation, which was operated by the Salvation Army.



Young Harold's hobby was singing. He sang when he worked, he sang when he played, and he sang just for the pleasure he got out of it.

At the age of sixteen, he applied for his first job, on a dairy farm. This was a memorable event, for it was also the first time he wore a pair of shoes. Even to-day it pains him to think about it, because he used to keep taking his shoes off whenever he could, to relieve his tired, aching feet from their unaccustomed cramped condition.

His first job, with one other boy, consisted of milking 100 cows twice a day and clearing the fields of weed and scrub.

The dairy farm in the McPherson Ranges was so far from the nearest town that even the farmer's wife flatly refused to live there.

Only once in six months did he get into town for a haircut, which is surely a long time between clippers. For this job he received 15s. a month. All of this, except 1s. a week, was sent back to the reservation to help pay for the clothes and rail fare which had been given to him for his trip to his job.

Six months on this job and Harold was ready for a change.

He quit the job and returned to the Reservation, much against the farmer's wishes. He obtained another job closer to home and near his mother and stepfather. This next job, with five other boys, consisted of milking 25 cows twice a day and for this he received £2 a week.

Shortly after World War II broke out, Harold decided to leave this dairy to go to work in the canefields and started out on £6 a week.

In the town of Bundaberg there were two churches . . . one attended by the white community, the other by the coloured workers.

In order to go from his lodgings to the church on the other side of the town, he had to pass the white people's homes and church.

Never forgetting his passion for singing, Harold often led the boys down the street, through the town, singing church hymns and native folk songs.

Most of his singing was an imitation of the old gramophone records he had heard, by John McCormack and Richard Crooks.