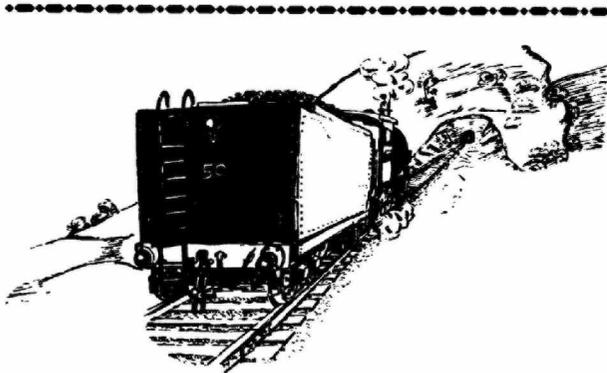


CHRISTMAS TREE and CONCERT at Walgett Aboriginal School

Why the gaily decorated school? And why the tree on the verandah so heavily laden with gifts? Santa Claus was coming to the school!! What excitement!!! All part of the splendid concert and Christmas tree held at the school on Monday, 14th December, 1959. Visitors came from the Reserve and the town of Walgett.

The concert opened with a prayer by the Rev. Ewings and much praise should go to him for the opening play that began with the Nativity and concluded with the visit of the Three Wise Men. Following this was a chorus of four girls, Cynthia Bullaman, Barbara Fernando, Beryl Morgan and Prudence Murphy, ably singing "O Little Town of Bethlehem".

Then it was the "littlies" turn whose contribution was aided by several drums. Their teacher, Mr. F. Crimmings, acted as conductor. Next came the children's choir trained by the Headmaster, Mr. S. Rixon. They sang the Christmas Carols, "O Come All Ye Faithful", "Once in Royal David's City", "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night", "Silent Night, Holy Night", etc. They were accompanied by cymbals played by boys sitting in the front row. The choir concluded with three negro spirituals, "Old Black Joe", "Swanee River" and "Turkey in the Straw" rendered in a very appropriate manner. "Tom Dooley" was the next item on the programme sung by Roy Murphy, Baymus Fernando, Keith Dennis and Sid Cubby.



Another fine sketch from Stan Ashby, of Michelago

A whisper was heard then that "Santa" was coming, so whilst awaiting his arrival the hill-billys added their music to the evening. Dudley Dennis, Jr., Willie Morgan and Reg. Russell contributing to this effort, playing their guitars and singing. Then came a very unusual musical instrument made from a tin with a piece of string added, and played with a nail by Peter Doolan, in partnership with Billy Morgan on the guitar. The numbers rendered were "Moonlight Bay" and "Gold Mine in the Sky".

By this time that "mellow" and "bewhiskered" gentleman Santa Claus had arrived, and the presentation of gifts began.

To conclude the evening three cheers were given for "Santa", and all children present were given refreshments.

Thus came to a close a memorable evening which will be long remembered by the children, and concluded the school year of 1959 at the Walgett Aboriginal School.

WELFARE ACTIVITIES

Male Welfare Officers, specially selected and trained for the work involved, are located at Head Office, Leeton, Kempsey, Lismore, Dubbo and Moree.

A female Welfare Officer is stationed at Head Office, another one being located at Kempsey. Although the work of Welfare Officers supplements that of Managers and Matrons of Aboriginal Stations, their duties lie primarily in the direction of advising and assisting those Aborigines residing outside supervised Reserves and in improving relationships between the Board and Aborigines and between the latter and members of the white community.

Male Welfare Officers are required to cover vast distances in caring for Aborigines residing in their districts and a major proportion of their official time is devoted to this end. They are also expected to identify themselves with public bodies within their areas, address meetings of interested civic philanthropic organisations, assist in the inauguration of Aboriginal District Welfare and Social Committees and secure employment and accommodation for distressed Aborigines. A very important duty of Welfare Officers is to take action for committal of neglected children to the care of the Board.

Both female Welfare Officers are trained nurses. The one stationed at Head Office is obliged to make special visits of inspection to country districts, as directed by the Superintendent in particular cases, is responsible for arranging admission of Aboriginal patients—mainly children—to Metropolitan Hospitals, placing girls in employment, inspecting and reporting on the homes of applicants for wards to be boarded out, adopted or employed as domestics, and for periodically visiting such wards to ensure that their welfare and living conditions are satisfactory.

The female Welfare Officer stationed at Kempsey devoted her activities last year mainly to assisting in a campaign conducted by the Department of Public Health towards the eradication of hookworm and roundworm from Aboriginal children. As the incidence of worm infestation is pronounced throughout the North Coast district, the work of the Welfare Officer is most onerous, particularly as it is essential that remedial measures be carried out if the campaign is to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion.