



## Harry Penrith

# A Personality and a Purpose

Mr Harry Penrith, winner of the N.A.D.O.C. essay competition (senior section), is Assistant Registrar of Wagga Agricultural College. He is an Aborigine and rightly proud of his people and their traditions. Having benefited from the policy of the Aborigines Welfare Board in achieving integration himself, his life-purpose is to bring the Aborigine to enjoy his full citizen rights in our culture. As President of the newly-formed Aborigines Advancement League in the Riverina, he seeks not charity, but justice and discriminating advice for his race.

Harry was born at Wallaga Lakes on the south coast of New South Wales, and suffered the sad loss of his mother who died in giving him birth. Separated then from his family and deprived of family life and training, Harry has nevertheless developed into a strong and wholesome character. He is a popular and well-regarded citizen, gentle and courteous, friendly, with a splendid bearing and quiet dignity and blessed with many friends. He says, "I am amazed at the easiness with which I am accepted with my family into the community. We have tremendous neighbours and I feel strongly that their friendliness is in no way false."

What factors have produced this happy result? Harry himself sees four moulding forces.

- Bomaderry Children's Home, which nurtured him from earliest days. "I am sure that this home, run by devoted Christian women of the United Aborigines Mission has been a great influence on my later life. There I learned the reality of God's love for me. I would wish that all Government institutions for Aborigines were continually staffed by officers of active Christian principles".

- Kinchela Boys' Home and school, where Christian teachers ensured his excellent progress in academic work, and outside school hours, further developed his grasp of moral and spiritual principles, for which he is grateful.

- Kempsey High School, to which he travelled daily 26 miles by bus. Completing Fifth Year there, he was fully integrated into the life of the school, playing for the school First XI cricket and captaining the Rugby League First XIII. Thus he had benefited by the Aborigines Welfare Board policy of ensuring a full education to all who may benefit by it.

- Petersham Baptist Young Men's Hostel, where he boarded after taking a position as clerk in the Sydney offices of the Department of Agriculture. "I am sure that the Hostel was a steady influence in my life. I developed strong and continuing friendships with other young men, now chemists, engineers and teachers and found myself warmly welcome there".

Serving with the Department of Agriculture continuously for 10 years, Harry now receives £1,728 per annum. This stability gives ground for hope that he is but a forerunner of many Aborigines who without losing national identity, may develop into self-reliant citizens of our community. He comments, "I appreciate my good fortune in all this, but I cannot forget that in the Northern Territory pastoral industry many of my people are paid only £2 10s. od. weekly and their keep".

Today, Harry maintains a modern home in a good residential area of Wagga, where he lives happily raising a family of four vivacious and happy children. It was always his desire to marry within his own race, and certainly the health, good looks and beautiful dressing of his family justify his goal of showing how successful integration can be, in the friendly atmosphere of Wagga. His home was obtained through the assistance of the Welfare Board and the Rural Bank, which has also given him much guidance in financial affairs. This is a part of European culture that takes real adjustment, before Aborigines can benefit by the intricacies of consumer-credit, and he is grateful for such help.

It is a joy to Harry that his oldest girl, Rebecca, is in her second year of pre-school kindergarten and learning well. Harry expresses his view that "education is the most vital aspect of her integration into Australian society". His newborn son has been named Garfield after the dashing West Indian cricketer, Garfield Sobers, and it is Harry's hope that cricket will loom large in the boy's social future.

Harry has played for Riverina Rugby Union against the New Zealand All Blacks, and for New South Wales Rugby Union against Victoria and has found sport a great stepping stone to social acceptance.

To complete his own development as a person and in response to deep convictions, it is Harry's intention shortly to enter into full membership of the local Baptist Church, where he will be eagerly welcomed for his Christian character and sincerity.

As a friend of many years' standing has put it, "Harry has attained the major goals of his own life. Where others of his family and school-friends have suffered sad loss in their development, Harry has faced the same problems, with great earnestness and wonderful success. All the problems of living in institutions, severe moral testings from the example of others, family and financial problems all have been met with a perseverance and faith that is remarkable. Harry is a man greatly respected, and worthy of our admiration. His future is bright and he will not rest till all that can be done for his people is done".