

that I had taken, to wait until the younger men had gone, had given them confidence. Had I not done this, and dropped some information which I shouldn't have, then my foot would have been in it and opening an oyster would have been easier than getting any further information. In the end though, they did agree to show me their bullroarer—the only one they had with them. In return, I promised to show them a holy object from a different country, about 1,500 miles away.

We met that night and they unwrapped the symbol most carefully. It was engraved with circles and lines. They said it was very pretty and rubbed their fingers on it. Then down they went, onto their knees and the chanting started. It was the most sacred thing you could've seen anywhere. It couldn't have been more sacred if it had been a high mass, this quiet, deep chanting. These men couldn't possibly see, or show me, a sacred object without chanting. These things are sacred. They are not something to be brought out and just looked at. They are to be felt and experienced.

I have known occasions, when one of a group of Aborigines will fall down unexpectedly. The others would ignore him. When I asked what he was doing, they explained that the man had got a twitch somewhere in his body. At once he would go into a receptive mood and the twitch would

warn him that a relation, perhaps his father, would arrive later on. This sort of thing governs a great deal of the Aborigines' lives and apparently it works—quite enough for them to act on, at any rate. Birds give signs of events happening hundreds of miles away. So, the Aboriginal people seem to live on two levels. There is the ordinary level of everyday life, and this other level, this inner meaning of things, which is present all the time.

The thing that I treasure most was my personal links with tribal Aborigines. In the old days, I might get a message to go to some station. I might have to cross a river to get there. On one such occasion, I was wondering how on earth I was going to get across with all my equipment. I was starting to worry about it, when an Aboriginal man, who had been out with me often, stuck his head between my legs. He carried me and the gear across a wide stretch of water as though I'd weighed nothing. I'd said nothing to him, but he hadn't liked to see me worried. It's these kinds of memories that I treasure. These personal memories were what made my work so worthwhile. In the places where these old friends are still alive, I could still get the same warm welcome from them. It doesn't matter how much water has flowed under the bridge, I know that if I were to land in the middle of Arnhem Land tomorrow, they'll say "G'day, old man."



*Above: Mrs Ruth Walker, Mrs Val Hinton, Mrs Greg Potts, June Potts and family, Seven Hills.*

*Top Left: Alan and Nola Roberts and family, La Perouse.*

*Left: Donnoleen Campbell and Michelle Campbell, La Perouse.*