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APRIL, 1963

SUNDAY 14

EASTER DAY

104-261

Eastwards for 4 hours today and we have finally
reached the Kauwol Valley. Leaving Fukutu we descended
rapidly to the Kauwol river which we had to bridge.
It started raining shortly after we started this morning
and we were soon soaked, the rain keeping up
almost all the way. We must have crossed the
Kauwol at about 5,000ft (or less) and from there
we climbed steadily to our present camp which is
at 6,800ft. Most of the way we were on about
the best track we have had since the beginning
of the patrol and it was ~~was~~ a pleasure being
able to walk without looking where one puts every
foot. It was so nice being on a good track for
a change that the rain and the steep climb did
not even worry me, although it was fairly cold
once we pulled up.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (14/04/63)

Broke camp and returned to Fukutu where gear sorted out and excess dumped, thence on through the hamlet of Oktambip and camped in the bush at 6,800 a.s.l., after bridging the Kauwol River. Track time 9 hours

APRIL, 1963

EASTER MONDAY

MONDAY 15
105-260

Nearly 7 hours on the track today and I am exhausted. — actually I'm altogether sick and tired of this patrol walking miles every day, doing no work of any use to Matrap, being filthy dirty all the time and one's clothes always damp and on top of it all being hungry most of the time. It's just getting beyond a joke and the sooner it is over the better.

Today we started off still on the good track and climbed to about 7,000 ft and after $\frac{3}{4}$ hr the track deteriorated and the rest of the way we were once again on a pretty rough track. We then started descending and came down some almost vertical slopes, two of which took an hour each. After 5 hours we reached the Alice river at 4,000 ft (i.e. had come down 3,000 in about 4 hours) and had to build a bridge across it. After crossing we continued another 15 minutes and are now camped on a 45° slope — there just isn't anything flatter than that unless we climbed to the top of this mountain which will probably take 3 hours or so. What we could see of the country ahead of us looked terrifying and we appear to have a few very rough days ahead of us. What an Easter week-end this has been!

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (15/04/63)

Broke camp and passed through Oyamtobip hamlet, a Bundit group, thence over the Kutum River to camp at 4,100 feet. Track time 5½ hours

APRIL, 1963

TUESDAY 16
106-259

EASTER TUESDAY (VIC.)

A further 6 hours on the track today and it has been a very hard day. There have been some particularly steep ups and downs but fortunately we are on tracks that are not too bad. We passed through one inhabited village with about 20 people in it and managed to buy some food from them - that at least means we can have a start with our dinner. The country here is extremely rugged and about the worst we have been in as far as cliffs and gorges go but at least the improved tracks make up for that. Tonight we are camped at 5900 ft which means we climbed 1800 ft. today.

Halfway here we ran into one of Ham Classen's men with 9 extra carriers to help us. We should meet up with him at the village he is waiting on Thursday and then it will probably be another week to Telefomin.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (16/04/63)

Broke camp and passed through Atambin hamlet, thence over the Alice River and camped at 5900 feet. En route rendezvoused with Corporal Handari and fresh carriers, ex Mr Classen's group. All heavy loads passed to new carriers. Track time 6 hours.

APRIL, 1963

WEDNESDAY 17

107-258

After 5 hours walking today we have got to the biggest village we have seen for many months consisting of over a dozen huts. We are now out of the rugged mountains and today's walking was on relatively level ground and about the easiest walk we have had for weeks. The people we are amongst now are FAIWO MINS and are the wildest looking ones we have seen what with painted faces and all kinds of face decorations such as feathers etc. Also a few of the huts are "men's houses" and have painted wooden walls - women aren't allowed in these houses.

Today on the radio the D.O. told Des that the whole patrol was to fly out of Telefomin and back to Kiunga. They seem to think we are in no state to walk all the way back. Des is however determined to walk back and reckons it would be a disgrace to be flown out. I would also rather walk back but as the country we will then walk through is miles away from the West Irian border any work I could do there would be of little use to Matmap so I'll probably have to fly back. This means I could be back in Melbourne early next month and it will be rather nice to be back in civilization, although really I couldn't worry one way or the other.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (17/04/63)

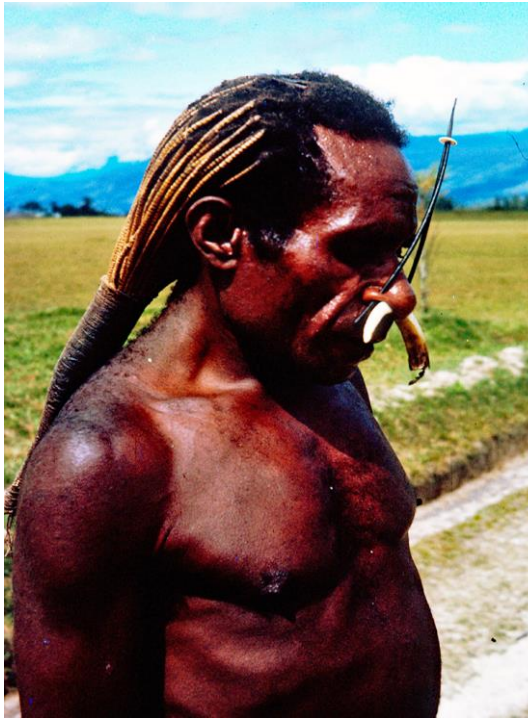
Broke camp and moved to Bultemvip village, a large village of some 30 houses and only one day from the westernmost Telefomin patrolled area. Camped at Bultemvip 5,500 a.s.l. and at the foot of the Hindenberg Mountains. Track time 4¹/₂ hours.



'The Faiwomin people'



Part 5 – Fukutu Drop Site to Telefomin (14 April to 28 April 1963)



APRIL, 1963

THURSDAY 18
108-257

late yesterday afternoon the cloud lifted and we found that the village we were in was up against a great big mountain or rather a huge sheer cliff. It is one of the most impressive sights I have ever seen and although not the highest mountain we have seen this trip it is most certainly the most beautiful. This morning Res and I stayed behind while the rest of the patrol moved on so that we could take some photos. Unfortunately it was straight into the sun and by the time the sun was high enough it became overcast.

Last night (actually 2 a.m. this morning) I managed to observe 3 stars but it was hardly worth getting up for. This is the first night for many weeks that I could do any astrowork.

It took us just over 2 hours hard walking to get to this village where we have joined up with Sam. There have been lots of people bringing in tans since we arrived and they proved to be quite a collection with all sorts of decorations and painted faces.

We are about 4 days from Telefomin but one of our men cut his foot badly while putting up a tent here and had to have a few stitches in it. This means we will probably have to wait here for several days till he can move. On top of it all we expected Sam to have some decent tinned food here but he seems to have nothing so it just means a few extra days before we have anything reasonable to eat.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (18/04/63)

Moved to Sogolomik where rendezvoused with Mr Classen and the balance of his party. Corporal Handari incapacitated with a badly staked foot, Constable Kasari with badly cut foot sutured, and patrol of necessity again stood down. Camped at Sogolomik 4,600 a.s.l. Track time 3½ hours.



Dan Classen with Des Fitzer



Time to dry-out the Boots!

APRIL, 1963

FRIDAY 19
109-256

So we start sitting around again and it is not the most cheerful prospect. At least I have some calculations to do which will help to get the time go by. It has been quite a nice day and we have been able to sit out in the sun.

There are a lot of the local people around our camp most of the time and one has an audience no matter what you're doing. Brushing one's teeth seems to fascinate them.

APRIL, 1963

SATURDAY 20
110-255

Another rather boring day and by the look of things will only start off for Telefomin on Wednesday or Thursday. Our food position is again awful - we still have a bit of porridge left which we have for breakfast; then usual amount taro for lunch and boys' meat and rice in the evenings. Other than that there is nothing of interest.

APRIL, 1963

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY

SUNDAY 21
111-254

LOW SUNDAY

Nothing of interest today - just sitting around and hoping the time will pass quickly. We are getting a good supply of taro from the locals so the carriers are getting a good feed. The stores of us also fill up with taro and I wouldn't know what we'd do without it - taro is not too bad to eat but one gets awfully tired of it.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (19 - 22/04/63)

Spelling carriers and injured personnel at Sogolomik [4 days].

APRIL, 1963

MONDAY 22
112-253

Much the same as ~~Sog~~ yesterday but at least we'll move again tomorrow.

APRIL, 1963

ST. GEORGE'S DAY
TUESDAY 23
113-252

Walking again today and it was a beauty. We climbed a fantastic cliff - I wouldn't have believed we could get up it. Fortunately the track was quite reasonable most of the way and except for the climb which took almost 2 hours, the going was fairly easy. From the top of the cliff we had a beautiful view back towards last night's camp but unfortunately it was overcast so the photos I took will probably not be the best.

We are camped at 7,300 ft so climbed ~~to~~ 2,500 ft today. This is a very nice camp but it is bitterly cold and raining as per usual.

It's about 4 days to Telefomin but we'll probably have one days rest and get there on Sunday.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (23/04/63)

Departed Sogolomik and camped in bush after passing through hamlet of Bleblil at 7,300 a.s.l.
Track time 5½ hours.

APRIL, 1963

WEDNESDAY 24

114251

A very wild night last night with a fair bit of wind and plenty of rain. It was still raining this morning and we only started walking at 9.30 in light drizzle. After a while we started climbing steeply and got up to 8,400 ft and then it was almost straight down. From the top we got a beautiful view into New Guinea looking down into the valley. At last we have crossed the border from Papua into New Guinea and its like being in another world. On this side of the mountains there is a broad valley and the mountains are much less rugged and covered in grass (where there have been old gardens) It is really a beautiful spot and we are very well set up in a rest house at 4,800 ft. (We did $4\frac{1}{2}$ hrs walking today, went up 1,100 ft and then down 3,600 ft).

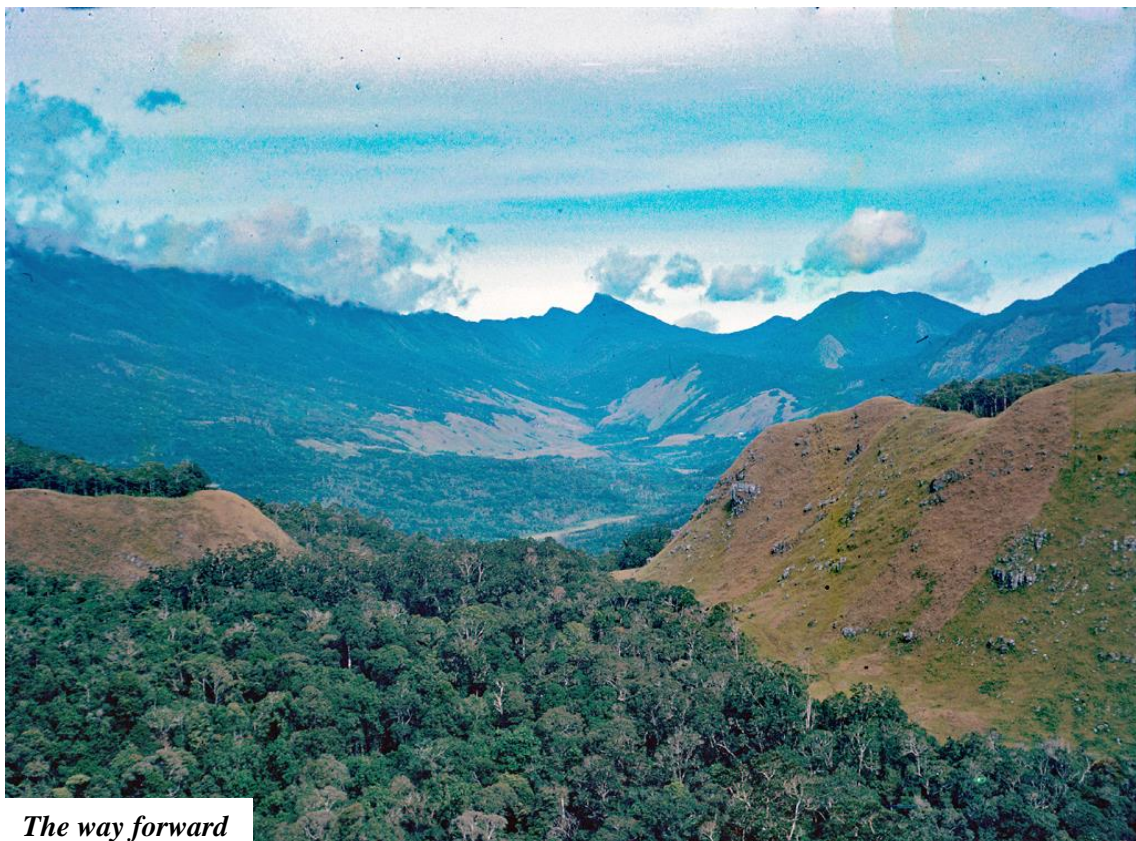
There are hundreds of people in this valley and we've got a mound of food - mainly taro, sweet potatoes, bananas, sugarcane, yams, pumpkins, cucumbers and tomatoes. What it is to be in a land of plenty again. Tonight we will ^{all} be having a feast - even the boys' meal should be quite good with all the vegetables. It's just unbelievable that two sides of a mountain can be so different. The last 2 hours walking was along almost perfectly level ground on a beautiful wide track with only grass and no jungle alongside it.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (24/04/63)

Broke camp and crossed into Territory of New Guinea between Mts Aiyung and Fugilil at 8,400 a.s.l. Slept at Atemtabip rest house. 4,200 a.s.l. Track time 6¹/₂ hours.



The way back



The way forward

APRIL, 1963

ST. MARK'S DAY

THURSDAY 25

115-250

ANZAC DAY

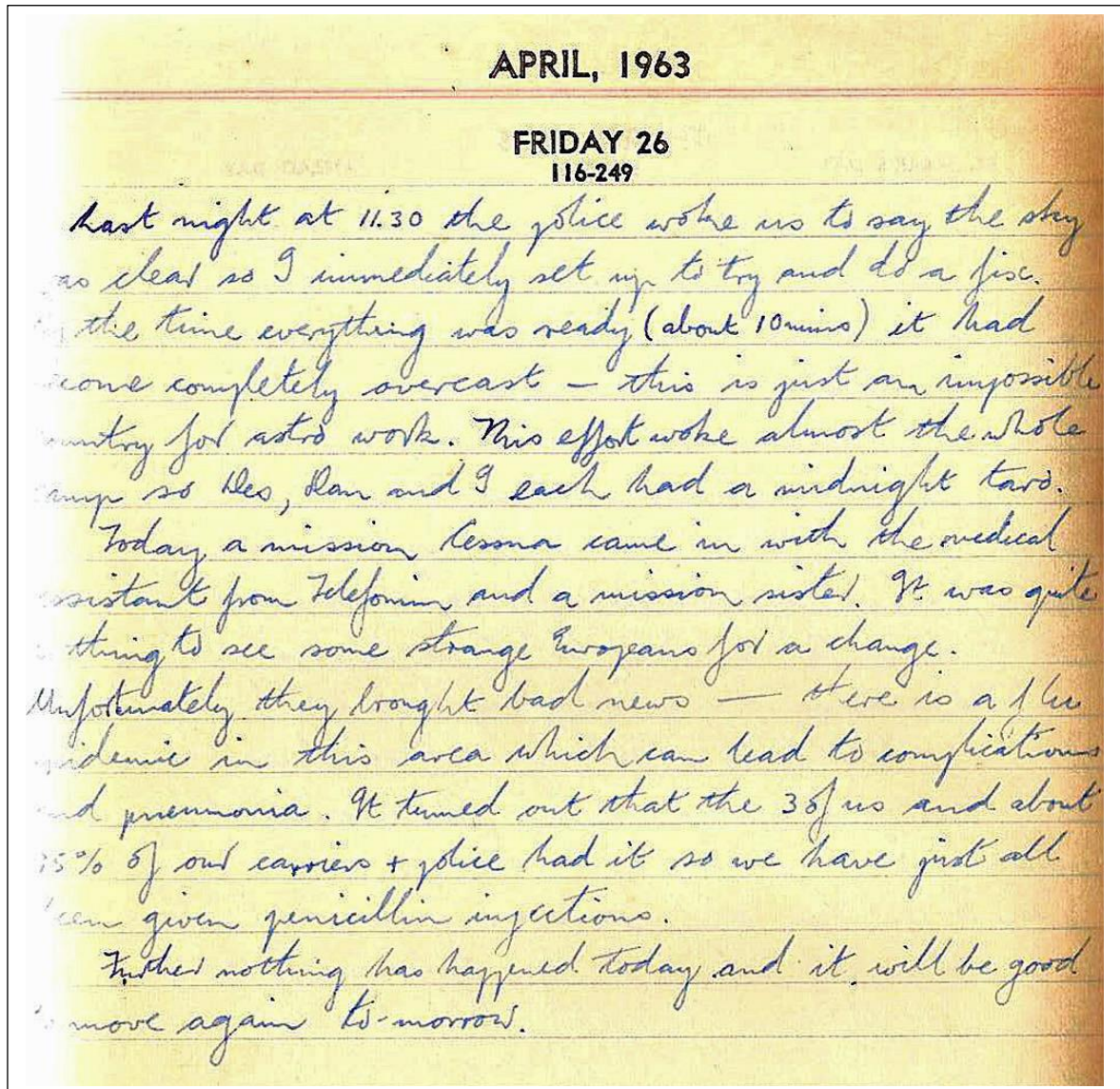
This is definitely the land of milk and honey. Last night's dinner consisted of boji meat, mealies (2 between the 3 of us), sweet-potato chips, tomatoes, cucumbers, pit-pit (a kind of grass stalk a bit like asparagus), chobel (something like a marrow) and native cabbage (leaves of some kind of plant not much like cabbage at all). It was quite a meal and then the cooks forgot to cook the pumpkin! Dessert consisted of bananas - its quite a change to have a full stomach again.

This morning it was drizzling but we had only 2 hrs. walk to the next rest house where there is a village and mission airstrip. (We believe there is a mission plane coming in tomorrow). By 11 a.m. it was a beautiful day and we had a swim in the river. This is a lovely valley and its terrific to be out of the jungle although there is plenty of it up on the mountain slopes.

Again we got a heap of food this afternoon and have been eating bananas, tomatoes and sweet-potatoes all day. We also got quite a lot of mealies, some guavas and 2 papaws so will be eating well again tonight. Apart all I can write about is the food but after what we have been through these past 2 months its quite a thing to have plenty and in variety again.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (25/04/63)

Departed Atemtabip and moved to Tifalmin rest house in one hour. As for last night, native foodstuffs and European vegetables in abundance purchased and issued to all patrol personnel. Slept at Tifalmin.



Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (26/04/63)

At Tifalmin. Mission Aviation Fellowship Cessna in with rations ex-Telefomin. Slept at Tifalmin

APRIL, 1963

SATURDAY 27

117-248

A perfect night and by 8.30 I had completed an astro-fix.

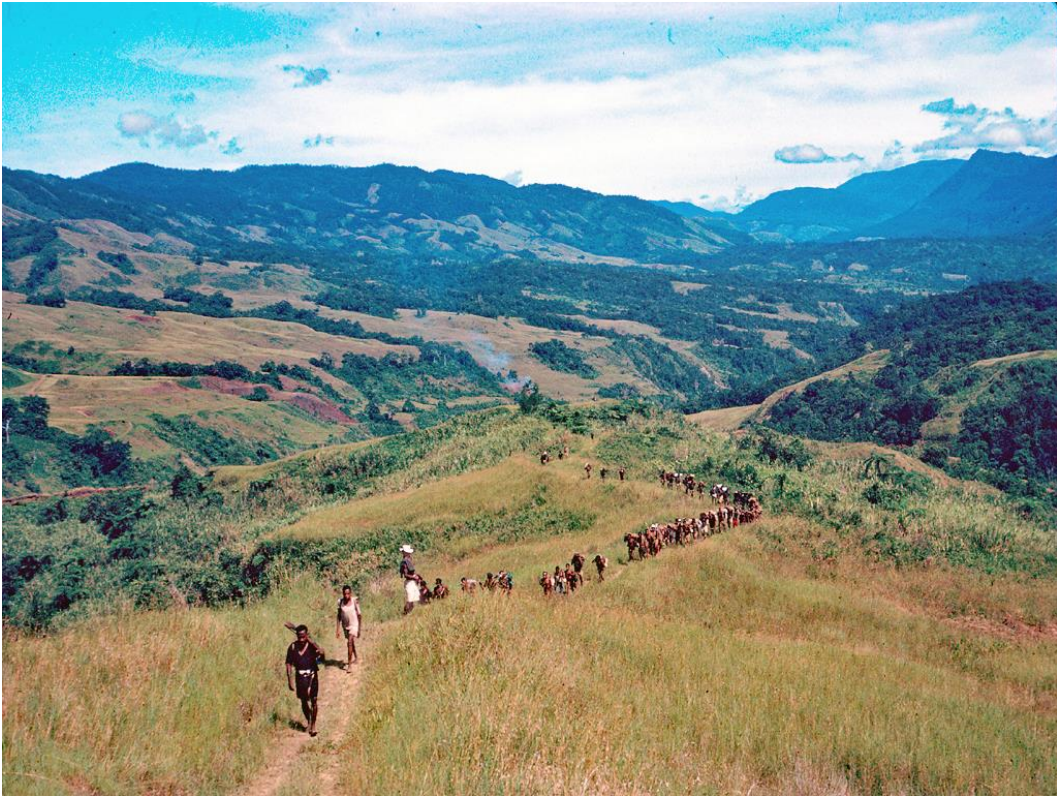
Today has been a beautiful day and we did a bit over 3 hours walking to get to the next village and rest house. On the way we crossed a high hill and from the top had a fantastic view. Looking back there was the ham valley and in this direction the valley in which Telefomin is situated and could actually see Telefomin in the distance. Unfortunately we had let the camera get ahead of us and I ran out of film and couldn't get any photos of this side.

About 4 hours walk to-morrow should get us to Telefomin. Walking here is glorious — the tracks are beautiful and after the Star mountains the little hills we have to cross present little difficulty.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (27/04/63)

Departed Tifalmin and moved to Urapmin rest house. Track time 4 hours.

Part 5 – Fukutu Drop Site to Telefomin (14 April to 28 April 1963)



On Patrol



APRIL, 1963

SUNDAY 28

2nd AFTER EASTER

118-247

Well here we are in Telefomin after 4 hours very fast walking along a beautiful track. We were out in the open grassland all the time having some terrific views. About 1½ hours out from Telefomin we crossed the Sepik river at a gorge about 20 ft wide. Telefomin itself is on a huge flat plain and the buildings are very spread out.

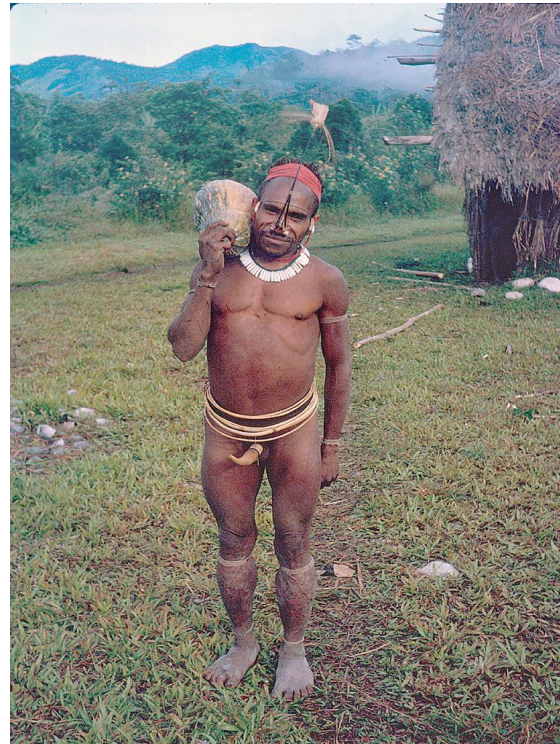
Since arriving here everybody has been so kind to us and they just can't do enough for us. Our out way to the District Office we had to pass the mission where we were met by the mission sister we'd met at Nfabini and she was waiting with cold drink and biscuits for us. Then when we arrived at the D.O. Hazel Todale (A.S.O.) took us to his home where we had a few ice cold beers and lunch. It is completely overwhelming to see European houses and speak to Europeans again after being out for so long (3 months to the day).

This afternoon we spent drinking beer with the C.P.O. Mike Brian who has spent a few years in Rhodesia and Kenya. Hazel offered to put the 3 of us up but we decided rather to camp and be independent. This evening we had dinner with Hazel and Jean and it was rather strange to be sitting in a home (a very nice one at that) and eating decent food at a table! They are a terrific couple and couldn't have been nicer to us.

Last night was again perfect and I did another astro-fix. Day was a lovely day and I could do a fix now but am a bit tired.

Extract Patrol Diary - Patrol Report Kiunga 9/62-63 (28/04/63)

Urapmin to Telefomin Government Station in 5 hours. Reported to Assistant District Officer, Telefomin, tents pitched and patrol stood down to rest.



Some local people

**This concludes Part 5 of John Groenewald's description
of his Star Mountains Patrol.**