

# THE ASOPA FILES

**Edited by Keith Jackson**

The stories in THE ASOPA FILES are contributed by people who spent time at the Australian School of Pacific Administration and relate to their personal experiences at the School and beyond the School.

The stories are yarns in the time-honoured Australian tradition. Each has more than a nodding acquaintance with the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but many have been embellished and refined in the telling and retelling.

That said, these yarns reflect, with accuracy, clarity and humour, an era that has now, sadly, passed. They show how a group of young people – most in their late teens and early twenties– adapted to what for most of them was an exotic and challenging environment.

The stories are organised into a number of sections that range from the ASOPA experience to the first Territory landfall, through the settling in period to those halcyon days when we were all Territorians.

**School Days** looks at ASOPA arrival rituals, including the perils of adjusting to city life. There were many country people who volunteered for life and work in Australia's territories.

In making the **Territory Landfall** most Asopians were confronted for the first time with the concrete reality we had been trained to deal with. This was not just Work, this was Working in the Territory - a crucial distinction. Our arrival in this new environment posed varying problems of orientation and adaptation.

The **People We Knew** include the genuinely famous such as Margaret Mead and Sir Edward Hallstrom, minor identities like anthropologist Paula Brown and artist Hal Holman, notable colleagues such as Dubbo Dave Kesby and John Waters, and the genuinely infamous like mad kiaps, recalcitrant priests and eccentrics of all hues.

And then, of course, we must visit the **Places We Were**. These stories focus on the characteristics of locations like Kopiago, Koroba, Daru, Dregerhafen, Rabaul, Kieta and Mount Wilhelm, PNG's highest mountain.

This rich blend all added up to a **Lifestyle** well beyond the ordinary. And there is no real understanding of this group of young Australians, transplanted into the fertile cultural climate of the Territory, without coming to grips with how they lived. The frustrations, deprivations and dangers as well as the social life, civil situation and recreations. Our gaze encompasses everything from buying a firearm, going on leave, dealing with randy superiors and servants, raising livestock, being transferred, punishment postings, illness, the perils of air travel and the elements.

We were involved in some outlandish **Acts & Incidents** and lived to tell the tale. There are blood soaked mattresses, scorpions and snakes, flights and fights, guns, rope bridges, gurias and volcanoes, not to mention pupils who get the better of teachers and employ creative fund raising methods.

We conclude with **The ASOPA Dictionary**, a glossary of the language reflecting the culture, values and camaraderie of Asopians, as well as some notes on our **Authors** and a **Glossary** of the Pidgin words and phrases and some other terms that appear in THE ASOPA FILES.

