NOTICE OF ORDINARY MEETING

The first general meeting of the Society for 1977 will be held in the Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide at

8.00 pm Monday, 28 March, 1977

AGENDA

1. Apologies.

2. Minutes of general meeting held Monday 25 October, 1976 to be confirmed. A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. New members.
   The following new members have been elected to the Society:

   Helen Bachmatiuk, 55 Somers Street, North Brighton
   Alexander Greig, Shurdington Road, Crafers
   Marcus Beresford, 14 Porter Street, Parkside

4. Papers and Journals.
   The following papers and journals from other Societies and Organizations will be tabled:

   Anthropological Society of Queensland Newsletter No. 84
   Anthropological Society of W.A. Vol. 13 No. 9 and Vol. 14 No. 1
   Anthropological Society of Victoria Newsletter No. 133
   Andragogia Vol. 1 No. 1 Brasil
   Research in Melanesia Vol. 1 No. 3-4 and Vol. 2 No. 1-2
   S.A. Field Naturalists Vol. 51 No. 2
   ECOS No. 10 November 1976
   Moonbi 31 December 1976
   Royal Society of S.A. Transactions Vol. 100 Pt. 4
   Conservation Council of S.A. Newsletter Vol. 4 No. 2
   Anthropological Forum Vol. 4 No. 1
   The Artifact Vol. 1 No. 3 and No. 4
   Australian National Parks & Wildlife Service Report
   Mankind Vol. 10 No. 4
   University of California Publications in Anthropology Vol. 12
3. Field Trip over long weekend in October. Details with regard to this will be announced in the near future.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are now due for the year 1977, and all members should have received a separate account. If not, please contact the Secretary.

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DR. C.P. MOUNTFORD - A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

by Mr. R.D.J. Weathersbee

The formal listing of Dr. Mountford’s work, his academic achievements and the other honours he gained during his long life will be covered elsewhere. But I am delighted to pay a personal tribute to him on behalf of his many friends.

Early in his career as an anthropologist he decided on his main objective— to convince all people that the Australia Aboriginals were not naked savages, eking out a dull and brutal existence, but a cultured and courageous people, living in harmony with their environment and with a spiritual and moral way of life that the Western world could well envy.

Monty had the passion and the energy to pursue this objective tirelessly and the skill to write books that will continue to carry his message effectively in the years to come. In the early days, without the tertiary distinctions that opened the door to academic and government money, he had to fight for every penny. He had to be commercially minded and sometimes had to do things which were frowned upon in academic circles, but all the money obtained and any profit made by him went back into producing more and more books and films, all designed to carry his message of the depth and beauty of the spiritual life of the first Australians.

He had defects, as we all have, but the characteristics which made him an extraordinary man persisted to the last days of his life: the determination and obstinacy that carried him through the many battles with political and academic bureaucracies to make major contributions to our knowledge; the insistence on perfection so evident in his photography; the toughness, both physical and mental, that drove those associated with him to perform at top pitch; the basic simplicity that made him so approachable and eager to help young anthropologists and made it so difficult to call him 'Dr. Mountford' instead of 'Monty', but above all the compassion and sense of humour which gave his message about the Aboriginal people such strength.

He performed three great services for all Australians, brown and white. He recorded for posterity myths and legends and ways of life that have now gone forever. He acted as an interpreter of the brown Australians to the white Australians. Most importantly his records and books will be an inspiration
to the Aboriginal people themselves. With the knowledge of their past spiritual culture, no Aboriginal need feel inferior to any culture, black, brown or white.

With Monty's death the era of the pioneer, self taught, Australian anthropologist comes to an end. He was the last of those men who had to endure extreme hardships in gaining their knowledge from the aboriginal people in the harsh deserts. Perhaps because of these difficulties Monty never regarded the aboriginals as scientific specimens, existing only to further an academic career, or to gain political ends. He loved and respected them, and this love and respect not only show themselves in his writings but were evident in all his thoughts and conversation. It is sad that his last book "Nomads of the Australian Desert" which epitomises his feelings and conveys the best and clearest picture of the richness and strength of Aboriginal culture is currently denied to the people of Australia and the world. A book of this calibre must endure and I am sure that the time is not far distant when the present objections, being withdrawn, the book will takes its rightful place as one of Australia's most cherished records.

I consider myself fortunate that I have many memories of Monty that can give me a personal touch to his writings.

Some years ago Monty, at the age of 76, organized a campaign to put an access road into Mount Chambers Gorge. He bullied the Director of Tourism, the Speaker of the House and assorted anthropologists into going to Wilpena Pound for the weekend so that he could show them the area. We started walking into the main gorge down a creek bed with very large boulders ranging from the size of a football to that of a car. Monty led the way whilst I stationed myself behind him to catch him if he fell. The weather was very hot and one by one the party dropped out, exhausted, until only Monty and I were left. Although I was successful in catching him on several occasions, I finally missed and he fell, cutting his head. Undeterred, he pressed on until he came to a spot where he said he could get an excellent photograph of the gorge - "Here's my camera" he said, "nip up to that ledge and take a couple of shots, my boy". "That ledge" was approximately 100 feet up the face of the cliff and it was only the feeling that if I didn't get there, Monty would probably have tried, that drove me on. I panted back and we set off on our return trip. Monty's face was bleeding badly and I became very worried. His only comment was "wipe the blood off, I don't want to give these damn flies a free lunch".

On another occasion I accompanied some anthropologists on a trip to Arnhemland. We reached what was then Musgrave Park and one of them decided to photograph the paintings at Cave Hill just outside the settlement. We were given an aboriginal guide to the location and as the cameras were being set up the old aborigine, named Tommy Dodds, began to talk about the cave and the ceremonies which were held there. Suddenly he said "Do you know the dreamtime tale of this hill? Him big dreamtime tale from here to Darwin." There was great excitement, the cameras were forgotten and tape recorders were quickly and unobtrusively set up. This was an opportunity to hear first hand, a myth which could well write a new chapter in anthropology. He spoke on and on with the scientists recording every word with bated breath. At the end of an hour and a half the dreamtime ancestor had reached Darwin "and then this fella he jump into sea and now big rock in Darwin harbour". The recording was stopped and during the long pause the anthropologists were congratulating themselves on having something really unique to take back to civilization. Then Tommy Dodds said "old man Mountford, him bin tell me this tale".

5.
Monty was a great talker, always ready to yarn about his beloved outback or to retell one of the Aboriginal myths, never with a superior smile, but with a sincerity that left one with the feeling that he believed in them as much as his original informant. I will never forget his comments about other anthropologists and the bureaucrats and missionaries with whom he had done battle—often acidulous, sometimes outrageous but always tempered with humour and frequently with the admission that "of course I was an awkward 'so and so' myself."

The most warming memory I have is of the time we arrived unannounced at the Davenport Reserve outside Port Augusta. Monty was soon in the middle of a crowd of people, handing out lollies as he used to do forty or fifty years ago. If a social worker had done the same thing they would probably have spat in his eye—but recognising Monty, they accepted them with courtesy and soon it was just like old home week with taxis and battered jalopies arriving from town with more and more people coming to meet "old man Mountford" to remind him of the days over thirty years before when they knew him in the Northern Flinders and to introduce their children and grandchildren.

Death is always sad for the relatives and friends left behind, but in Monty's case we can be comforted by the knowledge that he lived a full and happy life and achieved the objectives that he set for himself—a privilege denied to most people. He was one of those very rare men who will be regarded with respect and affection by people not yet born—in fact he could well become a legend—very like one of those which he never tired of recounting about his Aboriginal friends.