

OUTBACK LEGEND OF THE SKY

Barry Desailly

Across the Channel Country where the inland waters flow
And the bush-folk gather, yarning, by the campfire's evening glow,
They'll reminisce on by-gone years and mates who've passed this way,
Old stockmen, ringers, drovers who lived another day.

They'll tell of raging blinding storms of choking desert dust;
Of blokes who blocked the leaders when the 'Nappemarries' rushed.
But there is one name, when spoken, in esteem held mighty high;
'Twas the bushman known as 'Sandy'—a legend of the sky.

A son of the land of the great outback and true to the bushman's creed,
He answered each call without question if ever the bush was in need.
In flood or fire or famine when disaster knocked loud at the door,
'First cab off the rank' was Sandy Kidd, the one who stepped to the fore.

From Bedourie to Betoota and down the Birdsville track,
A household name was 'Sandy' in the land of far-outback.
Along the Cooper channels to the waters of Lake Eyre,
With his knowledge and his knowhow, few bushmen could compare.

Like the scars and battered knuckles on his weather-beaten hands,
Could he read the Channel Country and the drifting desert sands.
Each waterhole and claypan, every billabong and bend
Shone brightly as a beacon, his guiding light and friend.

When the land was soaked and soggy and the creeks ran banker-high
And the bush fell to the mercy of assistance from the sky,
There stood one ever-willing to cast a selfless bid;
'Twas the Channel Country bushman—outback pilot, Sandy Kidd.

On gibber flats he landed by the light of hurricane lamps,
To rescue injured stockmen from the far-flung cattle camps.
To parched and perishing travellers, blindly lost, about to die,
He dropped life-saving liquids from his 'fountain in the sky'.

How oft' an anguished mother of an ill and ailing child,
Prayed and watched and waited through a night of weather wild;
How oft' her pleas were answered at the breaking of the day,
When the message rang out clearly—"Sandy Kidd is on his way".

When the mighty Cooper spread her wings 'cross station, track or town,
'Twas Sandy to the rescue when the chips were falling down;
Whether guiding stranded livestock from the rising water's wake,
Or dropping food and medication when survival was a stake.

No fame or fortune did he seek nor words of accolade;
With a handshake and a "Thank you", how oft' his bill was paid.
No bureaucratic protocols nor questions 'where' or 'why',
Could deter 'No Nonsense Sandy' from his mission in the sky.

But Sandy's made his final flight and joined old western mates,
On the tarmac at the airport by St. Peter's Pearly Gates.
Yet, at times we pause and wonder if perhaps his thoughts might roam,
To a town they call 'Windorah' in the land he called his home.

When the history books are written and a thousand stories told,
One name will be emblazoned bright, writ' large in letters bold,
For the legacy that he bestowed shall never fade or die,
And the bush will honour Sandy—"Outback Legend of the Sky"