

Our Journey 'down under'

By **JOHNNIE BARNES**
National Commander, Royal Rangers

THIS SPRING it was my privilege to visit Australia and see the great progress being made in the Royal Rangers program in the land "down under." It was a memorable experience.

Accompanied by Ralph Palmerton of Eagle Lake, Florida, I flew first to Queensland. Our plane landed in Brisbane on April 19 where we were met by Will Thorne, national commander of the Australian Royal Rangers, and other delegates. They gave us a most cordial welcome.

Will became our guide and escorted us on a whirlwind tour of activities. Each morning we gave lectures in the Commonwealth Bible College on "Ministry to Youth." The Lord helped us. At the final session the college dean, Dennis Smith, commented, "I can't remember when visitors have made such an impact on our students."

One afternoon I had the privilege of speaking to an overflow crowd of high school students. That evening we addressed a men's rally at the Mount Gravatt Assembly of God where 160 men had gathered from various parts of the district. Afterward we opened the meeting for questions. For over 90 minutes the men bombarded us with questions on how they could en-

Will Thorne (left), Commonwealth Royal Rangers commander; Bill Butterfield (center), state commander for New South Wales; and Johnnie Barnes, U.S. commander, admire a patrol flag.



large and strengthen their Royal Rangers program. It was inspiring to see such enthusiasm.

In between the public meetings and private interviews, Ralph and I did some sightseeing. We made our first contact with Koala bears and kangaroos. We fell in love with the beautiful countryside as well as the friendly people.

On the second night there was a large rally at Glad Tidings Tabernacle. The lower floor was filled with over 400 young people. Incidentally, membership in the Royal Rangers in Australia includes girls as well as boys. There were colorful ceremonies for presentation of special awards. At the conclusion of the message I felt impressed to give an invitation, and 20 persons came forward to accept Christ. We felt our visit to Brisbane was well worthwhile and left with a great admiration for the work of the Assemblies of God in that area, particularly the youth work.

Next we flew to Melbourne, Victoria, to attend the biennial Australian Commonwealth Council. Here the Royal Rangers work was strongly emphasized. We were invited to speak in several morning and evening services on subjects related to youth ministry in general, as well as Royal Rangers. Between sessions our team was swamped by people wanting to talk with us. Will Thorne was greatly encouraged by the interest shown by the ministers and delegates. "Individuals from areas where I thought Royal Rangers might be opposed are asking me to come and help them start the program. I can't possibly fill all the requests for assistance," he said.

Saturday was Royal Rangers Day at the council. Rangers from the Melbourne area gave a very impressive demonstration on the parade grounds in front of the conference hall. Australian leaders felt justifiably



Australian Royal Rangers explain one phase of the program in a presentation at the Australian Commonwealth Conference.

proud as they watched the boys present the various phases of the program.

At the final service of the council there was a blessed move of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation. At the conclusion they stood for over an hour with up-raised hands praying and worshipping God.

Ralph Reid, Commonwealth superintendent, publicly thanked us for coming to Australia. He said our visit gave a needed boost not only to the Royal Rangers, but also to the youth work in general.