

MOUNTAINEER

The magazine of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club

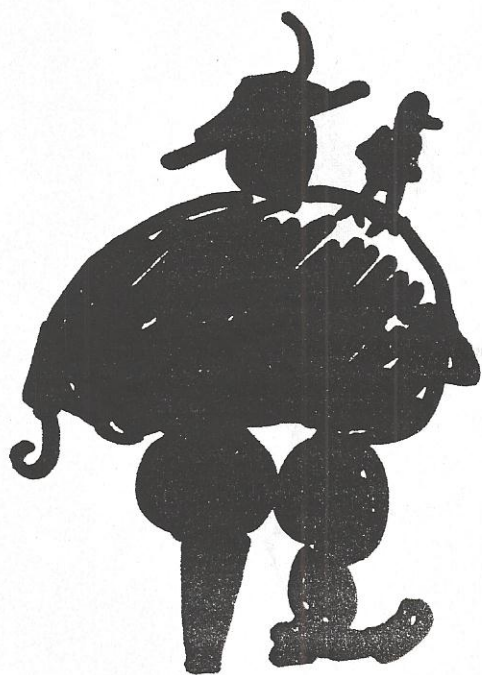
Pirate Issue



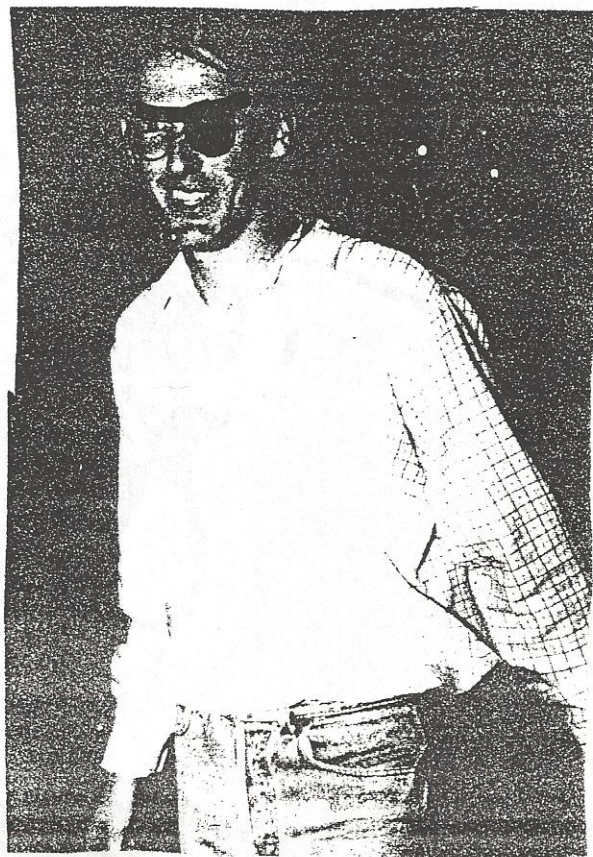
The scene inside the high-security MOUNTAINEER offices as the OXO-PIRATES tie up the editor and assume control.



Dave, Steve, Dave, Phil and the Legend-mobile about to embark on a classic Indi trip. Note the bike on the roof for the car-shuffle. Steve is wearing a helmet.



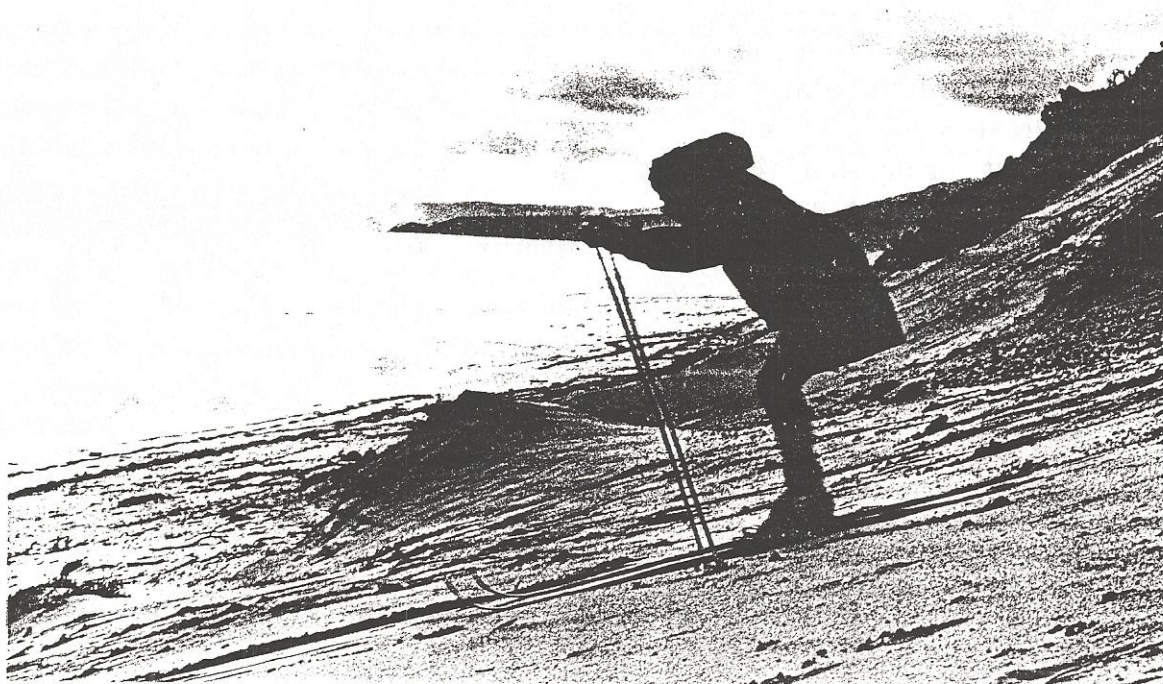
Yo Ho Ho and a cask of cheap port...



Pirate Editor.



Dave clearly doesn't want to be photographed next to anyone wearing a silly hat (or a silly expression).



Phil ski-ing the runs, Cape Otway.

EXTRACT FROM...

PART 1: PHIL AND DAVE'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

After six months absence from my spiritual heartland, Arapiles, the stress was beginning to set in. So Phil grabbed a car, we both grabbed our bikes, and we set off up the Western Hwy for a weekend of absolute mellowness and mountainbiking, and praps a bit of climbing.

Arriving at the Pines was like reading my favourite book for the hundredth time, or snuggling beneath the covers of my bed after a long time sleeping in a bag on dirty floors. The phone box shone like a rectangular advertising sign; possums scurried along the roof of the picnic shelter; Kerry the Cop was quietly hassling some people in the trees.

We couldn't resist getting out the bikes for a quick hoon in the dark, tearing around a coal-black campfire in the gums and bunny-hopping logs. Phil bailed when he got a little over-ambitious trying to hop a stump and sailed over the bars. What a fantastic buzz! We were like kids on Christmas eve; couldn't wait for the sun to rise so we could open the big, orange present that loomed in the darkness from behind the gum-trees. This was going to be fun, oh yeah.

Despite the predictions of doom and rainfall the morning dawned to a perfect day. Early morning cycle-hooning completed, we broke out the ropes and picked a climb: Pheonix(12), probably the best 12 at this most awesome mount, Bard included. The first few minutes on the rock was a bit hairy, my climbing ability creaked like a rusty gate, but pretty soon I was totally absorbed in the route. Move after move was unlikely but consistant at the grade; genuine rests rare; protection and exposure fantastic. Forty metres up the fifty metre pitch, Phil tells me the rope is only forty-five metres long. Great. Oh well, he'll just have to stand on tippy toes. I used my last bit of protection three metres before the end and jury-rigged a belay to bring Phil up.

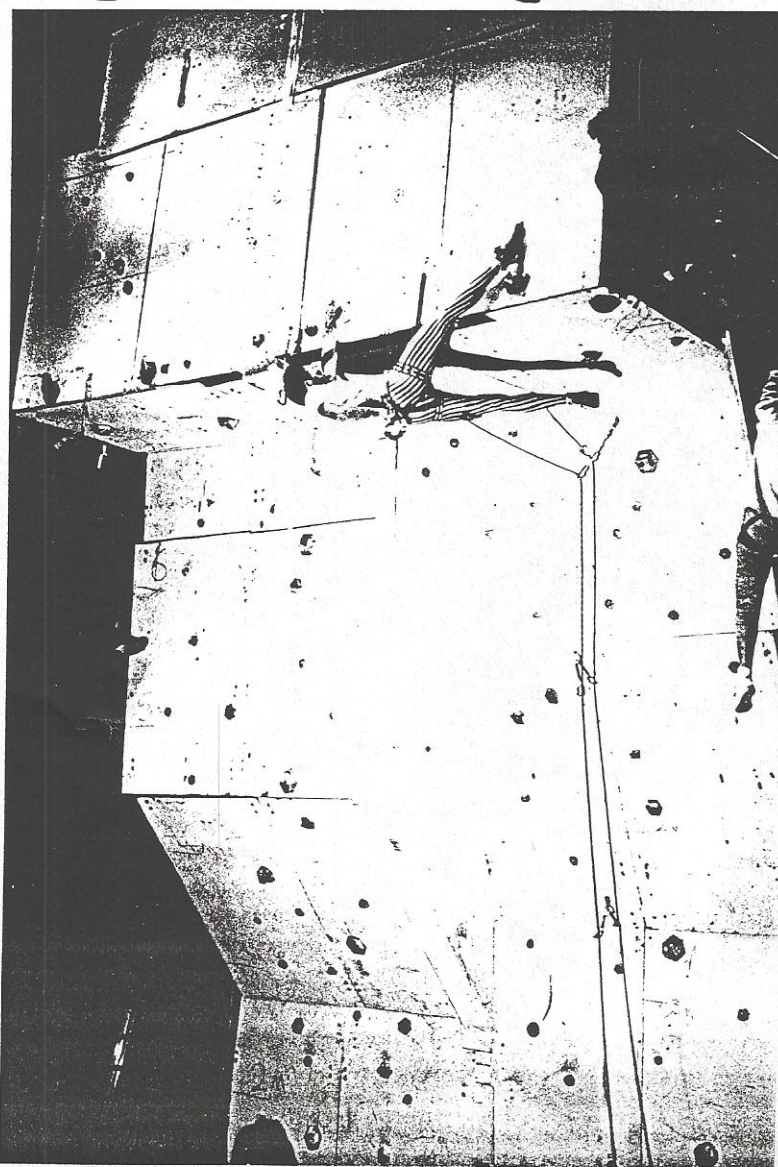
Top-belaying is just like fishing: sitting alone on a rock platform, taking in the view, line dangling over the edge and dissapearing below, fingers stretched out along the rope ready to hall it in gived the slightest twich. It's amazing how much you can tell about a climber who is out of view by feeling the vibrations in the rope. True. A nervous climber, even on a slack rope, transmits twitching, shimmering vibrations down the rope core; a confident climber pulls the rope through with smooth and sweeping motions. Despite a struggle with the day-pack in a short chimney, Phil was at the belay ledge in no time. He led the next pitch up a short wall and gully, and we were at Flinders Lane.

• • • •

Climb sight-seeing is always a fun occupation: making the rather indistinct rock features match the somewhat vague route descriptions takes a bit of imagination and scrambling about. But the rewards are worthwhile: to a climber, some routes are exciting just to look at. Paddlers know the experience from looking at flooded rivers from the bank or on video. From Flinders Lane at Arapiles a series of spectacular climbs emerge: Scorpian(18) is a lightening-bolt crack, visible from the Moon; Quo Vadis(20) an elegant sickle; Anxiety Neurosis(26) a wicked corner and steep wall; and new arrivals are a couple of bolted but unclimbed lines from the unthinkable imaginations and abilities of Jerry Moffat and his band of Pommy Cohorts who pillaged Australian climbing last summer, grade 35 at least.

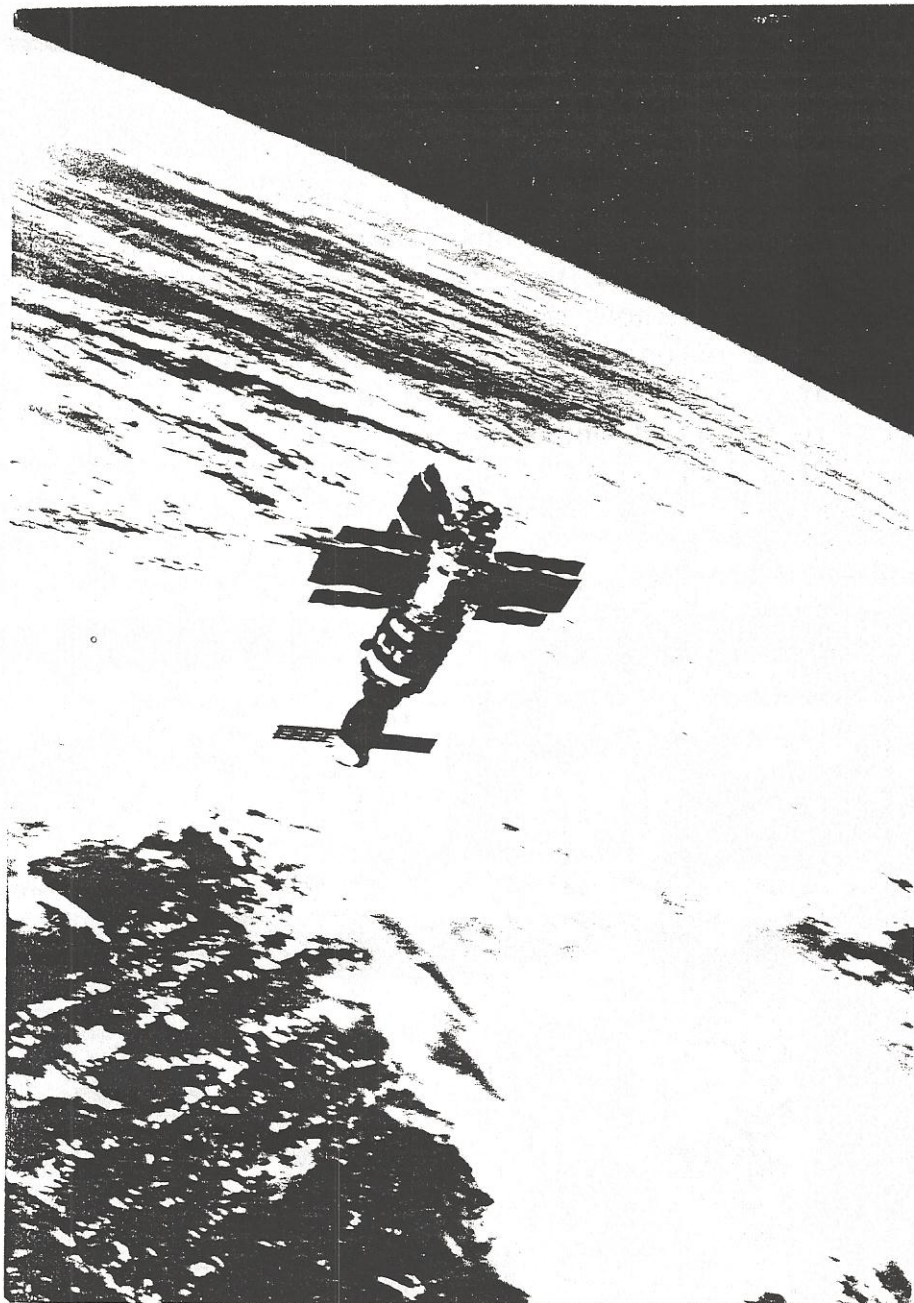
That afternoon was taken up top-roping Little Thor(20), just like the masses before us. A bit of a cycle topped off the energetic part of the day.

THE PIRATE



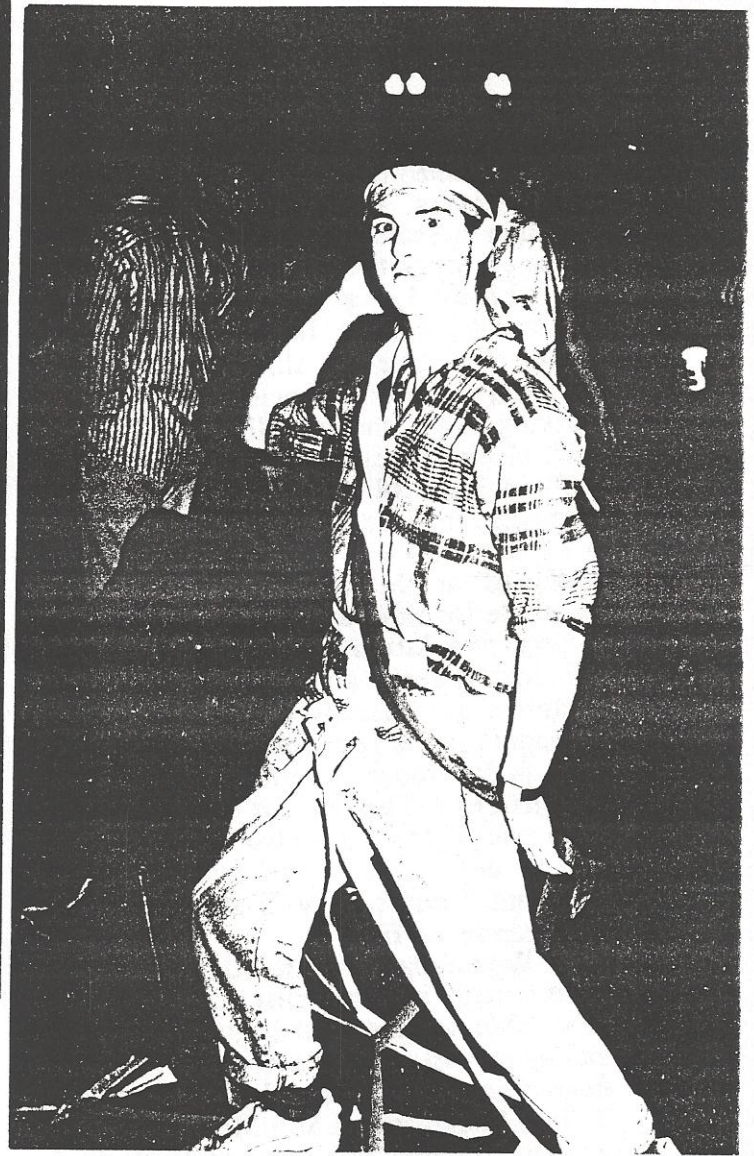
Australia's best sport-climber, Mark Baker, winning the Men's Open, ACT Climbing Championships, 1991.

Sports Union proposal for new MUMC clubrooms.



Dave Kjar finds a way to quit drinking.

The Prez.



Three suspicious-looking characters definitely NOT sitting on top of an eighty metre high chimney in Spencer street. That would be foolish.



When Japanese climber, Megatashi Sporti, pulled out of the Melbourne Climbing Cup in November 1991 with a chest infection, his right leg decided to compete without him. It came 16th.

THE LAST DAYS.

People started drifting in early in the week. From my campsite near the water-tank I watched them: haunted, middle-aged circus-freaks, faces showing their first emotion in years - and that just a flickering smile of recognition.

Like dying whales they were returning, caught in the tide of the Millenium. At every shit-hole crag in the country, the most entrenched of locals were striking camp, thoughtfully rolling board-stiff sleeping bags, moving on. At Frog, only a handful of bottle-blond surf-climbers remained. A pathetic army of Blue Mountains bolt-to-bolters had spontaneously gathered at the Mt York turntable to squabble for rides south. The two-hundred strong population of Werri-Gherat, the Flinders Ranges crag that had replaced Arapiles as Australia's climbing mecca sometime in the Nineties, scraped together enough dole money to hire some busses for the drive east. They arrived on Thursday, at least one of the big Volvo coaches being driven onto Mitre Lake, where by the weekend it had sunk well above its axles and been set on fire.

Wednesday and Thursday passed me by in a haze of dope, dust and intolerable heat. That summer had begun in August, and by the last week of December it was 45 degrees every god-damned day. The Alfred Wright Lockwood & Son Memorial Drive was soon littered with the sagging hulks of exhausted cars, paintwork frying in the lethal UV. By Thursday afternoon the thousand space car-park opposite the Pines was well full, and cars lined both sides of the road half-way to Mitre Rock. There were people everywhere, like someone had spilled a can of de-hydrated humans on the mountain and then spat on them. A thousand, ten thousand: a huge cloud of dust spiraled above the Pines, a twisted convection current driven by the heat of their filthy bodies. That night the twenty-year-old toilet block finally packed it in, backing-up into the tent-sites of a dozen or so poor bastards who spent the night swimming in shit. By morning a fleet of porta-dunnies had been hauled in by the shire council, joining the two old water-trucks near the picnic shelter. With utter indifference to the destitution of its inhabitants, the perimeter of the Pines had sprouted a garish array of sprukiers and sellers, flogging everything

The Last Days

DAVID BURNETT



(Reprinted from "THE" climbing
tableid¹⁹)

from sun-screen to climbing-rope. Mr Whippy vans vied for custom with parasites selling warm five-dollar Cokes from the back of their cars. A converted semi, daubed with the logo of a chain of gear-stores, edged through the crowds on Friday morning. Within an hour or so of opening for business it was overturned and looted. As the final weekend of the century approached, the Pines and its surrounds resembled one of the thousands of horrific AIDS camps that now littered Africa: a seething, sweaty mass of listless, desperate humanity. Like every Easter, only much, much more so. For those expecting Saturday night to herald Armageddon, little further confirmation was necessary. The gates of hell had already begun to leak, and its contents were dripping in boiling, oily drops upon the Wimmera.

In the Pines tents were pitched wall to wall. I took refuge on the water tank, not really sleeping at night; just drifting into a quieter state of restlessness. Even at three in the morning it was light under there: the glow of a thousand gas-lights throwing nightmare shadows on the UV sheeting that had been cast amongst the remaining branches of the decrepit pine trees a few years before. The erosion in the campground had remained unchecked for thirty years now, and tents were pitched at crazy angles in the mesa and valley terrain that now existed. From my vantage point on the tank, the whole thing looked like a violent, choppy ocean under a moonless night sky, bedraggled climbers bobbing between tents like drowning sailors.

Outside the Pines, tents stretched well into the bush. No Camping regulations ignored. The glow of primus stoves pinpricked the dusk all the way to Castle Crag, and a hundred earth-bound stars winked in Central Gully.

Those last few days were spent climbing, ironically. I met a girl, someone I may have known a few years ago, and we escaped into the darker reaches of some gully before sunrise. She had hitched in from Werri on Monday, and knew my brother. Like the rest, she was here to see what would happen. Not that anything other than the usual drunken debauchery writ large was expected; but if the world was going to end on Saturday night then this was the place where the transition would be least noticeable. Or so she thought.

The cliff itself wasn't as crowded as I had expected. No-one was here to climb, not really. Shit, it was too hot to climb: even in the shaded gullies the air enveloped us like thick, stale oil. Suffocating. We must have tried a dozen routes on Friday, half that on Saturday, failing on most, rarely talking. Late on that day, somewhere high in Central Gully, we sat and had a smoke, gazing numbly at the disaster area that clogged the mouth of the Gully like pollution bobbing in a stagnant, algae-choked river. The heat haze was so intense that the Grampians were completely invisible; only a continuing stream of cars, like ants traversing the cracks in a parched, yellow pavement, emerged from the glaring whiteness to add to the swarming melee below us.

That last night I spent prowling the camp, faces washing by me, pushing past me, swirling around me. It seemed like everyone was there, somewhere. Hell, everyone was there. Thirty years of rock-gods, gathered as if at some great feast, some last supper. Faces without names, too: a guy I'd seen bumbling on *Liquid Air* back in 93; another I'd belayed on something in the Northern Group a few years ago; a girl who'd taken the biggest whipper anyone had ever seen, sixty, seventy foot, decked-out, walked away like she was some kind of witch. Over in the gums was the Caravan, still jacked up on its rubbly pile of stones. Rust oozed from every orifice, the ruddy orange of the paintwork bleeding into the dirty yellow of the ground on which the contraption sat. Around it was the only patch of dirt within a kilometre not occupied with some artifact of sprawling humanity, afforded by the presence of two snarling dogs on separate thirty-foot chains, each skittering over a carpet of beer cans to glare and slobber at passers-by. And here they were, pissed as newts, mumbling the usual crap in credible drawls of every conceivable accent, and - Oh God - they were playing Pink Floyd. Above it all the Bluffs were like black ink, spilt and smeared across a sky made blood-red by the dust. In the van they were confessing their sins, every bloody one of them. Carrigan insisting he'd tugged a runner on Ethiopia; Scheel toying with the chisel he'd used to chip *Punks in the Gym* all those years ago; Baxter was going on and on; Orriglasso admitting he'd used sticky chalk on the first ascent of *Renaissance Man*, his 36 left of Punks. Even HB was

tearfully confessing he'd once placed a bolt next to a reasonable 1 RP placement.

What the fuck was this?, I thought. What did they think was coming, Judgement Day? Was Noddy going to rise up from his premature grave and demand an explanation of every ethical *faux pas* committed in the shadow of his mountain? That'd be a laugh: all eternity wouldn't be long enough to hear such a sordid list. Who gave a shit, except, of course, for the long-haired climbing writer *cum* groupie furiously writing it all down. They wanted redemption: it was way too late for that - just take a look outside. The product of their collective sins was seeping out of the very rock itself, flooding the campsite and the terrible community gathered within it, as surely as that shit had bubbled up from the toilet block on Thursday night.

By ten I had floated away again, knowing that there was little left to be done. As I struggled back to the Pines the true horror of the place struck me: part party, part pogrom, every form of human perversion was occurring. All the sick shit that gets talked about around campfires was happening, man, right there. All of it. On the ground, in the trees. And there was this *howling*. Fuck, it was a campfire, a human fire, seething and boiling. The immolation of human souls. It stank. It was so hot. Still 40 degrees. Dry as desert bone. Not a real fire, though. Not yet.

I reached my bedroll at about 11:00pm, soaked with sweat. Thank God I had made the necessary preparations before this. Days ago I had unloaded them: thirteen large steel drums, each sealed and heavy. Seven in the Pines; four more in the Gums - one just behind the van; the remaining two in the bush towards Dec Crag. All self contained, isolated from the rest of the world, counting the days, the hours. I had raised no suspicions: the place had already been crowded, and the stupid bastards probably had thought they were some kind of new-fangled rubbish bins.

I took only my sleeping bag, a rope and light rack. Not that I'd ever want them again, but you never knew. Weaving up the road, now carpeted with bodies in all states of intoxication, some, perhaps already dead, I passed the girl. She looked at me, and then at the scene around her. She knew. Shit. Pulling away from the roaring, stamping, flaming group she was with, she followed me, catching up somewhere near Golden

Streak. We ascended Central Gully in silence. Within 40 minutes we had crossed the summit road and were heading into the anonymous bush on the back of the mountain.

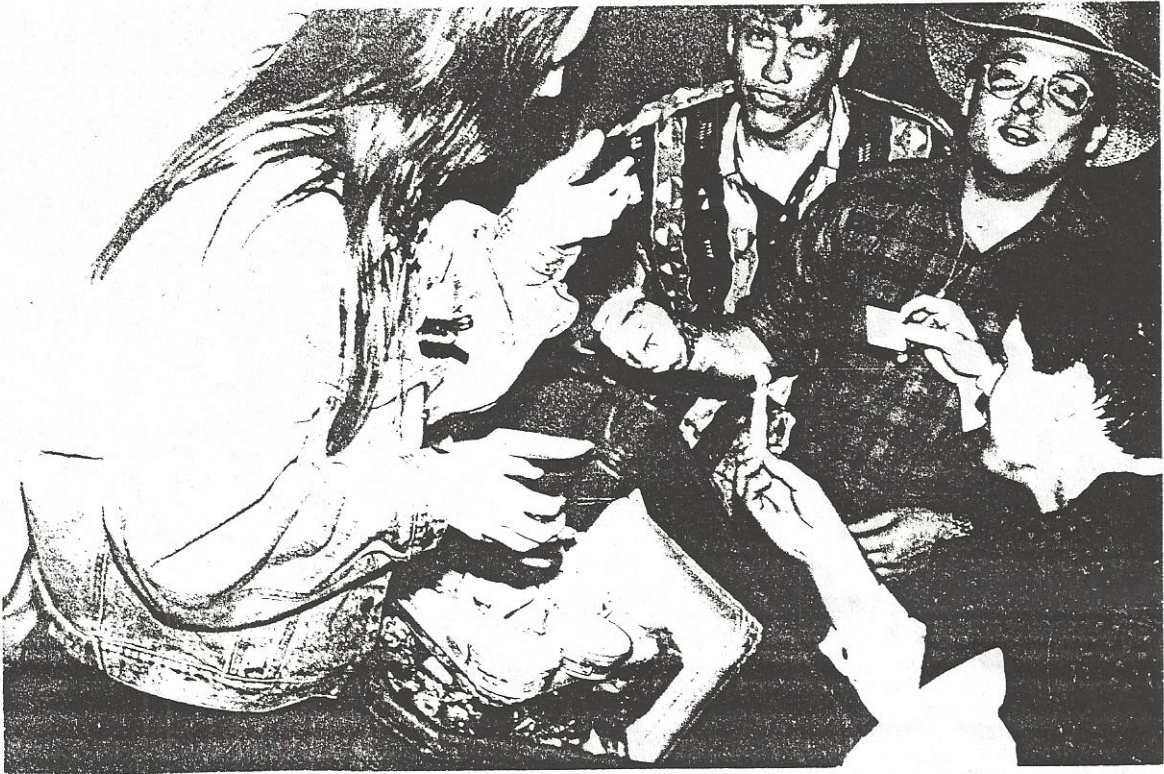
I resisted looking at my watch, reluctant to give such a grubby necessity the respectability of anticipation. The timing was hardly important, serving only to advance something that had been slowly occurring for decades anyway.

There was no sense of satisfaction in what I did: only a momentary disorientation as a flaming midnight sun rose over the skyline behind me, splashing the dusty sky with blood, and sending a searing, cleansing wind roaring across the mountain to ruffle our greasy hair.

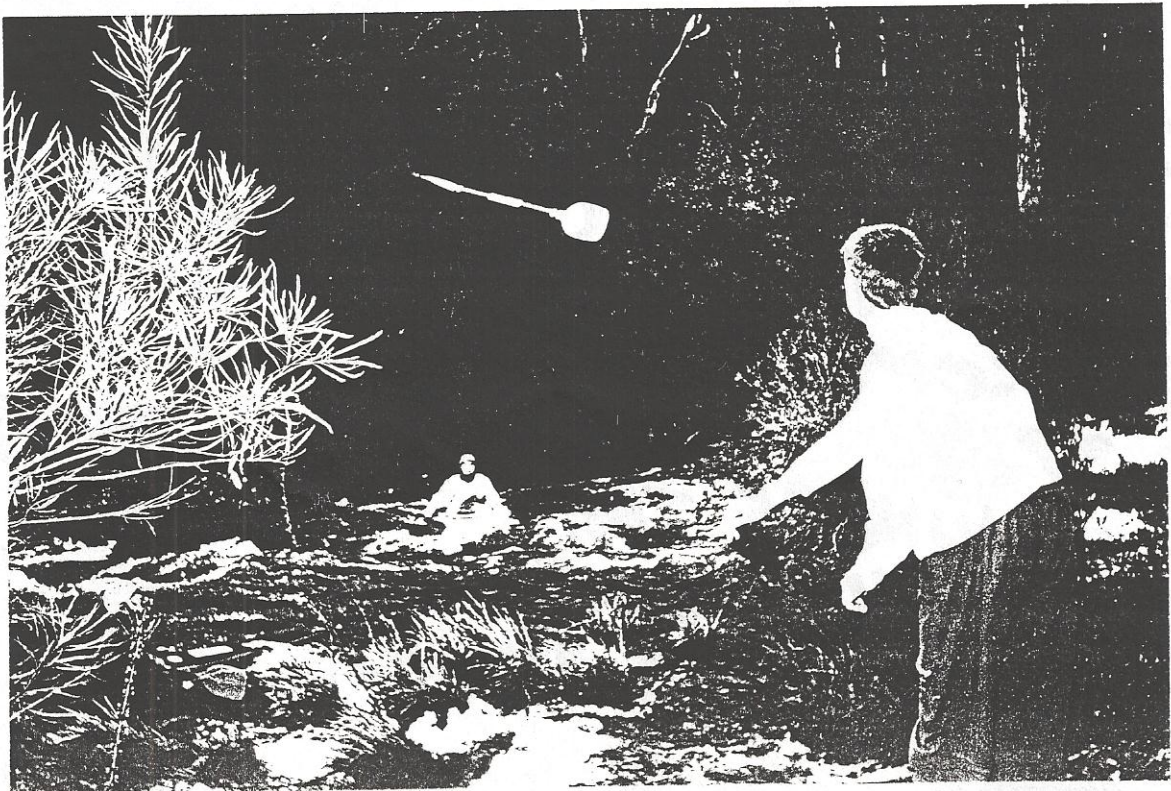
David Burnett



Nick reading "How to Fly the Bell Jetranger Helicopter", as preperation for NZ.



The MUMC Bushdance was way under-catered, and hungry patrons were soon rummaging in rubbish bins to satisfy their apatites. Later that night the then-president satisfied another kind of apatite by drinking a bottle of cough medicine.



Andre testing his new Raft-o-Pierce, IV 91.

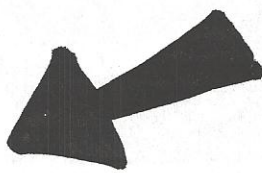
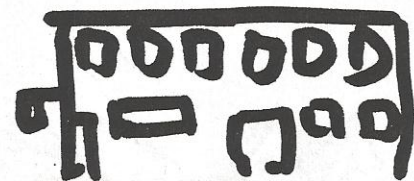
THE ADVENTURES OF OXOMAN



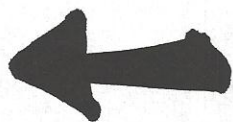
OXOMAN and the
FUNSTERS go on a
PUB CRAWL



THEY GO TO
THE CLYDE!



THEY GO TO
NAUGHTONS!
(they go everywhere)



IN THE
MORNING
OXOMAN Remembers
EVERYTHING



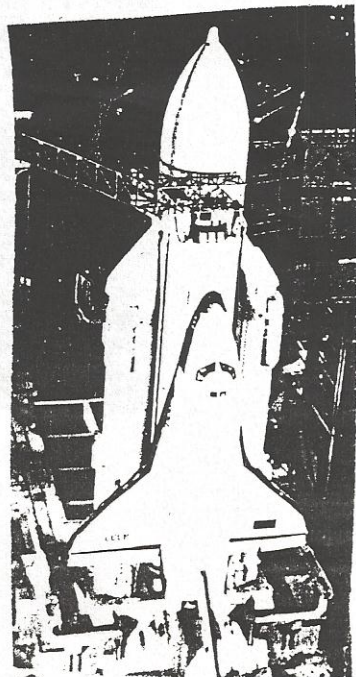
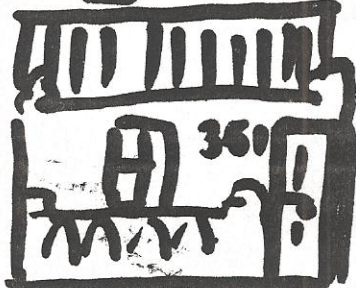
WHERE THE TABLE
CAME FROM....



WHERE THE
ELEPHANT
CAME FROM...



BUT WHERE THE
FUCK DID THEY
GET THIS..





The President forgetting a vital piece of climbing
apparal...(his shirt). Arapiles.



Kate and Andrew discussing whether he should go
mountaineering in NZ over summer.



Dangersports.

WILD SHOT

I WISH I HAD A
ROPE-KNIFE.....

I WISH I HAD
A HELMET....

Okay, it's steep. Steve Carter in the tuck, and Steve Bird about to 'make the first turn count', on the Redmond Barry Building, University of Melbourne.
Andrew Wettenhall

Wild welcomes slides for this page; payment is at our standard rate. Send to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Victoria 3181

