

MOUNTAINEER

The magazine of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club

MUMC 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



This edition of the Mountaineer celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club. It is really two magazines in one. The first, edited by Greg Martin and Phil Waring, is a collection of articles submitted by the "older generations" for this magazine.

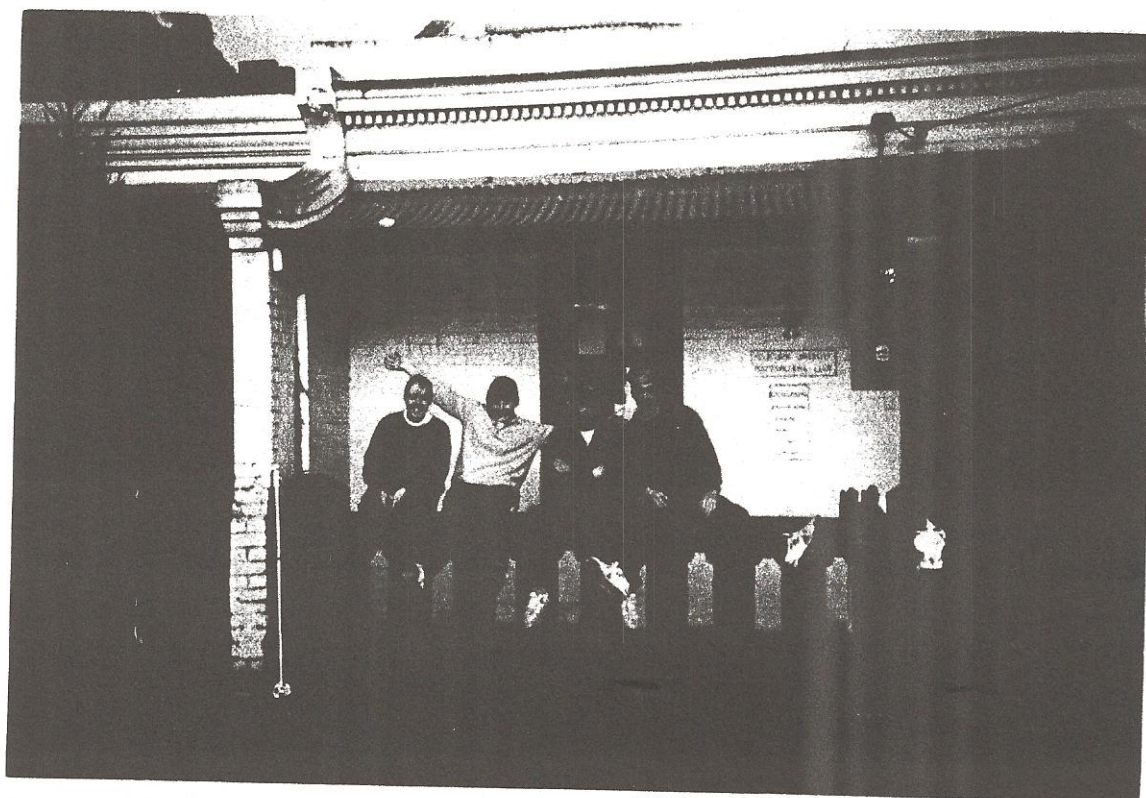
The second part consists of articles taken from the Mountaineer magazine over the past 10 years, and represents the current activities of MUMC; kayaking, caving, skiing, bushwalking, rock climbing, rogaining and general debacling!

I apologise for cutting bits out of the original stories and I hope these people forgive me.

Special thankyous are due to Russell Smith and Rebecca Starling for last minute bits and organising a printer, and also to Kate Bradshaw, Dan Colborne, Rohan Schaap and Dr Barb Evans for their help.

Watch out for Wombats!

Amber Mullens.



Melbourne University Mountaineering Club

50 years down the track...

MUMC today is one of the largest and most active clubs at Melbourne University. The majority of the 500 or so current members are undergraduate students, although there is a fair sprinkling of graduates amongst the crowd. MUMC 'headquarters' are now situated on campus up near the cricket pavilion. We're in a huge place with four separate gear stores, enough room for trip meetings to be held without falling over one another, plenty of space out the front for enjoying the sun and separate boatsheds down near Tin Alley. Pop in for a visit one lunchtime for a guided tour and admire the great set-up.

MUMC is, as ever, involved in a huge range of wilderness activities. Bushwalking is still an all time favourite. One of the longest MUMC walks of recent times was the hike completed by two club members along the full length of the Alpine Walking track. The traditional Midnight Ascent is particularly popular these days, with more than thirty five people scaling Mt Feathertop in the light of a full moon each winter to enjoy a formal dinner in MUMC Memorial Hut on Saturday night. This year the 50th Anniversary was celebrated on the Midnight Ascent with balloons galore, a three-tiered, multi-coloured birthday cake, and lashings of gluhwein (for medicinal purposes of course!).

An increasing number of club members are now becoming involved in rogaining, a sport which first developed within MUMC. A Victorian Rogaining Association 24 hour rogaine was hosted by our club this year - which proved to be lots of fun, and lots of work, for the people involved. In true OXO style, there were more enthusiastic club members up and about during the midnight hours than competitors in the 24 hour event!!

Mountaineering is a small but significant activity within MUMC owing to the 'modest' nature of Australia's topography. MUMC's mountaineers generally venture to New Zealand and beyond in search of hillier places. Some impressive MUMC mountaineering expeditions recently occurred in Alaska and India. This year, MUMC Mountaineering donated one of the club's wooden handled ice axes to the Himalayan Trust. This organisation works with local people to provide basic infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and clean water for the people living in the Everest region of Nepal. The ice axe was signed by Sir Edmund Hillary and was sold at auction for \$4000.

When winter comes, many club members head for the snow for some cross-country skiing. Plans for the impending development of Mt Stirling cause MUMC much concern, and the club remains actively involved in the 'Save Mt Stirling' campaign. In other news on conservation, at the end of this year MUMC will carry out track maintenance work on the Tom Kneen track along the north-west spur of Mt Feathertop using a \$3030 grant obtained from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Rockclimbing has become a very popular activity within the club. Trips of all standards are frequently run to favourite cliffs such as Arapiles and Mt Stapylton. More adventurous club members have travelled further afield to Moonarie (South Australia), Frog Buttress (Queensland) and Whitewater Wall (Tasmania).

Kayaking is as strong as ever. As well as paddling all kinds of 'gnarly' rivers around Australia, some MUMC paddlers have tested their skills in New Zealand and India. In the competitive arena, the club has a number of Canoe Polo teams, and MUMC always shines at Intervarsity Canoeing.

Caving is one of the smaller activities within the club, owing to the specialised skills involved. At the beginning of this year, the club appointed a willing postgraduate club member with extensive SRT (Single Rope Technique) skills as an Honourary member of MUMC to ensure the continuance of SRT caving within the club. The appointment of Honourary members is an initiative designed to ensure a high level of skilled instruction remains within MUMC.

Awareness of safety issues has grown, and 1993 saw the creation of the new position of Safety Convenor on the MUMC committee. Safety and skills courses are run in each club activity, and club members are encouraged to participate in first aid courses through a subsidy program. A combined leadership and first aid course is also held over three days each year to provide potential new leaders with the skills necessary for leading MUMC trips.

The MUMC committee now consists of 14 members, and over the last few years, about half the committee positions have been held by females. The number of female trip leaders within the club is also on the rise. This year a group of female climbers obtained sponsorship from the Sports Union to participate in a lead-climbing course at Mt Arapiles.

MUMC is definitely alive and well. The spirit of adventure within the club, and the love and respect for wilderness places, is as strong as ever. MUMC club members are still the most enthusiastic and crazy bunch of people they've always been. While MUMC can look back on its 50 year history with a great deal of pride, it can also look forward to a bright future ahead.

Scott Edwards (1994 Vice - President)
Kate Bradshaw (1994 President)

FIFTY OXOS

editors: Greg Martin and Phil Waring



**October
1994**

**Published For The Fifty Year
Anniversary of The
Melbourne University
Mountaineering Club**

Introduction

This souvenir publication forms an essential part of the 50th Anniversary of MUMC. Several people independently had the idea to publish something, but the following pages are our completely biased selection. We hope you like them.

Most articles submitted have been included, although with some contributions, thoughtful slashing and burning has been undertaken by machete-wielding survivors of an early track clearing party, in order to reduce the package to less than 153 pages.

Delving through old copies of *The Mountaineer* leaves an overwhelming sense of awe of the collective energy of the MUMC; all those trips, climbs and kilometres, all the storm-bound days, the optimism, the kilograms carried, and the sweat expended. And all so pointless, just to go around in a big circle and end up back at the start again. The French climber Lionel Terray summed up the futility of it all in the title of his autobiography, "Conquistadors Of The Useless". Even the great Terray ended up losing his life to this useless pursuit. MUMC sadly has a long honour roll of members who have also paid this ultimate price because of a passion for mountaineering in all its forms. No matter how much we rationalise, mountaineering is a dangerous game, increasingly so on the alpine and Himalayan stages. The seriousness of this useless pursuit is one reason MUMC stands apart from other university clubs. Those who have to ask why we do it will never understand the answer; indeed there is no answer that can be put into words.

Mountaineering is much more than a sport; it is a way of life. It provides an arena where people can get to know each other in a deeper way than probably possible through any other social activity. Strengths and weaknesses which may never surface in city life, are accepted and understood amongst mountaineers. This factor probably explains the many life-long friendships which have arisen from the MUMC. At this 50th Anniversary Dinner, almost 400 of these old friends, stretching down through the years from current young members right back to foundation members of the club, have got together because of the special part the MUMC has played in their lives. Some of these people may not have seen each other for years, and yet can comfortably pick up old friendships with ease.

Again, thanks to those who did contribute to this publication. Special thanks to Sue, for many hours of typing, and proof reading. We would like to acknowledge all the authors of material used, both new and old (most have probably long since forgotten writing anything), and the artists who drew the cartoons and sketches culled from old copies of "The Mountaineer".

Have an enjoyable read, and we hope you get high doing so!

Greg Martin and Phil Waring

October 1994

"His long, lithe snow-shoes sped along In easy rhythm to his song;
Now slowly circling round the hill, Now speeding downward with a will;
The crystals crash and blaze and flash As o'er the frozen crust they dash....."

Extract from "The Demon Shoe-shoes" by Barcroft Boake

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The Formation of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club

by Phillip Law

As part of an address I gave at the 45th Anniversary Dinner of the M.U.M.C., I described how the Club developed. If not recorded elsewhere in the annals of the Club, it would seem appropriate for these details to form part of the publication arising from the 50th Anniversary. I am indebted to Bill Bewsher for most of the detail.

In mid-1944 a small group of Melbourne University undergraduate skiers, chatting in the U.S.C. hut on Mt Donna Buang, kicked around an idea (put forward by Niall Brennan) to form a mountaineering club.

Later, Brennan convened a meeting on 9th December 1944 in the Men Graduates' Room of Union House to establish such a club. A provisional committee was appointed as follows - Niall Brennan, Mary Auburn, Kay Hunter, Geof Watson, Richard Johnston, Phil Law, and George Thomas.

It was agreed that Professor Tom Cherry should be invited to become President, and Professor Fritz Loewe vice-President. Later, Kevin Westfold and Gavin Ardley were co-opted to the committee. The first meeting of the provisional committee was held at the Cafe Latin on 6th November 1944. I think I suggested the venue, for it was my favourite restaurant. Eight people attended - Cherry, Loewe, Brennan, Watson, Westfold, Law, Auburn and Hunter.

The next important fixture was the first Annual General Meeting which was held in Union House on

11th May 1945. A constitution was adopted, an annual fee of 5/- was decided and a Committee was elected comprising Cherry (President), Loewe (vice-President), Brennan (Secretary), Watson (Treasurer), Auburn, Ardley and Hunter. Westfold was appointed "Keeper of the Maps".

Activities were rather desultory for the first couple of years, with social occasions and discussion groups punctuated by the odd excursion to some mountain area. But round about 1947 the Club expanded rapidly and gained momentum as Bill Bewsher and other leaders pushed the field work vigorously. New members were taught the skills of climbing on rock-faces at the Cathedral Range and Hanging Rock, and later at Mt Arapiles. Advanced climbers ventured overseas to extend their skills to ice climbing in New Zealand and the Himalayas. A number of members sought adventure in Antarctica. The annual 24-hour walk led members into orienteering, rogaining and skiing.

The Club has come a long way, and there is no reason why it should not continue to prosper. I trust that the undergraduate members will continue their association with the Club after they graduate, so that the highly successful tradition of alumni support for, and interaction with, student activities will be maintained. Experience has shown that this is one of the essentials for the longevity of a university club.



"HEY! GO EASY, BILL!"

Yarra Glen to Eltham

Wednesday Sept 7th & Thursday Sept 8th - 1949

by Brian Capon

Our party of Vera Palmer, Sue Williams, June Swinburne, John McMillan and Brian Capon went by train to Yarra Glen, and walked to the downstream end of Yerring Gorge. We kept on the north side of the Yarra river, with a very small stretch through the bush. Starting from Yarra Glen at 10-15am, we arrived at the downstream end of the gorge at 1-15pm, where we were able to cross the river by a small bridge before lunching on the southern bank.

We started off for Warrandyte at 3pm, and made the mistake of choosing the more interesting route on the north side of the river when we only had time for the duller but simpler route through Wonga Park. We made two detours ; the first was caused by following a path on the map which was wrongly marked, and the second occurred after dark, and was due to keeping blindly to a route which a man had explained to us.

We arrived at Pound Bend Youth Hostel at 10pm, and found Bill Bewsher (Secretary) and John Rigby there to greet us. These two had decided to pay us a visit after finishing work at the university. They intended to announce their arrival by dropping firecrackers down the chimney. Not finding us there they were a little disappointed, especially as the spongers had brought no food with them.

However, when we eventually arrived they soon got going with their crackers and squibs and we all had a good time until we went to bed at 2am.

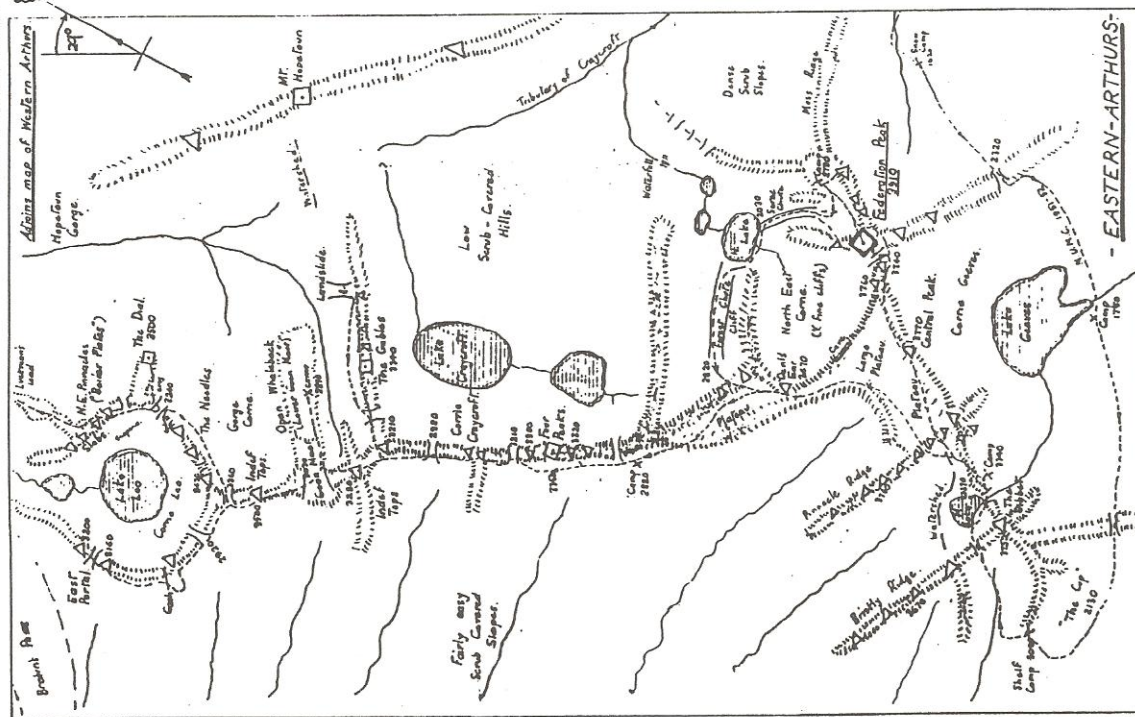
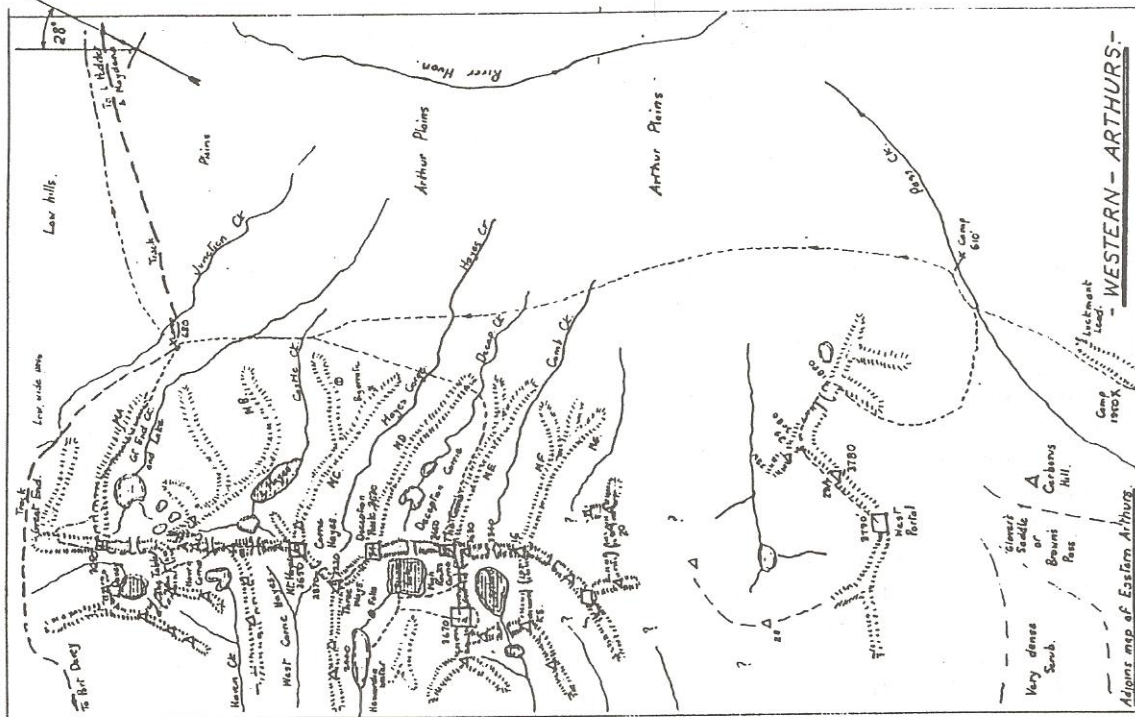
Next morning we got up at 8am, and Bill and John caught the 9am bus from Warrandyte to the City (fare 2/6). After a leisurely breakfast, we packed and left at about 11-30am.

— SKETCH MAP OF ARTHUR RANGE (S. WEST TASMANIA) —

Based on original sketch maps of J.E. Young, Melbourne.

Traced by B.M. Davis (H.M.C.) January 1956.

Aerial photo references: Admon Run 1 Nos. 2809a to 28101 (Capeport Plain to Hanging Lake); Bathurst Run 100 Nos. 2809a to 28101 (Mass Ridge to Shull Camp); Arthur Run 3 (West Portal); Pelican Run 12 to 15 (Pass Cr., Lookmen's Lead)



— Melbourne University Mountaineering Club Routes 1951-1952.

Notation used is that of J.E. Young.

H.C.

Interview With Bill Bewsher

by Greg Martin

Based on a discussion with Bill on 23 August 1994.

Bill was sitting in a well worn chair at his desk in his cosy attic study, surrounded by an extensive collection of polar books and journals. On the walls hung large prints of Antarctic images; including an abstract pattern of sidelit sastrugi, and an orange ANARE Weasel precariously balanced and tilted in the jaws of a great crevasse of bottomless indigo.

Q. When did you join the MUMC?

A. Even before enrolling for lectures in 1947 I saw the Mountaineering Club at a sort of orientation week, so I joined up on the spot and never looked back! Lovely! I was a teacher during the war, then I was called up at 18, joined the AIF, then when I came out, all the student teachers went into college in 1946. I had matriculated, so they sent me up to uni. I thought I may as well go up there, and see what it was all about.

Q. What years were you at uni?

A. From 1947 to 1949 I was full time at uni. I was a Primary teacher, and never wanted to get into Secondary teaching. To my surprise I passed the four first year subjects. But I really worked hard towards the end of third term '48, so I could get into third year and do full time MUMC! Later on I picked up an Arts degree in my own time, while I was teaching.

Q. Had you done any bushwalking before you joined the MUMC?

A. Yes, a little - I was lucky enough to have a high school teacher who took us out for day trips, and I did a bit of walking myself, but not with any club. It just seemed a good way to get exercise, it seemed good to me.

Q. What positions did you hold with the Club?

A. In '48 I was on the committee, then became Secretary/Treasurer in '49. I was a Vicepresident in 1950, a committee member in '52, and then Club President in '57 and '59, and Vicepresident again in 1960.

Q. How did rockclimbing fit into things?

A. Prof Cherry started that; he had spent a lot of time in England at one stage and had rockclimbed there. He was the one who introduced it to the Club, and he taught a lot of us up at Sugarloaf. Very basic stuff. Sugarloaf and

Hanging Rock were the only venues. All we were interested in doing was getting into SW Tasmania; Federation Peak was the main magnet. We reckoned that with a lot of the mountains in there, a bit of rope knowledge would be needed to get to the top. It wasn't rockclimbing for its own sake, we wanted to get to the top of mountains.

Q. Tell me about the trips to Tasmania?

A. I first went to Tassy in the summer of '46-'47 with some Teachers College people. In '47-'48 Prof Cherry led a Club trip up the Rasselas valley in the SW, but I didn't go. Instead I had a trip with some Tassy friends. But starting in the summer of '48-'49, I led a series of big Club trips into SW Tassy for four summers. Most of the year was spent planning those trips. That's when we developed the idea of aerial food drops, with the Hobart Aero Club.

In '48-'49 we couldn't agree on dates, so I took a party in before Christmas in December, and Prof Cherry went in towards the end of January. We got as far as Moss Camp, then some of the party were sick. As Prof Cherry's party were on the way in, they met John Bechervaise with his Geelong College Exploration Society group coming out after making the first successful ascent of Federation Peak. So the MUMC party altered plans, and instead aimed for Lake Geeves which hadn't been visited, and then tried to reach Hanging Lake which had shown up on aerial photos. They didn't quite reach it that year.

Next year we had three groups of six. John Mainland's party reached Hanging Lake, while my party got to the Peak Plateau and made the first MUMC ascent of Federation.

In '50-'51 we had a change and went down the South coast, then up from Precipitous Bluff to Craycroft Junction. Nobody had been in there, and I know why. It was a terrible trip! We did thirteen and a half miles in ten days, and that was a crack party of three of us. For a week we averaged less than a mile a day - we were practically crawling through the stuff!

The summer of '51-'52 was the last of that series of big trips. Seven of us went in for 45 days, and we had 55 four-gallon kero drums full of food dropped at six different spots. We had a week at Hanging Lake - there

were also other Club parties in the area, and between us we did several weeks worth of climbing around there.

We came out through the Eastern Arthurs, and were planning to do the traverse of the Western Arthurs. But on the 28th day someone did a knee in, and we had to reorganise. Later, three of us did get halfway across the Western Arthurs, and I could never work out why the MUMC or the Hobart Walking Club didn't get in there and clean the traverse up. I think it was at least ten years later, sometime in the mid-60's, when a Sydney uni party completed the traverse. I could never work that one out.

Anyhow, all of the detail of those SW trips should be in Dave's book.

The reason I didn't go back of course, was that I was stupid enough to get married at that stage, which finished my really long trips. Then later I went South.

Q. When did you marry?

A. August 1952. So I did no more long SW Tassy trips, and that's why they cut out in '51-'52.

Q. When did you go down South?

A. That was in 1956.

Q. What happened in the intervening years?

A. You must realise that before the war, there were bushwalking clubs, but people weren't very mobile. Then around 1950, suddenly there was petrol and transport, the first Holdens were on the roads, and there were a hell of a lot of people getting into strife in the bush. This is when the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs (FVWC) Search and Rescue Section was formed. I had the jobs of Field Organiser of that, and Convener of the administrative subcommittee.

Between '52 and '55 we had three big searches. In May 1952, there was the Marysville Search, with six bushwalkers missing. They were all found three days after the alarm was raised.

Then in August 1953, the Donna Buang Snowgirl Search made headlines. A young couple disappeared on a day excursion to Donna Buang, leaving a vehicle parked at the turntable. After a very systematic search, they were found in the headwaters of the Watts River about two miles north of the summit. They had been out for three nights. Jennifer Laycock lost part of both her legs from frostbite.

A group had gone up to Baw Baw Plateau to do some work on the only ski club hut up there, the Ski Club of Victoria hut below Mt. Baw Baw. Late in the afternoon of the second day, an inexperienced member of the party was noticed to be missing, and the alarm was raised. We were called in on that, and over the next ten days, we had I think one hundred and seventy different members of the FVWC Search & Rescue group up there at different stages, as well as a lot of other people.

There was no police Search and Rescue then, and these searchers were run by a troika consisting of a police officer, a forestry officer, and myself. Officially, on any search, the police officer was in charge, even if he was the most junior and inexperienced constable in the state. On this occasion, we had a local inspector - he was a damn good chap, that inspector. We had gone up on the Tuesday, and by Saturday, we were all a bit shot. One night you'd get no sleep, the next night, just a few hours. Communications were practically non-existent. There were no proper maps available. To complicate matters, one of the searchers disappeared. The search was attracting a lot of media attention, and at a government cabinet meeting steps were being taken which would influence the future of search operations.

The inspector suggested going into Tanjil Bren and getting on the 'phone to see if we could get some better radios. There was only one little cafe there and it had a telephone.

I will always remember how he came back from the 'phone, saying in amazement, "the boss is coming up tomorrow!". "Not that lazy bloody superintendent from Gippsland who you've been saying all week should have been here?", we asked. He said, "No, no, the Commissioner!" This was Commissioner Porter, who had been a Major General during the war, and had then been appointed Commissioner from outside the force.

When he came up he found it wasn't a shambles at all, as the press and everyone had been saying, and he was impressed with the organisation and the way it was being run. Then he dropped the bombshell, that cabinet had decided they were going to call for general volunteers to assist. I admired the Inspector; he stuck with the Forestry chap and me and we could all see disaster in that plan. We did gain the right to sift out those without proper equipment and experience, and in any case those that were sent up did not get far into the field before the search was called off. But Commissioner Porter did say that it was not right that a volunteer group should have had three big searches in three years, and the police should have a section for this.

When he went back, he had enough pull to set one up, and the police Search and Rescue Section was established. The emphasis was on bushwalking skills, and it was the bushwalking clubs who trained the first few members of that section.

Today, the requirements for getting into this are quite different. Recruits have got to be top notch scuba divers, then they pick up a bit of bushwalking and a bit of rockclimbing along the way.

The missing searcher was found alive and well, but no trace of Haig has ever been discovered.

Q. How long did you continue with Search and Rescue?

A. I was Field Organiser until 1970, apart from a break in 1956 when I was in the Antarctic, then I took over the call-up side right through the '70's.

I started getting into other fields. A lot of new groups were starting up and going out into the bush; schools, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Outward Bound etc., and the active walkers and the police S&R were worried that a lot more searches would result, if there weren't some sort of controls.

That led to the setting up of an expedition panel for the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, and it led to us being requested to staff the first two Victorian Outward Bound courses, and out of that we developed the Bushwalking and Mountaineering Leadership Training Board.

Q. You were Officer-In-Charge at Mawson in 1956?

A. Yes, I think Phil (Dr. Phillip Law, Director, Antarctic Division) was looking for someone with experience in exploration, and my experience in leading those long SW Tassy trips was an asset. There was really nobody around with snow and ice experience. It's a different job these days, they want an OIC to stick in the base, more like an office job. The year before me Bechervaise was OIC at Mawson; that was the second year the base had operated.

Normally, teachers had to resign, but somehow Phil got me leave. And that set a precedent. When the ship came down the next year, Graham Wheeler got off, to work as a weather observer. I knew him slightly through YHA and I knew he was a teacher, so I asked him how he wangled it? He replied, "First they knocked me back. So I said, what about Bewsher? And I got the leave".

Q. Which ship took you down?

A. The "Kista Dan". We left from Melbourne, and sailed due south past Tasmania, reaching the coast a long way east of Mawson, which is right around almost under South Africa. The trip took seven weeks, and we spent over five of those weeks cruising the coast doing survey work.

Q. Mapping?

A. We had some rough maps of the coast based on American aerial photos. These were being produced for the forthcoming International Geophysical Year (IGY) in 1957. We found the outlines to be quite accurate, but in places the latitude was out by up to 40 miles! That was because the yanks didn't have any ground fixes. So we landed on every bit of rock and island that we could find to get accurate fixes. Phil was on the boat; he went down each summer.

Q. Wasn't that the year Harry Ayres went down?

A. Harry was there as a New Zealand Observer. He was an experienced mountain guide, with a solid reputation in NZ.

He had virtually taught Ed Hillary to climb, and Ed was the most widely known climber in the world after he and Tensing were first on the summit of Everest in '53.

The idea was that Harry would teach us some snow and ice skills, but his main purpose was to take most of the dogs back from Mawson, so they could be used by Hillary on the Fuchs/Hillary Trans-Antarctic Crossing.

Because we had an RAAF unit down there with two aircraft, they reckoned we wouldn't need the dogs. We disagreed, but only ten dogs were left. These were the dregs, and certainly were not a team. It was a battle to turn them into a team, but they proved vital to achieving our field program.

Q. What is your version of the icecliff incident?

A. My impression is a bit different from Phil's (Ed: see elsewhere in this publication). I really wasn't that worried, after all we were in the hands of an excellent mountain guide. Phil is convinced that it is the closest he has ever come to death, but I believe he has done a lot more dangerous things, such as flying around Antarctica in small aircraft.

It was the first time we had worn crampons, and we weren't experienced on ice. I think I was probably gazing around, admiring the scenery and not paying attention, when somehow, I fell off! I quietly said, "Watch it" to Phil who was close by, but Phil had no ice axe, and he went too. At this stage I gave a mighty shout to Harry, who was well above, cutting big steps.

Harry looked around, then swiftly turned back to the slope, and held us both with a quickly placed pick belay. Harry never expressed an opinion about this incident; the account in his biography is based on Phil's story. Later, Harry did comment to me that I had something in common with Ed Hillary - he had held falls by both of us.

Q. When I was at Mawson in '65, the huge aircraft hanger was still there, accumulating boxes of junk, and drift snow. Is that where you kept the planes?

A. That's right. We were the first party in Antarctica to fly 'planes right through the year. At other bases the planes were outdoors and snowed in over the winter. We even did a flight on Midwinters Day. It was perfect weather, and it was daylight briefly, so we flew.

The hanger is right at the waters edge, and the aircraft used the sea ice as a landing strip.

About '59 or '60 they took the aircraft up to the plateau, about a mile inland from the base. They were moored there, so they could be used during the summer when the sea-ice had gone from the harbour. But the

wind wrecked them; I think two Beavers and a Dakota were lost. That was the end of aircraft at Mawson, apart from those based on the ship on summer changeover trips.

In my year, we had a Beaver as the main aircraft, and an Auster as a back-up 'plane. Aerial surveying was the main job for the 'planes, but they were also used for supplying field depots.

Q. Flying must have been quite hazardous?

A. Good weather was crucial, and the only weather reports of use to us originated from Marion Island, off the coast of South Africa, and far to the north of Mawson.

The aircraft were used to set up a fuel depot at King Edward Gulf, about 170 miles west of Mawson, and we used that depot for flights further afield, such as up over the plateau and on to Amundsen Bay.

When we did the first flight in to establish an aerial depot near the Prince Charles Range, about 250 miles inland, the plan was to establish the depot at the north end of the range, near Mt. Bechervaise. But we couldn't find a suitable landing spot. The depot was actually put another 47 miles on, around the eastern perimeter of the range. Even here we had a very rough landing. Near the mountains there was blue ice, and deep sastrugi further out. We did find a spot that looked OK, with a bit of light ground drift, and not much sastrugi, but it was a rough landing, with the 'plane bouncing and thumping over the surface, and bits of ice shooting up on either side. We were still over a mile from the nearest peak, although it looked a lot closer. Doug felt it was risky at the altitude of 4000 feet to take-off with all three of us on board, so Peter Crohn and I stayed, with all the gear. We couldn't move it very far, and the wind got up, so we set up camp. Our tents were white, and hard to see against the snow.

The 'plane returned that afternoon, but with the white tents, Doug couldn't see our camp from the air, and we didn't hear him with the tent flapping so much.

Next morning the other pilot flew in, and found the right area (proved by photos he took), but he couldn't find us either, and we didn't hear the 'plane.

They were getting worried back at base, as we had disappeared. We had a nice night camping out on the ice, and weren't at all worried.

By the time the third flight came, we were visible, out marking a strip with pennant flags. They had brought the surveyor, and an aircraft mechanic to keep the engines running while they searched on the ground. Those white tents were a stupid idea!

Q. What vehicles did you have for field work?

A. Weasels, army disposals, and already worn out. When we did get the Weasels in to the aerial depot, we could only get them another 10 miles past the depot. It was a hell of a job even getting them 47 miles around the

eastern perimeter of the range to reach the depot. That was where I 'wrote off' a crowbar!

Q. How did that happen?

A. I was roped to a Weasel, about fifty feet ahead of it, tapping away with the crowbar. Usually it would penetrate about two feet before striking hard ice. Tap, tap, tap....all of a sudden the ruddy crowbar had gone! I looked down, and there was a little hole at my feet. The crowbar had vanished into the depths, and I didn't hear a sound. So I wrote the crowbar off, and I quickly got myself back a few feet also!

Q. How long were you out, Bill?

A. Eighty four days, including five days 'blizzed-in' just fifty five miles out from Mawson. Without the dogs, we would not have got much survey work done in the Prince Charles Range. We got the dogs that remained knocked into some sort of a team, and this team was used for three trips. Each of the trips lasted ten to fourteen days, starting from the aerial base.

On the first trip, I went with Peter Crohn, and Syd Kirkby, the surveyor. On the second trip, John Hollingshead who was the Radio Supervisor, went with Syd and Peter. We managed to stretch things to get a third trip in, and the party was Peter, Syd, and me.

Q. How did you get the idea to go South?

A. Some of us wanted to go to Heard Island to try and climb Big Ben. I put it to Phil, that if we got together a group of four, say an OIC, a doctor and a couple of other useful people, we might get positions at the Heard Island Base in 1955, and also attempt the mountain. Phil's eyes lit up, but unfortunately Heard was closed by the government before we could do this. I don't know if we would have climbed it, maybe we didn't have the experience, but I believe we would have got the jobs, because all of that group later got positions at Mawson.

Phil then said he would interview me for the position of OIC at Macquarie Island in 1955, but I really preferred to go to a mainland base, and I knew that being married, I would only have one chance to get down there. So, I put in for OIC Mawson in 1956, and I was lucky enough to get it.

Q. After finding such an excellent site for Mawson, and getting the Station established, Phil must have been keen to winter over there?

A. Phil said to me down at Mawson, "Bill, we're not having an OIC next year, instead as it is the IGY, a physicist will be in charge". I said, "I had better make sure the station is in good shape if you will be in charge next year." So Phil planned to winter at Mawson for the IGY in 1957, but when the appointments list came down, I got a shock, because Phil wasn't on it.

The government had told him his job was back here in Melbourne, and they wouldn't let him go down. That was crazy, that was a big blue, because it would have widened his experience of Antarctic conditions if he had been able to winter over.

Q. How many men were at Mawson in '56?

A. Twenty. We had four RAAF, three radio operators, three weather observers, two physicists, two mechanics, a doctor, a surveyor, a geologist, a marine biologist, a cook, and the OIC of course.

Q. Apart from yourself, were there any MUMC members down there?

A. Yes; Peter Crohn belonged to the MUMC. He was down at Mawson in 1955, and when he found that I was coming down, he applied to stay on for a second year! He was the first person to do that at one of our Bases.

In 1954, Bob Summers who was in the MUMC, was down there for the establishment of Mawson. Lots of MUMC members have been down since, of course.

Q. On the trip home, did you sail straight back?

A. Yes, although we did call at the French base on Kerguelen Island, and we spent a day there. We also wanted to visit Heard Island, but the weather was too rough. It had only been closed down for a year, and I think Phil would have liked to have a look.

Q. You knew Sir Douglas Mawson?

A. Yes, I had met him once or twice, and he knew who I was.

About May 1957, after I had returned from Mawson, and was working at the Antarctic Division when the office was in Collins Street next to the Regent, Phil asked me to go and meet Sir Douglas. He had flown over from Adelaide for an Antarctic Planning Committee meeting, and I was to meet him where the airport bus came in, up opposite the museum in Swanston Street.

I found him there, and we started chatting. He was very interested to hear the latest on Mawson Base.

Sir Douglas was elderly, and somewhat infirm, so I asked him if we should get a taxi down to the office, or if he could manage on the tram? Suddenly he realised that I had come to escort him, and he was genuinely surprised and flattered that anyone should go to the bother of meeting him!

Q. Which schools have you been associated with?

A. In 1970, I became Principal at Albion Primary, then in 1973 I moved to Camberwell Primary for eleven years. For my fifteenth year as Principal, I moved to Cohuna Primary, a much larger school, which helped my superannuation.

At the end of 1984, I retired at age 60.

Q. And since you have retired?

A. I thought I would be able to do lots of long trips, but I haven't been able to find any of my old mates to go with for various reasons.

I did do a campervan trip around both islands in New Zealand with Joan Talent (nee King), Judy Phillip (nee Sullivan) and Bruce Graham.

Near Mt Cook, we visited the Memorial Bells, in memory of Vicky Thompson, Jill Tremain and two Indian girls, who were all lost in an avalanche on 30 May 1974, on the Indo-NZ Himalayan Expedition to Mt Hardeol in the Kunoan Himalaya. Another of the Bells is in memory of Faye Kerr, who died in Madras, India on 25 June 1980.

Q. You were telling me about climbing "Mt Wilson"?

A. That was the happiest I ever saw Faye, back in our uni. days on the night we climbed the old Mt Wilson.

She was moving a'cheval along the ridge of the slate roof, with her tousled hair blowing in the wind, a big smile, and a four foot diameter army hydrogen balloon tethered to her waist.

It was a tragedy when the old Wilson Hall burnt down. It had a turret at each corner, which formed a sort of re entrant chimney, fifty five feet high straight up to the roof. It was just the right width for 'backing-up'.

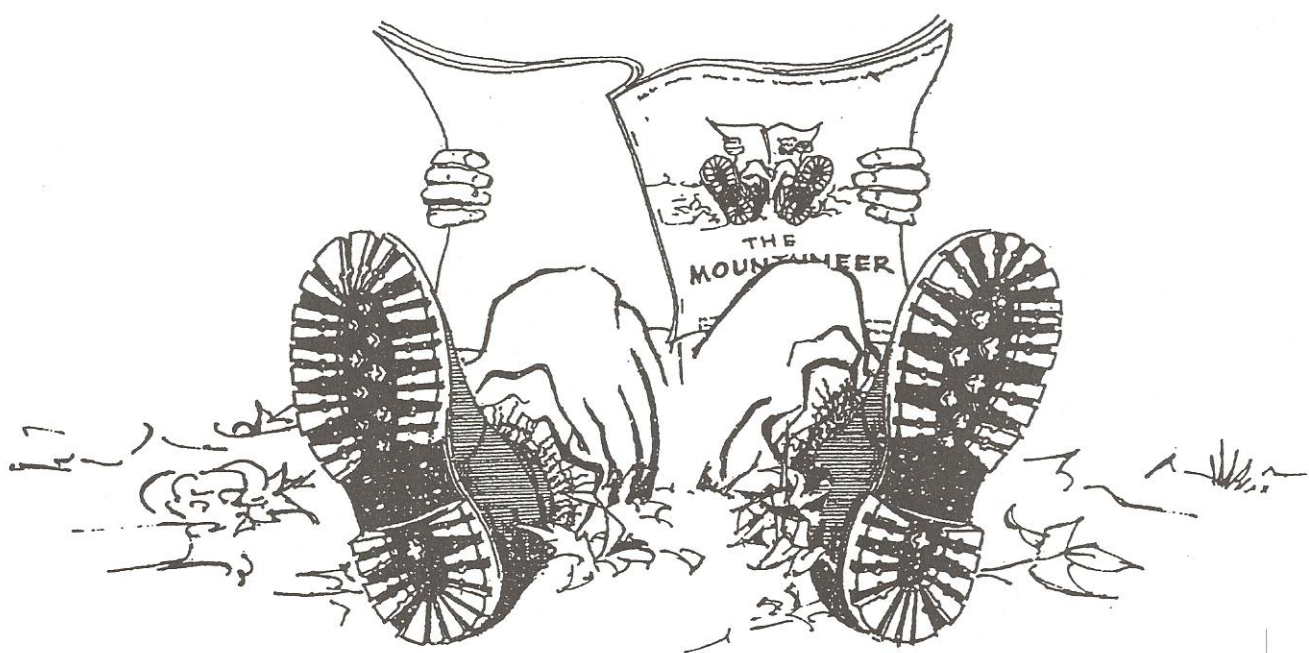
Our final ascent was as usual, in the early hours of the morning, and for equipment we had the balloon and a chamber pot. Faye, and Bruce Graham, were there. After backing up to the roof, and getting along the ridge to the final tower, Bruce climbed the tower, using the lightning arrestor conductor.

Unfortunately, before he got the chamber pot over the spike on top, he snagged and burst the balloon. The limp balloon left behind caused some puzzlement the following day.

Q. You would agree that the MUMC has played a large part in your life?

A. Oh, yes, I love the MUMC. If there had been a subject called 'Mountaineering' at uni I would have done well at that. I've kept in touch with reunions, and such things as organising some of these anniversary dinners. I helped organised the 45th together with Carla Miller and Jim Newlands.

I turned 70 in February, and I feel terrific. I certainly don't feel 70, friends tell me I don't look 70, and my family tell me I certainly don't act 70!



The Warrumbungles

by Daphne McPherson

Around 1956 an MUMC book was proposed. Some articles were written, but the book never eventuated. This is an edited and shortened version of one of those contributions

Party: Daphne McPherson, John Young, Eric Webb, Faye Kerr, Ian Lesley(?), Keith Ball, Merve Lia. The trip was in September 1952

We first saw this group of fascinating peaks one sunny afternoon in September, when the spring air was mild and a patina of green lay on the ground. Wattle, brilliantly yellow, provided sharp contrast to the more subdued tones of the purple sarsaparilla. The mountains themselves had that soft, blue look that comes with distance. But there was nothing soft about their outlines; the jagged edges betrayed the presence of innumerable cliffs and deeply riven gullies. Our excitement grew. Would we succeed in climbing them? Were ten days long enough? Hopes ran high as the peaks drew closer.

Some 350 miles north west of Sydney, the Warrumbungles are little known and rarely visited. Thus apart from their inherent grandeur, they have the subtle attraction and indefinable charm of secluded places. They cover an area roughly circular in shape with a diameter of about 40 miles, bounded on the east by the upper reaches of the Castlereagh River, and by monotonous plains on the west. To the north lies the area known as the Pillaga Scrub, and to the south the Oxley Highway passes through the tiny village of Tooraweenah, from where we set out to establish our base camp on Spirey Creek at the foot of Belougeri Spire.

Our aim was to climb Belougeri Spire, Crater Bluff, The Breadknife and Mt. Tondurion. These impressive peaks, rising like tusks from the scrubby ridges, are the pick of the Warrumbungles; although under 4000 feet in height they have massive perpendicular cliffs which offer excellent rock-climbing - perhaps the best in New South Wales. Hard plugs of long extinct volcanoes, or the remnants of trachydykes like The Breadknife, scarred and moulded by the elements into peculiar shapes, form this range.

The Breadknife is fantastic. There is no other word to describe its effect. Imagine a wall a quarter of a mile long, three hundred feet high and twelve feet thick, whose base, set in a casual confusion of rocks and boulders, slopes gently downhill. Add one forlorn little tree to the summit - and you have The Breadknife!

You may gain the impression that the whole thing is swaying gently in the breeze.

We began the ascent at the northern extremity, fortified by a lunch such as only bushwalkers know how to consume, and uttering a prayer for the continued stability of our precious mountain. Eric, a skilful and competent climber, took the lead. He soon disposed of the first few pitches, ultimately landing us intact beneath the shadow of a very impressive overhang. We viewed this silent obstacle with misgiving as it projected a good ten feet, and short of sprouting wings there seemed to be no means of surmounting it. After investigation, Eric finally decided to force a route to the right. It was a ticklish place. I watched him move out onto the western wall, with his back to the sun, toes in tiny cracks, and heels on nothing more substantial than airy space.

Relaxing, I watched two great eagles hovering high over our heads. Gracefully they wheeled in ever diminishing circles above the summit rocks.

With the sun already stooping towards the horizon and a chill wind blowing, there could be no delay. Assuming a nonchalance I did not altogether feel, I prepared to follow in Eric's steps. Out on the western wall the exposure was terrible; but climbing second and not leading makes a vast difference, and before long I was above the overhang sharing with Eric the delights of a beautiful sunset, and a bag of luscious jelly beans.

In front of us a long sloping section led up to a difficult looking cliff beyond which we could see the summit, much foreshortened and seemingly a mere stone's throw away. The question was - were we justified in going on with the certainty of being benighted? As we had seven more days we thought that we should not. I heartily agreed at the time, but have regretted this ever since. As things turned out we had no further opportunity to revisit this intriguing place.

So with one last glance at the little tree stuck rakishly on the summit, we descended. This was done

neatly and swiftly by abseiling from stance to stance. Our shadows cast upon the opposite ridge like two black dwarfs dancing on an enormous anthill.

We were soon down. Picking up some discarded gear we turned eastward and headed with all speed for camp with its promise of food, fire and friendly comfort.

At 6 o'clock the next morning the sun had already crept above the ridges, but the air still retained the fresh, crisp quality a cold night had lent it. Little birds in Harlequin coats called mellifluously to unseen partners. A tiny stream chuckled over stones. In a nearby tree a kookaburra laughed complacently. Voices sounded; a branch snapped; a thin plume of smoke rose from the fire.

Breakfast was a hurried affair. Today we were to make our assault on Belougery Spire. Lofty and provocative, it towered above us against a lambent sky, its thousand foot cliffs flaming red and gold in the morning sun. Keen with excitement, we set off up the steep slopes of scree that lay between the camp and the top of the ridge. Gaining the crest of the ridge after thirty minutes, we looked across at the mighty cliffs of Crater Bluff, pinkish-yellow in the diffuse morning light. Further south, Mt. Tonduron formed a near horizon.

Eric having elected to remain in camp for the day, our party numbered six, and we planned to climb as three ropes. After exchanging boots for the reassuring comfort of the prehensile sandshoe, we ascended a crack to a long sloping ledge covered with grass and wiry waist high scrub. At the far end was a rocky platform where we sat awhile, enjoying the sun and studying - not without some misgivings - our proposed route up the cliff face opposite. Assuring ourselves that the gully formed by the junction of the two main walls was feasible, at least for the lower part of its length, four of us moved across to begin the first pitch.

This was relatively easy, as was the second pitch, which took us out of the gully on to the main right wall and thence to the foot of a narrow chimney about ten feet high. John Young and I were ahead of the others, and as we were leading through it fell to me to tackle this outpost of the mountain's defences.

Holds were practically non-existent. It was a case of strenuously backing up. I emerged hot and winded on a narrow ledge, which provided an excellent stance, but no belays. Acting on the assumption that John was unlikely to fall out of the chimney, I anchored myself as securely as possible to a small tree and proceeded to bring him up. He took the chimney with ease and ensconced himself in a niche at the top, tying on to an old piton I had overlooked. John invited me to continue.

A cursory glance at the pitch following had revealed it to be nothing short of desperate; at least I thought so. It took the form of a V-shaped horizontal traverse. At the point of the V, and continuing round to the far side there seemed to be a practicable ledge, but for the first few feet the rock face was smooth and devoid of handholds, and bulged outward to form a slight but obstinate overhang. A tiny shelf under this could give purchase to the feet, but it was very narrow and sloped sharply downwards; friction alone would have to suffice to prevent a drop into the gully below.

A man with arms long enough could have cradled the bulge; but for me it meant forsaking a good right hand-hold, inching cautiously along the shelf, face to the wall, and blindly groping for something substantial to the left. Passing a running belay around the tree and taking several deep breaths in order to relax, I finally began to edge crabwise round the corner.

It seemed as though I was on that shelf for hours, but it could not have been more than a few moments. I could feel the sun hot on my neck and the coarse texture of the dun-coloured rock under my hands. A tiny lizard scrambled higher up the cliff and gazed at me with alert, beady eyes. Ah, lizard, what wouldn't I give to possess your gravity-defying powers?

Suddenly it was over and I was on the far side seeking a belay. I had to run out nearly a whole rope length before I found one. This time it was a solid tree, and I sat down, smug and self-satisfied, to await John's arrival. He was not long in coming, and traversed past me towards our fifth belay. Then it was my turn again. I climbed upwards until the face steepened and the holds became undercut. Belaying firmly, I suggested to John that he pass beneath me to continue the traverse round to the right. This he did and shortly after I found him tucked up in a tiny cave at the top of another chimney. In the roof, a manhole suggested a possible exit. With a few heaves and grunts and much verbal encouragement from John, I wriggled through to find a perfect stance and belay in the sun. A later climber found the hole so small that he was obliged to remove his clothes.

Once outside, the summit was within our grasp, and a few more rope-lengths over loose rock brought us to the cairn. Crater Bluff and Tonduron looked magnificent, but The Breadknife, low down in the valley, was dwarfed into insignificance. We left the summit at 3 pm and descended by the same route, finally arriving back at camp around 5 o'clock. It had been a good climb and a perfect day and we were well content.

Near the camp was a modest waterfall and five minutes later I stood beneath it. What a wonderful moment, full of a primitive keen delight. To feel the

clean cold touch of surging water, washing away the sweat and dust and the inevitable pieces of dogwood; to be able to relax, free from the anxiety of the climb. To be able to meditate on the imminent delights of a bowl of soup and a pot of bubbling hoosh, the prelude to surrendering tired limbs to the seductive warmth of a down-filled sleeping bag. To be able to do this, after a long and strenuous day, gave one a deep sense of satisfaction.

The eighth member of our party had arrived and we resolved to climb Crater Bluff, but somehow our plans went awry. The day remains in my memory as a classic example of what can only be called "messaging about" on the rock. Crater Bluff has been likened to a decayed hollow tooth. The summit lies on the northern rim of the semi-circular wall enclosing the long, twisting canyon of the so-called crater. It is not a true volcanic crater but has been formed solely by weathering. Two did reach the summit but the rest of us, having watched the sun set in a saffron sky, abandoned those pleasant pursuits and returned to the ridge that connects Crater Bluff with Beloungery Spire, and began the hour-long trek back to camp. The scrub was thick and we plodded wearily along; a string of tired, sunburnt automatons in a wilderness of trees and rocks.

We emerged on to the scree slopes to a refulgent moon silvering the rocks, and deepening the shadows. It was a scene of calm and peaceful serenity, beautiful but rather unreal. Things seemed to have a semi-magic quality. An improbable enchanted air was heightened by Eric producing a tonette, and playing a few scraps of elfin melody as we scurried down the slope. How he managed to keep perfect time, tune and balance whilst hopping from rock to rock down a steep gradient, had us intrigued.

Dawn next day was tranquil enough, though an overcast sky robbed it of the beauty of its predecessors. After a goodly breakfast of Farex and the remains of last night's apricots, we shouldered ropes, and with the nails in our boots clinking impressively on the rocks, set off up the slope towards the top of the ridge. Crater Bluff was again our destination but this time we were heading for the south-eastern buttress, the route used by the two successful climbers on the preceding day. They had left a fixed rope on the first pitch - reputedly the most difficult section - so we anticipated little or no trouble with the remainder of the climb. Nor did we have. By the effective method of each roping on to his neighbour, it was no time before we stood on the lower lip of the crater preparatory to scrambling up its steep, grassy interior.

This crater resembled a miniature glacier, though much narrower and with grass and shrubs and rocky outcrops taking the place of ice. The sombre

walls, the silence and the bleak grey sky all combined to give an air of baleful desolation. We found the grass wet, and slippery for those shod only in rubbers. However, we succeeded in reaching to within thirty feet of the rim unroped. Here the grade steepened considerably so we used the rope for the last two pitches, gaining the summit at one o'clock.

Sitting haphazardly on the boulders of the narrow rim we nibbled Vita Weats, and we felt pleasantly happy. Tonduron in the south looked astonishingly like a newly made jelly, hence our subsequent appellation "The Jelly Mould". We regarded it with a feeling amounting almost to condescension, as we had heard that the route to the summit was nothing more than an easy rock scramble. Such arrogant optimism deserved the sharp rap over the knuckles Fate was about to give us.

The next day we spent resting. Resting that is, in between frequent snacks helped along by mountainous meals. We also managed to divert the water supply from its chosen course, so that it flowed past one of the tent doors. Consequently the occupants, being still abed, wondered at the shouts of laughter that greeted Eric's playing of, "I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside" and "River Stay 'Way From my Door". At night we stoked the fire, sang songs, recalled experiences of past trips and eventually went to bed feeling warm and comfortable and pleasantly drowsy.

Mountaineering is not always a grim business.

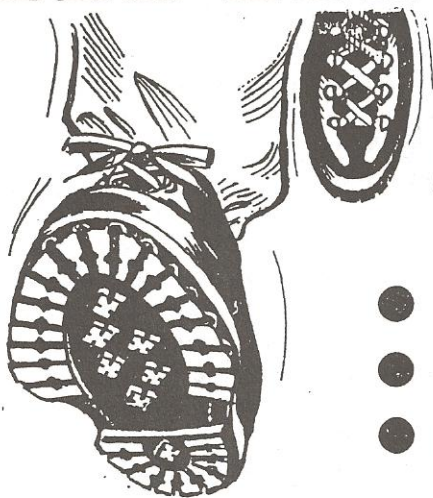
The following day we shifted camp over to Mt. Tonduron. The journey occupied the greater part of the day and towards evening we found an open clearing alongside running water, so we quickly took up residence. Again we sang songs, and ate innumerable pancakes fried in oil.

The next day was our last. After breakfast we packed up completely so that we could make a quick dash up Tonduron and then return in time for the two mile walk down the valley to our rendezvous with the waiting truck. It was here that Fate stepped in.

Although we took ropes, the majority of us were unable to get up Tonduron at all! Two did reach the top but only after a strenuous climb. We others had to be content with getting a mere two-thirds of the way. What had happened to the reputedly easy route I couldn't say - unless a fall of rock had obliterated it. We walked down the valley, warmed by a late afternoon sun, then hopped aboard the waiting truck and were whisked away.

As the rolling plains came up to greet us and the mountains slipped behind in the gathering darkness, I felt rather sad. It had been an excellent holiday, and I felt loath to return to the noise and bustle of the city.

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CIRCA 1961

Reminiscences From The Fifties

by Giff Hatfield

My introduction to MUMC was in 1953, my first year as an engineering student. At that time most climbing was at Cathedral Range where the "Black Streak" on Sugarloaf Peak was a real challenge. The ropes at that time were mainly manilla and most protection was by means of pitons. It was around 1955 I think, that some of us filed the threads out of a range of ordinary hexagonal nuts (as used on bolts). These were then threaded onto slings to provide protection where we couldn't use pitons. How equipment has changed over the years!

December 1954 saw a contingent of nine head for Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair Reserve to walk and climb. I was lucky enough to join in with Max and Bryan aiming to climb all the main peaks in the Reserve. We ultimately missed out on completing Pelion West, Mt Nereus (very cloudy) and Mt Ida (lack of time).

On the first morning we were up fairly early and off quickly to reach Kitchen Hut around 10:30am, where we dropped our packs and headed for Little Horn to start a traverse along the top of Cradle Mountain, with one main abseil down to a ledge, a step across the gap, and a climb back up to the ridge. It was quite magnificent with clear views and plenty of snowdrifts - thus the need for care where the snow was melting away from the rocks creating rock-to-ice crevasses. Kitchen Hut was reached again about 6pm from where we had a short walk to our campsite, eating tea while watching a glorious sunset.

We spent the next few days around Barn Bluff, Mt Oakleigh, and Pelion East, before moving camp to Pelion Gap. Thursday 23 December we rose with the sun about 5am on a cool morning. Quickly heading up Doris after breakfast we found ourselves admiring the imaginary islands created by the mountain tops suspended in mystic lakes of cloud. Atop Ossa soon after 8am, we had magnificent clear views to the Prince of

Wales Range and Frenchmans Cap to the south, and back to Cradle to the north. Heading over the large boulders along the ridge, we went over Paddy's Nut to be at Thetis for lunch.

Down over more rough dolerite rock, we walked through some forest and scrub to some lovely tarns in the saddle. I had lost a heel off my boot in the morning, and by now the other heel was wearing distinctly. By 2pm we were on Achilles, still with good views although getting hazy, and over the next hour the sky clouded over. Unfortunately, Max was pretty crook by this stage, and I was getting a sore ankle. We tried to skirt Pelion West, but struck some hard going in thick cutting grass scrub. After ascending again we finally got down to the moor, rejoined the track about 5:30pm, and headed back via Frog Flat and Pelion Hut to our camp at Pelion Gap just before 9pm. Our sleeping bags were certainly welcome that night.

By the end of Christmas Day, we had climbed Falling Mountain and moved to Pine Valley Hut. The falling barometer gave warning of storms which came overnight, and lasted into Boxing Day. In the afternoon we headed up to the Labyrinth, to plan climbing routes on Geryon and to climb Eros and Hyperion for a magnificent sunset. It was quite dark in the forest when we returned to the Hut. Over the next two days we did some climbs on Geryon and ascended several other summits, after which I joined another party to climb the remainder of the southern peaks.

Ed Note: the above article is an edited version of a recent letter from the author. We omitted the sketchy notes Giff provided about some of his overseas climbing trips over the years since the 1954 Reserve trip, as they deserve a better treatment than we could possibly give them here.

[illegible]

ISSUE I
~~2/2/54~~ 2
Nov. 1957

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Lakes

by Professor T.M.Cherry

Written for the never published MUMC book about 1955, this unpublished musing from the Foundation President of the Club is now reproduced.

The Greek philosophers regarded the whole inanimate world as composed at bottom from the four elements Earth, Water, Fire and Air. It is from these, therefore, that the mountaineer ultimately derives his joys and his tribulations; and indeed, his acquaintance with them is both ultimate and intimate. He has Earth upon which to sleep and walk, and - in its more perpendicular aspects - to climb. By Fire at night he has his being, while by day he has the sun to tan his skin and draw the scent from the eucalyptus forests. Of Air he can enjoy upon some mountain tops nearly a full sphere, as against the plainsman's hemisphere. He must thank it too for 'the purple noon's transparent might' and for the more gorgeous displays of sunset and perhaps sunrise. One might speak also of the less genial manifestations of these elements: for nature does not always smile, and in memory we value equally the fair and foul days. But my concern here is to be Water, and since space is limited, water only in its more static and bulky aspect.

The dictionary defines a lake as 'a large body of water surrounded by land'. I prefer however, a more liberal inclusiveness, and class with lakes all inland seas, lochs, lochans, loughs, tarns, meres, billabongs, floods, ponds, pools, and puddles, provided only they be too wide to jump across. On reflection, this would include swimming baths so I add the proviso that they be not man-made, or at least in the case of the greater dams that they decently hide their skeletons. Indeed, some of the most memorable lakes are miniatures. I have in mind those of the Labyrinth, which lies in Tasmania a few miles north and a thousand feet vertically from Lake St.Clair, where the whole scene seems to have been consciously contrived in the style of a Japanese miniature. The pencil pines rise to twenty or at most twenty-five feet, and are shaped just like the trees in a Noah's Ark. For the beeches, five feet is a generous average, and the lowlier shrubs are to match. The broken cliffs in which the country rises run to ten feet. Into this scenery the little lakes are twisted; there is always one lying in wait round the corner. The water flows out in gorges four feet deep and nine inches across, where waterfalls roar into pools of dark Lilliputian depths. It is in keeping that the lakes are gracious only to Lilliputian bathers; humans find that beneath the shining surface a slimy

carpet clings to the rocks ... or rather, does not cling. Higher up, on the moors, the cushion plants pursue their age-long growth. A really old one, or rather colony, may be two feet high, with the span of a fair-sized boulder and nearly as firm to walk upon. Their surface is a mosaic of hexagons, in different shades of green and silver, five or six to the inch, and in season they are decked with starry flowers. In places these bushes are laid out in rows which have impounded miniature lakes; or better, terraces of such lakes, each cascading into the next down a mossy chute. There will be more of Tasmania before I have done.

The hollows which are fit to receive lakes have most commonly been formed by glaciers grinding down into their beds, or damming the lower valleys with their moraines. Victoria was deprived of a share in the 'recent' glaciation which has made Tasmania the mountaineer's playground, and there is but one mountain lake in Victoria. Still it is a near miss, for Kosciusko and Mount Gambier have them, and are only just outside. This lake is Tarli Karng, on Wellington, two days journey north from Maffra. And even it, in a sense, is an accident. A great cliff must have been tumbled, by an earthquake perhaps, a couple of thousand years ago, and it dammed the valley below. The dam is, at the top, a hundred yards across and half that in width, and carries a respectable forest growing amongst the boulders. Thence it falls away steeply down the valley, and some hundreds of feet below one reaches the water again, welling up amidst ferns into its gravelly bed; for the lake has no visible outlet. Tarli Karng was discovered by white men about seventy years ago, and for long thereafter its whereabouts, and even existence remained a mystery except to a few initiated. On Broadbent's road map of the World War I period it was shown, certainly - but on the wrong side of the mountain, and of course the Lands Department's maps had none of it. It is mostly on this account that it is a mecca for those who can carry a pack; but only partly, for it is magnificently set in a deep, sinuous, steep-sided valley clothed in unburnt forest. In shape it resembles a pear, or more accurately, a two-necked bagpipe for near the lower end a creek enters a pointed bay. It is of a size to scramble round in an hour; but this is good going, for what looks from above like a

circumferential beach is a steep bank of boulders. Of course, to bathe is a ritual, and in summer it is one of the more enjoyable rituals - until one dives down: the lake being quite landlocked, its surface layer remains fairly unmixed, and there the temperature is decidedly higher than in the general body of water.

Before leaving Victoria one should not forget Lake Mountain, at the head of the Taggerty Valley behind Marysville. I do not know who named it, or why for there is no vestige of a lake in its vicinity, nor any place where a lake might have been within the last century.

In colour, lakes span a good part of the spectrum, nor must one forget the black ones and the white ones. The copy-book colour is blue, and though the sky, when clear, contributes to this it is by no means the whole story. Perhaps the most famous of the blue ones is the Lake of Geneva. I have not seen it, but have always imagined it (and presumably I did not make this up) to be a deep blue. This colour is said to have a similar origin to that of the sky, from a suspension of microscopically small particles. In the case of the lake, this dust is the ultimate product of disintegration of the Alps: the glaciers grind up what falls on to them and what they scour from their beds and the rivers carry down to the lakes the resulting buttermilk. In the Geneva lake the particles have time to settle out of the top layers, and the Rhone flowing out at the lower end is clear. In New Zealand also, the rivers coming from the glacial regions are milky, and many of them flow through lakes; but these lakes are blue, about that of a Geelong Grammar cap - somewhat faded! Doubtless they are shallower, and with a quicker run-through of water, so that the sludge has not time to settle.

I recently saw, in the same eyeful, two little brilliantly green lakes and a larger blue one set amidst red, black and yellow rocks. This was on Mount Tongariro in New Zealand, and I remember a similar case of contrast high in the Pyrenees. The delight aroused by such scenes, when they burst suddenly into view as one tops some vantage point, is beyond description. There is however a parallel for those who can get access to a moderate-sized telescope and a star map: the double star Gamma Andromedae has one of its components orange and the other blue.

The black lakes, or in English usage more properly tarns, inhabit such mountainous regions as have peaty soil. The water is comparable to black coffee, but infinitely clearer unless the coffee is very skilfully made. Further, by a curious inversion reminiscent of 'out of the blue comes the whitest wash', the blackest water seems to ensue where the ultimate core of the mountain is the whitest rock. In Tasmania there are a great number of quartzite mountains, and with hardly an exception they nurture tarns of this sort. The best known, and one which is accessible with only moderate labour, is Frenchman's

Cap. Within a mile or two of the summit, and below it at various depths down to 3,000 feet, are no less than ten of these tarns which all become visible if one shifts position within a fifty yard circle. Indeed, except in one direction, that is the limit of shiftability. Some of these are fringed by quartzite, either hard clean rock, or white beach, and as the water shallows the tint runs from black, through brown, to gold. My first sight of this effect was at High Force, in the back part of Yorkshire. The coffee-coloured Tees comes all churned up to the top of the fall, and when seen against the sun it comes roaring over like spun gold.

The situations of lakes are various, and some are decidedly odd. For the larger specimens, naturally, one must go to the valleys, and the best effects are given by those which bore their way from foothills into the mountains. For the proper appreciation of these, very sensible directions are given, 'con amore', by Baddeley in his "Guide to the English Lake District". There are two points. Firstly, to see the lake properly one should prefer a lower vantage-point that is near at hand to a higher but more distant one. He instances Derwentwater, where Friar's Crag, fifty feet above the water's edge, or Latrigg (1000 feet at a mile and a half), is far preferable to Skiddaw (3000 feet at three miles). The secret no doubt, is that it seems much further down from A to B than up from B to A. Secondly, lakes of the boring kind should always be sailed upwards into the mountains; and if they bend, very fine prospects can be had. Of this sort is Baddeley's Ullswater, currently the playground of the speedboat kings. And it is surprising what small bends will serve the purpose, provided one sails close to the inside edge. St Clair in Tasmania is an excellent example. From the foot one sees only forested slopes and ridges. After the first small bend is rounded Olympus discloses himself, a clean-cut skyline buttressed by three miles of formidable cliffs, with Ida on the other side, a shapely but shy spire, standing in a tributary valley whose sides she just fails to overtop. Around the head of the lake, and a few miles beyond, there is a circle of seven peaks, each of distinctive shape, each with a rocky summit projecting far above the forests, and most of them begirt by 'organ pipes'; all but one are hidden until the second bend is reached, and then, in quick succession, they spring into the panorama.

The higher lakes often lie on shelves, whose existence may be quite unsuspected from below, or in cirques, which are hollows in the mountain-side, like vast bucket chairs. A friend has told me how these lakes can sometimes be 'deduced' without going up to look. One watches the creek coming down a valley. If it rises after the wind has swung round so as to blow down the valley, then there is a lake above; the wind has piled up the water a little at its exit.

The Port d'Oo in the Pyrenees is a little nick in the frontier ridge, which here is as narrow as a house

ridge, and wall-sided. It is probably used by smugglers, for from it a track descends into France, 5000 feet in three swoops. It has to swoop because the valley consists of three cirques, superposed; and each cirque is filled by its lake. At the top is the Lac Glace d'Oo, and now at last we arrive at our white lake, appropriately diamond-shaped. Mostly it is snow on top of the ice but in one corner there is a blue patch. The bottom lake is deep green, and a respectable river feeds it by a *pisse-vache* waterfall. The name is taken from the map of the Sogne Fiord in Norway. And talking of names, I was disappointed never to hear the local pronunciation of Oo. Is it "Oo" (delighted anticipation), or "Oh" (neutral), or "Oh" (disappointed), or two syllables?.

A lake in a cirque often has a magnificent backdrop, and accordingly should be seen from the foot; but if one comes on it from above there is in compensation the charm of the unexpected. For unexpectedness my prize exhibit is a tarn on Eldon Peak, also in Tasmania. But it is not easily "exhibited", as the easiest route to the mountain involves a day or more of solid plugging through a forest with very loving

undergrowth, and on reaching the clear upper slopes one will miss the tarn unless one knows where to look. The reason is that it does not lie in a cirque or on a shelf, for which there would be many vantage points, but on a *convex* hillside, like a cone, whose steep slopes are almost unbroken. Here it clings in a narrow trench formed by the sagging outwards, without complete collapse, of a line of dolerite columns, and fits neatly against the hillside like a crescent scimitar in its scabbard. It measures about sixty yards by ten, and its rocky retaining walls have no gaps; sun as well as water is trapped. For the inevitable bathe one can dive straight into deep clear green water.....

The attentive reader will have discerned my opinion, that lakes add the finishing touch to mountain scenery. Nor have I exhausted my ammunition; there is in reserve the moon, and the silver pathways that, miraculously always lead straight to *me*. One could also consider the logic of the matter, via the duplication of the view and Ruskinian contrasts - I prefer to take it as a Law of Nature, a primitive truth.



" DON'T WORRY ABOUT PHIL & ME
— SAVE YOURSELF, HARRY ! "

Incident In Antarctica

by Phillip Law

On the 1956 voyage of MV "Kista Dan" to relieve Mawson Station I decided to explore part of Wilkes Land (roughly, south of Tasmania) where U.S. "Operation Highjump" aerial photographs taken in the summer of 1946-47 had shown several small rocky islands along a stretch of coast about 150 km long. The first, at Davis Bay, they had named "Lewis Island", but no-one had ever visited it.

With some difficulty we discovered the small island and, at 0100 hours on Saturday 7 January, we anchored about half-a-kilometre north-west of it. The weather was unpromising, so we waited to see what developed.

After a breakfast at 0700 hours, the situation had improved, so at 0830 Dick Thompson (my deputy) landed Bill Bewsher (OIC designate for Mawson Station) and me on a ledge of rock at the northern tip of the island, where the surge of the waves on the rock was not too violent. Dick then took the motor boat back to the ship to collect the team chosen for a program of observations on the island - surveying, biology, geomagnetism and gravity.

As the day wore on, the wind decreased and our Beaver aircraft, mounted on floats, was able to carry out photographic runs of roughly 150 km both east and west of Lewis Island.

Ashore, the work went well and the motorboat continued to ferry men back and forth.

The island was exceptionally interesting. It nestled closely alongside the ice cliffs of the Continent, separated from them by a mere 30-35 metres of sea. It was about 270 metres long and 180 wide, of oval shape, and its rocky surface rose in the centre to a height of 27 metres. As the only rock outcrop for more than 160 km of coast, it was a breeding ground for numbers of flying birds and penguins. Our biologists made a census of the Adelie penguins, which numbered over 5,000. On addition, there were many nesting Silver Grey petrels, Cape pigeons, Wilson's storm petrels, Antarctic petrels and skuas.

In preparation for New Zealand's Antarctic program for the International Geophysical Year (1957-58), Edmund Hillary had sent as "observer" a famous alpine guide from Mt. Cook, Harry Ayres. These two had done much ice climbing in New Zealand with Harry acting as climbing mentor to the young Ed, but neither had before that time visited Antarctica.

Bill Bewsher was a competent mountaineer with a lot of experience of rock climbing, but he had never performed on ice. In the afternoon he looked across the narrow gap of water separating the islet from the mainland and said, "Phil, why don't we go over to those cliffs and get Harry to give us some practice in ice climbing." It seemed a good opportunity, so I called Harry and, together, we went down to the landing place, summoned the motor boat and collected the necessary gear - climbing ropes, ice axes and crampons. There were only two ice axes. To obtain another would have meant sending the boat out to the ship again, a delay of at least half an hour. Very foolishly I said, "We won't waste time. You and Harry can use the ice axes. I'll be all right without one".

The motor boat landed us at 1400 hours on a small ledge of rock at the bottom of a 20 metre ice cliff, then went back to the ship. The men on shore were on the far side of the island, and were not visible from where we were. We donned the crampons, roped up with Harry leading and me in the middle, and began to climb.

Harry led us on a long traverse across a slope of about 60 degrees cutting large steps ("buckets" he called them) for us to step in. When Harry was close to the top, on a 70 degree slope, I was in a steep pinch about six metres below him, while Bewsher was on a milder slope further down. Below him was a vertical ice-face that fell ten metres into the sea.

I heard Bewsher call and looking around, saw him sliding down the slope. I took a turn of the rope around my shoulders and squatted down in my "bucket" to belay him, but when the rope tightened, having no ice axe to hold on to, I was pulled from my stance and began tumbling downwards.

I remember being quite cool and calculating. I was thinking - "Bewsher is gone, now I'm gone, Harry won't know and, when the stress comes, he will be torn from his foothold and the three of us will fall into the sea. There will be no-one within sight or earshot, there is no place below us where we can scramble out, so we shall probably thrash around in the sea for five minutes or so before we freeze and drown."

Of course I should have shouted, but I was too busy thinking. Luckily Bill saw me spill out and gave a great yell. Harry dug his ice axe into the cliff without even looking around, took a turn of rope around it and, lying on it, withstood the tug of the rope and held us

both. He then carefully brought us up, one at a time, belaying us on the rope until we were back in the "buckets" behind him. It was not far, then, to the top of the cliff. He had probably done this many times with novice climbers in the Mt. Cook region.

Crampons are awkward things for the beginner to use. Strapped on to his feet, the three-centimetre-long spikes increase the length of his leg so that, on each step, he has to lift his foot higher to have the spikes clear the ground. On a steep slope, the inside leg has to be lifted very high through the narrow gap between the outside leg and the slope. In Bewsher's case, he had obviously caught his inside crampon spikes against either the ice surface or his outside trouser leg and had tripped himself.

Standing on top of the ice cliff, still roped together, we decided to walk some distance inland, up the plateau slope, hoping to see over what looked like a crest a few hundred metres ahead. But as we walked, the apparent crest just kept receding, so we gave up and returned.

But on the way up, there had been another incident. Bewsher came up to me, laughing and chatting, obviously wanting to celebrate his joy at our lucky escape. I shouted at him - "Go away! Don't come near me! Stay at least six metres away and make sure the rope joining you and me is at an angle to that joining me to

Harry! This is crevasse country and we must never walk in line or we might all go down together."

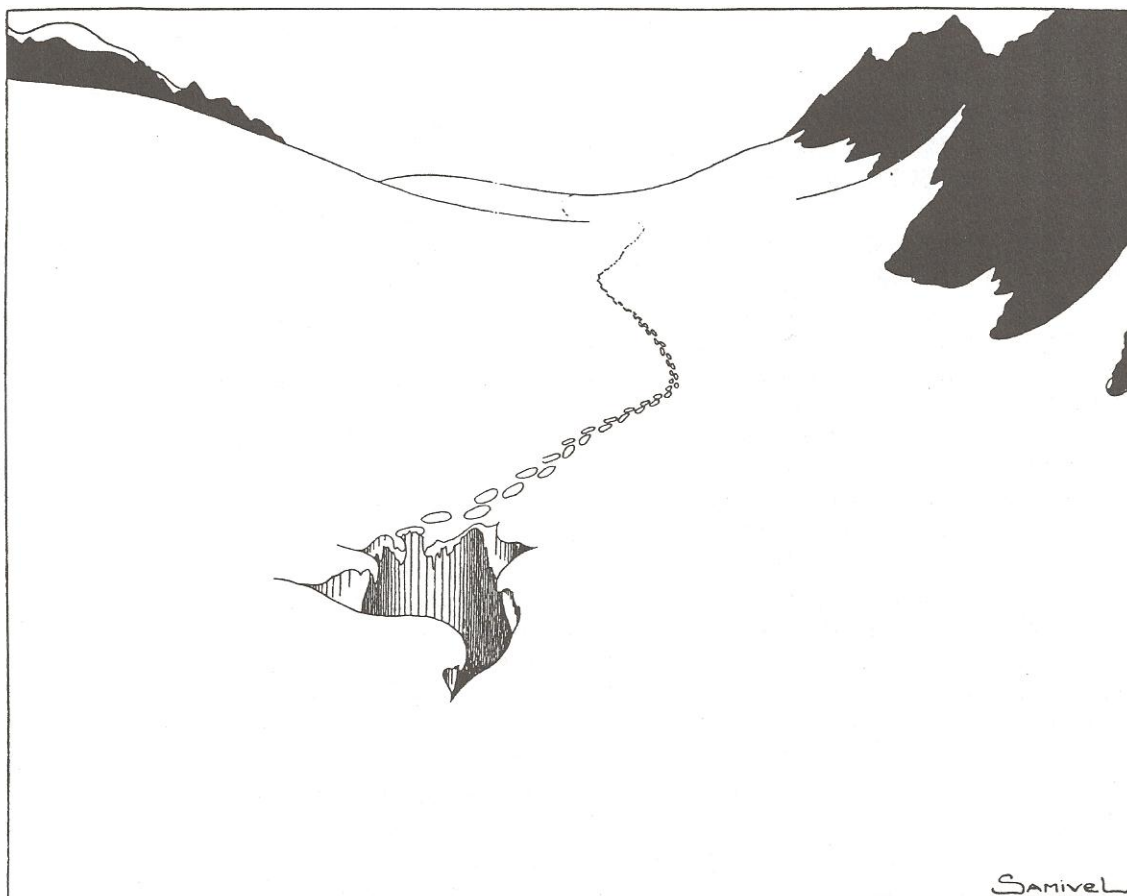
Less than two minutes after this, the snow gave way beneath me. I instinctively threw out my arms and finished up supported by them, flat on the snow at shoulder height, spanning a gaping hole in which my body hung. Looking down I could see the blue, shimmering, icy walls of the crevasse disappearing into the black depths.

Bill and Harry tightened their ropes and helped me to claw my way out.

The view was magnificent! The ice-edge cliffs, the bay full of icebergs, the blue sea, the warm sun and the calm, placid day all combined to make an occasion of perfection. From the cliffs, periodically, would come a roar as of a blasting explosion and tons of ice from the ice front would crash down into the sea. This phenomenon is the result of irregular expansion under the action of a hot day's sunshine cracking off the surface layers of the ice cliffs.

The motor boat duly arrived back at the foot of the cliff at the appointed time and took us back to the ship. After dinner, I worked at my desk, writing reports until midnight, then had a shower and went to bed at 0045 hours.

It had been quite a day!



Geryon - A Winter Challenge

From The Mountaineer, September 1959, No.6

Party: Bob Jones, Reg Henry, Gerry Jacobson, Fred Mitchell, Geoff Shaw (VCC.) . The trip occurred in the August Vacation.

Probably the first event of the trip worth noting was the fact that the party arrived at Nichol's Hut only 20 hours after leaving Melbourne. This was achieved by - plane from Melbourne (7.40pm) to Western Junction, Hire-and-Drive car to Cynthia Bay (2.45am), thence on foot leaving Cynthia Bay next morning to Nichol's Hut (4.10pm). Even though it had been a mild winter the lakeside track was in surprisingly good condition, there were only a few slushy patches and no trees down; and despite a hot day and heavy packs, we made relatively good time to the hut - perhaps spurred on by occasional glimpses of the distant snow-covered DuCances.

Sunday

We continued on into Pine Valley in the morning; the weather had deteriorated, with occasional showers. After lunch we climbed up to the Acropolis Plateau which was covered by several feet of soft snow. Crossing this to the Southern buttress of the Acropolis, we had an excellent view all round. Peaks that are literally rubble heaps in summer now had impressive snow faces, the lakes on the Labyrinth were frozen over, the gullies in the rock buttress were ice-filled, and snow ridges were corniced. Returning to Pine Valley, heavy rain made the snow very slushy, and progress was slow and wet, but it had been an afternoon well spent.

Monday

Mt Gould towering above the valley lured us from the hut at an early hour. Fresh falls of snow and thick scrub made progress difficult till we reached the foot of the cliffs of the Parthenon. There on steep snow slopes we made our way up towards the Gould saddle, and about 200 feet below the saddle the party split. Reg and Fred continued on to the saddle - having to rope up because of the steepness of the icy slope. Gerry, Bob and Geoff also roped up and began climbing a steep snow and ice gully on the Parthenon. After climbing 300 feet they were forced to retreat by almost sheer ice walls, which would have necessitated the use of ice pitons. As there was insufficient time then to climb Gould, we glissaded down to the scrubline, waded down creek to the plains and returned to the hut.

Tuesday

Our plan of attack on Geryon was to first establish a camp high up the valley, and then climb (2 ropes) on the southern end of the Geryon ridge. Mainly for our own convenience we blazed our route up the valley, from the Cephissus Creek crossing up the east side of the valley. After a hard days work a camp was set up in the snow 200 feet below what we thought to be the South Spur of Geryon - actually we were below the Acropolis, but still in a favourable position for climbing Geryon. Bob and Fred remained in the camp that night.

Wednesday

Reg, Gerry and Geoff came up to the high camp early in the morning, taking 2 hours from the hut. While setting up their camp, Reg had the extreme misfortune to gash his leg with the tomahawk (which he had sharpened the previous day). After first aid treatment he returned to the hut, assisted by Gerry and Fred. Heavy snow was now falling and the weather was showing signs of deteriorating.

Thursday

Bob and Geoff made an early start from their camp and climbed across the frozen slopes below the Acropolis to the Acropolis - Geryon saddle. Roping up was necessary as soon as the saddle was reached. The normal summer route up the South Spur (v. diff.) was out of the question because of icy rock, however the summit was reached after four pitches on the south west side of the spur. The climb was severe to v.s., owing to extreme cold and the thick ice coating on the rock. At the time they thought they were on the South Peak - visibility was almost nil. However in climbing the South Spur they were the seventh party to do so, and the first to make a winter ascent - a splendid effort.

Friday

Leaving camp at 4.45am a second attempt on Geryon was made, this time the South Peak, in much better weather conditions. After skirting the South Spur, five hours were spent in attempting three routes, each

time unsuccessful because of loose rock, ice, exposure, and intense cold. Finally, admitting defeat, the party returned to camp, packed and descended to the hut.

Saturday

As Reg was unable to walk out to Cynthia Bay, Fred went on ahead to get the Ranger's launch up to Narcissus Hut, covering the twenty miles in four and three-quarter hours. By 7.00pm, the rest of the party reached Cynthia Bay, thanks mainly to the co-operation of the Ranger. Fortunately there was a doctor staying there for the weekend, so Reg was able to get immediate treatment, also Bob was treated for a frostbitten toe.

To end our stay at Cynthia Bay, we had an enjoyable rock-n-rum-n-roll session, then returned to Launceston Sunday, and Melbourne on Monday.

Remarks

To any party considering a similar trip in winter, we would suggest:

1. At least three teams climbing on the peak.

2. Adoption of the high climbing technique of an early start to avoid soft snow and falling ice in the afternoon.

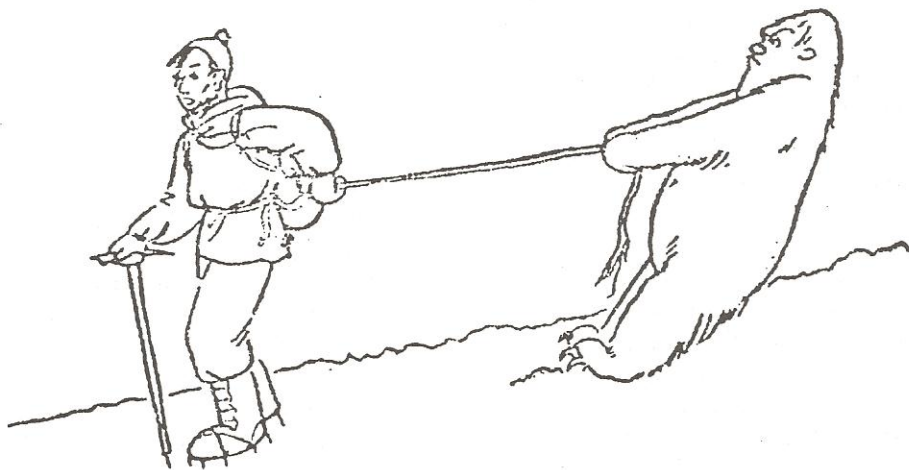
3. A high camp, either on the western slopes, or on the Acropolis - Geryon saddle. Protective snow walls could be built.

4. Use of crampons (with previous experience) in the gully climbs and also on iced rock.

5. Some members of the party should have climbed in the area in summer.

Transport

It is probable that the launch will resume service on the lake this year, making it possible to save about half a day. For a large party, Hire-and-Drive cars can be a worthwhile proposition. The cost is only a little above that of public transport, this being offset by the time saved, and also the convenience of having the car.



Federation Peak

by Les Southwell

Mountaineering in the Arthur Ranges in Tasmania's South-West is now so popular that even finding a campsite can be difficult, and access may soon be rationed. Bulldozer and chainsaw still encroach on the borders. But it was a very different matter just thirty years ago, before the coming of the loggers and the "Hydro", and the Gordon Road from Maydena.

In fact, following the heroic forays of white explorers in the nineteenth century into the region, until recently there was little development (apart from mining at Queenstown) and much remained unexplored. Its secrets remained guarded by the wild, rugged terrain and capricious weather.

It was not until 1947 that the first plane landed on the beaches of Lake Pedder, right in the heart of the South-West. This greatly facilitated access, and also marked the beginning of the system of air-drops which made extended trips possible. But the remoteness of this great wilderness still made it a serious affair for the mountaineer; to ensure a safe and expeditious journey demanded a measure of fitness and endurance, some basic mountain experience and adequate planning.

MUMC (and Hobart Walking Club) members were prominent in pioneering new routes into virgin areas. Sometimes progress through ferocious scrub would be just one mile a day. Some hardy walkers, for reasons of cost or lack of pre-planning, spurned the use of air-drops and subsisted on light spartan rations to extend the duration. There were tales of bushwalkers staggering out of the scrub after a three-week walk, ragged and exhausted, with just a pound of flour to spare.

Federation Peak was first climbed in 1949 by John Bechervaise's party, but the classic route to the summit of Federation Peak by Geoff Shaw and Jack O'Halloran was only climbed first in 1961. In fact, Geoff's success was built on his experience on a previous attempt with my party of five the year before.

It is hard to re-create the strong sense of wildness and awe which the "South-West" engendered at that time. Here was trackless country without proper maps - we had only a crude sketch map by John Young of MUMC made in 1952 with the aid of some aerial photos. It looked more like a pirate's treasure map - highly simplified and stylized, with extensive areas left blank as unexplored. The land was virtually untouched except for the activities last century of a few piners along the rivers, some minor prospecting and a failed ranch at Gordonvale.

None of us had been to South-West Tasmania before; looking back we were all pretty much greenhorns. Keith and Judy had done some walking in the Flinders Ranges, my sister Jan had walked in the Alps, Geoff was an experienced rock-climber but no bushwalker whilst I, as leader, had done a bit of both. And as we were soon to discover, we had picked a patch of particularly bad weather that January. But we were all fascinated by photographs of this unknown land. So it was with a mixture of exhilaration and foreboding that we finally boarded the plane for our fortnight's adventure.

In Hobart next morning the storm had relented, the dark rain-clouds giving way to puffs of scattered cumulus. We boarded the little Cessnas at Hobart and took off - over the streets and houses, over fenced and ploughed paddocks, over a patch-work of tree-farms intertwined with roads. As we neared the Divide beyond the valley of the Styx those familiar scenes receded. In clear cold air and brilliant sunshine the hills rose to meet us and we entered a new world - bold, complex, mysterious and seemingly endless.

As far as the eye could see there was range after range of dark, jagged and forbidding mountains, spreading forests of tall eucalypt and deepgreen ancient rainforest, with open valleys of golden button-grass running between. And nowhere any sign of man.

We swept past the great dolerite columns of Mt Anne, the natural temple atop the rolling alpine meadows of the Eliza Plateau, and along the winding gorges of the Huon. Soon the broad valley of the Serpentine spread out beneath us, a carpet of sedgeland and scrub in hues of straw and olive-green, all interwoven with meandering clearwater streams strung out with ponds, swamps and minor sandy lakes.

Then Lake Pedder appeared: a thin band of gleaming white which slowly widened as the huge expanse of beach swung into view, evoking strong feelings of anticipation. It was like the opening scenes of a Wagnerian opera as the curtains drew aside the darkness. We landed gently on the firm fine sands and disembarked.

When the little plane took off, we were marooned in this primeval landscape, little changed since the passing of the last ice age. We were keenly aware that from now on we were entirely reliant on our own resources, and it was a long walk out. We were not to see another living soul for the entire trip. Alas, we saw little of the lake, failing to appreciate what an extraordinary

and complex place "Lake Pedder" was. We paused only to camp the night in a clearing behind the high dunes, for our schedule demanded that we press on to reach our main goal, Federation Peak in the Eastern Arthurs. Besides, we could always come back later to explore it at our leisure - or so we thought.

Next morning we set off across the buttongrass plains of the Huon headwaters towards Junction Creek. Geoff slipped on a log crossing the Huon, wetting his pack and sleeping bag; we took it as a bad omen. A westerly airstream was bringing a series of cold fronts: a daily cycle of brief sunshine, then nor'westerly wind and clouding over, rain, then cold sou'westerly wind change and clearing.

We pushed on over the buttongrass and heath of the Arthur Plains, plunging through dense scrub at each creek crossing, on to Pass Creek and the first of our food drops. Each drop-site was merely an "X" on our sketchmap, and if we missed them, we knew we would starve. An hour before reaching a drop, all thoughts would turn to food, and conversation would fade out; but we found every bag, all intact.

On climbing the high, exposed route over the Eastern Arthurs, we were now exposed to the full force of the weather. We battled our way through thick scoparia near the Boiler Plates, but Keith ripped his lightweight parka badly, forcing us to bivouac on the high rocky ridge north of Goonmoor. Pinned down by sou'westerly squalls, we cut out a tent-site in the scrub to wait out the storm, thus losing a precious day.

The next day dawned unexpectedly fine and, failing to notice the wisps of high Cirrus cloud approaching from the west, we succumbed to temptation and dawdled away a delightful morning at Hanging Lake. (Here also was a jarring sight, an ugly pile of old air-drop bags - almost the only sign of human activity we encountered.)

After lunch we took the high route along the narrow ridge leading to Federation Peak. The cloud layer grew thicker and lower, and the wind grew in strength. On reaching the black spike of the Devil's Thumb, we peered over the edge into the great amphitheatre surrounding the Forest Lake, where a wind-gust nearly blew Keith off his feet. Without warning, the air in the valley flashed over into a huge barrel of ragged cloud, tumbling over and over as the wind swept overhead. We knew we were in for a rough time, and heavy rain soon set in.

From here the route became a sort of goat-track down steep gullies filled with shingle and traverses over bare rock, marked with occasional piles of stones. It led downhill to skirt the mountain, turning sharply to rise steeply up to the notch in the main ridge, then descending to the safety of Bechervaise Plateau. In the gloom the lead member missed the turnoff cairn, and as darkness approached we had to bivouac on a small shelf perched high on the mountainside.

We pitched camp as best we could. At least it was sheltered by the mountain whilst the nor'westerly held. Overnight the rain began to ease off, but at 1 am we could hear a faint roar in the distance. The wind had changed direction, and a cold sou'westerly front was now sweeping up the mountainside, snapping boughs and branches off as it went, the roar intensifying rapidly.

Suddenly a chill wind struck. A cry went up from the girls' tent: "Can you help us, our tent's down". Before we could get our wits together, our tent also collapsed on us. The girls thought we had abandoned them. Eventually we re-erected the tents in the cold, the wind and the darkness, but it was a long night.

A capricious sun greeted us at dawn, so we half-dried our gear, then began the steep climb back to the notch, with the great rock-wall above us and the black waters of Lake Geeves far below.

We reached the haven of Bechervaise Plateau by lunch-time and set up camp. Of course, by now the rain had set in again, but Geoff and I dutifully shouldered our climbing gear and scrambled back up to the base of the cliff near the notch, which was the start of the recognized route to the summit then.

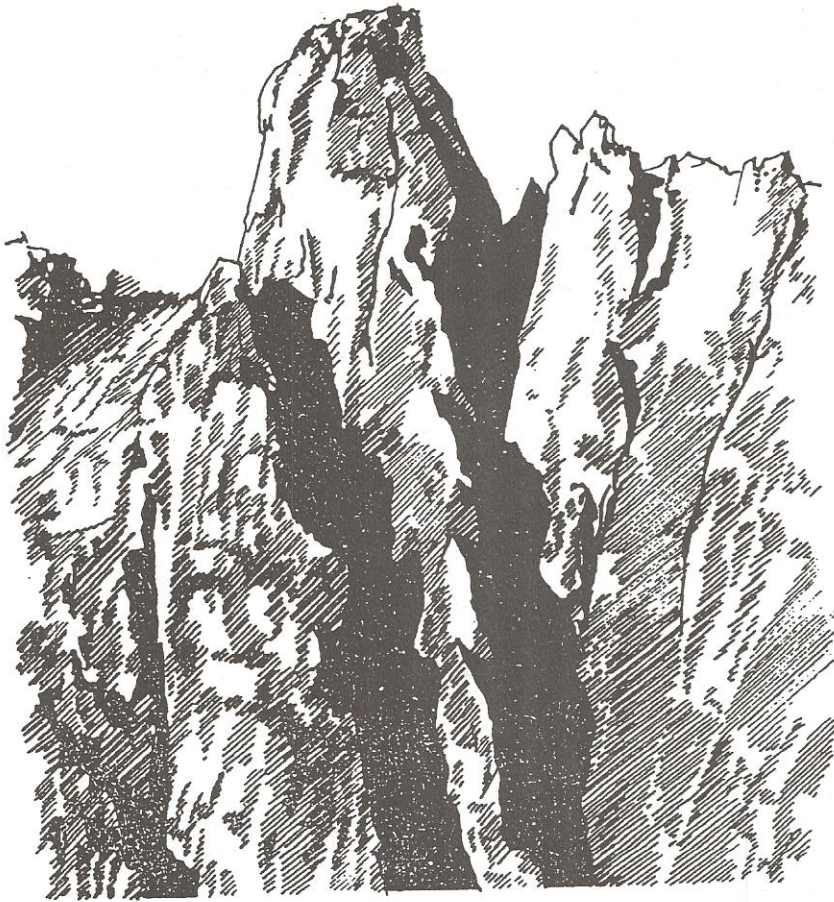
We were now encircled in dark, heavy cloud; but the rock-face, though nearly vertical, was well-supplied with holds, so we began the climb. However, every time I reached up to grasp the wet, black rock, a stream of cold water ran down my arm and into my shirt. So I made a short first pitch and tied on as best I could (the luxury of "jam-nuts" for fixing snap-links to the rock had not yet arrived).

When Geoff came up, he just looked at me and said, "This is bloody daft"; and as I totally agreed with him, we descended and went straight back to camp.

Next morning, the weather was still threatening, but as we could not afford to wait another full day, we abandoned our attempt at the summit. So we left Bechervaise Plateau and headed down through the chaotic tumbled rain-forest of the Moss Ridge. On reaching the Craycroft valley, to our chagrin the veils of clouds slowly began to clear on the mountain, all dark and glistening after the rain, as if to mock us and our puny efforts.

We then began to climb Wills Microlead, an open ridge onto the South Pictons. Half-way up, I paused for breath and looked round. There, for the first time, was our entire route over the Eastern Arthurs laid out on the skyline: the scrambles among rock-pinnacles and scaling cliffs, the tiring tangles with wiry scrub, the memories of storms and fierce winds and bivouac sites.

The shock of seeing, at one glance, all our daily trials of the past week laid out end to end, almost floored me and I stood gazing entranced at the panorama for some time. On reaching the ridgetop we had an almost 360 degree view. Far forward lay Blake's Opening on the Huon River valley, the start of the forest track where we were to be picked up. We knew it as just a cross and a



FEDERATION PEAK NW FACE

First Ascent of the NW Face of Federation Peak

by Bob Jones

From "The Bushwalker", Vol.2, No.2

It was Monday evening, January 1st. I had just blown out the candle and I was carrying out that ritual peculiar to those who use sleeping bags. The night was fine and we were banking on a fine day for the morrow. As I lay there, slowly drifting off to sleep, my thoughts ranged back over the preparations for the trip; to long letters written to Jack and doubts about there being enough people to make the trip possible. There were only four of us who finally boarded the plane on Boxing Day, 1960: Jack O'Halloran, the leader, Geoff Shaw, Robin Dunse and myself.

The march into Berchervaise Plateau had been a hot, exhausting slog. I could still see us stretched out 'neath some bushes on that hot afternoon on the slopes of Mt. Picton. We brewed tea while we waited for the heat of the day to pass. As we slogged along the South Picton Range the haze of bushfire smoke hung far to the north - an unusual sight for the south-west of Tasmania. Then again, sleeping out at night during the march up Berchervaise Plateau was unusual also! Our combined thoughts then were, "If only we have this weather during our attempt at the climb!" It was also suggested that drinking water would be a problem on the climb.

Now, after a combined reconnaissance of the route, our thoughts were still mainly for good weather. Geoff and Rob had viewed the climb roughly in profile from the most eastern ridge of the peak, whilst Jack and myself had traced a route from the valley floor directly below the climb. Our findings agreed on one point - the overhang about two-thirds of the way up the main face would be difficult to negotiate.

We woke the next morning to fine weather, with the early morning cloud dispersing. Although our intentions of any early start were good, time was wasted as we decided what type of equipment and food would be most suitable to take. We were merely setting out for a "look" at the climb, so only meagre rations were taken. It was 10am when we finally left camp.

We climbed to the Terrace, and then traversed north between the Federation Massif and a large pinnacle which was visible from camp. We then descended a couloir facing north-west, and at 12 noon we began climbing on its western side, our aim being to meet the

"Blade Ridge" which ascends directly from the valley floor. I climbed with Jack, whilst Rob and Geoff climbed together.

I led up the first pitch for 120 feet over greasy, scrub covered rock. The route led straight up from the gully, across a smooth shallow watercourse and up on to a buttress. Jack followed and led 70 feet further up the buttress. I joined him and we paused to view our surroundings. Opposite to us on the other side of the main couloir on the most western ridge of the mountain was a huge gendarme. It rises straight from the valley floor and when viewed from the Devil's Ears it appears as a separate entity to the left of the Peak proper.

From our vantage point we could see a magnificent climb which began from the couloir itself on good slabs and leading into a magnificent chimney. The climb ended in a crack. It was from the top of this feature that Rob and Geoff had done their reconnaissance on 30th December.

By this time the others were drawing near, so I led down and across towards the "Blade". An easy pitch of 70 feet up a corner brought Jack and myself to that point where the "Blade" ridge joins the north-west face proper. Here we rested and waited for the other two to join us. So far we had done 350ft. of climbing. When all four of us were together we took stock of our situation. We were perched on a blade of rock which plunged away into awesome depths on either side. Immediately above loomed the gigantic north-west face of Federation Peak. The scale was tremendous and we marvelled at the view. As we munched chocolate we talked over our immediate plans. The time was 2.30pm, which gave use at least six hours of daylight-time to reach the top. Also the weather looked like being fine for the remainder of the day.

I started off and climbed to the top of an easy diagonal ledge one rope-length away. Jack followed and then led through; first up the face for 20ft., along a groove for about 20ft., and then straight up to a good stance near a pinnacle. The exposure over those delicate holds was emphasised when some chocolate slipped from Jack's pocket and went spiralling into the depths. After passing my companions I began climbing up a couloir of moderate difficulty. About 40ft. up it branched

and I took the right hand fork and climbed upwards for another 40ft., well protected by large boulders. Here I encountered a grassy ledge which we later called the "Bus Stop." I followed it left for a further 20ft. Here I belayed myself to a rock and in response to earlier requests of the other two, I untied so that Jack could belay them over the difficult section.

Whilst these manoeuvres were taking place down below me I made a study of the overhang, 120ft. above. It did seem that a way might be forced up it by taking a route up an overhanging chimney - if we could get into it! Unfortunately the interchange of ropes down below took quite some time and it was ages before Geoff appeared. Jack followed and, leaving Geoff to bring up Rob, we joined forces once more.

I led off, first left for 10 feet, then upwards in a groove for 50 feet. I banged in a piton and a delicate move brought me out onto the face again. From here I climbed upwards diagonally to the right for 25 feet until I reached a large protruding flake. I fixed a runner and traversed left for 15 feet towards a corner. I was only 8 feet below the overhang. There I banged in a piton and prepared to belay the others. Jack joined me and we agreed that, in order to climb into the chimney, we had to traverse around the corner. Jack set out and tried hard; he came back shaking his head. 'Can't even get a piton in.' I had a look at it and then decided we might force it lower down. So I climbed down to the flake and then began traversing on delicate holds. Jack's encouragement egged me on, "Good on you, 'Herman'; you're fairly dancing over those holds."

By painstaking steps I inched towards the corner - a delicate move - and I found myself around it, beneath the chimney. A few sure blows with my hammer and I had secured a piton and attached a runner. I yodelled to the others. Entering the chimney proper involved a few very strenuous moves, relying almost entirely on the arms. I then climbed 20 feet up the chimney and anchored myself.

As neither Geoff nor Rob felt like leading, Jack had to remain where he was and belay Geoff up to the flake. By now it was raining lightly. Upon reaching the flake, Geoff's exclamation was, "The bloody thing's loose!" Jack followed my traverse to the piton below the chimney and belayed Geoff in turn. He then climbed up to me, leaving Geoff to bring Rob up. It was now 8.15pm and visibility was poor. Rob reached the flake and with a sterling effort completed the traverse to Geoff in semi-darkness.

Geoff joined Jack and myself whilst Rob, who was the only person wearing a parka, remained below tied to the piton. Geoff was straddled with his legs across the chimney, Jack was squatting on a chockstone and I found myself wedged above them, half supported on one foot. Under these conditions we resolved to pass the night. We cursed loudly when we thought of the food and gear which we had left behind at camp, but

fortunately we did not starve altogether; Geoff had a bag of peanuts and I had some raisins and chocolate. It was at this stage that I had an acute attack of "dropsy" which seemed to last the remainder of the trip. First I dropped the bag of peanuts, but luckily they landed on Geoff's head and so were saved. Next I dropped my own bag of scroggin and, before vanishing altogether, it also struck Jack's head.

After this sequence of events I was abused in two dialects-broad Yorkshire and loud Australian. They were convinced that I had dropped off to sleep. Jack was insistent: "Bob! Are you asleep? Bob! You must be asleep!" Later on, in endeavouring to find a more comfortable position, I dislodged a stone which struck Jack on the leg. After this I was strongly advised by the others not to move for the rest of the night!

Throughout the night we were subjected to periodic gusts of freezing wind blowing through the crack. About 1am we all fell silent, listening to the unmistakable sound of trickling water. From then on we passed the time deciding what we could do if our chimney was suddenly transformed into a waterfall. After what seemed an eternity we noticed that the sound of trickling water had stopped and a new sound had taken its place - the unmistakable chirp of birds from the valley far below us. A half hour later and we were gazing out from our miserable bivouac at a bleak sky.

After we had stretched our cramped limbs our first move was to try and climb up the chimney crack from inside, as no one relished the thought of leading straight off onto an over-hanging face. Geoff was the first to try to squeeze through the crack on the inside, to a chockstone about 15 feet above us. However, the bulk of both him and his clothing forced him back. During the manoeuvre I found wedged in a crevice my raisins, which I had dropped during the night. I decided to try the crack next and to give myself every possible chance I stripped off and had Jack and Geoff remove my trousers. My efforts were not in vain and, after gaining the top of the chockstone, I put on my trousers then threw down the rope weighted with karabiners. From here I moved on to the face, and climbed a pitch of 100 feet to the ledge at the top of the overhang.

Jack climbed up the face at the top of the chockstone and from there brought up Geoff. Leaving Geoff to belay Robin, he then climbed up to my ledge where we waited for them. The weather had become colder and it was sleeting lightly. Time passed and we could perceive no movement from the other two; we became impatient and finally we dropped them a top rope. A short time later they joined us. Rob and Geoff led off and we traversed to the right for a full pitch, then climbed for two pitches up an easy ramp leading to the summit. A few steps led us to the cairn. Sunlight shone briefly as we shook hands, yodelling gaily. It was 8 am on Tuesday, 3rd January, 1961.

Alpine Day

by Fred Mitchell

From "The Mountaineer" no.6, 1962

Party: Fred Mitchell, Graeme Wilmot, Col Fearon (NZ), Keith Currie (NZ).

Invariably more than an hour passes between the time when the ring of the alarm clock first disturbs everyone in the hut and when the climbing party actually leaves, though there is little else to do other than dress and have a quick meal. And invariably the attempt to get away quietly is a constant disturbance to others still trying to sleep. An enamel plate clatters to the table, an ice axe is knocked and falls to the hollow-sounding wooden floor, boots scrape, the pumping of the primus is suddenly very loud, and every slight sound and whisper is magnified in the stillness of the surroundings. Finally the climbing party steps out into the still, crisp air, and the hut door is gently closed. The clatter of ice axes and the harsh scrapings of crampon points on loose rock fade away quickly. Those remaining in the hut settle back to undisturbed sleep.

Our 12.45am start from Haast Hut on January 8th was no exception. Soon, however, the hut and its welcome comforts and shelter were forgotten, and it seemed for the first few minutes after leaving that nothing else existed apart from the snow slope lit up in a vague circle by our torches. In the darkness, for there was no moon, we could barely pick out the black outlines of rock buttresses or the faint glimmer of snow beyond this circle. Even the mountains seemed non-existent, though we were climbing steeply at the time and roped together. This first thousand feet up the ridge - a common start to all climbs from Haast - wasn't part of the climb. Instead it seemed to be just as much a part of the routine tasks of getting away as dressing or eating.

At 1.30 am we topped the ridge and crossed Glacier Dome, a snow dome overlooking the Grand Plateau. Axes were thrust into the snow and coils of rope dropped while we stopped for ten minutes to enjoy the cool and silent darkness and recover our breath after the trudge up. About a mile ahead of us, invisible in the darkness, was Mt. Tasman, second highest peak in the Southern Alps of New Zealand and described in the guide book as the 'premier ice climb'. This was the start of the climb!

Soon we were searching out a route through the icefall at the foot of Tasman's east face - a great wall of snow and ice rising 4,000 ft from the Grand Plateau. The torch beam picked out high blocks of ice poised at every angle, odd frozen shapes, sharply outlined black crevasses, and the showers of small fragments of ice sent scattering by the crampon points. The surroundings were strange and unfamiliar, strangely fascinating in the darkness. Gradually, however, the sky lightened and the snow became a cold white, more familiar and more real. The daylight showed that either judgement or guesswork had got us through the icefall by a not-too-devious route and only a steep traverse separated us from the Silberhorn ridge. This ridge, a steep blade of ice on the southern edge of Tasman's east face, led up to the Silberhorn from which it is normally possible to traverse the badly corniced divide ridge to gain the summit of Tasman.

It was about 4.30am when our two ropes (Col Fearon and Keith Currie of Christchurch, and Graeme Wilmot and myself) stood on the Silberhorn ridge, with the main part of the climb still ahead of us. Parkas, balaclavas and mittens were hurriedly put on as a bitterly cold south-westerly swept across the ridge and chilled us. Progress on up the ridge became terribly slow - because of its steepness and poor condition. Every step had to be belayed - 1,500 feet of climbing in 30 foot pitches. Gradually the crevasse patterns in the lower Linda Glacier far below on our left became smaller, though the summit pyramid ahead always seemed just as close, and never closer. Typically, the point where ice met sky appeared to be only an hour off, but after three hours of kicking steps up the ridge it was still in the same position. The sun was now well above the series of dark rock ranges in the east and the snow faces had undergone the daily change from cold white through pink and golden tones to a blinding white. The cold wind persisted and kept us on the move. Small slabs of frozen snow, broken loose as steps were kicked, slid off the ridge and disappeared below, while some fragments were picked up by the wind and whipped at us to sting face and

hands. At 9 am we were still 500 feet below the summit of the Silberhorn, and the route above us was now cut by an icewall across the ridge. Two other parties had meanwhile joined us on the ridge.

At about that same time a great avalanche roared down from the ice cap of Mount Cook and into the upper Linda Glacier. Minutes previously we had been watching the progress of a party, small black dots at the distance, moving across the head of the Linda. When the avalanche cloud cleared away there was no sign of them at all, not where we had last seen them nor anywhere on the route above. When three quarters of an hour later there was still no sign of them, we began to fear the worst and decided to get back down as quickly as possible.

While all this had taken place, two of the four ropes had made attempts to regain the ridge above the ice wall, but it was hopeless - the ice face to the left was too hard and exposed and the snow to the right too steep and soft. The wall itself was tried three times, and each time the leader fell down to be held on the rope. Thus at 10.15 am we were all on our way down - because the ridge had proved too difficult for us and because of something else more urgent now - the missing party. But after three rope lengths climbing down the ridge, they were sighted leaving the shelter of a rock buttress about 30 yards from the deep avalanche furrows. It had been a lucky escape for them, much to our relief also.

It was too late then to return to the wall and make a more determined effort. We had to continue the descent, made even more difficult now by the softer

snow conditions. At that same time two other climbers, Fritz and Kobi as they were known to us, stood on the summit on Tasman, just small black objects outlined against an intensely blue sky. They had just made the second ascent of Tasman's East Face and now, at 11,475 feet, enjoyed the rewards of gaining the summit after a perfect climb.

At 4 pm we were back down on the Grand Plateau plodding across the soft snow; thirsty and burnt, with our backs turned to the blazing sun and to the mountain. Over a short space of time, now that the technical difficulties of the climb were over, weariness suddenly overtook us. Probably we never even looked back toward Silberhorn and Tasman as we crossed Glacier Dome. The highlights of the climb were forgotten for the time being too; it was perhaps hard to imagine that only nine hours ago we had been kicking steps up a steep ridge to a high summit.

But the ridge had been climbed, and was climbed again that evening in the usual post mortem which follows a day of climbing. Our attempt via the Silberhorn ridge and the ascent of Tasman by Fritz and Kobi were brought back in detail to the present - easily done after a satisfying meal, several brews, and the friendly warmth of the small hut.

Success and defeat were now one. Ice axes, crampons, boots, ropes, parkas and other climbing gear littered the hut floor. The timber-lined walls reflected the warm glow of candlelight, and outside it was again still, cold and dark.



The North Jawbones

by Doug Hatt

First published in *The Mountaineer*, No.6, 1962.

Doug Hatt died while attempting Mt Cook in January 1965.

On the eastern side of the Cathedral Range are three cliffs all suited to rock climbing; the Sugarloaf, and the North and South Jawbones. Of the three, the North Jawbones is the only one, however, which offers lengthy climbs of a sustained standard.

From the turntable above Cook's Mill the cliff is always an impressive sight whether brown and warm in sunshine, or grey, cold and forbidding in enshrouding mist. The North Jawbones consists of three large slabs separated from one another by two gullies, the right hand or northernmost being the larger, and given the resounding name of Gardyloo Gully.

These slabs look deceptively steep at the turntable, but actually are less steep than the Sugarloaf. The sandstone provides only balance climbing on small but good holds, of the type found on Practice Slab and the Cave Slab of the Sugarloaf.

There is an excellent guide-book of the Jawbones prepared by Geoff Shaw and still available through our club.

The first recorded climb on this cliff was done by Geoff Shaw and Les Stevenson in March 1959 when they put up a route named "Steve's Delight" on the southern-most buttress. This was a climb just to the south of the left hand gully and dodged in and out of the prickly scrub contained in it.

Shortly after followed the "Northern Ramble" and "Route One" and "Route Two", all three on the northern buttress, but the latter two were incomplete in that they both ended two thirds of the way to the top in Gardyloo Gully, with further progress barred by steep smooth rock.

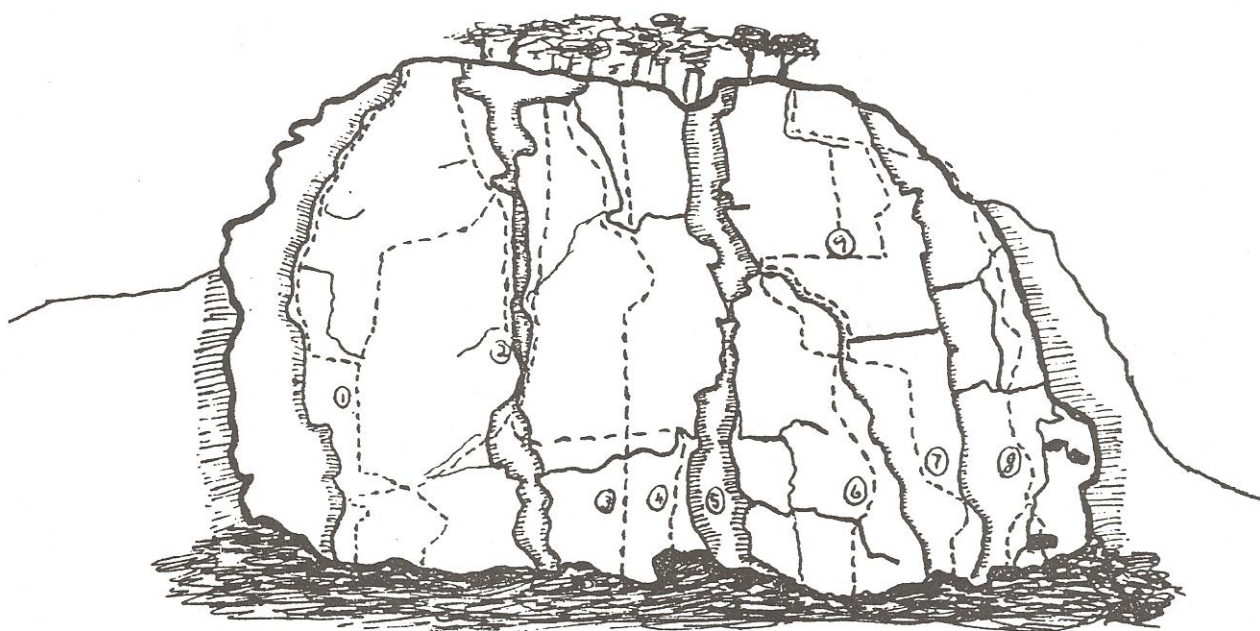
1960 was a quiet year at the Jawbones, but in 1961 the VCC had a strong band of determined and enthusiastic climbers.

The "Jerry Pot" was the first new climb on this cliff for that year and was put up by Bob Hewitt and Rob Dunse. It is a delicate climb up the southern end of the southern buttress with magnificent views of the Sugarloaf always at hand whether one is a struggling leader or merely a basking, belaying second, swinging from a piton. Two other entirely new climbs were also done, "Divect" and "Central Buttress".

But the real step forward came with the first climb of the "Traverse of the Gods", rated a mild v.s. and providing an interesting and ambitious finish to both Routes One and Two. At the level these two climbs terminate, the bedding plane which forms the cliff surface, has been buckled inwards, providing a horizontal groove, which slowly peters out as you get further from Gardyloo Gully. You inch out to the protecting piton with small finger holds, and then in order to get over the crux, you must commit yourself entirely to the friction of your boots. George Glover and Bernie Lyons were first across, but since then this has been one of the most popular climbs.

Now a real v.s. has been led by Greg Lovejoy from the middle of the Traverse, and there is scope for artificial climbing on overhangs at the bottom.

There are drawbacks to the Jawbones - a steep approach, prickles, and lack of water in summer. But those who make it, are rewarded by climbs which, whilst not comparable with the best at The Temple, and Mt. Rosea, are still extremely worthwhile.



The North Jawbones

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| ① Jerry Pot | ④ Central Buttress | ⑦ Route 1 |
| ② Steve's Delight | ⑤ Gardyloo Gully | ⑧ Northern Ramble |
| ③ Direct | ⑥ Route 2 | ⑨ Traverse of the Gods |

Pine Valley in Winter

by Phil Waring

First published in The Mountaineer, No.7, 1962

Party: Geoff Champion, Ellen Davies, Ron and Judy Horgan, Don Hutton, Greg Martin, Phil Waring.

On the morning of our departure for Tasmania, Dave Allen, our leader, rang me and asked if I would like to lead a trip into Pine Valley leaving that night. I cautiously inquired the reason for my promotion, and it was muttered that he had had an argument with an enraged appendix (unfortunately his own) and a long trip was out of the question. There followed a hectic repacking of rations - seven-eighths of ten bags of dehy, seven-eighths of that tin of tuna, etc - a scene that would be appreciated by those who have packed airdrops.

Experiments on Feathertop with various designs of home-made snowshoes convinced us that they were not worth the trouble, so the idea was abandoned.

Arriving in Devonport, we were such a novelty with ice-axes etc. that we were photographed for the local paper. After collecting our hired EK Holden Station Wagon, and cramming seven bodies and seven large packs inside, it was a pleasant 120 mile drive to Lake St. Clair, through snow-covered terrain. Later that afternoon, we started walking up the lake, and Echo Point Hut was reached in four hours, three of which were spent in the beech forest in the dark, with many fallen trees obstructing the track.

On the following day, occasional glimpses of the snow-covered Du Canes, and the magnificent spectacle of Olympus from Narcissus, lured us on and we easily made Pine Valley Hut that evening. The third day must have dawned fine, as it was fine at 10 o'clock when we first saw it; Mt. Gould was the unanimous choice. The climb to the Gould - Parthenon saddle is a bash up through medium *scrud* (*scrud* is defined as a heterogeneous mixture of scree, snow, scrub, crash and thud. It is likely to occur anywhere there isn't a bog or a cliff. Maximum *scrud* speed is 1 mph), then along under the icicles hanging from the cliffs on the Parthenon.

Some time was spent at the saddle practising elementary snow climbing techniques, as only Don had any real snow experience. The climb to the top, a rock-hop in summer, was more difficult under snow, but after one false start the summit was made. The view from the top was the best of the trip - away to the South the snow-

capped Frenchman could be seen, and to the north the vast expanse of snow-blanketed peaks of the Reserve.

As some of the peaks we intended to climb were a long way from Pine Valley Hut, it was decided to snow camp in the Labyrinth, a high plateau west of Pine Valley. From this camp an easy day was spent climbing Walled Mountain. Along our route were several lakes, covered with thick ice. After careful tests for brittle failure, we would go whizzing across them, skating on boots, rather than bash through the infamous Labyrinth-type *scrud* around the edges.

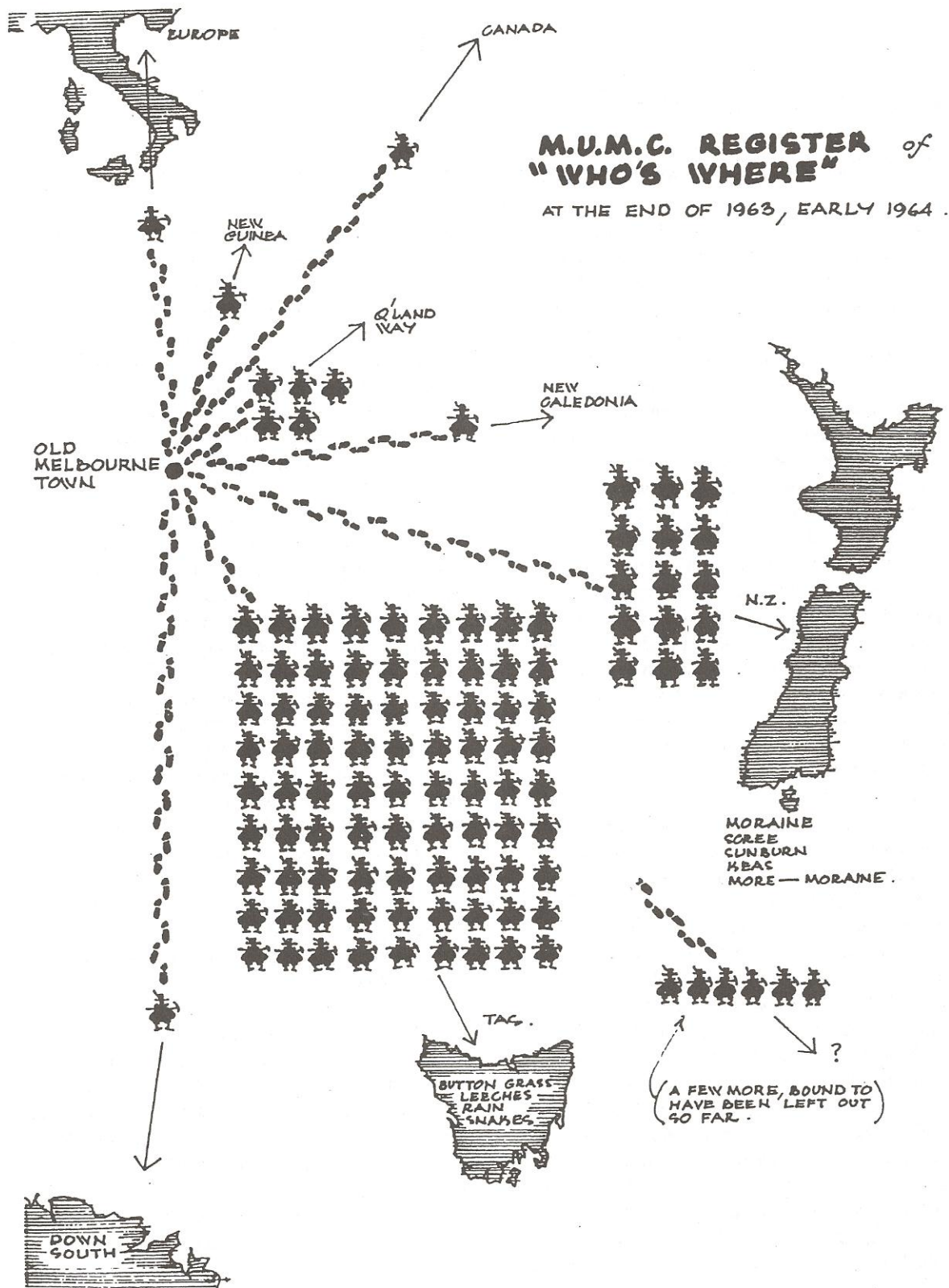
The second day Mt. Eros was climbed by Geoff, Ron, Judy and Ellen, whilst Don, Greg and Phil climbed Mt. Hyperion. Hyperion, an infrequently visited peak, is another scramble in summer but our climb was very slow, much 'gardening' to remove snow and ice from hand holds being necessary. We learnt later that it was the first winter ascent.

That night we returned to the hut weighed under with wet tents and sleeping bags. The next day was spent practising prussicking - in a gum tree outside the hut. A late (mid-afternoon) start was made on the Acropolis, but only Don reached the top. Part of the party, returning after dark through pitch-black forest without a torch, were reduced to caressing each tree to locate blazes.

However, the day after, the Acropolis was climbed by all on good hard snow. To the north, the stark, inspiring cliffs of Geryon alternately disappeared and reappeared through the mist. We returned to the Acropolis plateau, and contoured northwards around through thick *scrud* to the saddle between it and Geryon.

The foot of the climb on the South Spur was reached late in the day, and although Ron examined the first pitch, there was not sufficient time for a serious attempt. We bashed down via High Camp in the darkness back to the hut, and departed for Cynthia Bay the following morning.

So ended a terrific trip, one I would heartily recommend to anyone with £19 and the yen to do something different.



The MUMC in New Zealand

1963/64

by Greg Martin.

".....There is little doubt that this was the worst season for at least 10 years; a severe winter left much heavy snow, and the almost continuous bad weather from Christmas till late January made climbing conditions hopeless. The atrocious conditions were probably contributing factors in the large numbers of accidents, many parties being unable to cope with the extreme conditions. Some good climbs were achieved, however, before Christmas, and by enterprising climbers who happened to be in position during the brief spells of suitable weather..... More typical, however, is the report of 26 bods in Murchison Hut for a weeks bad weather - said hut has 10 bunks and a sloping floor". Information from Jan.'64 Bulletin of Otago Section, NZAC.

Party: Phil Waring, Shirley Madigan, Anne Hartnett, Dave Allen, Greg Martin, Graham Hirst, Gerry Jacobson, Reg Henry, Neil Sadler, Geoff Hill, Judy Horgan, Russell Judge.

Also in NZ that summer: Anton and Janet Cook, John Cole, Doug Hatt, Claire and Rex Harris.

Phil lent me the eight pounds airfare, which made that first trip to NZ possible. The gap between the years spent completing an engineering course and starting a job in the outside world provided ample time, and Phil's generosity solved the money worries. Dave Allen had been over once already, and had done a climbing course in Arthur's Pass with the surly tempered "Boz" as instructor. Gerry Jacobson had also been to NZ before, and had stories of a close shave with some loose rock on Malte Brun. The rest of our party of twelve were all alpine novices, although most of us were seasoned bushwalkers, with some rockclimbing ability. New Zealand was as exciting and unknown to me as a remote corner of the Himalaya. I had read Rev. Green's account of an early attempt on Mt.Cook with a dramatic stormy bivouac, and had pored over Moir's guidebooks, with their descriptions of dangerous river crossings, steep snowgrass, and rock bivvies. It had all seemed just out of reach; too difficult. Now, thanks to Dave's experience and organising abilities, we were really going.

No commercial guiding or instruction courses existed, although some courses in conjunction with the New Zealand Alpine Club had previously been held in the Arthur's Pass area. Guiding services in the Cook area were provided by Ranger guides employed by the

Mt.Cook National Park. Dave, with the help of Bill Bevan in NZ, organised a special instruction course for us, based at De La Beche hut in the midst of the big peaks of the Mt Cook area. This was possibly the first course for novices (as the Kiwis regarded us), to be held amongst the big mountains. Sentiment in New Zealand was very much that one should serve an apprenticeship of many years in smaller ranges before venturing into the Cook region. Australian climbers were not well regarded by New Zealanders, as the fatality rate was around 25% over the worst few years in the late 50's and early 60's. Enthusiastic Aussies with limited holiday time and very little if any alpine experience together with no appreciation of the ferocity of NZ mountain weather, tended to head straight for the big peaks, and this certainly contributed to the unfortunate accident record.

We flew to Christchurch on a block booking to get the 10% discount, and met Gerry and Reg over there. Arriving on a Sunday, Bevan Napper opened his equipment shop specially for us, and of course we purchased more than enough gear to make it worth his while. He had also put together a big box of food to an order we had posted over. In those days only Bevan and Oscar Coberger sold climbing equipment in Christchurch, and nothing was available in Melbourne.

Mail order was popular, with orders going to such places as Robert Laurie in London, and Sporthaus Schuster in Austria. Robert Laurie sold good quality handmade climbing boots, and the size was specified by tracing an outline of a foot on a bit of paper. This didn't always work out; for example I remember John Retchford being stoically loyal to his slightly too small and painful RL boots for many seasons.

Camping at the Show Grounds in Christchurch, we bought more food and repacked before taking the bus down to Mt.Cook. Twizel didn't exist, and the bus made a leisurely lunch stop at the Pukaki hotel on the southern end of the lake, before the final narrow and winding 39 miles of gravel road to the Hermitage. The hotel and the road were later submerged when the lake was raised for a hydro scheme, and the existing town of Twizel grew from a construction camp.

We took over a fair section of the old youth hostel at Mt.Cook, and began to repack and organise the food, two highlights of which were the pumpnickel black bread, and plum puddings packaged in foil. Our instructor and guide, Bruce Jenkinson, called in to meet us. When we saw how strong and fit he looked, we surreptitiously added quite a bit more weight to his share of the food to carry in; Bruce scooped this into his pack without comment.

Next day, in fine sunny weather, we took the battered glacier excursion bus up the rough bouldery road to Ball Hut, and descended the tourist path with its sections of thick rope handrail down the Tasman moraine wall onto the glacier. A faint path soon led to a tongue of white ice which extended to almost opposite Ball Hut. For years, climbers coming down the Tasman used the little group of tourists on the glacier as a marker for locating the ever changing path through the moraine, which speeded progress over the last stage of a trip out of the hills. Now Ball Hut no longer exists, and road access stops several kilometres further down. Access to the Tasman ice is much more tedious, involving a descent down "garbage gully" onto the Ball glacier moraine, with white ice not being found until up near the Hochstetter, after a long moraine bash. All this change has been caused by ice recession and a lowering of surface level of the Tasman, allowing the unsupported medial moraines to slip into the glacier, creating higher and more fearsome moraine walls.

To our eyes, the glacier was a wonderland of sculptured and glistening ice, interspersed with bottomless sink holes swallowing cascades of clear water, open crevasses, and hummocks, ridges and sharp aretes of ice. The infamous De La Beche moraine wall quickly taught us the technique of dynamic progress, jumping off each loose rock before it had time to accelerate. This surrounded us in an avalanche of loose rock and clouds of dust, which was a rapid cure

for our former bad habits of rock rolling from the summits of Aussie hills.

It soon became apparent that Jenks was about the best possible instructor we could have wished for. Bruce had just done a Grand Traverse of Cook, and with his background of deer hunting and his strength and rock solid sure-footedness, he was to occupy a pre-eminent position in New Zealand climbing for many years. He inspired many young climbers, and we certainly held him in high esteem to the point of hero worship. Many people owe their lives to Bruce's decisive action and almost superhuman fitness in search and rescue operations in the Mt.Cook area. The pressure of this got to him to the extent that he once said he felt like going off hunting in a remote part of the Landsborough during the peak climbing season. Several years after our first visit, when I eventually made my first climb of Cook, I was proud to stand on the summit with Jenks, who just happened to arrive with Dave White, guiding Oscar Coberger on one of his many attempts at a GT. It is ironic and sad that Bruce, who made the first ascent of the East face of Cook, and did many fine climbs overseas, and who had rescued so many climbers, and instructed and inspired all he came in contact with, died in a fall from Mt.Sebastopol while setting up some abseil points for an instruction course.

During the week based at De La Beche hut we practised step cutting and crevasse rescue on the glacier, and belaying, moving together, and holding falls on the snow slopes above the hut. A picturesque solitary little hogsback cloud in a clear sky hovered over the high peak of Cook at sunset one evening, and Bruce predicted bad weather. Our scepticism disappeared when we woke to a foot of new snow outside the hut next day. One day we crossed the glacier to visit Malte Brun hut (the point where the hut used to be is now free space, as the terrace has slumped into the receding glacier), and practised roped moving together on the sound red rock of the Malte Brun range. Evenings were spent back in the snug confines of the hut discussing gear and techniques and climbing philosophies.

The course culminated in a day trip to the head of the Tasman, and calling at the very new and still uncompleted Tasman Saddle hut. The huge multi-room snowcave abandoned by the hut builders was still there, and looked commodious and comfortable. From the hut we traversed Hochstetter Dome (9258 ft), frightening ourselves with the exposure down the western side, then plugged back to De La Beche in soft snow and the afternoon heat. On the way, Russ tested his partner by suddenly disappearing into a crevasse. He was unscathed, and even remembered not to drop his ice axe; for some reason wrist loops were unfashionable then.

We looked like Great War soldiers, dressed in baggy khaki army trousers, and wearing farm boots with the tops bound up with strips of army blanket turned into home-made puttees which forever kept unravelling. Wide brimmed hats were popular, together with assortments of scarfs and handkerchiefs worn to combat the frying effect of the burning sun; suncreams available then were quite ineffective. Ice axes were long with straight picks and wooden shafts; weight was prized as a (debatable) aid to step cutting. The old guard felt that 12 point crampons were only for the experts, and that the protruding front points would prove dangerous for novices - or perhaps it was the idea that a long apprenticeship of arduous step cutting should be served before the ease and security of front pointing was tasted. Phil even acquired a pair of crampons with the front points cut off. I borrowed a massive pair of 10 point Ekensteins from Chris Davis. Our ropes were Miller's No.4 laid nylon, available in white only, and always stiff and prone to kinks. Harnesses were unheard of; we used hemp waistlines, consisting of 5 mm. hemp cord wound seven or eight times around the waist. The rope was attached with a heavy steel screw gate karabiner, using a bowline or a tarbuk knot. Prussic loops were also made from hemp cord, and the only other climbing gear we had was a couple of slings and krabs each.

We got back to the Hermitage just before Christmas, and had the inaugural meal on Christmas eve in the restaurant of Hap Ashurst's still incomplete motel. Even then, climbers were not welcome at the Hermitage, which continues to belie its early climbing traditions to an ever increasing extent in present times.

Reg went off to do a trip with the legendary Faye Kerr, and I think Neil also went his own way. The remainder of us planned a trip to the head of the Tasman and Murchison. The idea was to fly in to below the new and spectacularly located Tasman Saddle Hut with lots of food, and for some of our party of ten to occupy Tasman Saddle, with the remainder crossing over to Murchison Hut. After a few days our two parties were to swap huts.

Graham and I decided to walk up the Murchison. Mick Bowie, retired as Chief Guide after an illustrious and accident free career, was now working as the glacier excursion guide. Mick, still an impressive and larger than life figure, was on the Ball hut bus, and he gave us some advice about the route, and got the bus to stop at the best place for crossing the mile wide Tasman moraine to the Murchison Valley corner. The weather was wild and windy, and we felt that Mick didn't quite approve of us starting out in the bad conditions. No swing bridge existed across the Murchison River, but it was just possible to get around below bluffs on the true right bank. By the time we reached Onslow Hut, we were wet and weary. To dry

out clothing, and have a look around the area, we stayed for two nights. When Graham and I eventually reached Murchison Hut we were welcomed by Dave, Phil, Shirley and Anne. Gerry was sharing a snow cave several hundred metres from the hut with two New Zealanders. Russ, Neil, Judy and Geoff had remained in Tasman Saddle with the bulk of our food dump, including 200 fresh eggs. While ferrying loads of food from the landing area up to Tasman Saddle hut, Dave had worn shorts, resulting in severely sunburnt legs which blistered very badly. Before the bad weather, Russ, Neil, Geoff and Judy had climbed Mt Walter (9507 ft) and Mt Green (9305 ft) in the head of the Tasman.

Next day we climbed Mt Phyllis (8100 ft), but declined to go on to Mt Sidney-King because the weather looked uncertain, and the ridge looked narrow and exposed. The early return allowed some of us to climb the easy Mt Cooper (7897 ft) behind the hut, descending at a run in soft conditions on a carpet of surface snow slides.

The inevitable Nor-Wester soon arrived, and as the weather worsened, people homed in on the tilted Murchison Hut from all directions. A big party of twelve Tararua trampers on a trans-alpine trip fled to the hut when their tents burst in the wind, and several smaller parties also arrived. Bev Price and John Leonard were members of one of the parties; Bev was one of those climbers one always seemed to come across on holidays in the Southern Alps. Tragically, she later perished on 28 November 1979, in the Air New Zealand Mt Erebus Antarctic crash.

The Tararua blokes were a cheerful and uncouth mix, who favoured red cosmetic lipstick as a lipscreen, unaware of the grotesque appearance it gave them. They regarded food simply as fuel, and had an unappetising and carelessly prepared diet, which we unavoidably sampled when it came to pooling food later in the storm. One evening a couple of days into the siege, Gerry and his fellow snow cavers who were over in the hut socialising, decided the weather was too bad to return to the snow cave, and this increased the population to 26 in a hut measuring just 10 ft by 13 ft, and designed to sleep 10. One bloke removed the inner door and slung it from rafters with prussic loops to make a rigid hammock, and another was occupying some planks laid between rafters in the vee of the ceiling. Others were sleeping on the floor and the cooking benches, as well as double and triple bunking. The bad weather went on and on, and there was no question of leaving the hut. The natural "toilet" was an unprotected deep fissure in a boulder outside, and the wind whistled up this in a gravity defying direction. Any visit outside was bitterly cold, and after visits to the crack in the rocks, people would stumble back into the cold porch with clothing in disarray, to thaw out fingers before rearranging clothing. I spent the year after this in the

Antarctic, and it wasn't till well into the autumn that we had a blizzard of comparable ferocity. Learning during that first visit how bad the NZ weather could get instilled a measure of respect that has served me well over many subsequent seasons.

One afternoon the weather eased, and the snow cavers went off to retrieve some food and gear. Before long, they were back at the hut in a panic, as all trace of the snow cave had vanished. Where it had been was now a vast slope of new snow! Gerry had all his money, air tickets, gear and spare clothing entombed somewhere under the five feet of new snow that had fallen in the previous few days. All hands turned out, with the exception of one of the Tararuas who had crampon wounds from a fall on Classen saddle, with every available digging implement - hut shovels, ice axes, and enamel dinner plates. An approximate area where the snow cave was thought to be was pegged out, and this was about 50 by 100 feet in size. We dug a trench along the downhill edge, down to the old snow, then worked uphill, carving off huge blocks of snow and rolling them down the steep slope. As the open cut mine face moved up the hill with no trace of the snow cave, Gerry's face got longer and grayer. The 25 workers persevered into the afternoon; suddenly a dead match was found, then a piss stain, then some food scraps, then finally the entrance tunnel. Gerry dived inside with a whoop of delight and emerged with his damp rucksack and sleeping gear. I doubt if he has ever dabbled in snow caving since that day. That afternoon must have been the centre of the depression, as several more days of wild weather then followed.

In the hut food was getting short, so we pooled our supplies and all went onto reduced rations. Cooking had to be done in shifts, because of bodies occupying every available surface in the hut. One evening the weather seemed to be easing, we had brief glimpses of the other side of the Murchison, and there were lulls between the barrages of wind. Our party decided to leave early the next morning, and force an escape down valley. This was now eight days after the onset of the storm. We were ready before daybreak, but the weather was still intimidating, so we waited until daylight. Gerry thought conditions were still too bad and decided to wait longer. The rest of our group roped up in the hut, took a compass bearing and launched out into the spindrift, amid promises from the Tauraruas that they would construct a memorial toilet in our honour when we perished somewhere below on the glacier.

As we got down the glacier a bit and around the corner, conditions eased and we could see that the weather was improving rapidly. Later we looked back and saw all the other hut occupants high up on the neve, following our tracks. Late that afternoon, we got to Ball hut, to find that Geoff, Judy and Russ and Neil had also just arrived from Tasman Saddle hut. They had

carried down full rucksacks of our food supplies, so a welcome feast followed. It was January 5.

Our time in the head of the Tasman and Murchison had not provided much climbing, but had taught us a valuable lesson in mountain weather.

Mt Cook bus lines took us to Wanaka, and at the youth hostel we packed heavy "Mountain Mule" rucksacks for a trip to Aspiring. Aspiring Hut was in fine condition, and furnished like a gentlemen's club, in contrast to the squalor of recent years. Arriving in rainy weather, we did day trips to Shotover saddle and Scott Bivvy, and relaxed in the comfortable lounge in arm chairs admiring the panoramic views up the West Matukituki valley. One afternoon a group of black japara-clad trampers were seen coming down the Matuki towards the hut, and as they got closer we recognised Doug Hatt's distinctive bandy walk. As the party arrived, Doug explained that he had traversed the Haast range from the west coast with a group of Kiwis, a long and impressive trip.

With a spell of fine weather, we sweated up French ridge, and spent a night in the tiny French Ridge bivvy hut. Anne and Shirley left us there to return to the valley. In good weather, we crossed the Breakaway onto the Bonnar Glacier, detouring to climb Mt Joffre. Colin Todd Hut, poised scenically at the foot of Aspiring's north west ridge, was empty when we arrived. Later that afternoon, two attractive girls arrived with a male companion; the girls looked completely unruffled and fresh after the long trip in. One of these was Josephine Scarr, an English girl who later wrote a book called "Four Miles High", describing two all female climbing expeditions to the Himalayas which she had undertaken not long before her visit to New Zealand.

The weather held, and with an alpine start, we set out to climb Aspiring, reaching the gendarme on the NW ridge still in darkness. Not liking the look of it, we backtracked a bit and cut across the Bonnar to a snow slope leading higher onto the ridge. The NW ridge was well snow covered, with the steeper upper section offering a staircase of ice sastrugi. Awed by the view from our first real mountain, seven of us stood on the summit; Graham and Russ, Phil, Dave and Greg, and Geoff and Judy. Of this seven, sadly two were later to die in the mountains; Russ on Mt Cook, and Geoff in the Himalaya.

Josephine's party also climbed Aspiring. They were climbing fast and got well ahead of us, and after returning to Colin Todd they headed off for French ridge that same afternoon. During the night the hut was shaking in the wind, and next morning thick mist whipped across the Bonnar. All seven of us tied onto two ropes joined, and set out onto the glacier on a compass course. In spite of detours around crevasses, we felt pleased with the navigation when we came out

right on the Breakaway. Over the edge, we huddled behind a rock trying to escape the wind, and ate a hurried lunch. Down in the valley, we caught up with Josephine's party, camping beside the swollen Matuki and waiting for our help to cross the river. Using a dead sapling as a linking pole, all nine of us forded the chest-high torrent without mishap. Nearer Aspiring Hut, Shirley and Anne came out to greet us, and we felt as good as any party returning from a successful climb could.

Dave had a trip into the Olivine ice plateau planned for us next, and we split up to hitch-hike to Queenstown, arriving in dribs and drabs to fresh bread and honey at the municipal motor camp. In those days, food was incredibly cheap in New Zealand and it really was the land of milk and honey, not to mention wonderful icecream, and mountains of fresh whipped cream on scones and cakes.

The Olivines trip involved flying in to a lake on the west of the Divide. Weather delayed this plan, so we abandoned the Olivines and instead decided to walk the recently re-cut Route Burn track. Several of the huts in Fiordland were still being completed, and there were few other walkers on the track. After this walk which ends near Milford, we took a boat tour of Milford Sound just after heavy rain, when all the waterfalls were in full spate. Our group then scattered, hitch-hiking back to Christchurch by various routes. Before leaving the Milford area, Dave, Geoff and Russ climbed Mt Crosscut (7500 ft), Mt Barrier (6900 ft) and Students' Peak (6400 ft). Geoff and Russ also climbed Mt McPherson. I went down to Invercargill, then up the east coast. Phil and Shirley went over Haast pass and up the west coast, walking the section where the road had not yet been constructed. Graham also had a look at the west coast.

The following summer, I was on the way south for a year in the Antarctic at Mawson, when news came over the Nella Dan's radio that Russ Judge and Doug Hatt had disappeared while attempting a Grand Traverse of Mt. Cook from the Hooker valley, on 11 January 1965. No trace of Russ or Doug has ever been found, and the loss of these strong and enthusiastic young climbers was tragic.

Phil and Shirley married and raised a family of three children. Sadly, Shirley recently died after a long and courageous struggle with cancer. Phil was until recently heavily involved in the federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, and the mountain leadership training scheme as well as search and rescue, and still bushwalks and enjoys cross country skiing, and bicycle touring. In 1990/91 Phil joined our group for a very successful trip to the Ruwenzori Mountains in Uganda, but that is

another story (Ed: told elsewhere in this publication). Several old MUMC members were on this trip, including Peter Druce, Anton Cook, Geoff Ripper, Phil, Sue Eager and Greg Martin.

Graham married Dale, raised two children, and maintains an interest in walking and cross-country skiing, with membership in a ski club at Baw Baw, and holidays in Canada for downhill skiing. Graham has not returned to alpine climbing.

Anne has travelled widely, and now farms near the mouth of the Murray in South Australia, and works part-time for the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

Judy moved to British Columbia and was associated with Simon Fraser University. No doubt she continued climbing and skiing in Canada.

Geoff died on a climbing trip to the Himalayas in October 1967. In May of that year he had made a first ascent of Papsura (21,165 ft.) in the western Kulu Himal. In October Geoff was in a party of four attempting the previously unclimbed Mukar Beh (19,910 ft) in the eastern Kulu Himal. After a blizzard, a search party found Geoff and two others in their sleeping bags in a tent buried under five feet of snow in a camp at 15,500 ft. Geoff was strong and quiet, a man at peace with the mountains where he spent his last days.

Gerry married Rae, and has raised a family in Canberra, where he still gets into the bush, and into the snow country on cross country skis occasionally. I don't think Gerry has done any more alpine climbing, but he has ascended Mt Kinabalu in Sabah (North Borneo), and his job as a geologist allows him to visit many exotic places.

Dave Allen married Helen and is raising a family in Hobart, is a keen downhill skier, and still does some bushwalking. Dave also has not returned to alpine climbing.

As for Neil Sadler and Reg Henry, I have no idea what became of them.

Alpine climbing has been a continuing passion of mine. Since that first trip to New Zealand, I have spent a further eleven climbing seasons in the Southern Alps, six seasons in the European Alps, two seasons in Africa on Mt. Kenya and the Ruwenzori, a few weekends climbing in the Canadian Rockies, and a three month trip to Nepal involving a lot of trekking and two climbing expeditions. Recently Sue Eager and I married, and we have three young children, Steven, Kathy, and baby Harry who is almost 2 years old.

Reflecting on that very first trip to New Zealand, so long ago now that even the glaciers, icy hour-glasses of the passing years, have noticeably changed the face of the Southern Alps, brings the realisation that it affected all of us and changed all our lives.



East Face of Feathertop

by Rumble

An account of two visits 4-5 July and 15-16 August, 1964. This winter was one of exceptionally heavy snowfall.

From The Mountaineer, No.4, 1964

Party: Braces, Weeny, Herman and Rumble.

We knew that Feathertop was a good mountain - the closest thing to an alpine peak that Victoria can offer. Many people visit Feathertop every winter but of these few venture onto the steep eastern side facing the West Kiewa Valley and the Bogong High Plains beyond. The eastern slopes of Feathertop seemed shrouded in mystery. The "East Face" of Feathertop had almost become a legend in some circles - a steep "seventy degree face" overhung by large dangerous cornices. We wondered if this was true. At least the idea of becoming more closely acquainted with this side of the mountain appealed, and the prospect of some enjoyable snow climbing was present.

I found Friday's newspaper in the lab. and turned to the weather page. As my eye followed the low pressure contours covering Victoria, my stalwart companions Braces and Herman Rothengutzen joined me. Together we discerned that the depression was expected to move into the West Tasman sea that afternoon, no doubt heading straight for New Zealand.

A telegram was quickly dispatched to the fourth member of our united band, Weeny in Benalla, saying that the trip was on.

The object of our trip was a climb of Feathertop from the Eastern face side. Those who have visited the mountain will recall that this is the steeper side, often overhung by a cornice.

To gain access to the east side we planned to leave from Harrietville and cross the Razorback ridge, descending into the steep sided West Kiewa valley via the Diamantina Spur.

Rain and gusty winds lashed the car as we motored out of town. Further north the rain stopped and a few stars appeared, suggesting that the weather was indeed clearing.

Weeny cheerily joined us at Benalla. We arrived at Harrietville in the small hours, pitched the tents in the usual place by the creek and were soon asleep.

At 10am next morning we shouldered the rucksacks and began the long march upwards, under

overcast skies. This splendid early start can only be attributed to the excellent atmosphere of unity and oneness of spirit our team possessed, qualities which every mountaineering party strives to attain.

We stumbled into Feathertop Hut at midday. The snowline extended half an hours walk below the hut. This hut is sadly in need of some maintenance, particularly in regard to the galvanised iron chimney which has collapsed and allows snow into the hut. A club work party at the hut one summer weekend could make a valuable contribution to a very usefully situated hut. By the time we had consumed lunch and several hot brews, it was snowing outside.

At 2pm we left the hut, taking turns to break a trail through the soft snow then encountered.

Visibility was low as we found the ice encrusted memorial cairn (5830 feet). The summit of Feathertop, five hundred feet above us, was lost in mist, as indeed it was to remain for the whole weekend.

We walked about a mile south along the Razorback on firm snow, wondering if with the low visibility we may choose the wrong spur. However some hunting around and work with the compass reassured us that our final choice was correct, as it proved to be.

The Diamantina Spur drops rapidly for a start, then undulates without losing a great deal of height before taking a final steep plunge to the valley floor. We slipped and slid down the steep final section as the light rapidly failed.

Camp was pitched in the rain, and with Herman suffering from stomach pains, we crawled into the tents to cook tea. A dry shirt and jumper, a comfortable tent and a mug of hot soup more than compensated for our tiredness. We had come to the mountains from soft city jobs, and although unfit had crossed a range in poor weather. On the way down into the valley we had sighted and studied several ridges running up towards Feathertop from the east, the lower reaches of these being below the cloud ceiling. After tea we lay in the tent whilst Braces read appropriate excerpts from the textbook, "The Ascent of Rum Doodle"

(Rum Doodle, standing at 40,000 and a half feet, is the worlds highest mountain).

Next morning a light covering of snow lay on the camp. Away by 8.45am, we followed a jeep track down the West Kiewa to the junction of this river with Feathertop Creek.

Crossing Feathertop Creek, we began climbing up the spur which runs out at the stream junction. Light scrub, and then snow gums, persisted fairly high up the ridge. Finally these thinned to nothing and we were on hard snow on a steep sided but fairly broad ridge.

With hard kicking Braces formed steps just sufficient to give the edge of the boot some purchase. The thick mist left us with no real idea of our position in relation to Feathertop, as well as depriving us of the scenic aspect of the climb. The angle of the ridge steepened, and then eased. We skirted an outcrop of rock, and chopped a few steps over an icy patch as the angle again became steeper.

Sooner than expected a small cornice of soft snow appeared cut of the mist, and wading through this we gained the summit ridge of Feathertop. Our spur had not quite run out on the main face as we had hoped.

As we stood wondering just where the top was, the mist thinned, revealing a beautiful snow ridge to the south, dipping twice then soaring skywards for several hundred feet to the summit. This view of Feathertop from the north seemed far more majestic than the usual one from the southern approach, and not withstanding the recent New Zealand trips we had all had, the sight left a great impression.

The ridge, more exposed on this side to the prevailing winds, proved to be ice covered, with several inches of loosely adhering snow. At this stage we rather regretted leaving the crampons at home. We roped up and hacked a stairway of steps all the way to the summit.

The cold wind barely allowed a stop on top. On the south side the snow was soft enough for steps to be kicked. At the memorial cairn we found our steps of the day before, and headed full steam for Feathertop Hut, a hot brew and a late lunch.

We reached the car just as darkness fell, packed in the rucksacks, and headed for home. On the drive home plans for another trip to Feathertop began to form, next time to tackle the face proper.

The second trip doesn't bear talking about, with missed rendezvous, much driving trying to decide where to start, followed by thrashing around in the bush of the West Kiewa.

The third trip was on the 15th - 16th August. Additions to the party were Phil Waring and Shirley Madigan, and Janet and Anton Cook. Herman was not with us this time, but Weeny came across from Benalla and met us at Harrietville. This time the snow on the track was deeper than ever, and the slog up to the hut took 4 hours.

Phil, Shirley, Janet and Anton camped near the hut, intending to climb Feathertop from the usual side on the next day. Braces, Weeny and Rumble continued on to find a campsite higher up, camping near the signpost below Little Feathertop.

Fooling about attaching Weeny's patent floor to the walls of the Paddy Pallin tent was cold work, but the shelter of the tent and the pleasant warm fug produced by the primus were welcome.

Next day, after a not very early start, we left the tent and walked out along the ridge some of the way towards Feathertop. The weather was reasonably fine but very cloudy. As the cloud blew across the slopes momentary glimpses of the surroundings were available.

We roped up and carefully broke through the cornice and moved down onto the eastern side. We dropped diagonally downwards, keeping an eye on the large cornices above, and hurrying over parts showing evidence of past snow slides. Ahead through breaks in the cloud we picked out a ridge or buttress running at an angle of 40 to 45 degrees directly to the summit, where the cornice did not overhang greatly. Climbing onto the foot of this buttress we followed it to the top. The snow was soft and heavy, and the crampons we had brought were not at all necessary.

As I climbed up over the cornice I saw that the rest of our party had also arrived at the top, almost simultaneously with us. After a few photographs we took a quick run northwards down the summit ridge to inspect the spur we had climbed on the first trip. The soft snow and the absence of mist had completely changed the nature of the mountain. We saw that our spur was broad and unexciting, and henceforth decided to call it "Packing Spur". So then it was over the top again, down to break camp and hastily pack before another stop down at the hut where the girls brewed cups of coffee whilst the tents there were taken down.

Feathertop hut was sagging badly under the huge mass of snow on the roof. The weight of snow had caused the walls to spring apart, and a couple of tie rafters had fallen out of position. It almost looked as though the surrounding snow was all that prevented the hut from completely collapsing.

So what of the "East Face" of Feathertop? It is rather too broken with gullies and ribs to be called a face. Certainly there are vertical rock bluffs on the sides of some of the ribs, but the general angle is more like forty degrees than seventy. The scale is not very big, although it is surprising how misty conditions can exaggerate distances and heights. If icy conditions were ever encountered some quite interesting climbs could be found.

Under stable snow conditions, the eastern side of Feathertop is worth venturing onto by any properly equipped party seeking some snow climbs.

Bogong High Plains On Snowshoes

by Mark Tweeddale

Party: Russell Judge, John Maclean, Don Thomas, Nick White and Mark Tweeddale.

After a winter of very heavy snowfalls, five of us set off in the September 1964 vacation to snowshoe across the high plains from Hotham to Bogong: Before the trip the details of the construction of our homemade snowshoes had elicited much discussion, particularly in the absence of traditional materials such as hickory. Instead, we used 25mm diameter cane for the frames, with sisal rope for webbing and leather for toe pieces and straps. There were five different designs at the start of the trip and five sets of changed ideas at the end, all still different.

We were dropped off just before the old Diamantina Hut, where the Hotham road was blocked by snow, and spent the night in Murray Valley Ski Club hut. In the morning we climbed to the summit of Mt Hotham where we found the lookout hut decked with horizontal "icicles" pointing into the prevailing wind. We walked across to Mt Loch and descended Swindlers Spur, lurching in a blizzard. Ploughing down the spur in our snowshoes was sheer joy, and Dibbins Hut proved warm and snug once we got the fire going.

The following morning started fine as we ascended the track from Cobungra Gap. Climbing in the soft and deep snow proved difficult, either with or without snowshoes, and it was into the afternoon before we reached the plains. We set off across them, navigating by compass in a featureless landscape, our direction confirmed by the occasional tip of a snowpole emerging above the snow. In the whiteout we heard a cry, and discovered Nick struggling to climb back up a two metre snowbank over which he had blundered.

When it began to snow we decided to return to the treeline on the more sheltered slopes and pitch camp, stringing the two tents in line. We lit a fire using dead branches from the tops of the surrounding snowgums and cooked a stew, hanging the billy from a rope. As the fire sank into the snow we gradually lowered the billy. That night it snowed again, the weight eventually breaking one of the tent poles and collapsing both tents. The morning dawned bright and crisp, but it took around half an hour to thaw our boots out sufficiently to get them on. Overnight the hot embers had melted the snow all the

way to the ground, some three metres below, leaving a large vertical shaft.

After a frigid breakfast, we made good progress for the first hour, covering two and a half kilometres, although thereafter we slowed to one and a half kilometres per hour. We sank about 30cm into the soft snow each step, tiring enough, but vastly better than getting bogged halfway up our rucksacks if we tried to proceed without the snowshoes. Even with the snowshoes it was sheer slog, whether going up or down hill.

In the open expanse of the high plains there was a remarkable feeling of exposure, with not a tree in sight and the prospect of hours of walking before there would be any change. When we found a few branches sticking out of the snow we lunched, lest we not find another landmark. The weather began to close in again with a rising wind and more snow, and as Wallaces Hut was completely buried we pressed on for the shelter of the Rover Hut to dry our wet sleeping bags.

Next morning we skirted Rocky Valley Dam in high spirits and headed up the exposed ridges towards Ropers Hut. The early sunshine disappeared as we climbed and by late afternoon we found ourselves on a plateau in gentle mist and falling snow. We were unsure of how far to go to reach the side spur on which the hut was located, and the snowpoles were completely buried. Our leader, Don, got us to form a line abreast across the crest of the ridge, far enough apart so that we could just see the next person. As we were about to start our sweep, one of the wingmen called out that he could just see a group of three poles projecting around 4cm above the snow. We dug down and found the sign pointing to Ropers!

Moving in the general direction we found ourselves on a spur and were relieved to spot the top of the chimney of the hut protruding out of the smooth snow surface. Russell, being the most nimble, climbed down the chimney to retrieve the shovel. Two handle lengths to the side and two and a half along we dug down, and one and a half hours later, we were able to open the hut door. We lit a roaring fire to melt snow for drinks as we had become very dehydrated, and as it

became slushy we scooped it out to quench our raging thirsts.

In the morning we set off for Timms Lookout, planning to climb Bogong via Quartz Nob. Glimpses of Bogong cheered us on. However, before we had gone far a blizzard began, visibility dropped, and we returned to the hut, staying there all that day and the next. One of the party had a recurrence of flu, and was having difficulty breathing. Partly for this reason and partly for the bad weather and a rapidly approaching food shortage, we abandoned the idea of climbing Bogong. Instead we returned to Falls Creek after three comfortable nights in the relative luxury of the hut. We arrived at Falls early in the afternoon, leaving a trail of snowshoe "footprints"

resembling those of a herd of elephants, and made our way back to Melbourne.

The snowshoes proved a success, as did the plastic bags between socks. Although the objective of Mt Bogong was not reached, the trip was very satisfying and highly memorable, due to the strange loneliness of the plains, the snowshoes, the difficulties and exhilaration of the weather and the going, and the good, reliable company. A trip to be recommended.

Ed: This article has been edited to include some information from Don Thomas' account of the trip in The Mountaineer. Given the popularity of cross country skis, it is a trip now unlikely to be repeated.



People You Meet

by Fred Mitchell

First published in The Mountaineer, No.1, 1963

Party: Juliet Hillman, Lynn Burbury, Rosemary Arnold, Fred Mitchell. December 22 to January 13, 1962/63

After a pleasant three week sojourn in the Pelions and Du Canes over Christmas, it became evident that some measure of our enjoyment of the trip was undoubtedly derived at the expense of other walkers. When several hundred persons make the trip through the Reserve it is natural enough to expect that number to include the odd "odd-bod", and we certainly seemed to meet up with, or hear of, quite a few. Not everyone who goes through the Reserve these days can be classed as the 'real thing', with neatly packed rucksack, blackened aluminium billies, and rations and clothing conforming to the best laid-down standards for the safety and convenience of the bushwalker. Apparently anything goes.....

Climbing slowly up to Du Cane Gap one afternoon, with grey skies promising foul weather before the day ended, we passed one chap making his way northward. He wore shorts and singlet, and a battered pair of sandshoes. He carried in his left hand an airline-type overnight bag, and slung over his right shoulder was an old hessian bag containing the remainder of his gear.

We spent New Years Day on the Gap, and during the afternoon watched a procession of over thirty people cross the Gap. Among them was a party of girls - their leader, a hefty German, wore a two-piece bathing costume in preference to more conventional walking garb. Very Cool! They were followed by a group of Rover Scouts. Their leader stepped across Campfire Creek (clearly named on the map), leant heavily on the sign which states, 'Campfire Creek', and asked, "Has this creek got a name?"

Struggling up to Pelion Gap one hot morning, we first met the party of girls mentioned above. What struck us most of all was the appearance of one girl - with freckles, long curls dangling beneath a straw hat, dark rimmed glasses, and a strange grin. Unmistakably she was straight from St. Trinians. We hurried on after that sudden meeting, which had quickly aroused us from dull

thoughts of the heat of the day and the weight of the pack.

We heard of a pair of walkers in the Pelion district who were making exceptionally slow progress; the reason being that one had blisters and couldn't walk, and the other was lazy and wouldn't walk.

Many people wear badges on their shirt, and the best example of this we saw was at New Pelion Hut. The front of his shirt was a black and orange notice proclaiming "FIRE DANGER" and setting out the rules for fire-lighting and the penalties relating to same. The back of the shirt consisted of an equally large notice ordering the "INSTANTANEOUS DESTRUCTION OF RABBITS AND VERMIN".

Two Austrian gentlemen arrived at Cynthia Bay, carrying small suitcases, and complete with cravat. Their plan was to "Hostel" their way through the Reserve.

Age is apparently no barrier. One couple, *at least in their fifties*, were met along the track. The helpful advice passed on by the lady was that, "Walkers should wear stocking on their hands for protection." (From what?)

Outside Derwent Bridge Hotel, one girl was heard to ask a small male party, "And did you meet any queers?"

Also overheard was this conversation piece between two YHA people back in Melbourne:

"Were you in the Reserve at all?"

"Yes, for a while anyway."

"I suppose you went right through to Cradle Mt?"

"Not exactly, we were only around Lake St. Clair."

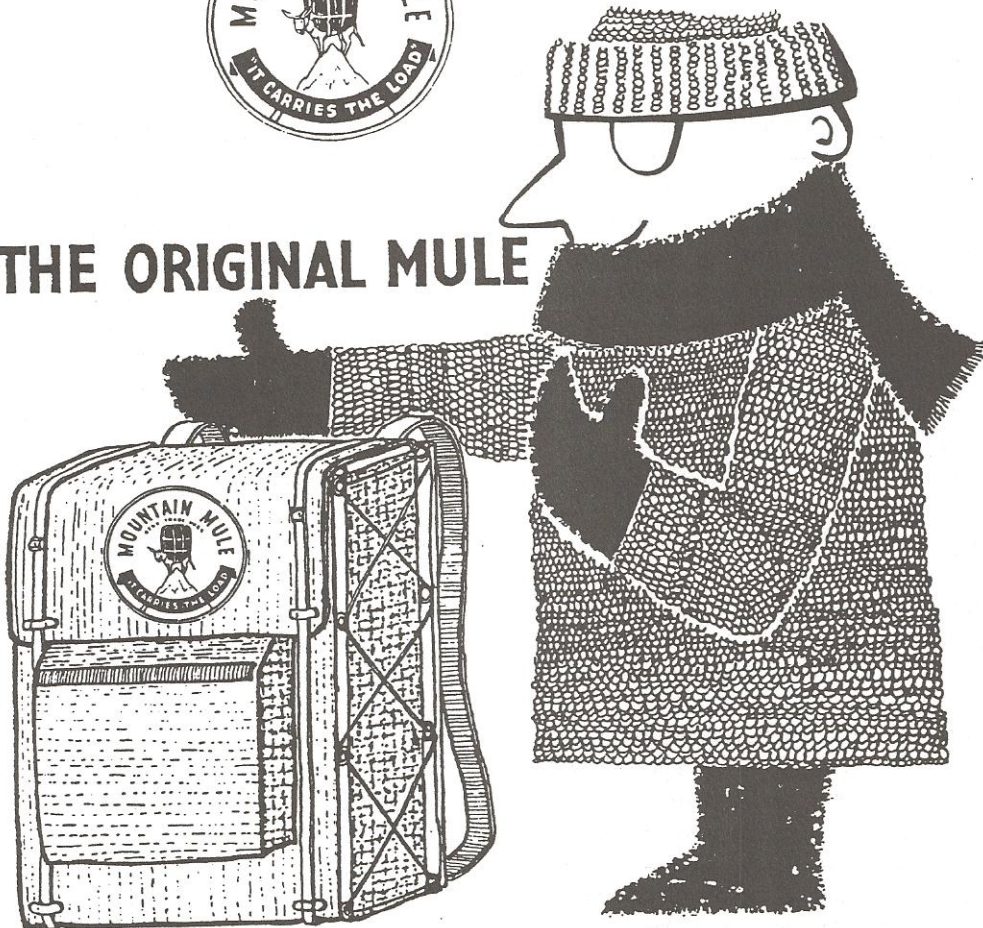
"Well, you were in the Reserve then."

"Oh yes! We had lunch there one day."

After that we were convinced that times must change. Surely the Reserve was different back in the fifties.



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The Great South Land

by Les Southwell

First published in *The Mountaineer*, No.2, 1964

"If you're going bushwalking in Tasmania", said the Old Hand who had Been Through It All, the best thing to do when you arrive is to jump into the first creek you see and get thoroughly wet. Then you'll be properly acclimatised." So with that definite and practical advice, our five mountaineers loaded rucksacks with winter woollies, water-proofs, and 15 hundredweight of vitals, and staggered down to the T.S.S. "Taroon" which lay patiently at anchor in Hobson's Bay.

Now I remember clearly having learnt at school that the climate deteriorates rapidly on approaching the polar regions, so when we entered the open sea, where the spume drove up and down the long wave-backs, and the lull began to stroke as if nudged by a whale in curiosity and devilment, I reflected apprehensively on the truth of the statement. Next morning we were up early to get a glimpse of the snowclad stormy peaks of Van Diemens Land. Accordingly, we were astonished to gaze out upon a sunlit glassy sea, and began to suspect that perhaps the captain had thought better of it, and was making for the tropics instead. Little did we know.

So on this shining morn our little band of explorers arrived at Devonport. Gleeefully, we leapt off the boat and clambered aboard the Waldheim bus. That night we found ourselves at the frontiers of the Cradle Mountain Reserve, with its mile-high peaks and myriad of lakes. Here the authorities, perhaps by way of amends for the rigours they are letting the traveller in for, have provided some wonderful little alpine huts, set amongst the pines, constructed in split timbers and shingle roofs and complete with blankets, firewood and lamps. Complete indeed, with numerous fat little possums, like baby bears, who wander nonchalantly into the huts, and rummage through the rucksacks for whatever rations take their fancy.

Next morning, we set off for the high plateau of the Reserve, those surface twists and rolls as was the whim of the Creator. From it one may look far out beyond its walls past range upon range into nothingness, to increase the sense of isolation. And to sober the rash and adventurous spirit, further to remind him that the Reserve can also be harsh and uncompromising, are the snowgums clinging to the crests - bent now to avoid the wrath of the gales, yet lithe and with bright-mottled bark as an antidote to the winter snows. Through the timbered ranges the fires have swept in broad swathes,

leaving the sombre ridges on the far horizon's rim all hoary-edged as the stubble on an old man's chin. Here, above the young and vigorous saplings, rise the dead giants of the old forest whose bleached limbs show fiercely white in the summer sun. What a contrast to the quiet pines crowding the dark valley sides, whose dense tops strive to bar the last flecks of sunlight from penetrating to the soft gloom below, so that nothing may grow on the open floor save the festoons of vines, and the endless furry carpet of moss.

Out on the moors and meadows and valleys of the highlands are the glacial lakes which, like mirages in the desert, beset the traveller to draw him from his course. Those set against the peaks are deep and dark and chill, yet in the meadows their waters are shallow and tepid; their white sandy shores fringed with pandanas palm would almost convince one that they are tropical lagoons.

Often we camped by them. Our cook, as was his habit, would be first up to make the porridge on his little fire, the twigs crackling and leaping about to send up a thread of blue smoke wavering into the clear morning air. "Get up, you lazy beasts!" he would exhort, shaking the tent for emphasis, "the best part of the morning is slipping past." And if the mood took him, he would recite a couplet from Omar-Khayyan for the benefit of any nearby birds, then race down to the water to be first in for our morning swim. I can recommend the procedure as a fine cure for many ills.

Now the length of the Reserve, and far beyond, is fairly strewn with peaks. Some rise abruptly from the high plains to stand alone, as islands, guiding the traveller from afar; some are drawn out into long jagged ridges to enclose and darken the valleys. Others huddle in clusters and great blocks, with vertical walls cleft and shattered so as to confuse, exhaust, and delight the mountaineer. Yet so rough and split are the faces, that a well-trained ox might be persuaded to tackle it. And so, as compensation for having favoured the climber unduly, the gods have seen fit to provide the bases of these climbs with a tangled mesh of vegetation, so that the climber will arrive at the face suitably chastised, weary and ill-tempered.

Normally, of course, the climber spends most of his time creeping along the track in the murk of the Tasmanian summer, to pitch camp beneath a peak and

await a fit of fine weather when he can dash up it with his carefully conserved strength and enthusiasm. But not for us. We had three weeks of sunshine, so I will simply mention that I managed to finish off three pairs of boots in the time and leave it at that.

But enough of the climbing. There were worse terrors in store. "Oh, don't worry about mozzies in Tassie, they're a rarity", the Old Hand had reassured us. When the insects found us, however, it soon became apparent who considered who a rarity. Of a night, it was too hot to be entirely sealed up in our sleeping bags, so the mozzies would line up on the tent roof in their hordes, patiently waiting for dinner to calm down a bit. And not only mosquitos; the forest paths were beset by those voracious little bandits, the leaches, waiting in ambush for us. Come to think of it, "waiting" is hardly the word, for at the first halt these little horrors would come galloping up, anxious for their delicious annual meal of Bushwalker.

And speaking of meals, reminds me of the night at Pelion Hut. Normally our diet was sufficient to choke a horse, but just for once we couldn't wolf down any more. So after dinner we sat the spare dumplings on a plate covered by a billy. When morning came we found the plate, wonderfully clean but perforated like a sieve. Beside it lay the billy, whose stout rim sides had also been carefully and lovingly chewed (leaving teeth marks like bullet holes), apparently to savour the last skerrick of dumpling. Of course, it was a Tasmanian Devil' whodunit. Therefore our respect for the culprit increased; and for that matter, so did our esteem for the cook.

One could only regard it as a stroke of fate that our cook should have discovered a new recipe for Haggis just before the trip. And so when we reached Advance Base in Pine Valley the following night, a great Haggis was prepared (with the help of fifteen advisers), and launched over the fire in the huge iron boiler which Providence had arranged to provide the hut with. The hour was late when it was finally pronounced ready and the crew, being ravenous of course, fell upon it and devoured the lot. Straight away they crawled off in sober silence to their bunks before it could take effect, there to ponder on the rashness of their action.

Thus encouraged, for starving men will eat anything, our cook set to next day in earnest. He began his masterpiece, The Damper. Now the gourmet will appreciate that, in order to maintain its distinctive flavour, the ingredients must be necessarily simple. In awe we saw our cook manage to incorporate therein a dozen diverse ones - amongst the dissidents there ran a dark and slighting rumour that this was merely because it was the only food that he could lay his eager hands on. Once again the cauldron was set upon the fire, with the plate of dough inside as in an oven. Or perhaps I should say as in a furnace, for the temperature of the reaction was found to be sufficient to melt a hole clean through the aluminium plate. Anxiously we took it out and dissected it. Within the thin hard shell of ebony lay a core of finest damper, steaming deliciously; obviously this was no recipe for amateurs.

Thereafter we let him work unhindered - or that is, until we reached Narcissus hut. For it was here that, in a burst of inspiration, he invented his Curry. So strong was it that we really had no idea what the other ingredients might have been, and we began to suspect that the cook, in his bold and imaginative experiments, was in danger of being carried away by his own enthusiasm. And thereafter a watch committee was appointed to supervise his activities.

By now the more sensitive of our readers may be feeling somewhat upset at the punishment being inflicted on our explorers. But I would be misleading you if you thought that the crew felt their lot unjust. For to be quite honest, they were afflicted with a form of altitude delirium.

The symptoms of this ailment are difficult to define, but they include an uncontrollable urge to venture into remote and inaccessible regions; an insatiable appetite; and stranger still, an absurd passion to climb the highest and toughest peaks in sight. Evidently the victim's thoughts are deranged, for not only does he fail to appreciate the state of his exhaustion, but in the advanced stages of this disease, a glint of fiendish glee comes into his eye as he devises further punishment for himself.

Well, it's called Mountaineering.

Skipping Trip

by Barry Pullen

From The Mountaineer, June 1962, No.5

Party: Barry Pullen (Skipper), Linden Gillbank, Michael Johanson, Gerry Jacobson, Dave Horn, Geoff Ripper, Frank Hicks, plus about another dozen - it was a van trip.

There were no exceptional circumstances regarding our departure, and the trip proceeded as other day trips, until we reached "One Tree Hill".

After fossicking around near old mine shafts, and some mild road skipping to warm up, we approached the first pitch. Several parties set out, Miss Gillbank, Messrs. Horn and Johanson being prominent as route finders, Mr. Jacobson bringing up the rearguard and Mr. Hick's entertaining with the new kangaroo technique favoured by some Queensland skippers. Ropes were not used, as no amount of imagination could stretch this particular pitch past - "very easy - easy". (Grade 1, Scottish Skipping Standards).

Later, matters were different, and difficulty of the pitches increased exponentially. "Easy - not so easy" to "fair enough - only fair", past "mild middling difficult" to "middling mild severe". Then, after lunch a true "severe" (Grade III, S.S.S.) was encountered. This was ably skipped by several members, newcomers acquitted themselves creditably and seasoned skippers were well extended.

The day was happily concluded by all partaking of a chinese meal at the Lingnan.

The following may now be considered skipping leaders-

J. Jacobson
D. Ho
M. Johanson.

Special mention to-

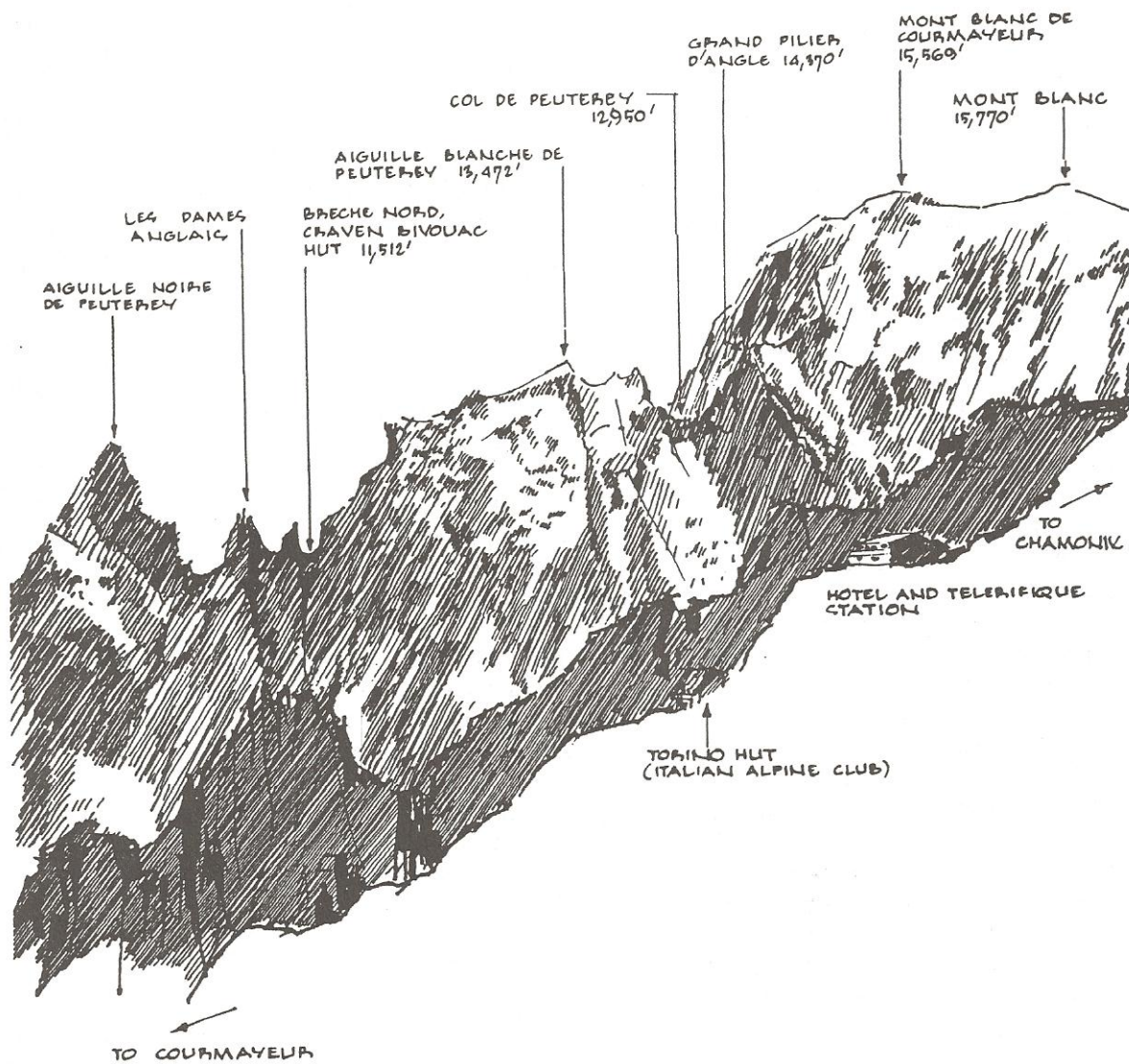
G. Ripper
L. Gillbank
F. Hicks

Historical Notes

An article recently appeared in "Scottish Clan History". Vol. XI, No. 1.

"..... during the crisis of 945 when a state of war existed between the Farquitar and the Robertson clans. Ian (The Red) Farquitar while scouting on the side of Ben Ibrich observed a party of Robertsons moving upon the Farquitar encampment. Now Farquitar was a champion skipper, and he set off to warn his clan. To reach the camp at the north end of the Firth of Petdie took him one hour, and being alerted his clan were able to save themselves"

In 1958, a test was made which had the 'Over 40 Years' Scottish Cross Country Champion run the same route, but he was unable to better one and a half hours.



PEUTEREY RIDGE • MONT BLANC

Dining Out - Mont Blanc For Dessert

by Fred Mitchell

From The Mountaineer, December 1965

The Dauphine, Mont Blanc Range, the Oberland, Monta Rosa region, Bernina Group, the Tyrol or the Dolomite country - just where does one head for first? That's the trouble when contemplating a season in the Alps, there are too many attractive possibilities. But in the 1964 season it was an easy matter. June 21st saw me in Lubeck in Northern Germany visiting relatives and generally intent on a lazy time after a lengthy tour of the countries to the North, when a letter from Bob Jones arrived and very quickly dispelled my intention. "Meet you in Chamonix on June 28th plus or minus two or three days." That was the extent of our planning. On equipment, Bob suggested it would be a good idea to take two cameras along so that if we dropped one camera!?? we still had the other (to drop?!). Otherwise I was to bring all the gear I had, "take a gander at the weather in the Oberland" on my way through, and "bring that guide book, Mein Herr!"

Lubeck and Chamonix were 900 miles apart but hitch-hiking down was no problem, and at Munich and Berne I completed our preparations by stocking up on colour films and a few food items. (The latter were, incidentally, almost finished by the time I reached Chamonix). Bob turned up on the 29th sweating beneath a huge rucksack and a litre of beer was soon disposed of. Thus it came to pass that the Terrible Two were encamped in the shadow of the Chamonix Aiguilles. Over dinner that evening Bob let slip the idea of having a go at the Peuterey. I choked on my vino and quickly changed the subject to lower altitudes and easier routes, as the granite needles of the French Alps are quite formidable even from a safe distance.

Three weeks quickly passed, a week on the Aiguilles, a long Traverse to Mont Blanc from the West, a few more climbs on the Aiguilles and a traverse route on the Dru, and once more we were

down in the valley. Again over dinner the Peuterey was mentioned, but this time it was 'on'!

There was no old school of 'do-it-the-hard-way' climbers in Chamonix, and our South-West days were long past, so we felt no shame in taking the cable car up to the 12,400 ft station on the Aiguille du Midi, on our way over the Alps to the Italian side. From the Midi it was an easy walk across the snowfields of the Vallee Blanche to the crest of the Alps forming the French- Italian border and to the Torino Hut just below a pass. That was on July 25th and our time was a little restricted, but the Aiguille du Geant was too tempting - a great finger of granite not far East along the ridge.

So we made an early start next morning ahead of a large number of parties and made a quick ascent of the Geant. The route was neither long nor difficult, a text-book climb on small holds, on steep and exposed slabs on the North-West face. Behind us, at sunrise, the Brenva face of Mont Blanc was a blaze of colour and the ice faces on the Peuterey glistened - photogenic but not so inviting. On the way down, the heads and shoulders of ascending parties made excellent holds, but really, their language! Tch! Tch! The number of parties on these more popular routes is a hazard not to be taken lightly.

Back at Torino we had a good lunch and set off down the steep track to Courmayeur in Italy, one eye on the crumbling rock beneath our feet and one on the outline of the Peuterey over to our right. From the valley it rose sharply to the Aiguille Noire, an immense needle that was thankfully avoided on the route, dropped to the pinnacles on the Breche Nord then rose again steeply to disappear into clouds at about 14,000 ft. The detail of the ridge was lost in a blue haze behind a fan of light rays from a break in the clouds and it became an oil painting, rather than the long climb it promised and proved to be.

The approach to the Gamba Hut on the 27th recalled Tasmanian days, a few miles walking up the valley on a rough track through forests and then up steep grassy slopes above the treeline, drenched by a heavy thunderstorm. The Gamba was just above 8,700 ft and the starting point for the route. There we dried out, dined on spaghetti and crawled under the blankets early in the evening, ready for a 1 am call by the Warden.

To awaken early and find that the weather was bad was not really a disappointment, and it was so pleasant to turn over and go back to sleep - instead of getting up shivering and stumbling about in the dark preparing to leave. At 9 am the weather was still unsettled but as there was the possibility of it clearing we left an hour later, intending to go up to the Craven Bivouac on the Breche Nord, to be in a good position to continue the climb as soon as it did.

The climb up to the Breche Nord should have taken us 4 hours; in fact it took us 9 hours. Rain and hail most of the way made our progress slow, first up easy slopes to the Col de l'Innominate and an abseil down a steep loose face and gully to the Freney Glacier. One of our abseil points was a piton from which a bunch of plastic flowers hung. This, and a small plaque on the Col, served as a lonely memorial to the death of some climber years ago.

The glacier was at that point an icefall and our route across it was a precarious one, taking us to the foot of the rock face below the Breche. This was easy at first, but steepened into an exposed couloir of hard ice. Holds were scarce and hands numbed by the hail and cold, and we felt anything but secure on the upper part of the couloir. It was a relief to gain the rock ledge at the top. From there a series of broken ledges and gullies, difficult in the wet, led us down to the Breche and to the Bivouac.

In the darkening mist it was a welcome sight. Though small and cramped (it was not quite possible to sit upright on the floor), it was shelter and once inside wrapped in blankets, we were oblivious to our ominous surroundings, except for occasional reminders as another avalanche of loose rock thundered down the steep couloirs on either side of us. We were protected from rockfall by an overhanging cliff, but at our doorstep was a drop of a couple of thousand feet to the Brenva Glacier - ideal for the sardine tins. The stove was soon roaring beneath a billy of soup, spirits revived, and over our meal we thumbed through the log book The first entry was dated 1932, and there followed just a few each season, including Grivel, Marcel Kurz Gunther Nothdurft, Rebuffat. A small OXO man was religiously added to the tattered pages and then it was time to try and get some sleep.

It was not a very restful night however. Either the blankets were a little damp or perhaps it was just cold and cramped, for sleep did not come easily. At some disgusting hour Bob ventured head and shoulders out of the tiny trapdoor then cheerfully reported that the weather was still foul, and a great plume of cloud was streaming off the Geant. Good news! But at 8 am the grey clouds rolled back, the summits of the Geant and Grande Jorasses thrust themselves up into the blue, and we began packing.

The climb up from the Breche was simple now that the rock had dried off and we were soon on the crest of the Peuterey, moving quickly on easy broken rock. The sun warmed us and after the previous day's soaking the scramble along the ridge was the perfect remedy. Our route took us on to the steep East face for a long traverse diagonally upward to a notch on the ridge, then along it to the snow arete leading to the 13,472 ft Aiguille Blanche. We had made excellent time but the difficulties were yet to come and the guide book warned that the next section could take from three-quarters to six hours depending on conditions.

The Aiguille Blanche had three summits connected by airy knife-edges of snow from which one could spit onto the glacier several thousand feet below. From the third summit we abseiled 300 ft down the steep rock face and a further 150 ft down a wall of hard ice to avoid a long bout of step cutting. The stretch in our doubled 300 ft rope just allowed us to drop over the lip of the 'schrund' at the foot of the wall onto the easy slope leading out to the Col de Peuterey.

It was then 4 pm and we still had 2,600 ft of the Peuterey to climb; it was going to be a long day! Height was rapidly gained on the following rock ridge, but approaching the Grand Pilier d'Angle, the summit of a great buttress to the ridge, progress became slow. The ridge was by then a series of gendarmes separated by ice walls and aretes. There was several hundred feet of this until we gained the beginning of the clear snow ridge. But at 7 pm it was pointless to attempt the remaining 1,200 ft of snow and ice on the ridge ahead; the next best thing was to find a ledge and bivouac for the night.

About forty feet below the ridge we cleared ice and rock from a sloping ledge, built a low wall round it and roped ourselves to the steep face. It was neither comfortable nor roomy and we were cold and weary. With feet in rucksacks, all spare clothing on and covered by a plastic sheet we passed a sleepless night, watching the slow progress of the stars in their lazy arc overhead and the twinkling of lights in villages far below. The primus was lit almost hourly to melt another block of ice for a warm drink, until 1 am when, after a long history of Victorian, Tasmanian

and New Zealand brewing, the burner collapsed. We persevered with it but to no avail - the 'choofer' was finished. That meant no more warm food or drink and worse still no more water. But sitting up there in silence at 14,300 ft the discomforts didn't really matter, and it was an experience not to be regretted. Had the weather changed it would have been a different story. However, we did make a mental note to always carry a few cigars for the next bivouac (not to mention a duvet or light sleeping bag and gas primus).

Next morning, the 30th we began moving at daylight, but it was 6.30 am before we had thawed out boots, equipment and ourselves, and were ready to leave. The ridge for the first part was a sharp arete, icy beneath the surface and the cornices and exposure ensured cautious movement. This eased out to a gentle snowface on which we could safely pause to take in the view extending over the entire Swiss Alps, every summit remarkably distinct and blue beneath the golden sky.

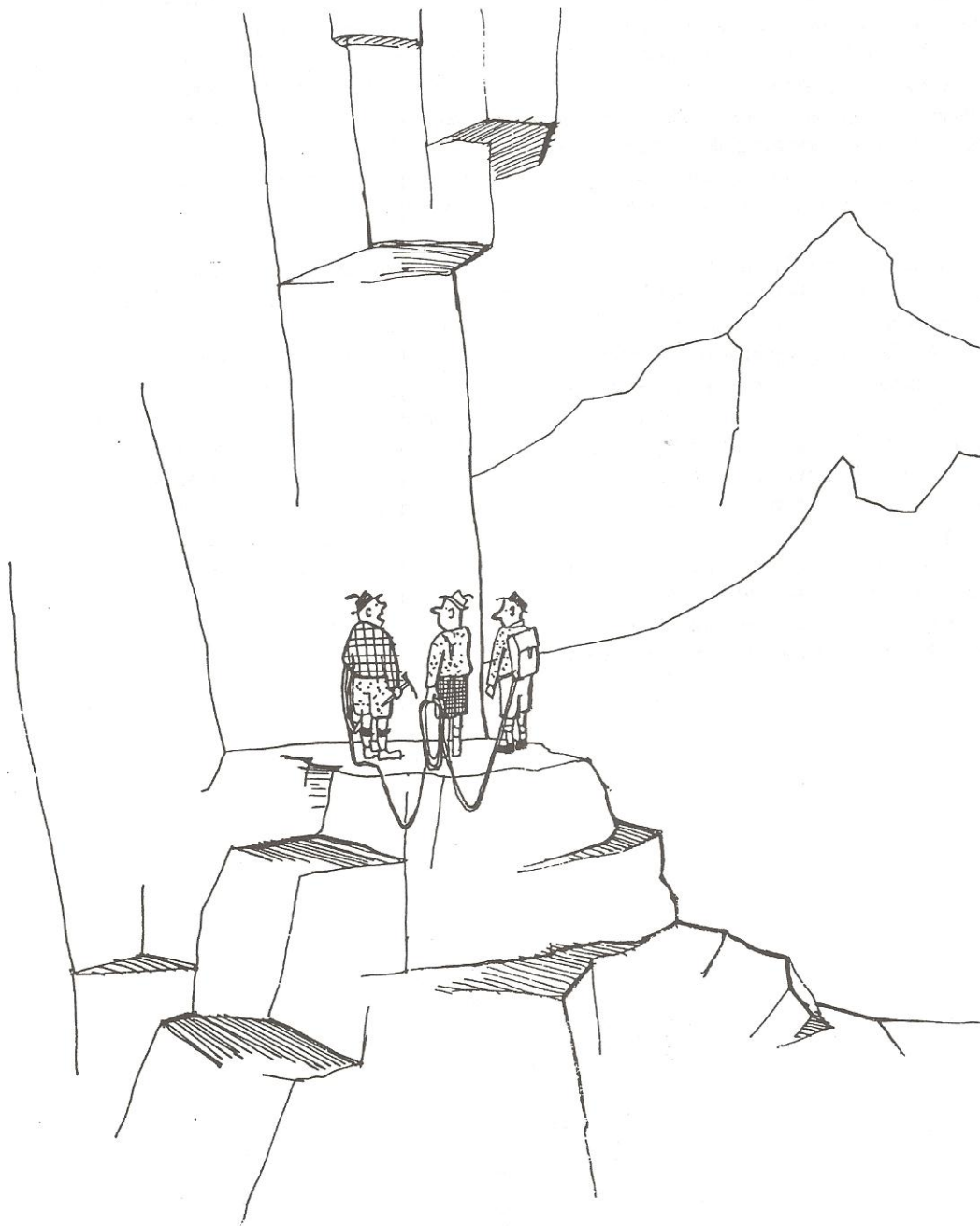
But our joy was shortlived. The ridge steepened and became harder until it was a sheet of bare ice, the exposure increased, and thirst slowed us even more. It became necessary for one to belay the

other from ice pitons because of the exposure. Thus foot by foot we moved upward.

Two thirds of the way up the face, the shaft of my axe split; after a few more steps it shattered completely to add to the general difficulties. At midday, after what had seemed to be endless hours of stepcutting, we broke through the cornice of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, 15,570 ft, and dropped onto the summit thankful for ground that was safe and level by comparison.

That was the finish of the Peuterey route. there remained only the trudge up the dome to the top of Mont Blanc where our reward, greatly appreciated, was a tin of chocolate dessert. Then the 12,000 ft descent to Chamonix later in the afternoon - a running, jumping and sliding descent that reduced us to knee-shaking wrecks by the time we arrived at the Plan station, just able to get the cable car the remaining thousand metres down. There was barely time for a beer outside the tent, before collapsing into sleeping bags in a deep sleep. No one who had seen the state of us returning could possibly have believed that we had enjoyed and been well-satisfied by the Peuterey climb. But, never again!





"LET'S BIVOUAC HERE OVERNIGHT IN THE
HOPE THAT SUDDEN BAD WEATHER WILL
MAKE FURTHER ASCENT IMPOSSIBLE."

Nothing But Trouble

An Ascent of the Peuterey Ridge, Mt. Blanc

by Bob Jones

"This is a route of great magnitude, undoubtedly the finest route up Mt. Blanc....There can be very serious ice-climbing difficulties, and it is primarily a route on which the climber is very much committed" - Gaston Rebuffat.

We gazed with a fleeting sense of comedy mixed with horror and disbelief at the broken stump of ice axe shaft. Fortunately, the ferrel remained intact. It was not the best prognosis for success over half way up the steep Peuterey Arête, which terminates on the summit of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur.

This was our second equipment failure. The collapse of the 'choofer' in a red-hot heap during the night before last was more comical and discomforting than dangerous, although by now both of us had raging thirsts.

We had been lucky with perfect weather since leaving the Breche Nord of the Dame Anglaise over 24 hours ago. A succession of rock falls at regular intervals shooting past the Brèche had made sleep difficult at the Bivouac Piero Craven. There, the sky at dawn would have graced any stage for Die Walküre, with ugly grey mares' tails streaming off the ridges. Within hours the weather had improved to become a Siegfried Idyll, so off we went in glorious conditions, moving well.

Mont Blanc by the Peuterey is one of those long classic alpine routes which are very weather dependent, with individual sections that can take anything from 3 to 6 hours, depending on prevailing conditions.

The views from the summits of the Aiguille Blanche were a painter's heaven. The sheer beauty of the views from the third summit made us reluctant to leave, but when we did so it was in two long abseils. I led off down the second abseil and had to do a jump over a large bergschrund with just enough rope to reach the lower lip. I couldn't exercise the system of rope signals we had prearranged, I was out of sight of Fred Mitchell, and as sound here was subject to multiple echo and diffraction effects, intelligent communication was impossible. I later learnt that Fred thought I had shot off the end of the rope into the 'schrund. When he eventually appeared on the upper lip he did look relieved and surprised.

We moved out onto the Col de Peuterey about 4pm. From the col we ascended rapidly to the Grand Pilier d'Angle, a massive feature on the Peuterey Arête, which at this juncture is broken by a series of gendarmes, perched on ice walls. The route was very slow and hazardous, and we were often forced to move singly.

By 7pm. we had to bivouac, relying on the faithful 'choofer' (petrol stove) to melt snow and provide us with drinks. The night was very cold with no wind. We passed the time swapping yarns, interspersed with star gazing and speculation on the activities of the inhabitants behind the distant village lights. The whole atmosphere was charged with anticipation of the final ascent. For the moment, we were fit, safe and relatively content.

Next morning we started along a sharp arête, which eased into a gentle névé providing us with superb views of the Brenva face. In fact during the present climb we had been making tentative plans for the Brenva, fuelled by our almost euphoric mood of optimism, a mood which, in ignorance, often precedes the unforeseen. In our case, the deceptive névé rapidly became a steep face of complex structure which was now undergoing a rapid and potentially dangerous metamorphosis in the heat of the morning sun. Firm snow became a layer of snow over hard ice. This change was followed by a thin resolidified layer of white ice over blue ice necessitating care and the employment of ice piton belays. The top layer degenerated into a rotten mosaic over the hard underlaying ice, forcing us to cut steps for long stretches at a time. It was during one of these stretches that Fred's axehead parted company with the shaft. The exposure was very severe, and the precious axehead cartwheeled, bounced off the slope and spun out into the void. We just looked at each other, our thoughts unspoken. A slip had to be avoided at all costs. Retreat from here would be possible, but slow and just as hazardous as continuing the ascent.

One thing was very clear. We had to move either way as rapidly as possible because the heat of the sun was rendering the overlayer very unstable. Step cutting alternated with front point work, and I was prayerfully thankful for my excellent Pierre Allain "Mont Blanc" 12 point crampons. As we moved into shadow where the sun had not penetrated, the ice in places was black and very hard.

Looking ahead the conditions appeared to improve, and the appearance of the summit cornice gave us some encouragement. Then suddenly the slope became a couloir with magnificent good firm snow,

which to some extent compensated for the objective danger of cornice debris spilling down the couloir. We tried to surge ahead but we were very tired. Our speed reflected our condition, and progress was painfully slow.

Fred struggled through the cornice first and I followed, wondering what lay beyond. As my head emerged, Fred was grinning and standing on relatively safe ground. Oranges on the summit of Mont Blanc itself never tasted so good. I don't remember much about the descent via the Vallot Hut, which was to save our lives two years later, but that is another story.

Early Recollections of Arapiles

by Jim Newlands

When I visited Mt Arapiles at Easter 1994, what struck me most was how much the place had changed. I hadn't been up there for a few years, so I wasn't surprised that there were changes. As I walked around, memories came surging back, and I sat and thought of the early days of climbing at the 'Piles, when it was really unusual to see more than 5 or 6 people there. These numbers swelled on holiday weekends, when the locals came from all over the Wimmera to see the "mad buggers". There were close to 500 people camped there at Easter this year, with 50 or 60 people climbing and practising around the Plaque area alone. At the Anzac Day weekend, a fortnight later, there were more than 300 people camping.

The days of climbing in solitude have gone for ever it seems, and today, at weekends, there are several climbing groups queued up waiting to get on to the more popular climbs. Camping fees, on an honour system, are payable. Just put your money in the machine and take your ticket. The old tank at the shelter has been replaced by a system of reticulated water, available from taps, but it's uncertain how long this will last. The Committee of management is worried that the source of this water, (artesian), is drying up, due to the heavy demands placed on it. The toilet block, built to replace the old double holer is used continuously, and the queues stretch at times well outside the toilets. One thing that did disturb me was the number of people who seemed to have forgotten (or perhaps never learnt ?) about basic safety techniques and practices, and I have a suspicion that we may yet see a few accidents there, but I hope I'm proven wrong. What was pleasing to see was the extent to which a lot of the vegetation has regenerated, and this can only be good for the place.

One brash young buck, all of fifteen if he was lucky, and with maybe two or three trips to the 'Piles under his belt, told me very knowingly that "This place is magic. It never changes". I growled that if he had known it from the early days, he'd see the way it had changed. I explained to him how it was now overcrowded, the cliffs were steeper, the

handholds smaller and further apart, and the chimneys a lot narrower. He had the grace to smile.

It was fun to sit under the pines and reminisce with Speedie and Stone, and a few of the other people who were active there in the sixties, and who did so much to create the Arapiles Legend, but there were a lot of missing faces too. I suspect someone was having a go at us when a couple of wide eyed youngsters came up to our campfire and asked, "Is this where they're having the meeting of the Arapiles Historical Society ?" Poetic justice; its just the sort of things we used to put people up to ourselves.

What I've written are my recollections of early MUMC activities at Arapiles. A lot of the things I remember about the Mount relate to climbing with the VCC, on their trips up there. These memories haven't been included, but there are some good yarns. I haven't asked the people who were on club trips in the early days, what they remember, and maybe there are a few of the following stories which, like a good wine, have improved with the telling over the ages. But there is a basis of truth. How much truth, you'll have to work out.

The First Club Trip

The first official MUMC trip to Mt Arapiles was organised for the first weekend in the Term 1 Vac. in 1964. Arapiles had only recently been discovered as a climbing venue, and there were only half a dozen routes recorded. The club's climbers were always talking enthusiastically about it but the only members who had actually been there were Doug Hatt and Russell Judge.

We couldn't leave until after 6, so a few of us went round to Jimmy Watson's and made a nuisance of ourselves until we were thrown out at 6. That's how long ago it was; 6 o'clock closing was still in place. Five of us (myself, the Horti Bum, Sue Quilford, Jenny McMahon and JC) piled into John Cayley's car, and we were off ! We got as far as Deer Park, then had to stop, (for petrol, among other things). The

miles zipped past, and soon we were on the other side of Stawell. It was a moonless night, pitch black, and we talked of the Grampians to the south, but couldn't see them.

Past Horsham, the fun really began. All we knew was that Arapiles was "just past Natimuk, on the Goroke road. You can't miss it!" Hah!! Too bloody right you can, and we did!! There was a signpost to Centennial Park, but nothing to indicate the whereabouts of a mountain. Talk about Black Holes and Calcutta. It was so bloody dark, we couldn't even see the silhouette of a mountain, so we just kept looking, and driving, and hoping. We finally turned back, about 15 miles past Natimuk, and returned to the road junction just outside Natimuk, to take the road to Edenhope. There was a second road junction just about where we knew the mountain should be, and we followed it. It wound slowly upwards. At least we'd found something, and after a bit of searching, at the end of the dirt road, we decided to wait until morning to find the cliff. We parked down a narrow track which led to a clearing with a tree in the middle, and bedded down for the night around the tree, mumbling and complaining bitterly about "never finding the bloody place" and "bastards who couldn't give accurate directions".

Next morning, at first light, we found out just how close we had been to the cliff face the night before. We had all slept about 5 yards from the edge, as it turned out, and we looked out in awe over the area and the back of the Pharos. It was stunning. We didn't even stop for breakfast. Everything was thrown into the car and away we went. The drive to Centennial Park from the Edenhope road was an eye-opener, and we all gasped as the cliffs around Central gully came into view. Familiar faces, and faces which were soon to become familiar, greeted us and we set up camp near the old picnic shelter. The pine trees and the pine plantation, fenced off and dense, were considered at that stage the domain of the very brave. Beast was camped up there, and we weren't quite in that league. Two VCC members (Peter Jackson and John Fahey), were also camped around the shelter, and were a fountain of knowledge, describing some of the different faces and their climbs. During the next few years I came to know both well. Names like The Organ Pipes, Tiger Wall, the Pharos, the Watchtower and Castle Crag excited us.

I went off with John Cayley to climb Red Parrot Chasm (now more commonly referred to as Red Carrot Spasm). We were advised to take a handful of rocks of different sizes, to use as chock stones for runners, otherwise protection was very thin. No Friends or even Jam Nuts then; they were all in the future. It was a pleasant chimney, but the scramble up, over and around the broken ledges and pinnacles to

get back down to Central Gully took longer than the climb.

Telescope

That night we all yabbered away about what we had done during the day, but Telescope was (as usual) louder than anyone else. He'd wandered around all day on Tiger Wall, on a climb called the Wobble or the Dribble, (or maybe it was the Piddle), and was extolling its virtues to Peter Jackson, who wasn't the least bit interested. The description went on and on, and Peter, who didn't suffer fools gladly, finally reached the end of his patience. I'm glad he restrained himself, but afterwards, after much hilarity we all agreed that Telescope's head probably looked better not decorated with a variety of pitons. (The nickname came from an incident on an earlier beginner's course at Sugarloaf. Halfway up the climb, sitting next to Doug Hatt, he pulled out a telescope, and performed Nelsonian antics. After that, no one in the Club ever called him Roger).

Early Climbs

John Bennett and Alan Marsland laid siege to Castle Crag. They made several attempts to reach the top, and some of the lines they attempted were completed later as Hun and Mickey Finn. John and Russell Judge later completed the first ascent of a real classic on the Crag, Trapeze. Castle Crag first fell soon after this weekend to Glen Devereux and Andrew Smith, when they climbed Cunrack, on the side facing the main cliff. Despite the hope expressed by Ian Speedie and Mike Stone in the first guide book, that the origin of this name has been lost, I can assure them that it isn't.

The weekend was typical Arapiles autumn weather, a sheer delight. We later climbed Siren and The Spiral Staircase. There was loose rock everywhere, and it became a common practice to clear the loose rocks, but first checking that there was no-one down below, or if there was, it was no-one important. The noise of exploding rocks hitting the ground after dropping several hundred feet can be quite un-nerving.

Looking back on it, the weekend was memorable, the climbing excellent and the company most enjoyable. It was the fore-runner of many, many more wonderful weekends at the 'Piles.

The First Accident

Later that year, there was a serious accident at Arapiles. Andrew Smith, a 15 year old climber from the VCC, fell on Tiger Wall, and broke a leg. Two

MUMC members, Doug Hatt and Ian Guild (The Beast), climbing at the Mount that weekend, were prominent in the rescue. John Cayley and I learnt of it late on the Sunday night when Doug came home.

Beast and Doug featured on the front page of the local newspaper. Keith, (better known as "Noddy") Lockwood, born and bred a Natimuckian, a noted climber, and now the editor of the Wimmera Mail-Times, recently kindly sent me copies of the report of the rescue.

The Bouncing Baby (Austin)

One of the requirements of the Agricultural Science course was working on a farm in the summer holidays between third and fourth year. I hoped to work on a farm near Horsham so that I would have some chance of getting to the 'Piles at weekends. Imagine my delight at being given a farm near Natimuk! The organiser even apologised to me because it would be 17 miles from Horsham, and I had asked for somewhere near Horsham. Was 17 miles close enough? Lorraine Symons (then the Club Secretary, and also an Ag Student) was working at Goroke, and she often came over to visit at weekends, so the Mount was an obvious destination.

One weekend, on Sunday afternoon, we'd gone out there to walk around the place, and Lorraine parked her car somewhere up past the pine plantation, near Central Gully. It was on a bit of a slope, and we had only walked about ten yards when a noise made us turn around. The bloody car had taken off downhill!! Fortunately, it was facing uphill, and the back wheels were on an angle, so it stopped itself after bouncing around a bit. I think it was about half an hour before we stopped shaking and started to see the funny side of it. What a pity the pub wasn't open.

On the farm where I was working, there was a fountain of information about the Mount and the history of the surrounding area. Mrs Crossley was a delight to listen to, regaling Lorraine and myself with stories of Bob Menzies' schooldays, and also the local historical gossip. One very interesting story was about Australia's Dads' Army, the Local Defence Volunteers, to which her husband belonged. Apparently, a 3" Mortar was loaned in rotation to each of the groups in the Wimmera and Western Victoria. It was Natimuk's turn and the local group had gone out to practice at the Mount. They had been given three bombs to fire. One of the rounds failed to explode, but they couldn't find it, so there is unexploded ordnance out there, somewhere on the mount. Tread warily!

The Playful, Piddling Possum

Early in 1965, Dick Salt, Alan Marsland and I spent a few days climbing there, and we did a first ascent, Tantalus, on the Atridae. The line had tantalised us for some time, hence the name. We thought it was the first climb on this block, and we were a little disappointed that Jackson and Fahey had beaten us by a couple of weeks, with Cauldron. The two climbs actually shared the same first pitch, but we took some consolation in that we had gone straight up over an overhang, while they had followed the line of least resistance. It wasn't much of a climb, but I suppose everybody remembers their very first, first ascent.

There was no-one else around, so we slept in the picnic shelter, on the tables and I was woken on the first night by a loud yell, "You Bastard!!!" It took me some time to realise that, unusually, I wasn't the target of the abuse. A possum had been travelling along the rafters of the shelter, and had found it necessary to relieve itself - on a sleeping Dick Salt's head. He slept with one eye open and his mouth closed after that.

A Good Screw

A couple of years later, on a beginners' course, a rope of three of us from the club were on this same climb, with a large audience down below. I had led the overhang on the second pitch, and was followed by a well known and voluptuous member of the club. She struggled over the overhangs, asking me on several occasions in a loud, breathless voice, which revealed her consternation, "Are you sure you're well belayed Jim?" When she arrived at the belay, which was almost bombproof, she examined it carefully and was obviously pleased that I had used a large screw gate karabiner to secure the runner for the belay. "Thank Heavens!" she said in nervous relief, in a louder than normal speaking voice, heard as far away as the camp ground, "I always feel safer with a good screw!" which brought gales of bawdy laughter from the onlookers. I suspect Nick White may have added his own enthusiastic comments from below. As a gentleman, I shall refrain from identifying the lady who seconded the climb. Rest assured, Marg James your secret is safe with me!

The Two Seater Dunny

The toilet facilities at Arapiles were pretty primitive, and the author of the book, "Dinkum Dummies" missed one of Australia's real bush classics at the 'Piles. It was a genuine two holer, complete with splinters, no doors, and there were a number of weatherboard slats,

missing from strategic positions of the dividing wall between the two cubicles.

One weekend, on a club trip, a cuddly couple, new to the club, had eyes only for each other, and smooched and moped around entwined, never moving more than two metres from each other. Late on the Saturday afternoon, having completed a climb, some of us had gone over to the two seater for obvious reasons, and, lo and behold ! it was occupied, by guess who ? And, of all things, the pair were sitting holding hands through the missing slats between the cubicles. (How do I know ? Well I happened to walk in on the pair, of course having given the usual yells, warnings etc. appropriate to the occasion.) The comments from the onlookers were many, and pretty ribald, and they got worse, when two very red-faced never-to-be mountaineers eventually emerged, to run the gauntlet of a whole chorus of cheers and even more ribald comments. They left soon afterwards, and didn't take part in any more club activities.

The cans in these dunnies were emptied by some of the locals at irregular intervals, and as the Mount became more popular, the cans filled more quickly. At one stage, during a very well attended club outing, they took a bit of a hammering, and when they were on the verge of overflowing, Horti and I borrowed a shovel from Ian Sudholz, the local farmer, to do the job ourselves. We thought we'd taken precautions to warn people, but when we removed the cans to empty them, there were outraged shrieks and unfounded accusations by the female in the toilet, that we were perverts, and voyeurs, and many other vile things. My conscience is clear. I can assure you that there are priorities to observe when you are struggling to carry a full can of shit, and looking at bare bums, no matter how attractive, isn't one of them.

The Natimuk Rifle Club on Target

The old Natimuk Rifle Range was located around near the Watchtower, and it was common in the early days to find spent 303 bullets on some of the ledges in the area. Climbing there could be quite dangerous. One belay on Arachnus (the Watchtower), was often referred to as Bullet Belay. I collected some spent bullets, nickel-jacketed 303 calibre from the belay, the first time I did this climb.

On one pleasant Saturday, I was with some beginners on Arachnus, and we had stopped to eat lunch on this belay. Time passed, the weather was fine, God was in his Heaven, and all was right with the world. One of the beginners asked, "What are those people doing with that red flag ?" To my horror, the locals were about to start their afternoon's firing at the range, and we were directly behind the target butts.

Hell, we moved. The two beginners went over the edge into the chimney behind the Watchtower, and we crouched, wedged in the chimney for what seemed like an eternity, with daypacks over our heads until the firing stopped. Several ricochets hit the rock face. It's not a pleasant experience to have bullets "spanking" around you, even if they aren't aimed at you in earnest. Still, we were able to laugh when, from the depths of the chimney, suspended on a rope, one of the beginners queried (quite seriously) if the grade of the climb increased by several levels during periods when the range was in use?

Fortunately, the range was closed permanently soon afterwards.

Queen's Birthday 1965

One of the most memorable weekends at the 'Piles was the Queen's Birthday Weekend in 1965. Several different groups had turned up there, including a group of climbers from Monash University. It was the first time that the both MUMC and Monash had been away together, and as was only to be expected, there was a lot of rivalry.

Sitting around a fire, late on the Friday night, soon after we had arrived, Jenny McMahon came up to me and said, "Are you going to let those bastards beat us to it ?" She'd heard a Monash team planning to steal a march on us, by putting up the first climb at night at a joint University climbing meeting, "while the Oxo's are asleep". We were off, carrying a head torch and enough gear, to climb Diapason. Jenny declined the offer of "Ladies first". "It's your torch, and besides, the headband wouldn't fit around my head !" was her rather ungallant reply. Gallantry, or feminine logic ?

The tradition of the Queen's Birthday Sheep Roast started that weekend. To raise some money for the Feathertop Memorial Hut, we had arranged to buy two sheep from Ian Sudholz, and he very kindly refused to accept payment for them, saying that he would like to donate them. So, we all sat down around a huge campfire, happily barbecuing the various parts of the sheep, and seeing who could jump the furthest and highest over the fire. In later years, the VCC adopted the sheep roast with numerous variations as a regular Queen's Birthday event for many years.

This may have been the same weekend when Telescope and his Lady Love, the Fair Fiona, lost track of time, and found that they were stuck on a ledge with little daylight left, and required assistance to get off the cliff. They wanted a top-rope, of all things. They don't know how close they came to spending the night up there. There was a scarcity of volunteers to go and help.

The Dead Dingo

There was a club trip to Arapiles, at the start of the second term Vac.in 1965. Yet again, the weather was superb, and Rowan Webb was interested in finding some of the tree ferns which were fairly common in cracks at the back of the Bluffs. He was a bit impatient, and climbed up (unroped), to find somewhere to place monitoring instruments. Unfortunately, he got stuck, unable to climb up or down and I told him that I'd climb up above and drop a top-rope to him. There was a fairly easy route up to the right, and it didn't take long to get well above him to a wide ledge. There were a lot of people standing around below and they all decided that they wanted to come up too. It was such a pleasant, sunny day, we decided to boil the billy. Someone hauled up enough water for the masses and away we went. There was a fairly deep cave at the back of the ledge, where the sediments had been hollowed out by the wind. While looking for wood in this cave, I found what looked like a large dead dog, intact, except for the fact that the lower part of one of its legs was missing. It was well preserved, and appeared to be mummified. All quite fascinating. Everyone had a look, poked it and added their tuppence worth on what it was. A good time was being had by all. Then a faint call reached us. It was the Webb, whom we'd forgotten in all the excitement. He was soon rescued, but he wasn't happy that he'd been overlooked for a cuppa and a dead dog.

The locals were very interested in the find, and later in the week, back in Melbourne, I was contacted by Rod Sutherland, the local doctor. Local legend had it that there was a mysterious beastie, the Ozenkadnook Tiger, which inhabited the area around the Mount, an animal which bore a striking resemblance to the Thylacine, or Tasmanian Tiger. Its photograph appeared at regular intervals in the Wimmera Mail Times. The locals thought this find might prove to be a clue to its existence. I gave Doc directions to the cave, and he led a group of Fisheries and Wildlife people to the dog. The interesting report which ensued described an intact dingo, ie nothing missing. That seemed strange, because the broken end of the bone in the forelimb had been clearly visible. Some time later, Doc wrote to me and said I had been right, there was a part of a forelimb missing, and he recounted a very interesting story which had come to light when someone had been reading the records from the nearby Miga Lake Station. (Remember "Lost in the Bush", in one of the Victorian Readers ? This was the station from which the kids disappeared.) There had been trouble there, with dingoes savaging the sheep, so a Trapper had been called down from Broken Hill. He had wandered around for a few days

making his observations, set four traps, and caught three dingoes and the lower half of a leg in the other. It is probable that the dingo in the cave was the missing dingo. Unfortunately, it didn't solve the mystery of the Ozenkadnook Tiger.

The Ratbag and His Rover

On another club trip, one club member was taught a salutary lesson. He had just bought an old banger of a Land Rover, and it took him a lot longer to reach the Mount than the rest of the group. By the time he arrived, everyone was in bed, sound asleep. We had a rude awakening, when, to the sound of a sick car horn, a very noisy Land Rover was driven round and round and round, in and out between the pitched tents with the result that the whole campsite was aroused, and angry. The driver thought this was a great joke, and laughed long and heartily.

Now, our lad was not noted for his climbing ability, and a plot was hatched when he went to sleep. He awoke to find that his pride and joy had no wheels. They now resided on various parts of the cliff which were beyond his ability to reach. For the rest of the weekend, he begged other people to help him recover his wheels.

They were recovered just before people left to go home. A very chastened lad was careful to ensure that, on later club trips, there was no repetition of his antics.

The Thin Edge of the (Wooden) Wedge

Late in 1966, I was climbing there with John Bennett, and we attempted to put up a new route on the Atridae. We started to peg the route, and got up to the top of the curving corner, before finding that the crack was too wide. We needed some wider wedges.

That night at the Nati pub, we liberated some offcuts from the renovations, and whittled our way round the corner the next morning. We finished the first pitch but the heat was so intense that we had to retire. So we escaped, only to come back and finish it during the Labour Day Weekend the following year.

One Queen's Birthday, when climbing with Tom Kneen on Arachnus, we became aware that someone was in trouble. On the Watchtower Crack, climbing with Clive Parker, Lesley Kefford had fallen and broken her collarbone. Bruno Zeller was also on the scene, and we managed to get Lesley around the nose, on to Arachnus. There were enough people there so Tom and I climbed up and organised a couple of ropes as top-ropes, and dropped them down to Bruno. Lesley was strapped on to Bruno's back, reminiscent of Hellepart's rescue of Claudio Corti on the Eiger, and he climbed with the load on his back,

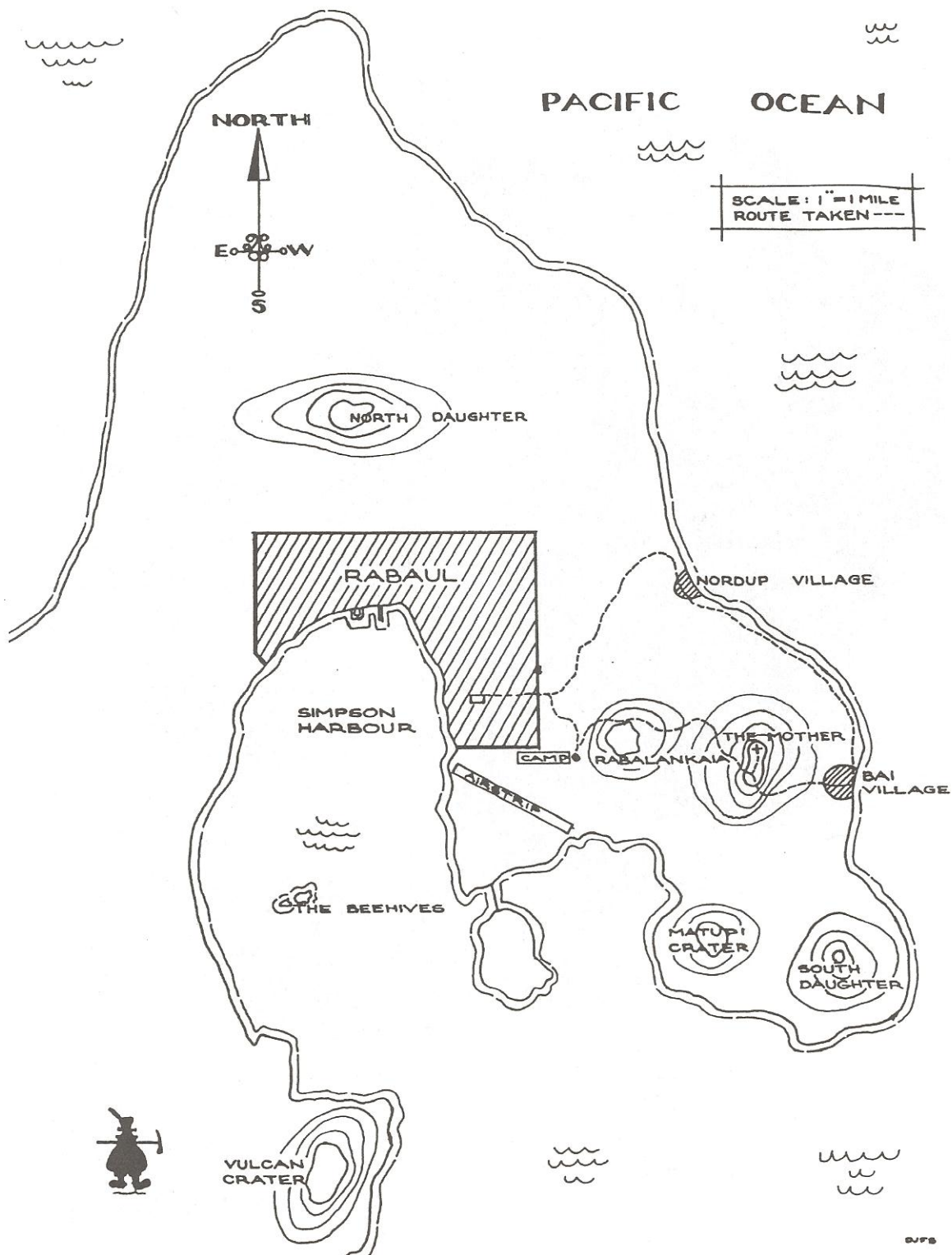
no mean feat, while we and a lot of others pulled and belayed him. Lesley was taken to Natimuk Hospital where Doc Sutherland attended to yet another fallen climber.

Despite all the changes, there is still something magic about the place, and it will always be special, because of the memories it evokes, and the people who helped make the memories by being part of the scene.

Mt. Arapiles







The Mother

by Phil and Val Willy

First published in The Mountaineer, December 1965.

Party: Val and Phil Willy. Trip: Rabaul - Rabalankaia - The Mother - Bai Village. New Britain, Papua New Guinea. 21st - 22nd April, 1965.

The Mother is the largest of a group of dormant volcanoes which tower over and separate the township of Rabaul from the Pacific Ocean. From Rabaul the upper slopes of The Mother above the tree-line appear to be smooth grass-covered easy slopes, and consequently, every so often people are tempted to make the trip up to its summit. Val and I set out from Rabaul at 4.30pm 21st April, and headed towards the nearest place of ascent. After only a few minutes walking we were at the beginning of the climb and followed a vague track ever upwards for 1,100ft vertical distance. This took two hours, and we made camp on the end of a very narrow ridge. This ridge, about six feet wide at most on top, was really the rim of another volcano - Rabalankaia - which is joined to the side of The Mother. Hence on one side we had an uninterrupted view of Simpson Harbour and Rabaul township including the airstrip, while on the other side was an almost sheer drop of 500 feet to the inside of the crater, now overgrown with jungle.

After spending half the night swatting mosquitoes, we arose with first light and set out immediately in order to cover as much ground as possible before the sun began beating into us. Similar to the day before we traversed more light jungle, climbing about 500 feet before coming out onto the deceptive "smooth grass-covered easy slopes" of the final stretch.

Now the sun had us full in its sights and we felt the attraction of our one waterbottle very strongly. However one must carry water for the whole trip and so we were forced to ration ourselves carefully. Leaving the tree line we entered the kunai grass slopes. In places this kunai grass is taller than a man, and we had to struggle

against it all the way to the top. At 10am we reached the summit, 2247 feet, with the finest view of land and sea I have ever seen. Because of the strong heat of the sun, we retreated from The Mother as soon as we had drunk in the wonderful view, and a tin of pears.

Heading down the opposite side we soon entered thick undergrowth and were confronted with innumerable spiders. Anyone who makes a similar trip through these "spider forests" will know just how nerve-racking such a trip can be. I have yet to discover the name of these spiders which on the average were three inches across (including legs), and the biggest we saw would have easily covered a six inch span. Black legs and body with yellow, orange or red markings on their back, they blended beautifully with the tropical background, and often we found ourselves blundering through their web before seeing them. They always sat immobile in the very centre of the web, which was invariably spanning our path. Our estimation for the trip was about fifty of these beasties.

From the peak of The Mother, to Bai Village, we dropped 2,200 feet vertically within a somewhat lesser distance horizontally, which brought us out to the sea. Without hesitation we walked fully clothed into the sea and cooled off. After being treated to numerous coconut drinks and mandarins by the local natives, we set off on our return trip via Nordup Village. Once on the road again, a truck lift brought us home within twenty four hours of beginning the trip.

Recommendations : Take plenty of water, film and energy, and it is the best short trip you will ever do.



GORDONVALE ~ 1965

In The Vale Of Rasselas

by Dave Hogg

First Published in The Mountaineer, December 1965.

Party : Sue Bail, Sandra Barnes, Dave Hogg, Graeme Jameson, Rob Taylor. Date : 26th December - 4th January, 1964/5.

The area containing the Rasselas Valley, the Denison and King William Ranges, and Lake King William, is seldom visited by bushwalkers, especially those from the mainland. Perhaps this is because of the lack of tracks in the area, or the fact that there is very little published information on these parts.

Starting from Maydena, we followed the road, then the old Adamsfield track to the Florentine River, which was reached for lunch on the second day. On crossing the Florentine, a sign-posted and well-defined track led north, first through the forest, then across button grass, towards the Gordon River. To the west stood the Thumbs, presumably named because of the rocky crags on top which resembled a protruding thumb. Camp that night was made on the Huntley Creek, about two miles before the Gordon.

Next day we crossed the Gordon on the flying fox, into the Vale of Rasselas (named after a fictitious prince of Abyssinia), and along the valley to the ghost settlement of Gordonvale. Built in the 1930's during the period of osmiridium mining in the valley, it was run as a hostel by the late Ernie Bond, popularly known as the Hermit of Rasselas, until ill-health forced him to retire to civilisation in 1952.

The site of "Gordonvale" had been visited by a number of prospectors in the 1930's, among them Ernie Bond and Paddy Hartnett. Ernie Bond saw the area as very fertile, and applied for a lease of 1,000 acres on which to build a small settlement. From the dense forest along the stream, timber was cut, the ground cleared, and one by one the buildings erected. All were built from the native timber, other supplies being packed in on horseback. Sheep were run, with the button grass being burnt back regularly to promote edible green growth. In 1936 a bridge was built across the Gordon, and a good pack track soon made. During the years that followed many walkers came to visit, to walk through the Gordon Valley, or into the ranges beyond, for Gordonvale lies at the foot of the Denison Range.

Since then, a certain amount of decay has set in. A few of the smaller buildings have collapsed, and no trace remains of the fruit and vegetable gardens. The main buildings, however, are still standing and are in

good condition, each one identifiable by a neatly carved wooden sign.

At the back of the main hostel, containing a main room and two attached bedrooms, a covered way leads to the office. Nearby are a butchery, a bakery and a rather dilapidated barn, and up on the hill behind the hostel is a small cosy cabin with a double bed - the "Love Nest". A short distance from the hostel, a small building, furnished with only a seat, is also neatly and concisely labelled.

The morning of the fourth day was spent climbing Mt. Wright, quite an impressive-looking peak overlooking Gordonvale. An excellent view was obtained up the Rasselas Valley. Next morning, we left the warmth and comfort of Gordonvale, and headed up the valley in drizzling rain. After climbing a spur, we arrived at Lake Rhona, nestling some 1200 feet above the valley beneath the cliffs of Reed's Peak, in the Denison Range. A fierce hailstorm marked our arrival at the lake, and, after seeking a sheltered spot, we pitched camp for our first tentbound afternoon. An improvement in the weather next morning saw us on top of Reed's Peak, with magnificent views, probably the best in the area. Then it was back down to the valley, and along it uneventfully for the next day and a half.

On the eighth day, we started across the button grass plain, soggy from the previous night's solid rain. Twenty minutes later, still crossing the button grass but now in water which was thigh-deep in spots, it became apparent that the Gell River had burst its banks. A hasty retreat followed, crossing a small creek which had risen about six feet overnight to flood level, and the rest of the day was spent tent-bound on high ground. The rain eased that night, and by next morning, the floods had subsided sufficiently for us to continue.

The button grass continued for a couple of miles past the Gell River, into a region of thick scrub and beech forest. For the rest of that day and for the next morning, we bashed through the scrub and beech forest, with no view for most of the time, until a wide expanse of button grass to the east of Mt. King William III was reached.

It had been our plan to go out via the King William Range, but as we were now two days behind

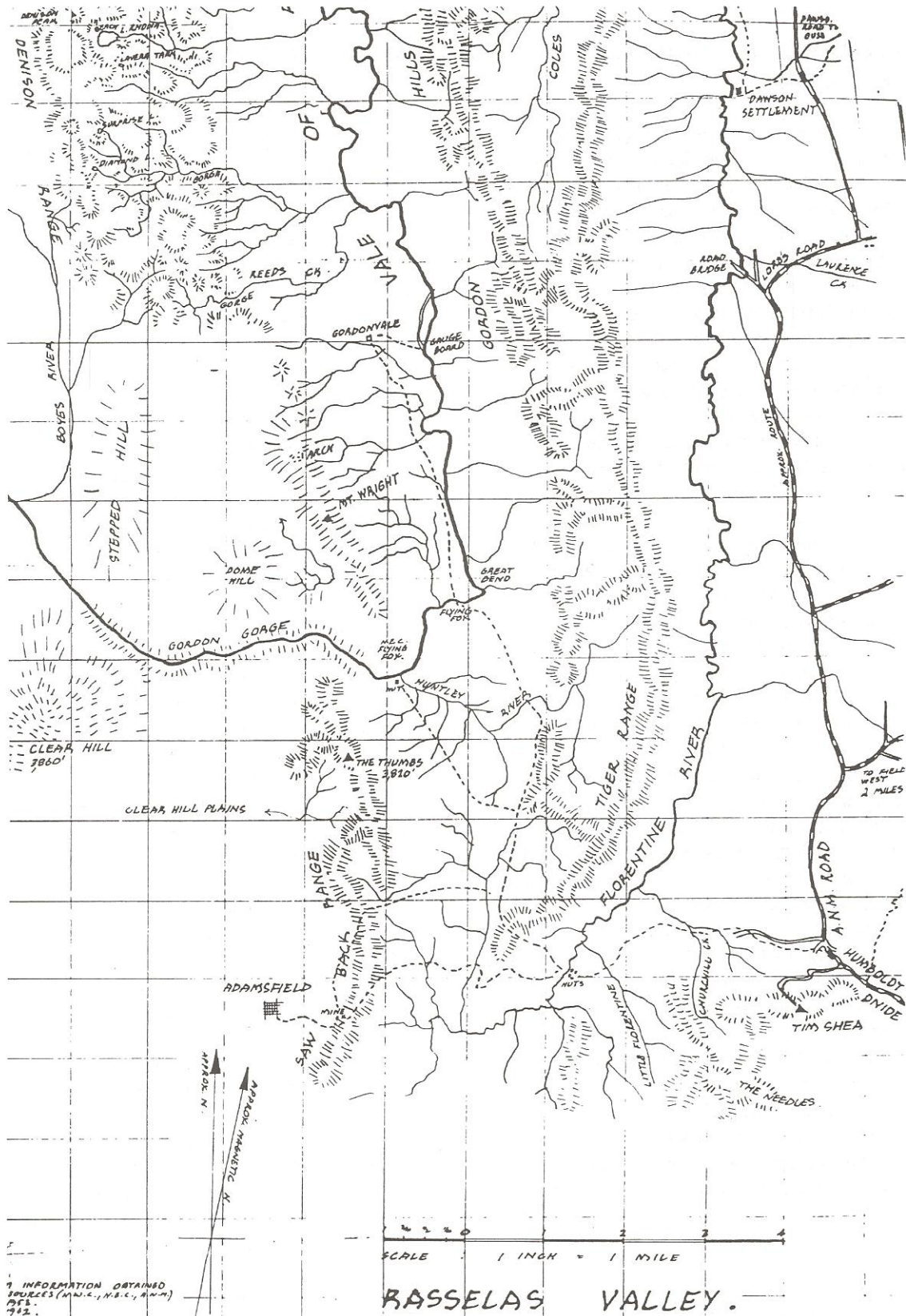
In The Vale of Rasselas

schedule, we kept going along the button grass between the King William and Mt. Hobhouse to Lake King William, where we reached civilisation at the Butler's Gorge dam.

Although the peaks are not quite as high as those in the Reserve, nor as rugged as those in the Arthur Ranges, they are none the less quite spectacular,

especially in the Denison Range with its beautiful mountain lakes. Gordonvale itself adds a rather unique touch to a trip in this area.

Ed: Very little of the Gordonvale buildings now remain



Mt Christina

One Memorable Day in the New Zealand Alps

by Dave Allen

First published in The Mountaineer 1965.

Party: Keith McNaughton, John Retchford, Dave Allen.

"Blast it, another bloody fine day!" With these words we started the day on which we climbed Mt Christina. It was 5am.

Yesterday we had traversed the peaks of Mt MacPherson and Talbot in glorious weather. We would have been content to leave it at that, had it not been for the thought that when the next bad weather cycle set in, we would probably lose 4 or 5 days. When collapsing into our bunks late that night, we had resolved that we would have a go at Christina, on the one condition that the weather be perfect in the morning. At dawn on the big day there was not a trace of cloud in the sky. Now we had to go!

For me, this was the third reason that I had gazed upon the sheer mossy walls of Christina, intrigued at how people ever got off the bottom, let alone reached the top. This time the mountain demons inside us prevailed, despite the vague feeling that we were taking on too much. Tense at the prospect of what lay ahead, the usual round of weak jokes at breakfast seemed even worse than usual.

Mt Christina is situated in the Darran Ranges, as the Main Divide is called just inland from Milford Sound. On the Milford side, the Darrans are dominated by Mt. Tutuko, a giant with ice climbs matched only by Mounts Cook and Tasman. Inland just off the Main Divide but higher than the divide, lies Mt Christina. Although its summit is at an altitude of only 8300 ft, it is formidable by any standards. For the valley floor below it is at an altitude of about 2000 ft, and the mountain rises in sheer walls straight from the valley floor. At about 6500 ft, it flattens off, relatively speaking of course.

We elected to go up the "standard" route, commencing at a large buttress near a cirque. We were fortunate in meeting a veteran, who kindly pointed out the details of the standard route, but it was like being told how to find your way through a labyrinth.

Christina has an uncanny ability at getting people benighted on its slopes. For, on the way up, at least it is possible to see where one can or cannot go in the sections above, thus avoiding the hardest areas.

But on the way down, the bluffs (as New Zealanders call them) are hidden from sight until one is actually on them, and then it's a case of ascending, and trying another way down.

The danger in this is that the weather can charge, making the mossy descent in the lower reaches exceedingly treacherous, as exemplified in many accidents in the Darrans. Christina, indeed, is a classic example of the mountaineering maxim that, "Speed, but not haste, is safety."

From Homer Hut we trudged down the road for a mile. It seemed a strange way to start an alpine climb. After an icy river crossing, we set off on the climb proper at the late hour of 7am. Blindly following the way which we thought the old timer had indicated, we almost spoilt our chances. The bottom couple of hundred feet was nearly vertical, with scrub requiring continuous chin-up type movements to climb. Like the scrub in SW Tassie, it seemed interminable, but eventually we all collapsed exhausted above it.

We were on steep snowgrass and rock so typical of the Darrans. With a rainfall of about 300 inches a year, the snowgrass manages to grow on incredible slopes. We all climbed on upwards, slowly and extra carefully, with a conscious effort being required to overcome the natural, but quite erroneous feeling, that you are safe on snowgrass (A slip on steep snow grass is exceedingly difficult to check and many deaths in the NZ Alps have resulted from little slips becoming big dipper slides into orbit over rock bluffs). Inevitably we made route-finding mistakes. Way down below us we could see the yellow crosses of toilet paper we had laid out to mark the route on our descent. This indeed proved to be the key to getting off the mountain in reasonable time, by showing a route known to go.

At about 5000 ft, the snowgrass gave way to rock and then to snow. Although much harder work plugging steps up the snow, it was more comforting. The ice axes obtained good shaft belays, and for the first time we were able to cast off the tension of exposure. One fascinating feature of the snow was several large grooves

- about 10 ft wide by 3 ft deep - down which boulders charged sporadically, polishing the snow to a hard shiny surface texture. After a few anxious moments, these were crossed. Every now and then, boulders became dislodged from the bluffs above and came sliding down the slopes, but fortunately none came near us.

After a brief lunch we were back on rock again, about 1000 ft. from the top. Beneath our feet a plane load of tourists flew up the valley, unaware of the battle we had to restrain John from hurling a rock in their direction!

The summit was still hidden from view. From time to time the afternoon mists swirled in, only to disappear again. Now we were cursing the rottenest rock you could find anywhere in New Zealand, and that's saying something. We found also that certain rocks were key boulders, supporting truck loads of boulders above them. The problem was to pick out the key before, and not after, you trod on it, for failure to do so would start a whole cavalcade of boulders avalanching. We were at a loss to puzzle out how the mountain had not collapsed years ago into a pile of rubble. With a last desperate leap for safety, we were on the ridge.

On one side, a dislodged boulder would end up in the beautiful and incredibly green Lake Marion. But on the other side, it would land about 100 yards from the road in the Hollyford Valley we had left 10 hours ago. For it was now 3 o'clock. We could see the regular

afternoon mists from the west coast, dammed up like water behind the passes, to come tumbling and swirling down into the valley. North of us was the jagged skyline of the Darrans near Moraine Creek Hut - the aptly named Mt. Sabre, and others. The scene was rugged and exhilarating.

Pushing on steadily, we reached the summit ridge, a glorious knife edged snow ridge rising gently to the summit a couple of hundred yards away, and at 4pm we stood on the summit. The mists had engulfed us, and the view disappeared. After stuffing some chocolate and scroggin into our mouths, we uttered the usual mountaineer's cry at such triumphant moments "Let's get the hell off this bloody mountain before we're stuck here!"

Soon we were on our trail of yellow toilet paper crosses and rock cairns, all of which we removed. Following our yellow markers proved to be extremely easy, for they stood out clearly in the failing light.

At 9.30pm, fourteen and a half hours after setting off up the mountain, we were at the bottom, exhausted, relieved, and still hardly able to believe that we had done it.

An hour later we were back in the hut, putting on a brew, so ending one of the most enjoyable climbs we had ever done.

Real Climbing Walls

by Roger Caffin

Climbing walls seem to be the thing today. Every Uni has one and there are even a couple of commercial ones in Sydney now. Can you imagine it, actually pay per half hour to go climbing? But they are all feeble things, with artificial epoxy holds bolted here and there on to masonite. They aren't real walls. Real walls are found, not made. Let me tell you about some real walls we had back in the mid-60s in the MUMC.

First of all, there's the Burke and Wills Memorial, in a park near Melbourne Uni. It is a small tower built of volcanic rock, just begging for attention. There are about three routes up it. You couldn't get any more because it's not all that big. And there are two traverses around it; high and low obviously. Climbs on it were normally done late at night; there was some idea that maybe the authorities wouldn't approve. The state of climber sobriety was often a bit in doubt too.

Then there was the Aikman's Road wall. To explain this I have to explain Aikman's Road itself, for those unfamiliar with it. This was the MUMC clubroom; the basement of a University-owned terrace house across the road from the Uni grounds. The microscopic concrete backyard was the normal venue for lunch for active MUMC members most days of the week. (Active in a relative sense; most people just sat on the ground the whole time and talked). On one side there was a brick wall, and eventually attention turned to it. The gaps between the bricks were of a reasonable size, so just maybe one could get enough of a finger hold to stay on. Mind you, proper climbing shoes were not used here. Thongs and DBs were the lunchtime rule.

Well, with a bit of judicious "cleaning" of the mortar (to make a few bits of grooves deeper), it became possible to get to the top of the wall. Once there, a problem became apparent. The mortar between the bricks was proper old lime mortar, not modern cement, and mortar is soft, unlike cement. The wall swayed! Having done that once or twice (got to the top, or felt the wall sway, as you wish), we very sensibly and on the grounds of safety decided to declare the wall out of bounds (done that, boring, etc).

In writing this I was reminded of the passage wall in a terrace flat some MUMC climbers were renting in those days. Late one night (OK, during a fairly normal party) we were chimneying up the main passage from the front door when we realised that the top of the wall was moving sideways some 50-100 mm relative to the ceiling, due to the force of our feet.

Apparently the wall was not anchored at the top. Again, in the interest of safety etc, etc, we desisted. (The renters made a few comments too, I seem to remember).

Around that time someone brought up the Cambridge Uni practice of building climbing. Given the large amounts of sandstone on some of the old Cambridge buildings, it only seems reasonable that there should be good routes over them. Well, that was OK for them in England, but what about Melbourne? Returning from lunch at Aikman's Road, we were confronted with the Old Arts Building. A fine old structure, with a solid granite foundation and massive sandstone walls. Curiously, the granite was wider than the sandstone, and there was a little sloping ledge running along the wall on top of the granite. Purely an academic question, of course - was the ledge wide enough to stand on?

The argument did not get far. It was clear, at least to the scientists present, that the matter was best settled by experiment, and the others were willing to be convinced by our arguments. Now, at the northern end of the building the granite ledge is quite close to the ground, so this was easy to do - although the ground did fall away towards the south end of the building. Up we hopped. Yes, you could stand there. Could you traverse? Yes, but with some difficulty. There were all sorts of obstructions along the way: down-pipes, window ledges, corners etc. Did these matter?

The down-pipes (of which more later) were very old and generally about to fall off the wall. Whatever had been used to hold the spikes into the sandstone (wood? or lead?) had collapsed, and the pipes swayed. In fact, the "bolt holes" the spikes came out of were of more use than the pies. The first climber to meet them warned the others, and we inched around them safely.

The window ledges looked to be a problem. Not only did they stick out a bit, pushing you outwards, but they were quite long and sloped badly downwards. Too steeply, it seemed, for a decent downwards pressure hold. But this is an old building, built by old stonemasons, and under those stone slabs the old masons cut a "drip groove" to stop water from going back into the wall. An undercut layback hold by gosh! Just the thing, what?

The corners came in two varieties: concave and convex (room there for an MSc thesis maybe?).

The concave ones were just fine. The convex ones were tricky until you worked out the correct combination of layback moves to get around. Then they too fell to the experimental method.

So the problems were all resolved? No, not quite. One slip of concentration and you fell off! Moral question: climb back up or restart at the beginning? This was solved by the realisation that climbing back up any distance from the start (the ground slopes down, remember) was even harder than traversing! So on we traversed until we found ourselves rather higher above the ground than we wanted to be. Decision: the traverse had been "solved", so we all jumped off. Now understand, the traverse was fairly thin and we had been concentrating on it and not looking behind us. When we did look we saw a crowd of about several hundred quite silent Uni students standing there watching us in rapt fascination! The only thing to do was to look at the time and declare an immediate lecture, and leave rapidly.

The aftermath of this little exercise was equally hilarious. The Uni Works Dept sent the MUMC a large bill for repairs to the down-pipes, which had on subsequent inspection all been found to now be very loose. Obviously, we were responsible. My recollection is that the committee (useful things, committees) replied very politely and after due and careful consideration and investigation, that the Works Dept must be mistaken. First of all, there was no "Traverse of the Old Arts Building" trip on the Club books, so it couldn't have been an MUMC effort. Secondly, the downpipes were in such a poor state, (even the ones on the other side of the building!), that the unnamed individuals involved (whoever they were) had been scrupulous in not touching them for fear of falling off. I believe nothing more was heard from the Works Dept; I don't recollect them ever fixing the down-pipes either. Unfortunately, the committee also told us to lay off and not repeat the exercise - spoilsports!

Then there was the assault on the North Building. If you look at it from the main road to the east, you will see a thin expansion crack running all the way up the end face near the corners. A couple of us thought it would be great fun to climb it using wedges. Check out the height of the building; "fun" is only one description! The effect on the peak-hour traffic coming up that road would also have been fun.

A vast number of tapered wooden wedges were made, of just the right thickness to fit in the crack, possibly in the long-suffering Physics Dept workshop (I still have some of them). Official permission was sought. Well, that raised an interesting question. Just who was responsible for authorising such a thing? We got permission for the attempt from someone - they thought that we knew what we were doing. However,

at the last minute (the morning of the climb), someone else overrode the permission we had; perhaps it was the Vice-Chancellor. In hindsight that was probably a good thing. Had we got too near the top we might have been cooked by the side lobes of the very large and powerful weather radar dish on the roof!

Reviewing that project makes me wonder about sanity and other things. I think we had ideas about doing a tension traverse around the corner to avoid the radar, if we got up that far. Mind you, what we would have done for good reliable belays for changing the lead over slips my memory. Maybe we were going to sneak a few chrome-molly bongs up with us and use the cement grooves as well. Frightening stuff: can you imagine unzipping the whole length?

By way of compensation, we subsequently got permission to abseil off the west end of the building. Now the building is rather high so we had to knot ropes together. We ended up with one knot half way down the building. OK, so down we go. The first abseiler got down to the knot and stuck. (I forgot who that was, although Sue thinks that we persuaded Chris Dewhurst to be the victim). Too late we realised that he should have taken some prussik loops (and maybe a Jumar if anyone had one) down with him, so as to be able to work his way past the knot.

The problem was compounded by the vertical fall. No way could you clip some slings to a carabiner and slide them down the rope; the carabiner terminal velocity would have nearly killed the poor guy! Eventually I think we knotted some slings around the rope and dropped them down. The abseiler was a bit tired and breathless when he finally got to the bottom. I don't think he had a proper abseil harness, just a waist loop!

With that problem sorted out, others had a go. By this stage there was a crowd, so a loud voice was recruited to give a sort of promotional spiel for the MUMC. It was explained that with the proper brake-bar the descent could be controlled from the bottom; good for cliff rescue etc. All very safe, you see. So one enthusiastic abseiler let go and let himself be lowered by the "friend" at the bottom. Well, the friend thought that this was too good a chance to pass up, so he let the poor abseiler free-fall for about 20-30 metres before putting tension on the rope just at the bottom. Let me hasten to add that the landing was quite safe. But the abseiler was very startled, didn't dare grab for the fast-moving rope, and let out a sustained four-letter expletive. It sounded real good at ground level, what with the Doppler shift as he accelerated down!

Finally, there was the great Home Show at the Exhibition Buildings one year. One of the exhibitors wanted a novelty to draw the crowds, and hit on the idea of building a scenic artificial mountain right in the

middle and having "mountaineers" climb it every hour or so. Sue is sure it was the Alpine cigarette company; how appropriate! I do remember that the top was white with snow, like the design on the Alpine packet used to be.

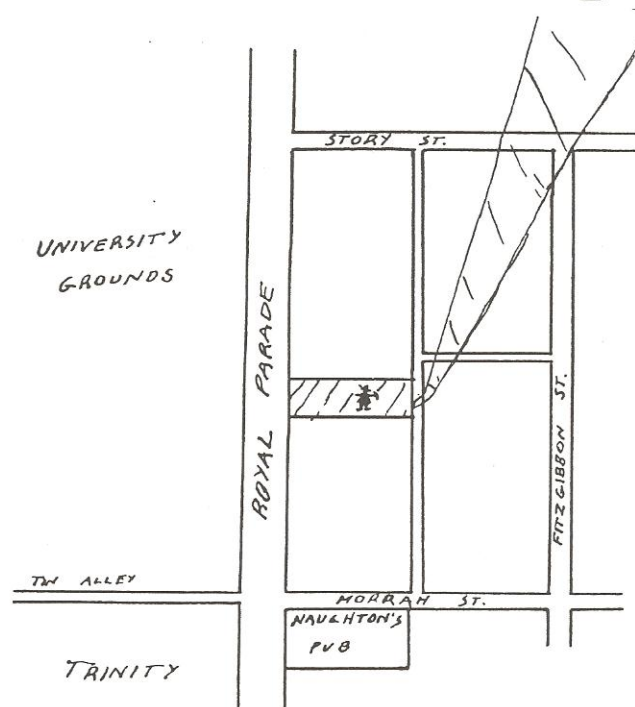
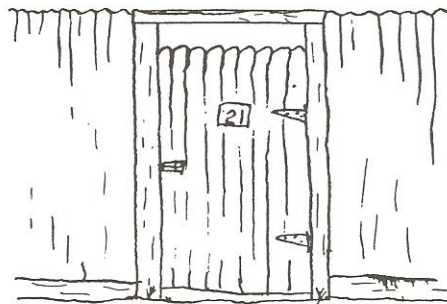
Well, we got the contract to do the climbing, for a fee, and with a roster and everything. I forget whether there ever was any insurance cover. Mind you, we had to get the organisers to strengthen the mountain on the critical places. You can't climb real well on chicken wire and papier mache! But a few carefully placed, well-bolted and camouflaged bits of timber did the trick. There was even a small overhang; good for gripping "will he, won't he" efforts from some of the more theatrical members of the squad. It looked really impressive.

On the last day we collected a whole lot of food from various exhibitors and had a bivouac half way up, and ate and drank the lot. I remember dried fruit, cheese and a bottle of something pink and fizzy and probably alcoholic. Great fun, and we didn't even drop any bottles on the visitors below.

Roger Caffin was at Melbourne University and in the MUMC during the mid to late 1960's. Roger did a BSc. and MSc. at Melbourne, and later did a PhD. in London. He is now a Principal Research Scientist with CSIRO Wool Technology in Sydney.

During his MUMC days, rock climbing trips were frequent, and long SW Tassy trips were undertaken every summer for 4 years. Roger led the 10th. traverse of the Western Arthurs, and (according to the locals) the 4th. full traverse of the Eastern and Western Arthurs. The last trip to the South West was a 5 week trip around the South Coast, during the period of the Hobart bushfires. Roger married Sue Wilcox after taking her on all of these trips. Their two daughters have in turn grown up, and have both graduated from university. These days, Sue and Roger bushwalk in the Blue Mountains on most weekends, and still do long walks in NSW and Victoria, and extended ski touring trips in the winters

AIKMAN'S ROAD





CLIMBING WALLS

Training Bushwalking Leaders - The MUMC Contribution

by Phil Waring

Twenty five years ago, in celebration of the Club's first 25 years, Harry Schaap edited "OXO", a souvenir magazine which makes interesting reading today. One of the articles in it was by Bill Bewsher on adventure training in youth education, mainly about the Outward Bound and Duke of Edinburgh schemes. However, Bill foreshadowed the "formation of a training board" to establish a 'Bushwalking and Mountaineering Leadership Certificate' by the National Fitness Council, adding that, "it is hoped that the first course might commence later this year (1969)".

That the first bushwalking leader course did commence in 1969, and that the Training Board is still active in this field in 1994, twenty five years later, are testimony to Bill's foresight. He also had the necessary political skills to get the idea off the ground and onto a sound footing, not to mention the hard work he put in, in the absence of secretarial support. Bill was chairman of the Training Board for the first thirteen years of its operation. If for nothing else he has achieved, his work in this area deserves the highest recognition. Surprisingly, an application by a later Board to the Honours Secretariat in Canberra for formal recognition of Bill's work for the Board, the D of E, the Federation S&R, and in other areas, was not successful.

For many years Bill was on the staff of the Howmans Gap week held in May. As Rod Lingard noted, "he could not hide his delight when the weather turned to snow or sleet for the 3-day walk! His final night rendition of the "Ballad of Idwal Slabs" was always a star attraction of the night - although it was best not to sit in the first three rows of the audience!"

Bill used his inside knowledge of who was who among bushwalkers to recruit the best available talent to run the course. Perhaps it was not surprising then, that there was a strong MUMC flavour among the early staff members. Names such as Dave Hogg, John Cole, Tony Kerr, John Steele, Harry Schaap, Carla and Pat Miller, John Retchford, Marg James, Tom Kneen, Ros Escott, Ron and Judy Frederick, and others come to mind. It

was sometimes said jokingly that if the MUMC and VMTC members (the latter largely through the influence of Stuart Brookes) withdrew, the course would collapse! This is not intended to deny the major contributions made by members of other walking clubs and, later, by graduates of the course.

Given Bill's thirteen years as chairman, Dave Hogg's input to the initial Board, John Retchford's long stint and current Vice Chairmanship, and my twelve years on it, nine years as Chairman, the guiding influence of MUMC is apparent and ongoing. Nowadays, however, the majority of staff members are graduates of the courses rather than members of bushwalking or mountaineering clubs.

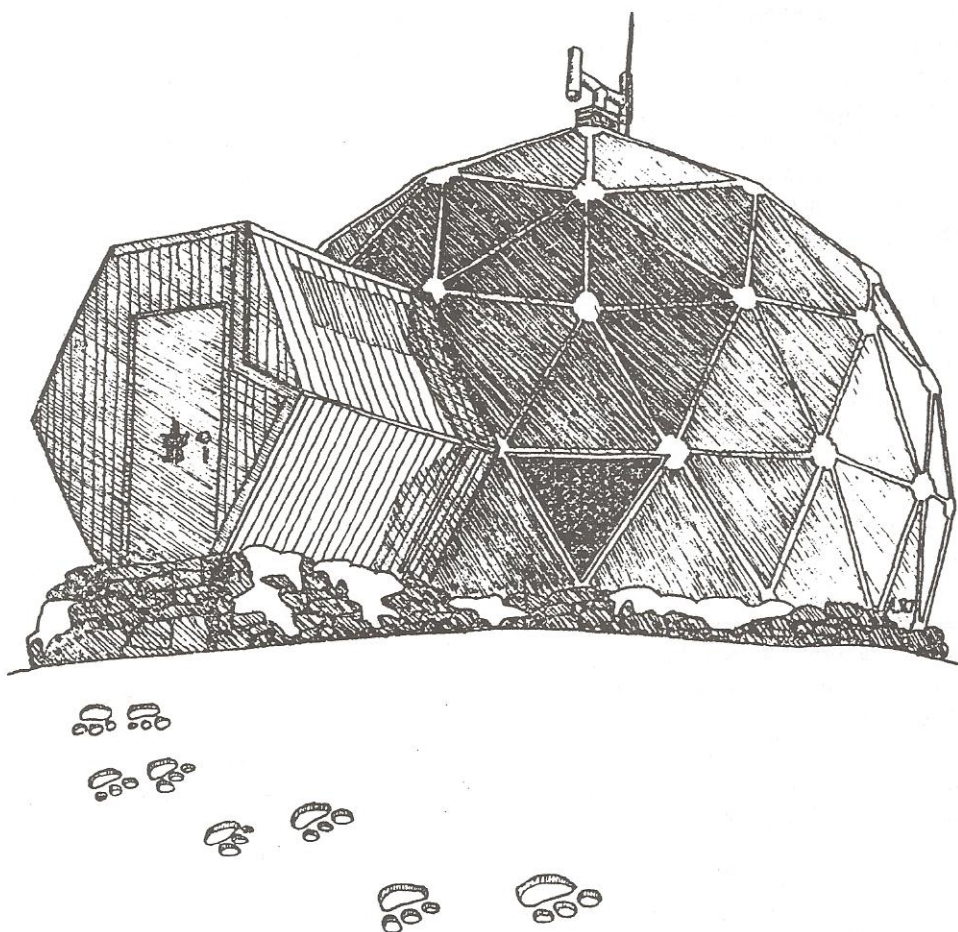
A few specific reminiscences: Carla Miller was a very early graduate, and moved on to undertake various roles, notably director of appraisals. Tony Kerr was the first, and longest-standing, editor of the course magazine "Groundsheet". Tony's impassioned pleas for contributions would strike a cord with anyone who has edited a similar newsletter. Tony, Harry Schaap, Ros Escott and myself made significant contributions to the course leadership manual which has sold over 20,000 copies. John Cole is remembered for his organisational thoroughness and for making the weakest tea imaginable.

Tom Kneen organised a very popular lecture on weather, later tragically giving his life when a cornice on Feathertop collapsed during a course-sponsored snow walk. John Retchford made a major contribution towards establishing a mountain school in Victoria, a venture that was defeated by prototype economic rationalists. Marg James and I continued a well established MUMC tradition when we ended our three day walk on the high plains with a scrub bash off Mt Fainter to McKay Creek Power Station in the dark. Finally, there was the memorable occasion when course members resuscitated several hypothermic members of the Australian Army on a training exercise at Shelley in NE Victoria, during a damp week in May.

This article would not be complete without some reference to leadership training carried out within MUMC by the current bushwalking (and skitouring) leaders. Perhaps it suffices to say that the approaches

adopted by the Board on the one hand and the Club on the other are widely different.

However, both are successful in producing leaders in the broadest sense who have and will make significant contributions to the community.



The Australian Andean Expedition 1969

by John Retchford

From Supplement to The Mountaineer, No 2, 1970

The Australian Andean Expedition 1969 was the first major mountaineering effort by Australians in one of the great ranges of the world. The aims of the expedition were:

- 1) To climb virgin peaks and new routes on those already climbed.
- (2) To explore and map a little known area.
- (3) To conduct certain experiments on the heart functions of people acclimatised to high altitude.

The chosen area is part of the Cordillera Vilcabamba in Southern Peru. The mountains here rise to about 20,000 ft, and although the two highest had been climbed, many fine peaks remained virgin.

A management committee consisting of Colin Putt and Peter Marsh was formed, and applications to join the party were invited.

Those selected were:

Ross Wyborn (leader)
Jack Higgs (deputy leader and surveyor)
Dot Butler (interpreter)
John Sutton (medical officer)
Richard Burnett (food organiser and photographer)
Michael Feller (food organiser)
John Gamlen (equipment organiser)
Keith McNaughton (equipment organiser)
John Retchford (equipment organiser)

We were an official New Zealand Alpine Club Expedition, and in financial support had the use of NZAC equipment. We also received generous financial and material support from Australian clubs (MUMC included), the Everest Foundation, business firms and individuals.

The expedition members left Sydney in mid-May and flew to Lima. While two members stayed to bring the equipment through customs (which took 3 weeks), the rest went up to Cuzco (11,500 ft) to acclimatise a little. Two of us (and our Spanish speaking wives) went on to Santa

Teresa by mountain railway, to organise mules for the trip to Base Camp.

An interesting 5 days journey with 35 mules took us and our two and a quarter tons of baggage over Yanama Pass (15,000ft), and into our first base camp (14,000ft). From here, four high camps were established in the Yanama Range, and a number of virgin peaks were climbed.

After about four weeks, Base Camp was moved about three miles, to a site near the snout of the Lasunayoc Glacier. Two high camps were installed on Lasunayoc (20,010ft - our highest objective) in a big carry involving the eight males in the party.

Ross Wyborn and John Retchford reached the summit on their third attempt via the NE. face. Four other members subsequently reached the summit, and the original pair repeated the climb.

In two and a half months, Expedition members climbed 19 peaks, 13 of them previously unclimbed.

The major climbing difficulties encountered were on ice, although a considerable amount of rock was climbed. Many of our routes were on steep faces because lacy cornices often made the ridge quite impossible. Ice and snow conditions were peculiar and very variable, ranging from waist deep powder snow to bare solid ice. Conditions were however fairly stable with time, and avalanches were not a problem.

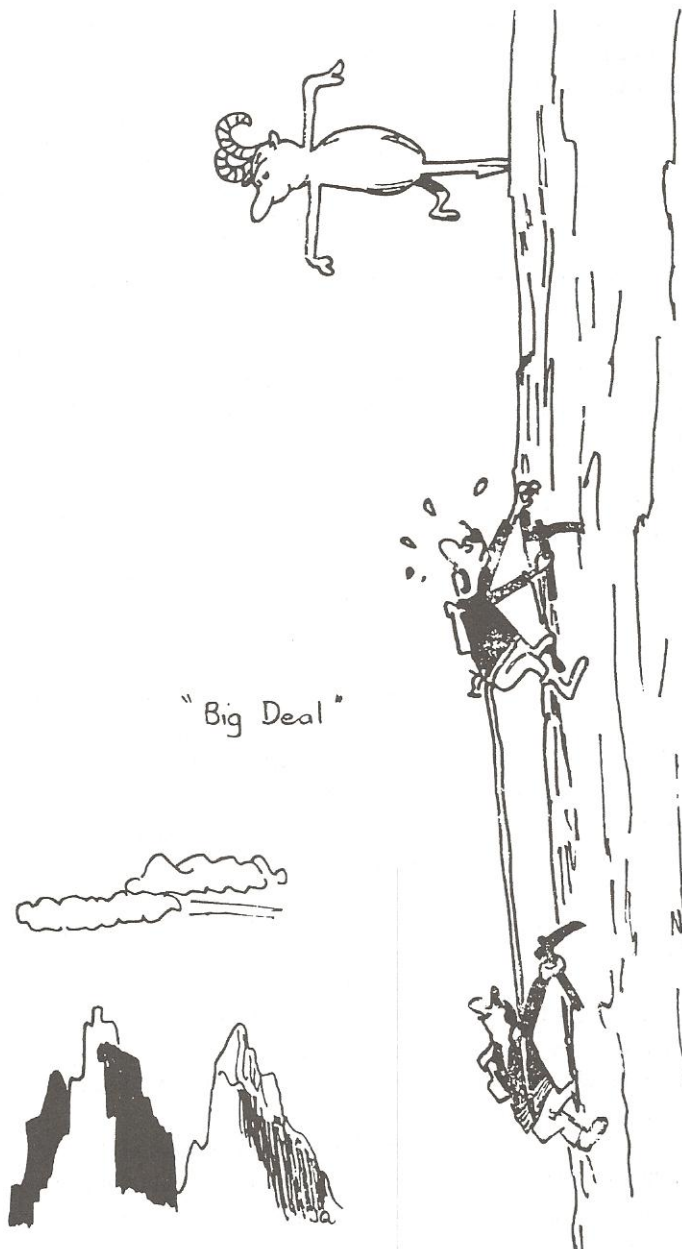
Route finding and the ability to travel freely in unknown country are of major importance when tackling unclimbed mountains. Important also is the wider variety of technical skills needed to overcome the difficulties that may arise. A steep Andean ice face is no place to discover deficiencies in one's ice technique. The party found that fairly broadly based New Zealand experience served them well.

Good weather helped us a lot. There were only four days on which we could not climb during the entire period. Temperatures dropped to about -50 degrees F at our camps, but we had no trouble with frost bite. Even a night in the open at 17,000ft caused little worry.

The major problem encountered was health. Only three members remained healthy throughout, and only two

of us climbed for the entire period. Minor complaints such as throat infections and stomach ailments brought on by the high altitude were expected (and experienced), but the main worry was an epidemic of hepatitis, which affected seven of the party to varying degrees. This disease is common in Peru and highly contagious.

In spite of the health problems the expedition was a great success. We hope that the experience gained will be a help and an encouragement to others.



Adventures In Peru - 1971

by Mike Feller

First published in the British Colombia Mountaineering Club magazine, "The BC Mountaineer" No.3 Vol 50 March 1972

Party: Sue and Rob Taylor, Peter Kneen, Jack Loeppky and Michael Feller (leader).

Tired and bedraggled after a hot and dusty 36 hour bus journey, we arrived early one frosty morning in Cuzco, the old Incan capital situated at 11,000 ft in the Sierra of south-eastern Peru. We located a suitable hotel, negotiated an acceptable price for our rooms and made straight for the showers in the hope of finding some "agua caliente".

Our plan was to climb in a virgin range of mountains close to the Terijuay group of the Cordillera Urubamba lying approximately 90 km north west of Cuzco. Unfortunately we had left behind in Canada all our information and maps of the area, and in Lima, due to an impossible bureaucracy and limited time, we had been unable to obtain any information at all about the area. We later learnt that army-survey maps of the area cost \$1 to \$8 Canadian. They can be obtained in Lima at The Instituto Geografico Militar which changes its address regularly. Our only map was a U.S. Air Force navigational chart of southern Peru and Bolivia which showed only the river systems of our area with the comment, "relief data incomplete". We had brought with us from Canada a small amount of freeze-dried food, but all other food and supplies we intended to buy in Cuzco - to save money and to avoid customs problems.

We thus spent the next two days acquiring food from the local stores and "super mercados", trying in vain to get hold of maps of our area - hampered by two-thirds of our party being unable to speak Spanish - and sight-seeing; taking in the awe-inspiring ruins and Incan stonework, the overwhelming opulence of the churches, and the great beauty of the local girls.

Having recovered from several minor ailments and seen something of Cuzco, we left early one morning in a colourful but dilapidated old bus for the village of Amparaes, which our reading had indicated to be the starting point for the walk in. Dawn saw us jolting down a valley through fields of maize, cows, sheep and llamas, dotted with straw-roofed brown adobe huts, and surrounded by eucalypts. Several hours later, we entered another valley and passed through the famous market town of Pisac beside the sombre Rio Urubamba, one of the many headwaters of the famous, incomparable Rio Amazonas. The Indians of the Pisac region dress

distinctively in dark red ponchos with frilly gold, blue and black stripes. Their villages are similar to those throughout the Sierra, consisting of a cluster of single or double storey adobe buildings, some white-washed, with tiled or galvanised iron roofs, narrow dusty, dirty, cobbled streets full of playing children dressed in rags; also dogs, chickens, pigs, turkeys, a mule or two tethered to verandahs, and various other animals. There was always a church and often a small schoolhouse, where the boys all wear khaki uniforms like small soldiers, and the girls wear dark blue.

Upon reaching the large town of Calca, we bought some delicious flat bread loaves from the market, then continued our journey up into the mountains leaving behind the Urubamba valley and climbing slowly past a spectacular, heavily glaciated range of the Cordillera Urubamba, up to an icy pass which registered 4730m on our altimeter. We then chugged down the road in an incredible series of hairpin bends into the Lares valley, arriving at Amparaes one hour later.

After unloading all our gear from the roof of the bus, the others kept dozens of inquisitive kids at bay while I went to the local police station seeking information. The local 'jefe' swore black and blue that no 'alpinistas' had ever started walking from Amparaes, as did his sub-ordinate. I then discovered a French Canadian mining engineer who appeared to be revered by all. He confirmed what the jefe had said and told us that the place we were after was probably Terijuay, much further down the valley. Since one of our mountain ranges was called Terijuay we caught the following bus on down the valley, about twenty minutes later.

The grasslands of the Sierra soon gave way to stunted bushes which rapidly became lush, green jungle. The temperature and humidity continued to climb as we descended into a jungle-covered canyon, past village after village, until our bus developed a flat tyre. We piled out and found shade beside some buildings surrounded by banana-less banana trees, and watched the incredible proceedings. The bus was jacked up and the wheel removed. The driver picked up a mattock from his tool kit and ferociously attacked the wheel to separate the tyre from the hub. His son, who like all small Latin American

boys was called 'chico', was naturally blamed for this mishap and forced to do several different jobs at once. One of these was to fill the petrol tank from a 44 gallon drum perched on top of the bus. Luxuries such as petrol stations do not exist in this part of Peru. Finally, the tube was extracted and a patch applied. Whilst pumping the tyre up again, I was given a turn, and almost collapsed from exhaustion onto several pigs that had gathered to witness the strange event. When the wheel was on, two nuts were found to be missing, and poor chico was blamed again.

Further down the valley the jungle stopped abruptly as bare grassy slopes testified to the ignorance of, and destruction wrought by, the local Indians in their methods of agriculture. The jungle is destroyed by burning. The soil here, like most of the soils throughout the vast Amazon basin, is poor and infertile, and the removal of plant cover exposes the soil to desiccation and subsequent hardening. After only a few years of growing crops such as maize, the soil will yield no more, and the farmer moves on to burn down another patch of jungle.

Late in the afternoon we arrived at Terijuary, which consisted of nothing but four adobe huts and a wobbly suspension bridge across the river. Surprisingly, we found three policemen stationed there, each of whom informed us that the alpinistas had gone off in every direction of the compass for periods up to two years. Taking this information with several grains of salt, we made camp on a sandbank beside the river, and debated what to do. We had descended to 1000m, close to that part of Peru's jungle known as the Madre de Dios. In that hot and humid place, surrounded by jungle-clad hills, we could not imagine the presence of snowy peaks. We decided to catch our bus back to the icy peaks we had seen on the trip to Amparaes, then lay down to sleep with the atmosphere pregnant with all the noises and scents of the jungle.

The bus was due to return at 4am so we knew it would be at least 5 before it arrived. Sure enough, at 5 we boarded the overcrowded vehicle and set off, accompanied by the familiar cursing of chico. It took most of the day to travel back to Amparaes, over the pass, then down to a small village named Totora which we had selected as our starting point. Before turning in, we lined up three very cheap (60 cents per day) mules to carry some of our gear, and watched the construction of a mud brick wall with interest. The sun-dried mud bricks were placed in position, then a cement, made of dirt, straw and water, mixed by the kneading action of people's feet, was applied by hand. Simple, cheap, and effective.

Next morning we loaded up the mules and set off up a well-worn track - the old Incan road which travelled all the way down to the Madre de Dios - passing several mule trains carrying produce from the jungle up to the markets of the Sierra. We slowly plodded up past

old ruins and terraced slopes, a legacy of Incan times, which are still used today for growing the only crop of the area - potatoes. We were accompanied for the first few km by our muleteer's mother, who was going to visit friends in the next village.

The track started to zig-zag up towards a pass. Near the top, Rob and I dropped our packs and went on to select a site for our camp. We selected what soon turned out to be a delightful spot - a hollow beside a small, deep blue lake a little way above the bottom of a valley, along which a small stream flowed, fed by a spring nearby. On the far side of the valley soared a 700m. rock wall to a peak which we decided to climb the following day.

The next day dawned clear, so we set out just after the sun hit our tents. Anyone who has lived in the Sierra would see that to the Indians, the sun is a much more logical object of worship than is some mythical person they had never heard of, prior to the coming of the barbarous Spaniards. When the sun comes out, life becomes warm and pleasant, things grow, things move; when it disappears it becomes cold, and life appears to cease.

We made for a break in the ridge leading down the far side of the valley, then followed the ridge up until vertical slabs barred our way, necessitating a descent down the far side into a rubbly gully. At the top of the gully was a monstrous gap in the ridge, looking as if someone had struck it with a huge axe. The upper side again consisted of smooth, near-vertical slabs. After two false leads we finally found a route out onto the face via a short, class 4 (Canadian) pitch out of the gully. Thereafter, a series of class 3 ledges and gullies led us back to the ridge where an easy traverse of three minor summits took us to the main summit. Our altimeter showed 5080m (corrected). We observed the clouds boiling up and no less than six, huge condors gliding above us, moving not a feather. These magnificent, fearful birds, aptly described as 'the spirit of the Andes', are relatively common in southern Peru, despite widespread slaughter. It started to snow and we hastily retreated to camp. This weather pattern of clear nights and mornings with afternoon snow heralds the end of the dry season, and in southern Peru, begins in late July, several weeks before the start of the wet season.

The following day we climbed a spur behind our camp to the snow col at the head of our valley. Our objective was a peak just to one side of the col. After messing around with cameras on the glacier on the far side of the col, we split into two parties, Jack and I to try a snow route on the far side of the peak which I had spotted from our climb of the day before, and the other three to try a rock route up the face from the col.

Jack and I traversed the rock slabs of the face to reach a ridge, down the far side of which a steep snow gully led to a glacier. Roping up, we cramponed down

the gully on fixed belays under ideal conditions, using ice-screws to belay. A short climb up the glacier, threading our way through a few crevasses took us into a steep icy gully leading to the rocky summit ridge. With crampons barely penetrating, and ice screw belays, we made the ridge. A further rope length had us on the narrow summit block, where a cairn led us to assume this to be Punta Erica of Malcolm Slesser's Scottish Expedition of 1964. Later we found this not to be so. Our altimeter showed 5240m. We heard the other party about 20m below us but left before they arrived, due to the snow and worsening visibility. Their route involved an easy system of ledges and gullies with some class 5 slabs near the top, requiring the use of several pitons.

A rest day was spent sleeping, eating, and photographing the herd of llamas which were grazing near our camp. Another mixed snow and rock climb left us with no more reasonable climbs from our camp. I wanted to put in a high camp at the foot of a glacier on the north side of Chainapuerto, a magnificent ice pyramid, and miniature Alpanlayo, the dominating peak of the area. However, the others wanted to move to another valley. Jack left to visit a girl friend in Buenos Aires, and I yielded, so we loaded up our packs and staggered back to Totorá with loads of 40-50 kg.

After a one hour wait, we piled into the back of a truck for the short trip to Calca. Truck travel is undoubtedly the cheapest and most common method of travel in Peru, and surprisingly not as dusty as bus travel. From Calca we wanted to catch another truck or a bus to a village some distance away. However, the day before happened to be the 150th anniversary of Peru's independence and the festivities were to last for a whole month. All of Calca and the surrounding countryside had turned out for a big dance and booze-up in the central plaza. Naturally all the bus and truck drivers were also there, so transport had come to a stop. After a conference we decided to head back to Cuzco. Peter and I located a truck driver in the plaza, but we were soon dancing away in climbing boots and scruffy clothes, doing our bit to celebrate Peru's Independence. We later had dinner at our truck driver's home, then left for Cuzco. Halfway there, the truck stopped in the middle of the road. Our driver got out and made love to his wife who was travelling with him, and fifteen minutes later we were on our way again.

From Cuzco, we visited (and I revisited) the old Incan city of Machu Picchu, one of the most beautiful places in the world. Then we parted, Rob and Sue to tour Peru, Peter to Lima, and me to Toronto.

Windy Old Weather

from Dawn Kneen, attributed to Tom Kneen

To the tune of "Windy Old Weather"

Up jumped Nick White with a gleam in his eye,
He cried, "Winter is coming, I'd better get high".

Chorus:

*In this windy old weather, stormy old weather,
When the wind blows we'll all get together.*

Up jumped Annabel Roth - she's cuddly and warm,
And she'll make for any old port in a storm!

Chorus, etc

Up jumped Tony Kerr. Oh what a pity!
He sat down and wrote ten letters to the committee.

Up jumped John Bennett all covered in hair,
He cried, "Snow is falling, but I can't see where!

Up jumped Bob Chappell with his hand on a line,
He cried, "Fishing's started and I'm feeling fine.

Up came Marg James bursting out of her skin,
"My bikini's worn out and my jeans are worn thin."

Up jumped Geoff Fagan he seemed rather full,
He sat on 'is tail and shot off some bull.

Up came Sue Eager and Rosemary Seear,
They looked all around and asked, "Any men here?"

Up jumped Bob Cannon with Blood on his hands,
He looked at his feet and said, "That's where she stands".

Up jumped Ian Thomas with a mighty big smile,
On a clear night his teeth can be seen from a mile.

Up jumped Clive Parker with a piton and krab,
"Climb Vampire crack feet first? - hell I'll have a stab!"

Up jumped Max Corry with his foot in his mouth,
He said "Melbourne's too warm, I'm heading off south".

Up jumped Les Southwell with a pack full of gear,
With all of that junk, how did he get here?

.....More verses. ad lib.

Tragedy On Mt Waddington

by Mike Feller

First published in "The BC Mountaineer", 1975

The eight members of the 1974 British Columbia Mountaineering Club summer expedition to Mt. Waddington gradually assembled by the general store at Tatla Lake, about halfway between Williams Lake and Bella Coola. The last to arrive were Ian and Graham, driven by Jack in his grandfather's old jeep pickup, at a steady 30 mph all the way from Vancouver. A meal at the local cafe was followed by a drive down Mosley Creek valley to Middle Lake.

The last part of the drive took us through incredibly beautiful scenery - old wooden fences and log cabins nestling at the edges of emerald green meadows and aspen-pine-Douglas-fir forests. Indian paint brush and daisies dotted the roadside. Glacier-capped mountains soared above. One could remain out of the car admiring this beauty for only a short time, however, as hordes of mosquitoes rapidly homed in.

We spent the night camped by the lake. Next morning our plane, a Beaver, arrived on schedule and, after an airdrop and two more trips, we all stood beneath the snout of Tellot Glacier, having been dropped on Ephemeron - or Tellot Glacier - Lake.

We staggered slowly up the north side of the glacier, up a rotten moraine wall, to a pleasant lunch spot near a small lake. A short drop to the glacier then, roped up, we began the long march up the glacier with Ed's rope racing off into the distance. For hours we plodded up through increasingly soft snow, plunging in up to our knees for the last thousand feet. Around 3pm we reached the hut, and soon set out to retrieve our airdrop boxes which had become intimately mixed up with those of another party.

We had a leisurely start the next day, despite our European insomniac, and dropped over 2000 feet down to the Tiedemann Glacier, then up to Rainy Knob where we camped.

A rope of four set off to find a route through the Bravo Glacier icefall and returned with the depressing news that the glacier was completely cut off by a large crevasse and that the ridge to the south offered our best hope.

The following day we were away early, making good use of the frozen-up steps left by the recede party. Once off the steps, however, we would break through a crust and sink in up to our knees, and occasionally up to

our waists - snow conditions which were to plague us for almost the entire trip. Avalanches came down throughout the night, testifying to the dangerously high temperatures.

We spent most of the morning trying in vain to find a route up the glacier. A huge serac collapsed only five yards away from one rope. The route to the ridge looked quite dangerous. To avoid the danger of overhanging seracs and crevasse walls, I chopped my way up a steep porous ice slope only to find the top cut off by another crevasse. This left only a lower, avalanche-prone route.

Leaving his pack behind, Jack crossed to the rock wall then found an 'easy' route up the steep wall to a nice belay edge. Ed followed with a pack then Jack returned to carry up his pack. One by one we followed, the snow giving way on one person as he was stepping across the hole between snow and rock. With his heavy pack he was unable to jumar up, but after removing his pack, he shot up. Three leads of class 3 to low class 5 rock, made extremely strenuous by our heavy packs, had us on a small snowy col where we camped.

From the col a narrow snow arete led up to the rocky ridge crest. Three of us kicked a set of steps up the arete to facilitate travel the following day.

After another warm night we set off in ropes of two. Ed and Ian led, followed by Jack and Graham, then Tom and myself, and lastly, Peter and Gray. We gained the top of the ridge through waist-deep snow and a variety of class 3 routes. Upon reaching the ridge crest, we found steep snow, corniced on the south with a platform of rocks on the north. Due to the poor snow conditions the only route was on the rock platform. We moved slowly, one at a time, belaying continually.

After three rope lengths, we suddenly heard Peter shouting desperately for help. "Gray's fallen and he's hurt badly!"

As rapidly as possible, still belaying continually, we returned. Rounding a corner we saw Peter with a solid belay. The tight rope disappeared behind a rock wall. Beyond the wall was a steep snow gully. Gray had slipped on the rock platform at the top of the gully and pendulumed down about 50 feet into the rock wall.

We reached Peter and set up a rappel. Being our medico, Tom went down with the first aid kit. He needed

assistance so Ed went down on another rope. Gray's pack was cut off and plummeted down to the glacier below. Gray became unconscious and was lowered to a rock platform, about 20 feet down. A pack with warm clothing was lowered. He was put into a sleeping bag, but he died. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation failed.

A debate then ensued regarding what to do. Eventually we cut off a piece of climbing rope and tied his body to a piton in the rock. Then a slow and uneasy retreat, with two rappels, to our last campsite. We didn't relax until we were all at the site. One of our tents had been in Gray's pack and the fly for the other was used to wrap around his body, so we rigged up a tarp over a hollow in the snow in addition to our remaining tent.

The next day we descended to the Bravo Glacier via three rappels, and hurriedly waded down to Rainy Knob for lunch. Then down to the Tiedemann and on up to the hut, where we radioed out for a rescue helicopter.

The next few days were spent soul-searching, lazing in the sun, giving statements to a RCMP constable who came up by helicopter, and waiting for the rescue helicopter. The air force helicopter came on a very windy day and couldn't retrieve the body. The following day an Okanagan Helicopter's chopper flew in and, with superb piloting, removed the body.

We didn't feel like climbing. Ed and Jack climbed Claw Peak one afternoon, and that was the only ascent of the trip.

The walk out down Tellot glacier to Nabob pass, then up to Mt. Jeffery, passing it high on its southern side, led to a superb campsite among heather and boulders on a knob east of Jeffery. A quick descent the following day led to the mosquito-infested jungle around Ghost Lake, into which we plunged to clean ourselves of the dirt and sweat, but never the memory, of the preceding week.

The coroner declared that Gray died of head injuries. The inquest concluded that he should have been wearing a hard-hat. On the day of the accident none of us were wearing hard-hats, as the weather was warm and we were on a ridge top with no danger from above. Under those conditions very few people would wear hard-hats.

Gray also suffered from internal injuries around his waist, probably caused by hanging at the end of the rope. Although it apparently did not come out at the inquest, a seat harness would probably have minimised such injuries, and the general feeling of our party was that the use of seat harnesses should be strongly promoted.

Party: Ed Zenger (leader), Jack Wilfert, Ian Turnbull, Peter Womble, Graham Stokes, Tom Linder, Gray Nourse, and Michael Feller.

"Like A Dead Bear's Bum"

by Nick Reeves

From The Mountaineer, March 1976

*"It was as cold as an ice berg gloomy and glum,
It was as cold as the hairs on a dead bear's bum"
.....Ancient Saying*

An ascent of the East Ridge of Mt. Cook to the Middle Peak, in poor conditions, with George Kuczera.

Nick Reeves died in an avalanche on Annapurna III in March, 1980.

At the beginning it was calm. The moon was full, so we switched off our torches. It was a good freeze and the cramponing was easy. The rhythm of our movement was soothing and we could relax. In the middle of the night we walked across the Grand Plateau to the East Ridge. We began to work up a sweat over those three miles. Indigestion came from the midnight porridge. The ground steepened and we, panting now, entered into the hardness of the climb.

At some moment during every climb you consider retreat. Usually this moment is when that first surge of energy fades, and before second wind. You wonder at being tired so soon. That mountain seems to be so big. You have doubts yet at the same time you move up. Beneath the huge bulk of the East face of Cook we wondered about what we were doing. Each bump we climbed only led to another. The way up to the ridge looked steep. We moved clumsily over crevasses. Bugged! and it seemed a good time for some chocolate.

If you do not turn around with your doubts, you become mentally committed towards success. So we moved on, and into argument. There were various ways up to the ridge but we disagreed over which one to take. In the dark, George led out into difficulty. Two other climbers moved quickly above us, up an easy gully to our right. Cursing, as only one can at three in the morning when forestalled, we belayed across steep ground to the gully. The moon had set, so using head torches, we moved up, over a bulge, and onto the ridge.

Once there we had intended to rest, but it was too windy and cold. In the sheltered gully we had been sweating but now we put on parkas. Slowly we moved together, upwards. It was cold but the sky was clear. Away down to the south, the first signs of bad weather were approaching. Before today it had been poor

weather for a week. If we were to climb, it had to be now.

It became steep, and we belayed. We used snowstakes, and led out full rope lengths. The climbing was not very hard, but it was exposed. Climbing was nicer than belaying. Leading out we could forget the cold, the wind, and our numb feet. Whilst on stances belaying we each cursed the other for his slowness. Towards the top, the ridge became steep as it merged with the upper Caroline Face. There were four difficult pitches, and our calf muscles ached as we front-pointed up. We could see light between the two front crampon points as they barely penetrated the ice.

In the fusion of cold and climbing we became absorbed. I can remember George pissing on his numb fingers to thaw them, and my newly acquired technique of belaying with my hands in my crotch. A mighty pitch was led by George, and we neared the top.

It was seven o'clock in the morning when we gained Cook's summit ridge. We climbed over the crest into a gale. It was obvious that a traverse over the mile of summit ridge to the high peak was not feasible. The other two climbed down towards the Hooker glacier. George and I hesitated, and turned towards the top. It was easy ground to the middle peak, and for a short time our hopes rose. But the ridge was too exposed, too long, and the wind too bitter. It cut through our parkas, chilling us. The tips of our noses were freezing. If the ice had been easy we might have made it, but no one could belay for a mile in the wind. We turned around, and followed the others. There were patches of green ice to cross and everything seemed too cold, bleak and high.

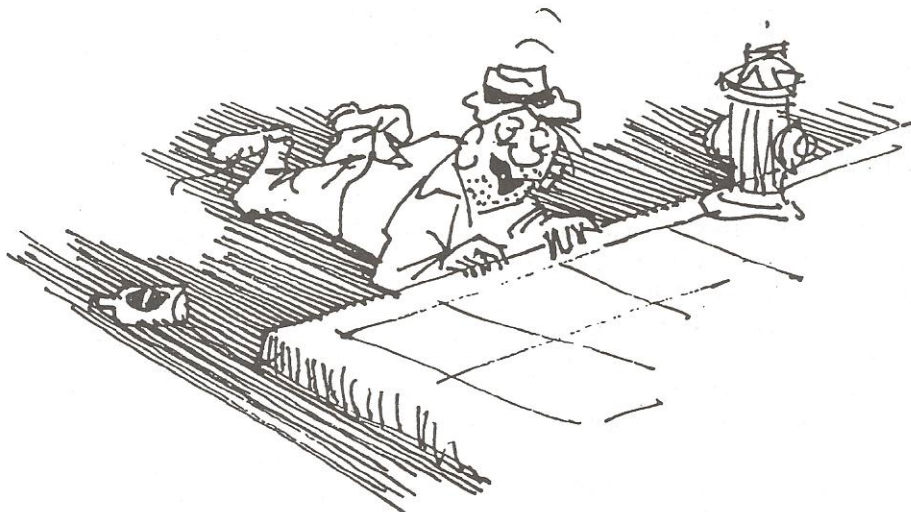
On the way down I slipped but self arrested easily. More than carefully, we reverse front-pointed to join the other two climbers. They were at a stance cut out of ice, near a frozen rock. Below, the gully snaked

steeply down over green ice, rock bulges, and verglas. We abseiled twice, using both ropes, and the frozen rocks for anchors. On the way up we had climbed as separate teams, with hardly a word exchanged. Now, we teamed together. Swapping names and jokes, it all suddenly seemed easier with four.

We were soon sheltered from the wind by Cook's west ridge and the going became easy. The southern slopes of the Hooker face are gentle, and we cramponed down quickly. It was sunny and on a convenient rock ledge we removed our parkas. It was a marvellous contrast to the bleak summit ridge 2,000 feet above. Another gentle gully would lead us down to

Empress Hut and a brew. It was only ten o'clock and we decided to walk on to the Village that day

It was the seven o'clock radio schedule that evening, and 'ZLVA' headquarters were discussing a problem with Plateau Hut. It seemed that four climbers were missing on the East ridge of Mount Cook. There was no sign of them, the wind on the top was vicious, and the weather was closing in. People were worried. Gardiner Hut knew nothing, and Empress could not be contacted. As people pondered, the radio crackled "This is four Hooker, four Hooker: The four climbers passed through an hour ago. Heading for the pub! Over!".



" I'M CLIMBING IT BECAUSE IT'S
THERE, THASH WHY! "

Sulphur And Sickness

by Bob Jones

The whole effort was now mechanical, but not yet a mere reflex. The forward plodding required considerable concentration and a determination to ignore a raging thirst and splitting headache brought on by the spasms of dry retching. I suffer from altitude sickness in a bad way, which no degree of fitness or acclimatisation ever seems to meliorate. Several factors did help. The air was becoming warmer, we were moving away from the sulphurous area, Mike was not sick, and this was the last long slope to the summit of Kilimanjaro.

I am writing this nearly 18 years later to the accompaniment of Beethoven's piano concerto #4. Beethoven always inspires or rather galvanizes me into action because I perceive him as a composer who echoes the moods of the elements. I can still picture being in the inner Hebrides back in 1975 on board "The Captain Scott", and adventure training schooner. Watching the breathtaking sunset over the unusually calm sea was enhanced by "The Choral Symphony" playing on my 'Walkman'. I was in a very private world, lost in the ethereal scene and the emotion of the music.

As I plodded, or more truthfully staggered up that slope trying to decide whether dehydration would become a problem, I thought of the last few days and the route into the mountain. At Arusha, we bought provisions at the market and got directions to us to catch a bus to the Catholic mission at Umbwe. The bus was reminiscent of the little red bus that used to take me to school between Fisherman's Bend and Middle Park in my primary school days. The brothers at the Umbwe mission had made us very welcome. They gave us a meal, and we bought them some beer from the local canteen. This was a very acceptable arrangement because although the canteen was *not* exactly out of bounds, I suspect that the buying of beer was not encouraged by the brother superior.

Early next morning we took the Umbwe route for the mountain. Both the mission itself and the route had been strongly recommended (with a caveat!) for several reasons by the secretary of the Mountain Club of Kenya. Compared with the trekkers path, it was a more interesting and picturesque route, involving some real climbing near the top, and it was not frequented by hordes of people walking up with guides to the summit, and no fees were payable!.

Our first camp was definitely very interesting. For reasons of weight economy we had decided to

dispense with tents and sleep out if necessary. At this particular camp, since we were in the African bush we selected an overhanging rockface as a measure of giving us some sort of protection against animals. No sooner had we finished cooking than we heard a distinctive noise like Vincent Price clearing his throat and coughing simultaneously in some horror movie. John had told us a tale of events which purportedly had occurred 2 years previously when a party of four had encountered a leopard during their first day's trek. The coughing sound had so unnerved one of the women, that she turned tail and bolted back down the track with the remaining three members following suit. This "Pink Panther" retreat was later verified by the brothers at the mission. I thought about our predicament and wondered if I should have accepted the marriage proposal offered by the very regal-looking Masai woman from a village we had passed *en route* earlier in the day. We decided to compromise with the leopard by hurling a piece of grilled bacon in the direction of the cough. This ruse seemed to work. The cough receded, we stoked up the fire, set ourselves two hour watches, and passed the night without mishap.

Next morning the cough reappeared at breakfast, but after a half hour's march we lost it. We congratulated ourselves on finding a cure for the common cough! The cure was probably due to the fact that we were emerging from savannah to alpine terrain.

Eventually we reached a mountain hut (about 13000 feet) of metal construction, where we decided to pass the night. There was still enough wood in the vicinity to afford the luxury of a campfire. As twilight metamorphosed into darkness we became aware of the stunning beauty of a sky which blazed overhead with an intensity beyond words. I took some time-exposure photographs, but alas, I lost the films later in Blantyre, Malawi. We climbed into our sleeping bags and imbibed the beauty of the night, until cold and sleep forced us into the hut.

The maps provided by the Mountain Club of Kenya proved quite adequate when coupled with some route finding, although the fine weather did help considerably. From the hut savannah quickly gave way to scree, moraine, and glacier. Before long we roped up in order to negotiate both slabs and glacier. Progress was steady, and we experienced that satisfaction which comes from fitness and rhythm to which all mountaineers can testify. It must have been at about

17000 feet, about the same altitude as Pt. Lenana on Mt. Kenya, that I had my first altitude-induced "bonus" of nausea and headache. I was determined not to vomit, and with steady footwork up a final neve, we reached the summit plateau.

The plateau was truly an amazing place. Its base was ice over rock with the latter overlaid with pumice and volcanic dust. Towards the centre, ice cliffs of apparently huge dimensions rose up, resembling gigantic cake decorations. Closer inspection of these structures proved disappointing, as they were only some 20 feet high.

The day was drawing to a close. I had been vomiting for some time. Unable to keep liquids down, I was steadily losing fluid. In this icy labyrinth we found a spot for our bivouac on a small area of ground protected on three sides by cliffs, giving shelter from the chill breeze. After a hot brew of tea and some food we spread our foam rolls on the frozen dust and crawled into our sleeping bags, determined to pass the night as comfortably as possible.

The horizontal position helped my headache, but I had to face the sub-zero temperatures to vomit and retch at frequent intervals. Thus we passed a dismal night.

The cold forced a move before dawn. It was the most miserable start that that I can recall (At least it had been tolerably warm on the Peuterey and I wasn't sick!). Nothing would stay down, and the omnipresent headache completed the cycle of misery. As we tramped towards the summit the air became polluted with the pungent smell of sulphur. We soon located the source of the gas and gazed down into the Reusch Crater which by now appeared in relief through the oblique rays of a watery sun. At the bottom, some 300 feet down, the active fumeroles were heaving like some prehistoric creature about to give birth, so expelling the sulphurous steam. It was too much. Purgatory had turned into Hell as my retching assumed a new level of intensity with increased frequency. Mike became alarmed at my condition, and wanted to turn back. I persuaded him between spasms that since we were only 500 feet (I hoped) below the summit I could endure it.

On we went, and then suddenly we reached the cairn; a huge structure. The Fir Bolg people of Eire could not have done better in their construction of stone dwellings. I cannot recall anything about the view, or whether there was a summit book, and if there was whether I in fact signed it! I was just glad to be going down.

We descended to a hut at about 16500 feet, which we had circumvented on our ascent. I recuperated within an hour or so and rehydrated

rapidly. We yarned a lot over a meal and retreated next day in threatening weather.

Conditions deteriorated to such an extent that we were forced to negotiate the "track" which had become a river in the rain forest. It was after dark when we eventually reached the mission, and a hot showers and a warm welcome.

Mike was from California. It was his first experience of ice, and he did well. He had tried climbing Kilimanjaro two years previously, but had been forced to abandon the attempt due to bad weather. He was a good companion and deserved to fulfill his dream. After we parted in Arusha, I never saw him again.

Bob Jones grew up in Port Melbourne and attended Middle Park Central School and Melbourne High. He is a professional engineer, having studied at Melbourne University, Caulfield Institute of Technology, and much later at both London and Brunel Universities in the UK, where he worked for a number of years.

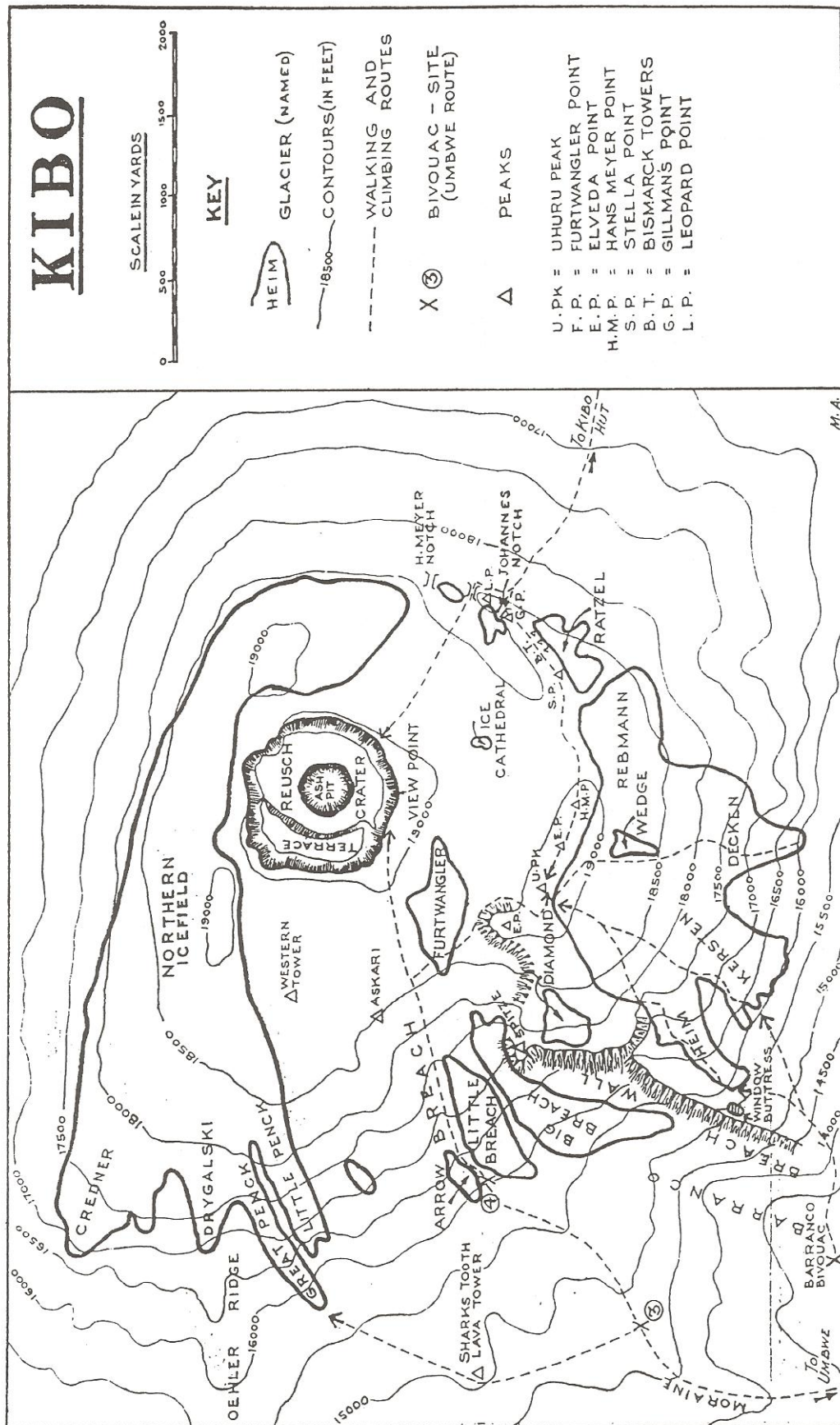
He was active in MUMC during the years 1955-1962, which included the first ascent, (1961), of the North face of Federation Peak, S.W. Tasmania, and the first recorded attempt, (1962), on Ball's Pyramid, N.S.W., some 500km. off the mainland in the Pacific Ocean.

Professional activities have included writing technical publications and filing patents, which culminated in a PhD in microelectronics in 1991, all of which he considers to have been a waste of time.

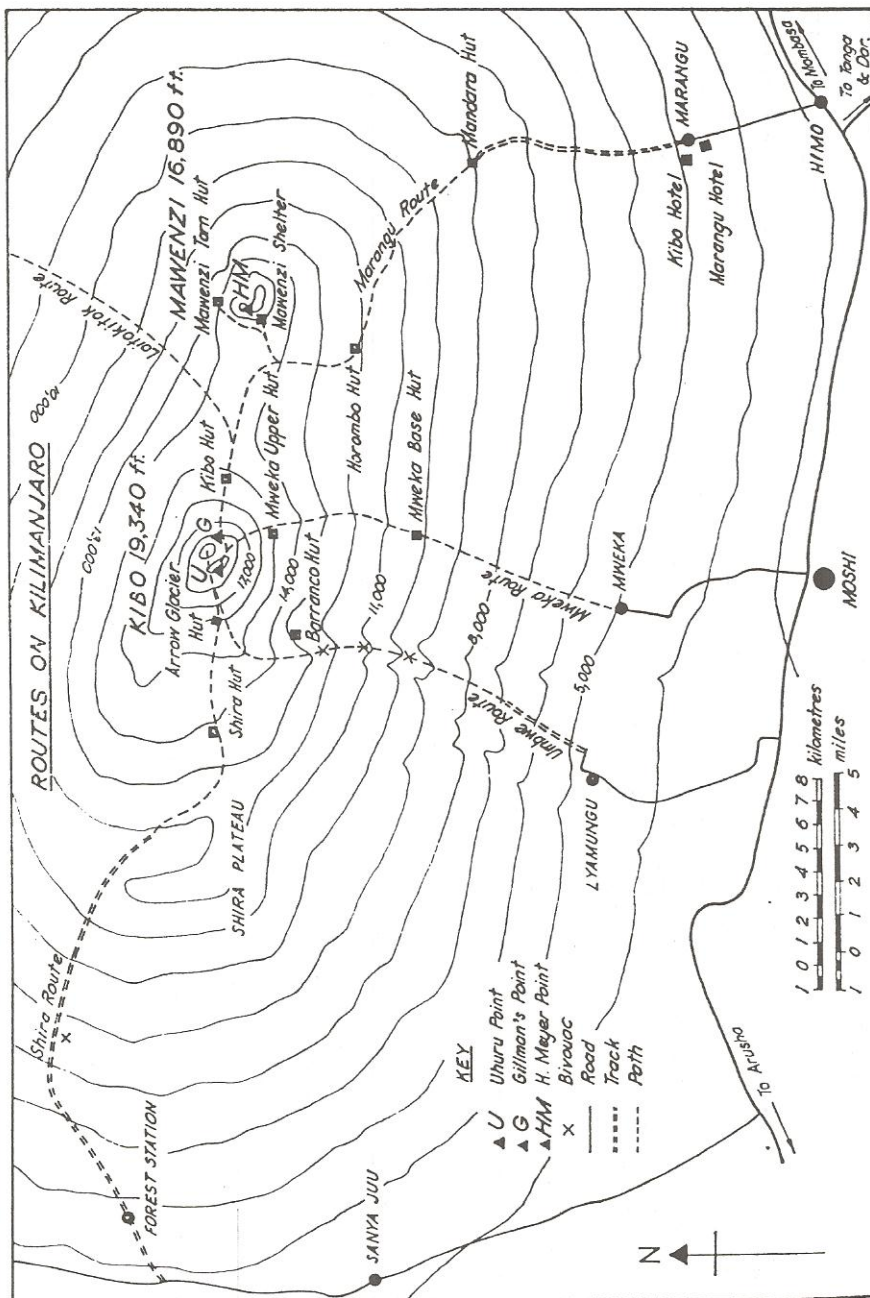
Besides "near misses" incurred in mountaineering activities, he has had some others, including shedding a load of gas bottles from the back of a truck in front of a tram in Preston, ducking a missile in the form of a full size school desk in a London classroom, surviving a grenade explosion in a Paris drugstore, courtesy of "The Jackel", and surviving two months "before the mast" in the North Atlantic on board a square-rigged topsail schooner.

Currently he is trying to weather the recession by working as a warehouse clerk for the Public Service in Bandiana. Having been unemployed for most of the time since returning to Australia in 1992, he was fortunate enough to get the job in spite of his Doctorate and his age. He is not quite sure whether failure to own a TV or being over 40 is a major bar to professional employment.

However he still manages to return most weekends to continue renovations on his Victorian house in Geelong West. During his Geelong sojourn he did honorary work for the National Wool Museum and the National Trust. Bob loves the outdoors, and making music (including the Renaissance period). Other interests include wind surfing, swimming, and bushwalking.



from: "Guide Book to Mt. Kenya
and Kilimanjaro". Ed: John
Mitchell
Mountain Club of Kenya 1971.



from: "Guide Book To Mt Kenya
& Kilimanjaro." Ed: John Mitchell
Mountain Club of Kenya 1971

Avalanche - RobRoy Traverse

Mt. Avalanche(2590m) W ridge - SW face - Rob Roy(2615m) N ridge - W face

by Roger Barson

From The Mountaineer, March 1976

Not yet dawn, awoken by the light of a dim candle. Porridge for breakfast, thick and gluey, washed down with almost hot coffee. The painful clash of cold night air on bare flesh, reluctant to leave the warm comfort of a sleeping bag. Knocking ice from boots, cursing the cold. Stagger outside, already cold fingers fumbling with half fastened clothing. The stars. And the indescribable beauty of the Bonar by moonlight.

One day in civilisation. A chance conversation, discovery of common interests, and a hastily arranged return to Wanaka and the Aspiring park. The long hot slog up the valley, the slow climb to French Ridge hut. The almost illicit pleasure of sleeping in. A crevasse-dodging zigzag up the Quarterdeck to the cold comfort of a snowcave on the Bonar. Restless sleep, mind busy seeking excuses.

Roped together, moving quickly, crunching up the glacier. The heart-stopping crack as one leg vanishes in a hidden slot. Taut rope reassurance. Careful traverse below gendarmes, cold guardians of the West ridge of Avalanche. Up steepening slopes to the doubtful security of rock. Don't like a handhold, throw it away. Standing on toes, nothing beneath my feet, body alive, mind relaxed.

A few tense moves, difficulty exaggerated by exposure. The half-hearted reassurance of a belay. Doubts betrayed by nervous laughter, then two more moves, loose rock. Tension evaporates with a solid runner. Move up, faster now, difficulties forgotten, sky turning to molten gold. Easily onto the summit. Wishful looks at Aspiring, rising from the cold-white bedspread of the Bonar. Compensation in photographs, postcard view from Mt. Avalanche.

No doubts now, tremor gone. East peak blocked by a deep notch, confident descent toward a snow ramp in the west. A less confident abseil from a nervous bollard,

followed by another, and crampons bite hard into ice crust. Still steep, belayed down slanting ice, insecure stances, no place for a rest. Then sliding down easier slopes, a cautious leap over the schrund to the Maud Francis glacier.

Food, and once again a mind deadening trudge. Tentative exploration of glacial mazes, the spikes of Rob Roy ahead, the drop into Gloomy Gorge at our side. A steepish ramp leads up toward the North Ridge of Rob Roy. On the ridge, blue ice now, crampon points biting. One steep section invites front pointing, aching calves soon demand a rest. A small stance, the security of a belay. A startling rumble as a section of the Quarterdeck disappears into the gorge.

Easier ground, sun hot now, packs too heavy. The low peak at last, collapse in a sweating heap, curse the heat. A long exposed ridge to the High peak, moving slowly enjoying the view. A world beneath us, the gleam of the Matukituki, skyline of peaks, wilderness. Then, almost an anticlimax, the High peak. Another rest, summit photographs. Wearily, feet stumble along the South ridge. Gratefully onto rock again, moving down loose slabs, cautious belays, conscious of our tiredness.

Snow, now softened, slows us more. Confusion and retraced steps, with Aspiring Hut gleaming in the valley below. Too tired to argue, follow down alarming rock, take my turn as snowplough, at last collapsing onto warm snowgrass. Water. Hungry now we swing down scrub covered slopes. Almost running down eroded trails, the legacy of deer herds past. Across the flats to the river, ford it in boots, then stagger to the hut and food.

Later, look back at the mountains.

Sit there as the sun sets

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CIRCA 1961

Rate Yourself as a Gear Freak

by Tom Kneen

A similar article, written by Hugo Furst, was first published in "Wild", September 1983. It seems that Hugo may have plagiarised Tom's work on that occasion.

"The loss of his clothes hardly mattered, because
He had seven coats on when he came,
With three pairs of boots....."

Lewis Carroll, "The Hunting of the Snark"

Gear Freaking is the most rapidly growing aspect of the rucksack sports. Its phenomenal growth has recently been documented by a postgraduate student at the Institute for Recreation Studies at Philip Institute of Technology. He found a growth rate of 29.3% a month, far greater than all the rucksack sports put together. This explosive growth is clearly a phenomenon of some importance and a multidisciplinary task force has been formed to research the subject further. Already we are beginning to see problems emerge. At our Recreation Counselling Centre we are getting an increasing number of patients whose problem is described as 'equipment anxiety'. They already outnumber contrite trail bike riders by an order of magnitude. The typical profile, established by our team of sociologists and psychiatrists, is a single male in his early or mid twenties. Much, if not all, of his spare time and money is spent gear freaking, yet he is acutely worried that he is not keeping up with the latest trends. Fortunately such chronic cases are rare, but it is obvious that they are indicative of a wider problem which this article attempts to solve by giving a scheme for scoring yourself, for answering that worrying question, 'How am I going?'

Catalogues

Collecting catalogues is the hallmark of the gear freak. Score 10 points for each current American catalogue which you own. They must be no less than 20 pages and in full colour. Score an extra 5 points for each for which you are on the mailing list. Score 5 points for each catalogue from any other source. Score double points for any catalogue you take on trips.

Reading Habits

Score 10 points each if you subscribe to any of the following magazines:

Mountain
Climber and Rambler
Alpinismus
Wild
Mountain Equipment Monthly

Score 5 points if you habitually borrow any of the above or read them at the newsagent. If you look at the back cover first, score 10; if you turned straight to the equipment review articles, score 9; if you read all the equipment advertisements, score 8; and if read the contents page, score -5.

Imported Equipment

Score 10 points for each piece of equipment imported by you in the past two years. An item sent by a friend overseas or brought back by a relative or friend scores 5 points.

Clothing

A short time ago this would have been easy. The possession of a down jacket and a Gore-Tex parka put you in the big league. Now with insulated jackets available from every disposal store, some of the mystique has been lost. So, score 20 points if you bought your down jacket before 1980. (Fibrefill and Hollofill also qualify.) Each zip-off sleeve scores 5 points. A fibrepile jacket now scores only 5 points. Gore-Tex parkas are holding up well. Score 10 points

for yours. But Gore-Tex overpants are better, score 15. Score 5 points for any other Gore-Tex clothing; anklets, gaiters, underwear, etc. All items of Lifa or chlorofibre underwear score 5 points, except those with a windproof front panel, which rate 10. The big item for the first half of 1983 is a Thinsulate jacket. Score 20 points for an ordinary one and 30 points for one with a Gore-Tex cover.

Footwear

Top-of-the-range marathon running shoes rate 10 points, provided they have been reviewed in *Runner's World* in the past four months. Score 15 points if your boots are the same as used on the most recent expedition to an 8,000 metre peak.

Sleeping Gear

The important thing with sleeping bags is to have lots of them, to refer to them as 'my two seasons bag' or some other such endearment, and to either know the bird which provided the down personally or have shares in the factory which made the synthetic filling. Score $5(N-2)$ points, where N is the number of bags you own. If your bag is rated at $T^{\circ}\text{C}$, then score $-T$ points (e.g. a -5°C bag earns 5 points). If you don't know the rating, lose 10 points. Your Therm-a-Rest scores 10 points if bought before June 1981, and 5 points otherwise.

Packs

You also need lots of these and we usually advise buying at least two a year. With new designs continually appearing it is impossible to score by model in a brief article. The recommended system is: Score $5(N-2)$ where N is the number of packs you own. Score 2 points for each equipment patch. Score 5 points for each detachable pocket.

Tents

Extensive research has shown that there is only one significant feature. This is the number of high tensile alloy rods in your tent. Score 2 points for each separate piece. Add 50% for shock-corded rods.

Cooking

This is a fertile field and a whole article should be (and has been) written about it. MSR stoves are still worthwhile - score 5 points for yours, with an extra 5 points for the multi-fuel model. If you run it on peanut oil, get another 5 points. Coleman Peak stoves score

10 points. Each Sigg billy is worth 5 points, provided it is not blackened.

Skis

This is a critical area, as a glance at any magazine will show. Rapid changes in design, materials and colours have made the going hard for all but the most dedicated gear freaks. The currently accepted scoring system is: Score $5(N-3)$, where N is the average number of pairs of skis bought per year, averaged over the last three years. The new microprocessor skis are worth 15 points. Heel locators are essential. The V notch type rates 10 points if bought before 1981 and 5 points thereafter. Voile locators rate 15 points. Carbon fibre poles are worth 10 points, but only if you actually bought them.

Disposals

Subtract 10 points for each item of ex-army equipment, irrespective of which army it was used by. There is only one exception-British army or air force sweaters with cloth shoulder patches score 3.

Lifestyle

This can be discussed under four headings: conversation, leisure activities, occupational goals and holiday preferences. Conversation for gear freaks is essentially a branch of bush gamesmanship, so ably described by M.Griffin in *Walk* (1979). The difference is that the gear freak has only one subject and never tires of it. Imagine two people meeting on the mountain. A non-gear freak would say something like, "G'day. Where have you come from?" The gear freak, however, opens thus: "Is that a pair of . . . you're wearing? I saw them reviewed in *Mountain Equipment Monthly* (produces copy). What do you think of them?" The correct reply is, "Yes, I imported them from Patagonian Mountain Equipment. Only got them a month ago. Still, I think the new model will be better and I've ordered one." I leave it to you to imagine how this conversation might continue. The winner of the exchange scores 10 points.

Leisure activities relate to the use of lunchtimes and after work. Score two points for every lunch-time or after-hours shopping period a week which you spend in equipment shops. Score an extra 5 points if some of the staff think you are on the staff, and an extra 10 points if the management think you are on the staff.

For occupational goals, score as follows:

Owner of a gear shop, 3 points. Full-time employee in a gear shop, 5 points. Part-time employee in a gear

shop, 7 points. Part-time employee in a gear shop and equipment consultant to a school outdoor education programme, 10 points.

Holiday preferences are another guide to gear freaking prowess. If your preferred use of your annual leave is: A long trip, score 2 points. Instructing at a Department of Youth, Sport & Recreation course, score 4 points. Equipment officer for a DYSR course, score 7 points. A tour of gear shops on the USA west coast at sale time, score 15 points.

Your Total Rating

Add your total score; this is your rating. A rough guide to its significance is:

More than 500: You are an arch gear freak and probably beyond help.

401 to 500: As a master gear freak, you are well known in all main shops and always have the latest gear.

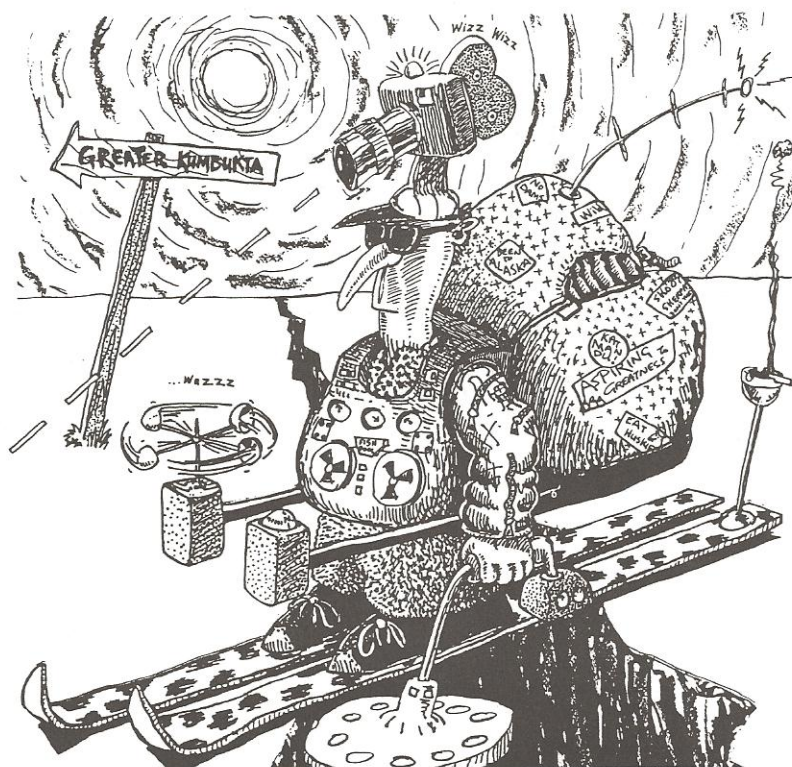
301 to 400: You are an experienced gear freak, although you are a little behind. You go on trips mainly to test equipment. You should spend more time reading catalogues and visiting gear shops.

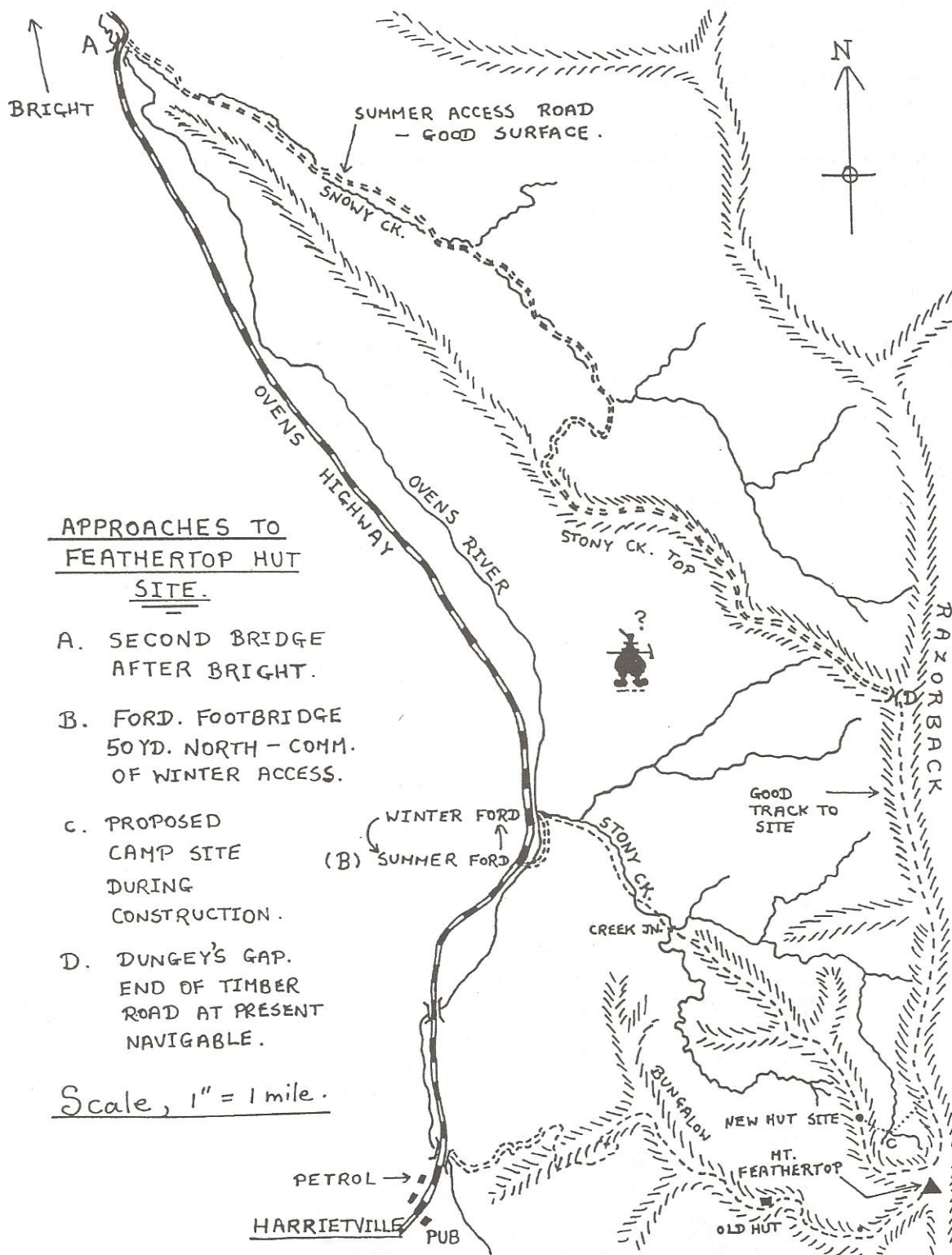
201 to 300: Average gear freaks like you tend to be rather anxious in the company of higher grade freaks. You probably spend more time on trips than gear freaking. You should memorise all advertisements in your next magazine.

101 to 200: As an armchair gear freak you have a large catalogue collection and you attend club meetings mainly to discuss equipment.

Less than 100: You are only a novice gear freak but the fact that you have read this far shows that you have higher aspirations. Keep trying!

Hugo Furst was born in northern Germany, within sight of the highest parts of the Tiefsen. From the time he was given his first Sporthaus Schuster catalogue he developed an intense interest in mountain equipment, an interest maintained to this day. Since arriving in Australia a few years ago he has established a reputation as an indefatigable authority on the subject and often lectures to school groups and Himalayan trekkers. His recent publications include a survey of disposals shops in *Queensland Outdoors*, a critical road test of four-wheel-drive vehicles in *Fall Liner*, and the book *Snow and Ice Equipment for West Australians*. He was leader of the Australian delegation to the Fifth UNESCO Conference on Mountain Equipment for Developing Countries.





A Tribute To Tom Kneen - A Spirited Activist

by Phil Waring

(former Secretary of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs 1982 to 1990)

"Great things are done when men and mountains meet; This is not done by jostling in the street". William Blake.

Tom was leading a BMLCC snow walk near the summit of Mt Feathertop on 25 August 1985 when a cornice gave way. Tom and three others and many tonnes of ice were hurled down the south east face of the mountain, leaving two stunned members of the party still on the ridge. Tom died as he fell some hundreds of metres into Hellfire Gully and was buried under the masses of ice. The other three were lucky and fell only a short distance from where they were able to scramble back to the ridge. The assessment of experienced mountaineers was that it was an unfortunate accident, which in no way reflected badly on Tom, who was being careful and was fully equipped and properly clad. Fate dealt a severe blow to the Kneen family that day.

As a measure of the community's respect for Tom, over 400 people attended his memorial service at St Aidan's, North Balwyn, which was held two weeks after his fall and before his body had been recovered. Tributes were paid to him by representatives from the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, the Bushwalking and Mountaineering Training Board, the Bureau of Meteorology, and family and friends. Although the following account concentrates on his Federation activities, I was lucky to have known Tom, and later his family, through at least five different organisations, of which more later. My first contacts were through MUMC, which Tom joined in 1962, and I got to know him around that time. We first worked together in 1965 on the MUMC Committee, where he supported my Presidency. That year he also joined Federation's Search and Rescue Section, and was as active member for the next 20 years. Only a week before his death he was a member of a Federation search party which was en route to Omeo to look for two

girls lost near Cope Hut, when they were found by others and the party recalled.

He was one of the large number of MUMC members who threw their weight behind the construction of the MUMC Memorial Hut during the mid 1960s. In the late 1960's, the building of the nearby Federation Hut also attracted Tom's interest and support. He attended Federation meetings and work parties and, at one stage, wrote a long letter to the Federation expressing his ideas on how the project should be conducted. Some readers will recall this particular trait of Tom's character; he was ever ready to go into print, often a length, to get his ideas across, and often in a fairly forcible manner!

His work on both of these huts on Feathertop was Tom's way of demonstrating one of his strongly held beliefs. This was that bushwalkers must be seen to be caring for the bush and for the recreation of bushwalking, by getting out there and building huts, maintaining tracks, and so on. His early enthusiasm for building huts was later tempered by the more modern approach of not introducing man-made structures into the mountains. In 1970 he was MUMC's delegate to the Federation's Tracks and Huts Committee, and he took over the chair of that committee from 1971 to 1973. Apart from attending many Federation track maintenance weekends, he instituted an excellent survey of all bush huts in Victoria, the like of which has not been equalled since, he assisted with the drafting of Federation's Huts Policy document, and was a member of the Alpine Walking Track (AWT) Liaison Committee which was responsible for advising the Forests Commission on the route of the AWT.

Quite early it was apparent that he was a passionate conservationist, and I would therefore like to introduce a quotation from the 1930s American wilderness proponent Bob Marshall:

"There is just one hope of repulsing the tyrannical ambition of civilisation to conquer every niche of the whole earth. That hope is the organisation of spirited people who will fight for the freedom of the wilderness".

Tom was undoubtedly one of these spirited people, a spirited activist, who was concerned with caring for the bush and the mountains, particularly his beloved Feathertop. His interest in conservation may have been first expressed in his strong opposition to the construction of a gondola chairlift up the Bungalow Spur of Mt Feathertop, which was proposed several times by a company known as Mt Smythe Pty Ltd. Tom was also active in opposing the unrestricted use of snowmobiles outside of ski resorts, and in other areas the maddening proliferation of trail bikes and in his words, "other infernal machines".

In 1971 he was a member of a Federation committee concerned with the Land Conservation Council and the alpine region. The following year saw him a member of an information committee which was set up in the interests of safety in the mountains. Several of the brochures which were initiated in that year endured in use in substantially the same form until after his death. In 1974 he became editor of "Federation News", a position he held for two years. This modest circular was an important instrument for communicating the Federation's views and actions on behalf of bushwalkers, and had been initiated in 1967 by another well known MUMC activist, David Hogg.

Tom's interest in publications extended to assisting with the production of Dick Johnson's "The Alps at the Crossroads", to which he contributed several photographs. They included pictures showing the devastation caused by logging in the upper West Kiewa valley and all too clearly visible from Feathertop, and another which showed pine trees planted in Rocky Valley. The removal of these alien species, which he referred to disparagingly as "coniferous weeds", was another of Tom's passions. He would have been pleased at the recent news that the SEC is to finally remove most of them. In 1975 he was MUMC's conservation representative to the Federation, and he also represented the Federation as delegate to the Kosciusko Huts Association.

Towards the end of the 1970s Tom's interests were broadening into other fields. The Rum Doodle Co-operative Limited, which is a beach house project at Inverloch, was initiated by Tom in

1979. The house is jointly owned by several ex-MUMC members and other friends of Tom's family, including my own. Tom's philosophy was of sharing holidays with friends at a reasonable cost and with the home maintenance effort also shared around. The name Rum Doodle is taken from a 1956 book which had cult status in MUMC and the Antarctic Division for many years. It parodied the stuffy members of the British mountaineering scene of the time, and gave the hitherto arbitrary number 153 a magic and humorous aura among devotees. In the late 1970s Tom also produced and circulated the "Nameless Newsletter", which was aimed at strengthening and renewing ties between mutual friends by telling of their trips and other activities. Many readers will recall this particular effort.

In 1982 and 1983 Tom conducted a series of four track maintenance weekends in the Bogong National Park. They were a continuing demonstration of his concern that bushwalkers must be seen to be looking after the bush. In a letter to me he had talked about working with the National Park rangers and had underlined the words "on our territory". On one of these weekends we camped at the old Feathertop hut site and cleared the oxylabium from the Bungalow Spur track up to the treeline. These weekends were not well supported by Federation members and it was partly for this reason that Tom branched out and on his own initiative formed the "Friends of Bogong National Park". This group is still doing good work in the area and, since the proclamation of the Alpine National Park, has changed its name to simply "Friends of Bogong".

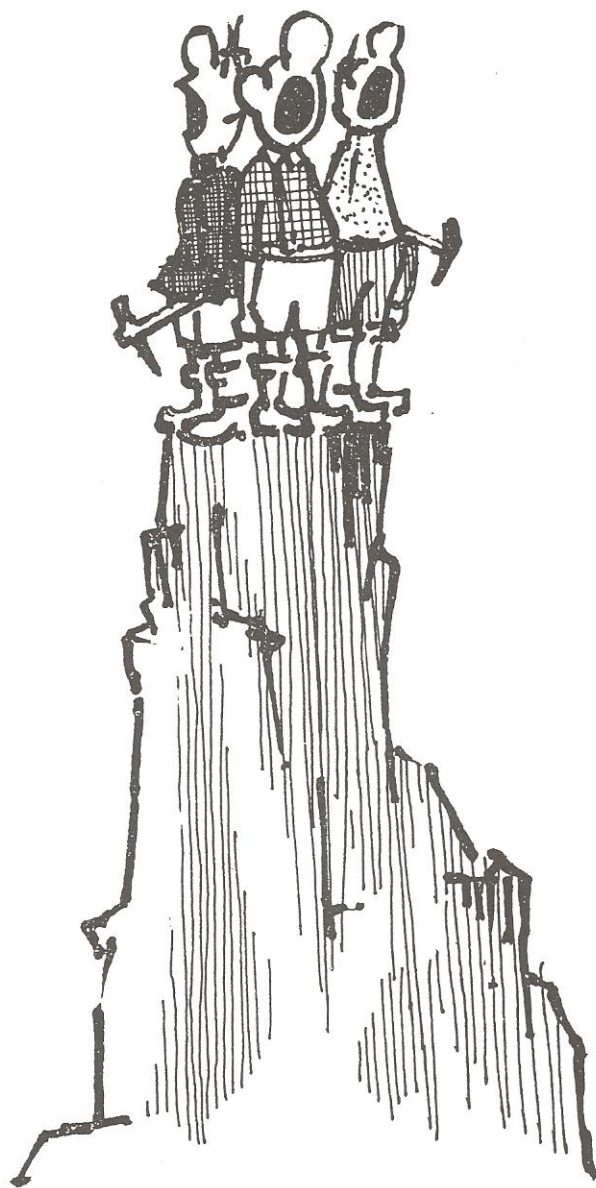
I hope that this account gives a representative sample of Tom's work on behalf of the Federation and elsewhere. In the interests of brevity I have omitted any reference to the work he did on behalf of the Bushwalking and Mountaineering Training Advisory Board in the training of leaders. I have also deliberately omitted names of the people with whom he worked as it would be impossible to list them all, and any omissions could cause offence. The history of the Federation, "The Scroggin Eaters", hopefully rectifies this situation and certainly covers many matters in greater depth.

Tom had a great sense of humour. Many will remember his "Wild" article (Ed: included elsewhere in this publication), under the pseudonym Hugo Furst, about gear freaks. I was also reminded of it while doing some research on the history project. I came across a 1970's Federation reference list of government and private groups with which the Federation interacted - it included such groups as ACF, the Forests Commission, and so on. Buried near the end was a one-liner, "Yeti Bounty Board,

153 Treasury Place, Melbourne". Inquirers would have had difficulty finding it.

I think you will agree with me that Tom's efforts in all of the fields I've mentioned have been an inspiration to many, and will continue to be so. There is much work still to be done to ensure that there will always be peaks and places of solitude which can be enjoyed by those who make the effort

to reach them. The Federation lost a good friend in August 1985, an entrepreneur, and a major activist. Fortunately we will be reminded of him in future whenever we look at maps of the Feathertop region - the name for the walking track up the North West Spur to MUMC Hut has been officially gazetted as the *Tom Kneen Track*.



"HELP!"

Frenchman's Cap

SE Face

by Dave Rogers

Sweat lubricated my loosening grip. A sudden sound like a knife shattering. A downward glance past my quivering heel revealed the sound source. Like a flying fox on a vertical cable, a carabiner with what, less than a minute ago, had appeared to be a firmly wedged brass nut attached, went whizzing down the rope, glancing sharply off the rock and over the recently negotiated lip of the overhang. "Shit, watch me" came some muffled strain from deep in my parched throat.

My chest cavity echoed 120 beats per minute, my eyes began to sting and forearms seize. "Is this what you want?" my mind screamed at God. "Is this what I want?" screamed my conscience. A 40m plummet to become a dead yoyo? Swinging up a boot to perch my toe on a pea-like protrusion added some comfort. The waning shoulders leaning back on the crack did not. I swung my other leg up until my knee was under my chin and pushed, lunging with my left arm higher up and into the crack. Then horror! My right foot popped off the pea and I swung out like a farm gate. I cranked my body back toward the face and again thrust up with my solid foot. My hand fumbled. "Oh no!" The edge of the crack was rounded. I couldn't let go to dip into my bag of heavenly white dust. My body shuddered. "Too bad Dave! Good try though." laughed the dark side of my consciousness. I wriggled with my hip against the wall to gain an inch. With every ounce of friction and strength remaining I willed my body up and thrust my right hand further into the crack. That did it. I clenched my fist, feeling it wedge into the crack. I leaned back on it and sighed deeply. I looked back. "Hector," I yelled. "that was scary, real bloody scary." "Great!" came the sarcastic reply. Well at least he wouldn't have to hold a 40m fall. I danced up the remaining angled face and perched on the edge, roping in. Those colours! Were they there before? The desert, the rock, the farmland appeared deceptively rich and vibrant. I became increasingly alienated from my final year studies and from the college social scene. Some very average marks, lack of adventure and a stranded female relationship left me feeling washed up. Mentally, physically and emotionally taxed, I frequently found myself abandoned in somebody's room with coffee, port, beer, spirits, cigarette's, very loud Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin and

nostalgically touring with equally ill friends, through old Beatles and Rolling Stones albums. From the hazy dim confines of that college cell, fantasies were born and a plan emerged. "I saw an amazing cliff while cycling through Tasmania," I reflected. "Frenchman's Cap...." "Let's climb it!" Hector exclaimed. I was stunned. I wondered whether he realised the seriousness of the proposal. I looked hard into his steely eyes. The gleam and the slight smirk said it all. We laughed and charged our glasses. "To The Cap!"

The several months that followed were intense. Final year deadlines, gym training, bouldering, dieting, early nights and much abstinence. The dream was sealed and the goal was set. I took the training initiative, and Hector kept my spirits up with his bright eagerness. From somewhere, through the sharpening of our minds and toughening of our lithe bodies, an uplifting of spirit was taking place. The climb seemed to be taking on a spiritual importance.

The last three weeks had been full of build up. The release of completing university enabled us to fully focus on the climb. Each morning at Mt. Arapiles, our two week training ground, began with a run. Each day our climbing improved markedly. Each evening we were spent, but in the most pleasantly relaxed way. I had improved from a shaky 14 lead to a confident 18. Amazingly Hector, from being inexperienced and unfit, had lead a 17 in good style. Now, aboard the Abel Tasman, I looked back on the wake as the sun sank over Melbourne, and wondered just how fit for the climb we were.

.....A pleasant meander to Lake Tahune; we hadn't even seen the face. Out of the hut window in the moonlight, the ghostly white cliff towered above the lake. This was the low face. "Well, the sky's clear!" I convinced myself. There could be no other choice; tomorrow was the day. "4am start then, Hector?" He looked glum. This was not what I wanted to see. "Sure" came the flat response. We hit the sack. I couldn't sleep. In the dark I heard fumbling. A torch came on and a figure stumbled out to the vestibule. A silent pause.....then "BLERRRRK." Coughing and spluttering followed. "Dave you awake?" "Hector's sick" Hector slumped back inside, white and ghostly. "Cancel the

alpine start " I said as he returned to bed. I rolled over and slept like a baby.

In the morning I was vaguely disappointed but determined. It seemed like Hector's fitness was perhaps not up to par. We decided to do a short 17 on the back of the mountain. Hector kept exclaiming how his hands were giving him real problems. Almost 2 hours had been spent on this 35m route. I wondered how we would tackle a 300m cliff face at this pace?

For several days we tried short climbs, but felt discouraged. The following day was again brilliant. The white buttress we were using as a training ground again beckoned. We had to do it. We sat below the pillar bathed in light from its dazzling reflectance. Stepping onto it felt like a sacred ritual. My boot seemed to stick and the holds, although sparse, were perfectly shaped, presenting inch deep hand width mini ledges, very aesthetically positioned. My shadow looked black by contrast. It was easy to forget the dangerous verticality. Despite the lack of protection, small pockets appeared appropriately as though the rock was saying, "I'll look after you, just don't worry." I felt privileged to be its guest. My body melted into its form, guided by the far greater presence of the rock. My moves were deliberate and relaxed, and strength seemed to radiate to me from within the mountain. I transcended my exposure and naked fear in an embrace with nature. Reaching the top was not relief but an interruption to the flow, a pause to reflect on the joy of those moves. Some inner relationship toward climbing had changed. The mountain would let us climb it to the fullest of our abilities if we came with respect to enjoy her moods, forms and delicate might. No longer obsessed with our 'big route', I felt peaceful submitting to something smaller, yet nurturing.

Light streamed into the hut window at dawn. I focused on it, and it drew me up and out of my sleeping bag. This was the day. The air was still and bird chirps sounded from down in the valley. I sat on the steps with a bowl of muesli. An aluminium clang from inside the hut confirmed Hector's keenness. "What about doing a slightly shorter but harder more direct route on the face?" I asked Hector after consulting the ancient guidebook. "Are we up to it?" He quizzed. "Today, we are" I assured him.

We wasted no time, but there was no sense of urgency or rushing. After methodically preparing we strode off up the gully to the terraces, traversing below yesterday's climb to the saddle. Here was our first view of the dramatic SE face. Smooth bold walls of yellowish white and pale grey soared nearly 400m above the valley floor. The scree slope dropped steeply away to the black tarn in the bowl another 200m lower. A bright quartzite ridge trailed off the majestic myriad of cracks and slabs to the south where some barely explored terrain lay. This was the dramatic SE face, our theatre for the day.

In the shade of a deep chimney we geared up, double checking the amount of racked equipment and its accessibility for seven 35-40m pitches. The line was almost perfect. Above the chimney was an exposed crack topped by a bottomless chimney of perhaps 60m before an awesomely exposed face disappearing to the no-doubt easier upper slopes. Hector insisted I lead the bulk of the pitches. I convinced him he should try a couple.

I began bridging above Hector's head looking for an early gear placement. As I progressed up the chimney each piece became progressively further apart. The double ropes wiggled all the way down the chimney to Hector, now on the end of the rope. Making quick pace he joined me in the sun and acknowledged feeling good enough to take the next lead. He was calm and appeared strong, cautiously but quickly working up the crack, occasionally exclaiming the overwhelming exhilaration of this, his newly discovered joy. I was more than pleased for his sake. As the sun swung around casting my stance into shade, I was keen to move. I danced up the crack with a fluid freedom I hadn't known before. My muscles were strong but relaxed. My mind was focused and aware and my body supple. Hector was amazed at our rapid ascent. "Well, below that bottomless chimney I think there's a ledge. Let's have lunch when we reach it?" was my suggestion. "Sure." Hector agreed.

I found it to be a tiny green oasis in a barren vertical world. The grassy little slope was about the size of a picnic blanket and acted as one. The day pack was like a hanging larder, clipped to a Friend in the roof. We were placed centrally, and diagonally opposite the huge SE face. One could take in a 180 degree panorama horizontally and vertically. Tarns bathed in the sun. Volcanic peaks cast shadows onto cool rainforest and yellow buttongrass plains far below. The horizon resembled a bow-saw blade. We transferred the weight of our salami and cheese pumpernickel sandwiches to our stomachs, potentialising their energy further.

As I stepped up and out from the ledge, an awareness of exposure crept over me. Hanging on the lip of the overhang a rush of precariousness pierced my comfortable relationship with the climb. I breathed hard and deep and let my arms dangle briefly, alternately, to charge their strength and relax them. "Watch me here," my voice quivered. I grunted awkwardly, almost ashamedly, before a surge of adrenalin powered me up to a perch in space. Glancing down did not reveal rock or Hector, but strewn out boulders, ironically warm and inviting, 200m below. I aimed my being at the relative comfort of the chimney. I stepped left around the arete and moved shakily up several metres before swinging my left leg across the void to a tiny edge. Shakily I moved up the chimney until the realisation I had no protection dawned. I fumbled for a nut and stuffed it into a slot in the rock. It stuck well enough but clumsily I

misclipped the carabiner back to my harness. Whilst it hung in the air for a brief second, I lunged at it. It bounced off my finger then onto the face before shooting from the chimney out into space, spinning and glittering in the sunlight. Hector watched it sail by and we stared, frozen, as the flimsy aluminium was engulfed by the monstrous vertical perspective. The faint death scream of shattered alloy floated back up after what seemed like minutes. "Whoah.....mate!" The reality of our position was too vivid to ignore. I began chatting pleasantly with Hector to place a more human dimension on the situation. I found myself safely above the crack. Astride it, I belayed Hector up like a spider climbing a drainpipe. We examined the crux pitch ahead. It seemed OK. Hector shunned my prompts to lead it. Once more I stepped above Hector's head and bridged up the V corner. It became apparent that the holds were very thin and the crack non-existent. I discovered some very thin cracks to place #2 and #3 brass nuts as the tenuous line continued. With fatiguing fingers and cramping calf muscles, I had to reach the beckoning ledge, two body lengths above. Shaking off the worry of falling onto a #2 R.P., I pranced up quickly, temporarily entering some cosmic frame of mind. The rock near the top was greyer, lunar like. Some small clouds framed and filtered the sun's rays, softening them. A gust of wind spiralling

down from the summit plateau tousled my hair. I poised in my vertical, friction dependant world. Surely this was not the earth? I balanced, delicately reaching for the lip. It's flat top invited a hearty crank on it. I did. It moved. A two tonne angular boulder atop a V chimney rocked threateningly with my body weight hanging off it. I placed my feet opposingly, frictioning on the featureless weathered quartzite. The boulder thudded back in place. "What was that?" Hector cried.

As his windswept hair protruded above the cliff he began informing me of the startling loose boulder that I had encountered. I nodded in agreement. "Oh Mate! What an unbelievable feeling!" came Hector's ecstatic remark. We sat back content, with the expression dog's have hanging from car windows. Some internal transformation had taken place. Between Hector and I, us and the mountain, ours egos and souls, this had been our personal adventure, like a secret you want to share but in essence is sacred. It was a turning point in our lives. It signified a renewed drive, uplifted spirit and inspired confidence. It had been a physical act; an outward journey. But in placing our beings in harmony with surrounding nature, we had simply manifest an enlightening inner journey through an adventurous undertaking. I flopped back against a boulder and yelled, "YES!" in climactic response.



The tigers at work



Peddling and Paddling Around the Polar Circle

by Ali Dedman and Rodger Grayson.

From The Mountaineer 1991

The trip proper began at Heathrow airport where, much to the surprise of airport staff, boxes and backpacks were transformed into a fully laden tandem bicycle, towing a trailer with our Klepper Aeriis II on board. We were carrying our full cycling, walking and paddling gear but as we peddled out of the airport foyer, the environment to use all that stuff seemed remote indeed. Nevertheless we battled the traffic with great enthusiasm, if a little trepidation. Ali was stoking (back seat on the tandem) with the London "A to Z" in hand, calling the turns, while I rapidly learnt the width and feel of the 'rig'.

The game plan for the year was to ride north through England and Scotland, the Orkney and Shetland Islands, and catch the first ferry for the season to Norway. We then hoped to work our way east to Finland, north through Finland back into Norway and south down the Norwegian coast. We hadn't planned any specific paddling trips but rather hoped to just head off whenever and wherever we felt like it. The overall plan was followed, except that our planned 3 months in Scandinavia extended to almost 6, after falling in love with Norway in particular.

The trip north through England was pretty rapid. In Scotland, we stuck to the west coast, which rewarded us with terrific coastal scenery and some fine paddling including several trips along isolated sections of the rocky coast and sea lochs. On one occasion we paddled along the coast, east into a sea loch, dismantled the boat, carried it across a pass to a large inland loch and paddled back to the sea - ah, the joys of a Klepper! The coast was home to seal colonies and abundant birdlife, much of which was really only accessible by boat. The weather too was kind, with few days spent curled up in the tent. The only exception weather-wise, was a fierce head wind along the north Scottish coast. We were keen to be in Lerwick on the Shetlands for June 1st so as to catch the first ferry service for the season to Norway, and we also wanted to spend a bit of time in the Orkney Islands en route, so we battled the wind. The Orkneys were quite a surprise for us. They're beautifully peaceful and the ancient ruins were entrancing. Their sheer age inspired awe (3000 BC) and their condition excellent. The building construction (including sewage system)

suggested that 20th century humanity has not come as far as we sometimes like to think.

Boarding the Lerwick - Bergen ferry was accompanied by a potent mix of feelings. To be heading to Scandinavia with our bike and boat was the realisation of a dream, but the practicalities of the next leg were causing concern. Although we felt fit and confident with the bike after the few thousand K's to date, the thought of Norwegian mountain passes were getting scary. We'd heard such a mix of opinions about the cycling conditions that fact from fiction seemed only differentiable through our own experience. The paddling of course, was bound to be superb. Nevertheless, such was our unease that on disembarkation at Bergen, we headed straight to Ali's cousin's in Stavanger for a week of acclimatisation and information gathering.

Our first month in Norway was spent exploring the famous southern fjord country, mainly by kayak. This is the picture postcard area with beautifully formed glacial valleys, deep fjords and towering cliffs. The Klepper ensured we were able to get away from the main tourist areas and savour the wild isolation of the Norwegian coastline. It was still spring and the waterfalls were in full flight, fed by the rapidly diminishing snowfields. Many of these plunged hundreds of metres into the fjords, creating turbulent cauldrons where they hit the sea. Campsites on the fjords were scarce due to the almost sheer cliffs, but those we found were idyllic. With relatively sheltered waters, paddling conditions were easy, with strong winds whistling down the valleys and the occasional rockfall (very scary when rock landed in our wake) as the only problems. At times on the Sognefjord, we were over 100km inland from the coast of Norway but still in sea water - these are BIG fjords! It was not easy to extract ourselves from this splendour to travel east through Sweden to Finland.

As with Norway, the first few days in Finland were spent with friends, adjusting to the culture and the language, both of which were surprisingly different to Norway. We had tried to learn a little Finnish, and Ali had been in Finland in 1989 and picked up a bit. Unfortunately, broken Finnish with an Australian accent

was beyond the pale for the Finns, and we usually resorted to alternative means of communication. In the south and the cities, English was widely understood, but most our time was spent in the east and north. In the two and a half months we spent in Finland, we met no English speaking tourists; quite a contrast from the tourist routes of Norway. Finland was a fascinating country, more so for the people than for the scenery. They were a mix of the modern and the old, numbingly uniform in behaviour and outwardly austere and emotionless. We learnt several Finnish card games from the locals and with one exception, all the games had no winners, only a loser. The aim was not to be the loser. A cursory introduction to the Finns we met would confirm this characteristic, but once the shell was cracked, we found a generous, merry people of great sincerity. In some cases, the shell was pretty thick, and in parts of eastern Finland we were viewed as some kind of being from another planet.

Much of Finland's surface area is fresh water lakes, and with the exception of a few days in the archipelago that reaches west toward Sweden, our paddling was confined to exploring parts of the lake systems. Riding, walking and paddling are certainly the way to get the most from Finland. The seemingly endless forests and lakes would appear monotonous from the window of a car, but taken at a leisurely pace, they came to life. Subtle changes in the vegetation as well as the distinct march of the seasons, ensured our interest. Reindeer, crystal clear lakes and abundant wild berries provided constant enjoyment, and the national parks offered some fine walking and paddling. The lake systems were, and in certain areas still are used as transport routes but the more northern lakes are wonderfully isolated. While the lakes don't offer challenging paddling, they are a serene and relaxing environment from which to watch the world go by.

Although we enjoyed our time in Finland, re-entering Norway on the northern coast reminded us of the missing ingredient in the land of 10,000 lakes - the sea. We'd never realised just what an influence the presence of the ocean had on our mental well-being! It was fabulous to be back on the coast, and a wild and windswept coast it was too. We reached Nordkapp, the northern most point in Europe, at the end of August, enjoying the unusually late summer weather paddling along the northern coast including a trip to the Oksfjorden, the only place in Norway where a glacier reaches the sea. We tried some fishing, and much to our surprise, were very successful! The fish seemed to just

jump on the line, supplementing our staple diet of curried rice, cabbage and onion with some fresh protein.

The weather remained unseasonably good right through September, allowing a full month to explore the Lofoten and Vesteralen Islands - a spectacular string of islands rising almost sheer from the North Atlantic, full of fabulous scenery and excellent for sea kayaking. During our travels in the area we managed to get jobs on a Killer Whale research vessel. This allowed us to stay north as the weather deteriorated, without the discomfort of cycling on ice. Paddling in this area was breathtaking with deep fjords, snow covered peaks, porpoise and whales as well as the excitement of 10 knot tidal races, creating overfalls and strings of standing waves in the ocean. We worked on board the research vessel until the end of October, when we had about 5 hours of sunlight daily and were losing it at a rate of an hour per week. During this time, we were offered a ride by the captain of a ship that carried steel south to Stavanger. After a few days of sub-zero cycling on icy roads we arrived at the port and set sail for Ali's cousin's place, recrossing the Arctic Circle after 3 months north of this latitude. Being on board a working ship was heaps of fun, and quite a change from the more pedestrian coastal steamers. At one stage when the engine broke down with a lee shore looming and a gale warning issued, we wondered whether the Klepper was going to serve as a life raft! Fortunately the engineer managed a temporary repair, and we hobbled into the nearest port.

Being late in the year, many of the shipping services to England had ended. Ferrying to Amsterdam (arriving at 2am) and riding through the cold night, we arrived at the Hook of Holland for the morning ferry to Harwich. From a riding and paddling point of view, the trip ended there.

We then flew to Boston where we off-loaded the bike and boat and re-equipped for colder weather before heading to the frozen lakes that form the border between Minnesota and Canada. I'd worked in Minnesota in 1989/90 and after catching up with friends, we borrowed some snow shoes and headed out for a few weeks in the frozen wilderness. This was followed by a comparatively decadent Christmas with my brother in Boston and then home. Melbourne greeted us with 41°C - quite a contrast to the -25°C a few weeks earlier. The saying grace was a howling northerly that sent the tandem and trailer hurtling down the Tullamarine freeway at tremendous speed - hopefully the memories of our ten months away won't disappear so quickly.

The Mountains Of The Moon

by Phil Waring

Party: MUMC members of the inaugural and successful Ruwenzori expedition were Greg Martin, Sue Martin (nee Eager), Peter Druce, Geoff Ripper, Anton Cook, and Phil Waring. Also with us were Barbara Cook (sister of John Bennett), Grant Dixon (photographer, "Wild" articles), Doug Adam, Ron Levy, Andrew Burns, and from England, Peter and Leonie Thoroughgood and son Tom.

Peter Druce and old friends Doug, Geoff, and the Thoroughgoods, together with Phil, Anton and Barbara, formed the bushwalking section of the party. Grant, Greg, and Sue, together with Ron and Andrew, comprised the climbing section of the party. Once we reached Bujuku Hut, the party split into informally organised small groups, each going off on short expeditions as the whim took them. Most of the party climbed Margherita, Speke and Baker, which certainly exceeded our original hopes. Zed was instrumental in getting the bushwalking group to the summit of Margherita.

Grant and Greg, Ron and Andrew, climbed the East Ridge of Margherita (16,763 ft) from Irene Lakes, and Grant, Sue and Greg climbed Alexandra (16,703 ft) and Moebius (16,134 ft) from Elena Hut, with Sue and Greg visiting the top of Margherita later that day.

Grant, Greg, Sue, Ron and Andrew did a very interesting overnight trip into Zaire, by crossing the Stanley ice plateau (the Uganda-Zaire border runs approximately through the middle of the ice plateau), and descending the West Stanley Glacier to a high hut in Zaire (Moraine Hut). We had heard tales of a passport and visa-less NZAC party being chased by soldiers after crossing into Zaire, but we saw no sign of life on our visit.

Later in the trip, Sue and Greg scrambled up Stairs (14,910 ft), memorable for the thick carpets of verdant moss covering rock ledges. Stairs is one of the summits of Mt Luigi Di Savoia - Greg Martin.

Surprisingly, or not surprisingly depending how you look at things, it all began at the 45th MUMC Anniversary

Dinner, when Greg Martin and Peter Druce discovered they both had a hankering to visit the Ruwenzori mountains in East Africa. Over the next 15 months a party evolved, and in late December 1990 we found ourselves enjoying the hospitality of some friends of Peter's in Nairobi, Kenya, while we purchased dried food for the three weeks in the mountains.

The Ruwenzoris were first called "Mountains of the Moon" in 150 AD by Ptolemy, who hypothesised that the mighty Nile River had its source in some fabulous snowy mountains in the heart of Africa. He was more or less right, although it was not until the 1880s that any outsider saw them. The main peaks bear the names of the African explorers Stanley, Speke, Baker, and Luigi di Savoia, the last after the Duke of Abruzzi who climbed all the main peaks with a 6000-strong expedition in 1906! The Ruwenzoris are a mountain chain rising to over 5100 m and situated just north of the Equator on the border of Uganda and Zaire. The name means "the rain maker", and we can vouch that trips to SW Tassie are a prerequisite for entering the area.

From Nairobi we took the overnight train to Kisumu and then a combination of road vehicles ("matutus") into Uganda. Gross overloading and high speeds being the order of the day, our hired Peugeot 504 ute needed 420 kPa (60 psi) in its tyres to support our combined load, while later our Toyota Hi-ace with 16 people on board hurtled through crowded villages at 120 kph. The locals were unfazed, even if we weren't.

Arriving in Kampala, we purchased "upper class" tickets for the train to Kasese (car-say-say) in far western Uganda, which entitled us to a sort of folding wooden shelf each; all padding had long since disappeared but the sharp spiral springs remained,

making foam mats a vital travel accessory. Every compartment had bullet holes in the windows. There were holes in the floor, no electricity, hence the remains of lights and fans did not function, and no water, so the "toilets" were places best avoided by a wide margin.

The green hills of Kampala slowly receded as the train jogged out of town, the track being in a poor state. Indeed that night several carriages derailed in the middle of a swamp, delaying the train for several hours, and we woke to hear railway gangers at work - apparently they have plenty of practice.

In Kasese we visited the Ruwenzori Mountaineering Services (RMS), who very efficiently arranged all our porters, and their food and equipment. Our walking and climbing plans had been prepared in detail back in Melbourne and we operated as a private party, apart from getting porters, and transport to the last village, from the RMS. For our party of 14 we hired 33 porters for the three day trek up to base camp, to us great value at around \$1.50 per day per porter. Grant, Ron and Andrew saved a few dollars and punished themselves by spurning porters and carrying huge packs in. Greg and Sue retained medium packs in the interest of gaining fitness, and found it useful to have warm clothing, food and cooking gear at hand at the end of the day, when arriving well ahead of the porters.

The porters were used for the carry in to Bujuku, where they were all dismissed except for the old guide Zedekiah, and after yet another argument, a young lad to keep him company. We thought it wise to keep Zed on for security at our Bujuku base camp, although it probably wasn't necessary and he did cause us some problems in attempting to veto some of our climbing plans.

Following a tradition established by the Duke of Abruzzi, each porter received a sportscoat or jumper and a blanket in addition to his food and pay, plus a few pangas (large knives) and cooking pots thrown in for good measure. The Bugandan porters were a cheerful and obliging lot, the headman/guide Zedekiah especially so, once the traditional arguments and negotiations (which all boiled down to extra pay), were settled every day or two. Zed had been walking and climbing in the area since the 1960s and had made one first ascent.

From the village at the end of the road we set off through a jungle of wild bananas and "elephant grass", although we didn't see any pachyderms. The weather was pleasant, not too hot or humid, but there was a stiff 1500 m (5000 ft) climb that afternoon to Nyabitaba Hut (8700 ft), some of the party arriving after dark. Next morning the track plunged steeply down to the Mubuku River where our porters quickly caught some fresh trout to supplement their diet of dried Nile perch. A very rough track then climbed to some newish huts at John Matte camp. Having not shaken off a debilitating wog

picked up in Karachi on the journey to Africa, and feeling the effects of altitude, for me this part of the trip was less than happy. After John Matte, however, we got into some REAL mud: the aptly-named Lower and Upper Bigo Bogs. Anton nearly lost his sneakers in several places. However, while hopping from tussock to tussock we caught our first glimpse of snow covered peaks and the amazing 2-3m tall lobelias, and were cheered on immensely. In one places there was a stretch of boardwalk, but conservation arguments had halted the extension of this. Eventually we reached Bujuku Hut at 4000 m (13000 ft), our base for the next few days.

"Let's go to Zaire this afternoon", said Anton, and so we did, climbing up through a forest of senecias (groundsel) to Stuhlmann Pass, the unmarked Ugandan/Zairean border, and descending across alpine grassland to Leopard's Lair, a prominent pile of rocks left behind by an ancient glacier. Above us towered the snows of some of the highest peaks in Africa, while further down the valley the entire country of Zaire was covered by a huge bank of clouds. We saw no people and no animals. The next day we went higher, finding a beautiful alpine plateau dotted with glacial lakes. My wog had finally disappeared, and the vision of the lakes, the glaciers above, and the strange vegetation was mind-blowing.

While at Bujuku an unusual party turned up, comprising four young female fashion models from Paris, and their attendant playboys. They were quite fit and, although not climbing, were enjoying the walk. They told us about a wonderful game park accessible from Kasese, and after the trip we enjoyed some time there, although that is another story.

A three-day side trip to Mt Stanley, at 5109m (16,763 ft) the highest peak in the Ruwenzoris, was organised. On the way we were lucky to see some of the beautiful Malachite Sunbirds feeding on lobelia nectar, their shining metallic green plumage glinting in the sun. We scrambled up a steeply rising ledge to a saddle where helichrysums, similar to those that grow in the Australian Alps, were in bloom.

Reaching Elena Hut, the next morning I had my first real experience of the effect of altitude, when I completely lost my appetite and had to force breakfast down. From the hut, Zed led us up the East Stanley glacier. As a precaution we carried marker flags and donned crampons, but neither was really needed as the snow was fairly soft and visibility reasonable. Crossing the plateau we dropped down below a steep rocky spine before ascending again. We waited for the mist to lift before picking our way onto the east ridge and climbing in ice and snow to the summit of Margherita Peak, the highest point on Mt Stanley. After the usual triumphant photographs, and after Zed had emptied the water from his climbing boots (ie his gumboots!), we descended happily, and returned next day to Bujuku Hut. Greg and

three of the other climbers had already ascended the peak by a rock climb up the lower part of the same east ridge.

Our second ascent was Mt Speke, 4890m (16042 ft). Scrambling up some slippery slabs above Stuhlmann Pass we traversed a rocky alpine heathland, then briefly roped up for an awkward move over a boulder, and reached the snow on the edge of the Speke Glacier. After one airy spot where an ice-axe belay was more than welcome, we continued upwards until there was nowhere higher to climb.

The view was spectacular, as mist swirled around, parting and reforming. We descended by the same route in the soft, late afternoon light.

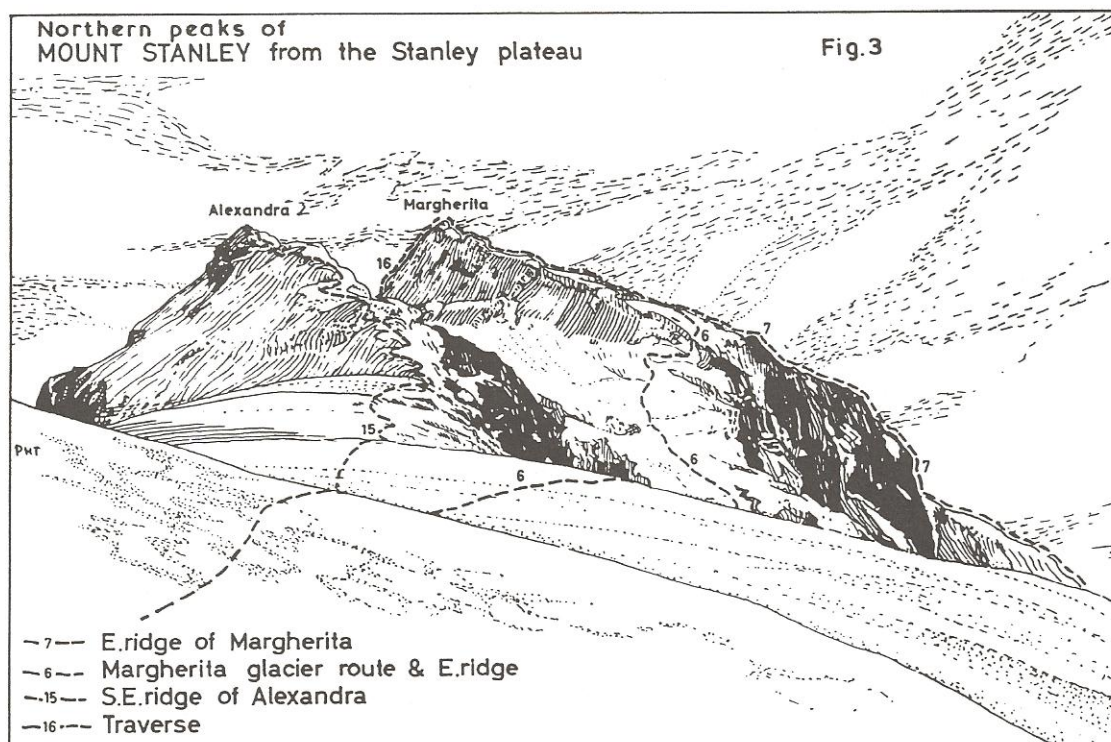
Some days later we "rehired" our dismissed porters, who had been hanging around Bujuku Hut in anticipation, and crossed Scott Elliot Pass to the beautiful Kitandera Lakes and hut. Here we again met up with an Austrian party who had been more or less paralleling our progress. Apart from the obviously different vegetation, Kitandera is like some of the more scenic parts of Tassie. It was the base from which we climbed our last peak, Mt Baker (15,889 ft). A very rough, steep track leads up through the forest and emerges into rocky heathland, passing a beautiful, small, mossy-edged tarn, in which the reflection of the strange senecias could be caught. Again a mixed rocky boulder and snow ascent found us on top, from where there were spectacular drops into the surrounding valleys. Looking out, range upon range

upon range of mountains, each progressively hazier, rolled away in all directions.

As if all these ascents were not enough, one of the most exciting tracks I have traversed was in store for us on the return journey. Fortunately the persistent rain of earlier in the trip had eased off and the track was drying out, the mud turning from slop to jelly. Initially the track crossed a high pass then dropped into the head of a broad valley covered with low heath. Lower down the bush thickened, and at one stage we entered a gully and needed to descend some steep, smooth, waterworn rock slabs beside the trickle of a stream. Pleasant in dry conditions, this dormant waterfall is impassable after rain. Further on, some enormously tall overhanging rocks had created dry, but well ventilated, rock shelters along the track.

We crossed the Mubuku River for the last time, jumping from boulder to boulder, the porters catching some more trout to take home. The last day we descended over 2000m (7000 ft) in 7 hours, the effect on how hard we had to breathe between morning and evening being most noticeable.

It was census time in Kasese, and after dining once more at the Hotel Said, we caught the pre-dawn Mercedes bus "the elephant of the road" back to Kampala. According to an article in the local newspaper, the census had been disrupted by some real elephants!



from "Guide To The Rwenzori"
H. A. Osmaier & D. Pasteur. 1972

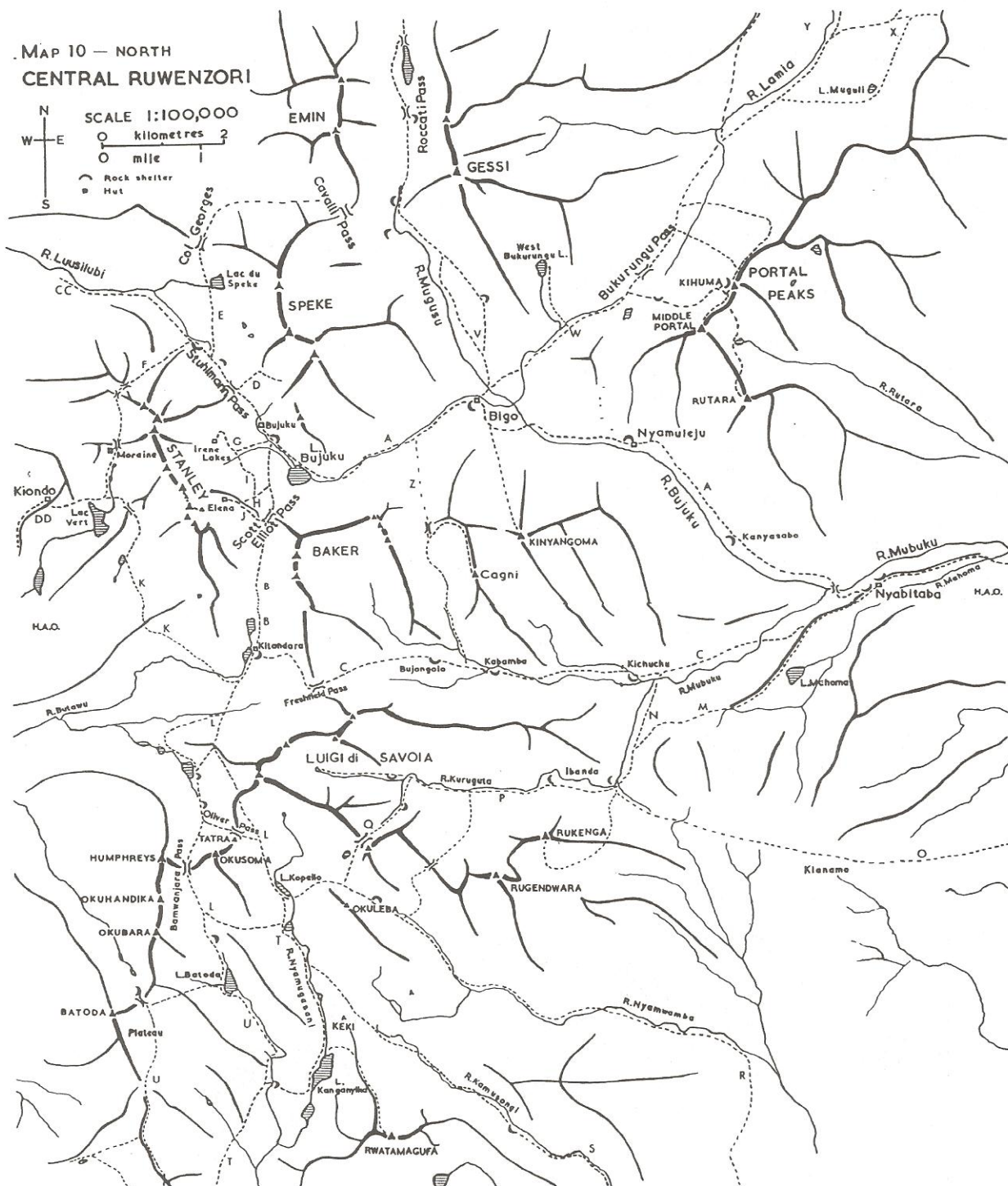
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Rock shelter

Hut



from Osmaston & Pasteur.

Changtse

September - October, 1991

by Evelyn Feller

First published in The BC Mountaineer, Vol 61, 1992.

Don't be suprised if you see me back on Monday' were my less than optimistic words of farewell to Michael as I arrived at the airport. It had been a summer of euphoria and frustration. First there had been the excitement of being accepted on a trip to climb Changtse, the North Peak of Everest, and then also being given leave from work. However, right through the summer it did not seem the trip would happen in spite of having been given the permit for the climb. Faxes would come from Beijing with demands for additional money, and for a number of us there was a definite financial limit. It appeared that this limit would well and truly be exceeded. However due to heroic efforts by our leader, Rob Brusse, the trip appeared to be within budget.

Team "Middle-aged Climbers with Women" actually boarded the Air China jet to Beijing. We gave ourselves this name after another expedition (to remain nameless!) told us they didn't have any female climbers, because women were too emotional! Our group consisted of ten men and three women ranging in age from 28 to 58.

We were welcomed in Beijing by our interpreter, Ms. Zhang. She was to be one of two obligatory companions. She had actually accompanied expeditions to Everest and Mustagh Ata. Our liaison officer, Mr. Li, was a former sailor who found the month at base camp a continuous headache, since he never quite acclimatised. While the group spent the day visiting the Temple of Heaven, The Forbidden City and Tianamen Square, Rob was involved in continuing heavy negotiations. For some one who had visited China during the Cultural Revolution, the social changes in China were astonishing. Gone were Mao's blue ants. Most people were in Western dress and watching very western television programs. The one child policy was dramatically visible, as we watched family groups also visiting Beijing landmarks.

After a flight to Chengdu, overnight there, and many hours of waiting in Chengdu airport, we finally arrived in Lhasa. We were under the impression that our accommodation would be rather spartan and had made all kinds of preparations to combat potential terrors of the Tibetan wash-rooms as described in the Lonely Planet Guide to Tibet. We were not disappointed to find we were staying in the Lhasa Holiday Inn, complete with Germanic chefs, fresh bread and tables groaning with amazing deserts.

On arriving in Lhasa at 3700 metres, the visitor is advised to do nothing more ambitious than to climb the dining room steps. This is sage advice which we were forced to ignore since our Chinese hosts seemed keen to get us to base camp as quickly as possible. We didn't really want to miss the Potala, and spent a rather shaky morning clambering up and down the ladders of this wonderful monastery, the former home of the Dala Lama. We were jet-lagged, suffering from various intestinal ailments, and in varying stages of AMS. I wondered how we were going to cope at higher altitudes, since climbing up four flights of stairs was proving very demanding. After an afternoon of further negotiations, this time with members of the Tibetan Mountaineering Association, we were able to load our truck with the food, oxygen and fuel which we had sent in advance. Most of us managed to visit the incredible Barkhor market, a sensory feast of colour, scents and sounds.

The next two days were extremely arduous, twelve to fourteen hour days, on roads that would make the worst Canadian logging roads seem freeway standard by comparison. These roads had been washed out by flash floods during the monsoons and there were gangs of Tibetans, both men and women, repairing them. An unexpected bonus of travelling at this time were the wildflowers, beautiful blue flowers growing in clumps on the dry mountain ridges. The roads are definitely often the most hazardous aspects for many expeditions, and on

numerous occasions I plotted my escape tactics in case of a capsized. The view was never dull; walled white-washed housing compounds surrounded by ripening crops; high glaciated peaks and gorges; prayer flags on high mountain passes where nomads would mysteriously appear with their mixed herds of sheep and goats. We stayed overnight in Shigatse and then after another long day arrived at the nadir of hotel accommodation, the Chomolungma Hotel. Here that mighty household invention, the vacuum cleaner, had clearly not been heard of. Water of any temperature was only available between six and eight in the evening and one had to schedule one's visits to the bathroom during that time. A bucket of brown water in the bath tub was the flushing mechanism. The teenage staff seemed to be up to continual high jinks that involved launching various flying objects, such as plates, in kitchens and corridors.

After a morning resting, and an afternoon of mild ridge climbing where we gazed across to the fort of Xegar which snaked its way up the red, precipitous ridges, and the legendary Shining Crystal Monastery, we had recovered sufficiently to make the trip to base camp.

We could no longer use the bus and climbed, huddled in down jackets, into the back of a covered truck. After a four hour ride over the 5200m Pang La pass with the first glimpses of the Himalayas, we were passing the Rongbuk Monastery with Everest dominating the skyline in front. From this side the mountain is not diminished by its companions like Lhotse, and is definitely worthy of its Tibetan name *Jolmo Lungma* - Goddess Mother of the World. For most of us it was the realisation of a mountain lovers dream. We thought of the triumphs of Messner, the Canadian Everest Light Expedition, and the Australian White Limbo Expedition as well as the tragedies of Marty Hoey, Tasker and Boardman, Roger Marshall and Mallory and Irvine.

Our euphoria was rapidly diminished by the realities of base camp. Base camp was a slum. It was hard to find a clean tent site where there was no yak or human dung or litter. At least we could see the money we paid in conservation fees being used, for the Chinese were busy constructing two toilet blocks and a pit for garbage incineration. Not surprisingly, policies on garbage management i.e. 'Carry in, carry out and recycle where possible', had not been established. We heard that, in spite of numerous international clean-ups at the Nepalese base camp, that route to Everest might be closed to allow the area to recover from the impact of trekkers and climbers. The future managers of this area have a huge challenge ahead, to maintain its grandeur and not diminish it with massive tourist developments, nor allow it to deteriorate due to human carelessness. Three other expeditions shared the site, an Indian, a Belgian, and the Canadian 'Climb for Hope' Expedition. This expedition had gained an impressive amount of sponsorship and had an incredible telecommunications

network established. It was possible not only to 'phone home from base-camp but also from the North Col, as one of our members did!

We began the task of ferrying loads to our first camp at 5600m. Vertically this was not much above base camp at 5200m. It involved a fairly flat walk along a gully between the steep valley sides and the rearing rubble of the lower Rongbuk Glacier. At the end there was a steep climb to the camp. This was a major challenge for our still unacclimatised bodies, but the effort was rewarded by wonderful views of Pumori, Lingtren, and Khumbutse, and of course the western buttresses and ridges of Everest. After a couple of days, when the gear pile was not getting much smaller at base camp, we decided to attempt to negotiate to get yaks. This was a dispiriting task. In Canada the charge for yaks seemed to stretch the budget too far at over \$1000 per person. We had decided to be the yaks. In Beijing it appeared that the Chinese Mountaineering Association (CMA) was willing to allow us to renegotiate this item should we change our minds. It appeared that at base camp the actual cost was going to be more like \$200. Problem solved? No way! Four days of long negotiations followed. Just when we thought an agreement had been made, the price would suddenly be increased or Bob would be required to make a long drive out to Tingri to negotiate further with the yak herders. It is not a simple matter of back-loading onto someone else's yaks when they descend the mountain. It appears that because mountaineering expeditions are such a lucrative source of funds for the drivers, the jobs must be shared fairly amongst them. We were not successful and my advice to other expeditions is unfortunately to bite the bullet, and pay before you go, or have the time to complete the negotiations.

It was at this point that the infamous illegal porter incident occurred. Three Tibetans suddenly appeared and offered to be porters, for a price. Apparently the Rongbuk Valley and the CMA is not really ready for private enterprise. Our liaison officer tried to discourage us from hiring these characters, but we felt fairly desperate given the description we had of the long and demanding carry to Camp Two. An advance party of five had already begun establishing this camp and were making eight hour round trips. At over 6000m this was hard work! The porters were at least valuable in transporting fuel and other heavy items to the first camp but at this point things fell apart. The porters had claimed they would be self sufficient with respect to food, equipment and tents. The reality was that they were not, and they began to demand such things. A couple of them were clearly not acclimatised. The following day they did not make it to the second camp because they were reluctant to cross a small stream and climb up the moraine wall onto the glacier. In spite of Ian's demonstrations that the manoeuvre was perfectly safe,

they turned back. In the meantime the most senior Chinese liaison officer at base camp had insisted that Ms. Zhang and Mr. Li accompany him to our Camp One to curb this infamous porter hiring. Whatever was said to the porters ensured their very speedy exit from the mountain.

Another gruelling week was spent stocking Camp Two. Our advance team had established a higher camp at the foot of a couloir on Changtse. Up to this point the weather had been extremely predictable - late afternoon rain or heavy snow. The snow had flattened our cooking shelter at base camp and was making the Indian and Belgian climbs very dangerous. The Canadian fixed ropes to the North Col were being avalanched away.

From camp two we made a day excursion up the 'Miracle Highway', an incredible gap up the Rongbuk Glacier to the Canadian Advance Base Camp. The reality is that once the dry weather starts it would be possible to walk in running shoes to this point. It was a magical day, just to be standing about 300m below the North Col and to see the pinnacles of Everest as well as other interesting 7000m peaks. Makalu was just visible. We were invited to supper at the Canadian Camp. Eating cherry pie, fresh bread, and then hiking back down to our camp in the moonlight was unforgettable.

The next morning our advance party made an attempt on Changtse. Unfortunately, the cold wind and altitude drove them back. Our route no longer appeared feasible. Other options were discussed. For those of us at the lower camp, Changzheng at 6975m appeared an inviting possibility, while Murray planned to join Andrew at the higher camp to go to the North Col. Juri and Brian settled for a 7000m peak above the Lhagba La Pass. That afternoon Peter and Roland established a route up the icefall of the Beifeng Glacier. Our route looked straight forward.

Early morning mountaineering starts are painful in any part of the world. Getting water at Camp Two was a precarious activity. One had to slide down the moraine to a pond under an ominous teetering serac and smash the ice to draw up a billy of yak dung- contaminated water. Unfortunately, one's feet were painfully chilled, necessitating a brief retreat into the sleeping bag. Our party of six moved in two teams through the lower seracs, then up to the glacier. The major challenge was a deep crevasse with a vertical rim to negotiate. I was not particularly thrilled to be voted the crevasse prober since it was hard to tell whether the floor of the crevasse would collapse. Even climbing a short steep vertical section was a major physical challenge at this altitude. We continued up a skiable slope to the shoulder on the peak. Changtse loomed above us and there were fluted ridges reminiscent of the Andes. To one side there was a steep col that Shipton and Tilman had crossed. It was late in the afternoon, and Ellen and Roland decided they had

given the peak their best shot. Bob, Grant, Peter and I continued on for another couple of rope lengths. The peak was only about 300m above us and was tantalisingly close - becoming steeper but apparently straight forward. However at this point we 'hit the wall' physically. We were breaking through the snow crust up to our calves and the freezing winds of the jet stream were buffeting us around. Breathing was becoming a problem. Retreat seemed a prudent decision and this was substantiated by the exhausted state in which we arrived back at camp. Meanwhile Juri and Brian were successful on their peak and Murray and Brian were preparing themselves for their successful climb to the North Col.

It was at this point we made the decision to return to base camp even though we had done only one real day of climbing. Even Juri, our strongest climber, appeared haggard and complained of feeling that he was physically deteriorating. None of us were sleeping very much, in fact we spent most nights rolling around like chickens on a spit. It had become a chore to eat and no-one was really drinking the required four litres a day of liquid. It was almost impossible to choke it down. After clearing and cleaning up our camps we returned to an enthusiastic welcome by Ms. Zhang and Mr. Li. They demonstrated their enthusiasm by cooking some wonderful tasty Chinese food for us. Unfortunately their enthusiasm turned to bewilderment the next morning when Rob, Shelley and Ian felt that the opportunity to get to the North Col might not occur again for them and they headed back up. The rest of us recuperated. Juri and I decided to climb up an easy peak to the west of camp. This was a wonderful day where we were rewarded by imposing views of Cho Oyo and Everest, as well as the dry Tibetan Plateau. The winds were still, and we lunched in tee-shirt weather on the summit. On our descent we learned that Ian had become ill and that Rob had accompanied him down from Camp Two. Shelley eventually reappeared, extremely disappointed. She had continued on alone, but had been discouraged from continuing to the North Col by the Canadian Expedition who were in the process of retreating from the mountain due to the high winds. The remainder of the time at base camp was spent cleaning up, with individuals making excursions towards the Lho La and to the Rongbuk monastery.

This account cannot be made without mention of the behaviour of the yak herders. I had been told Tibetans love trading. That was an understatement. One could not retreat to one's tent for peace as there would always be a hand opening up the zip and often three faces peering in trying to sell jewellery, knives, or yak bells! A meal could not be cooked without having an audience of six or seven herders. They decided that our large block of parmesan cheese had a greater value in their meals and it disappeared one evening. When I attempted to burn some

garbage I was jostled by a number of them trying to grab our containers and their contents.

We left Base Camp farewelled by the first Brazilian expedition to Everest (which was also unsuccessful). The journey across the Tibetan plateau, while bone shaking in the truck, was pleasant. In Xegar it suddenly became possible to visit the fortress and monastery. On the way we were quoted a price of \$500 for this sight-seeing tour. Now it seemed there was no extra charge and it was a wonderful afternoon, probably the cultural highlight for us all. Although ruined, the remains of the fort were impressive. The monastery, destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, had been rebuilt. A humorous touch was an old oxygen cylinder that had been festively painted and served as a gong. The monks were friendly and the place seemed to be a living monastery, whereas others, like the Potala, were empty of their former splendour. We continued on to Shigatse where we visited the impressive Tashilhunpo Monastery, the home of the Panchen Lama and the Yellow Sect. We then had one of the culinary highlights of the trip - a meal at the 'Yak Burger and Fries' Restaurant.

The trip back to Lhasa was via a different route. We soon found ourselves bogged, along with many other vehicles, in semi-desert country. An enterprising farmer extricated our truck and bus. We spent the afternoon travelling along a gorge of the Tsang-po River. In Lhasa's Bokhara market we embarked on a massive carpet buying frenzy, and feasted on the smorgasbord of the Lhasa Holiday Inn.

From Lhasa, things became tense because it appeared that we would not get on the plane. There was some difference of opinion as to whether we should pay the excess baggage charges that were being imposed on us. All of a sudden it seemed impossible to have gear

shipped back to Canada, as we had on the way in, although we believed we had met these costs as part of our budget. Only at the last minute did we board the plane to Chengdu. Here our itinerary became even less certain. We were no longer booked on flights to Beijing. We possibly had to draw up a priority list of those whose work demanded arrival in Canada quickly so they could go on whatever bookings Zhang could get. After a day of exploring Chengdu, we suddenly found ourselves on a morning flight to Beijing. From there we were whisked to the Great Wall, where we made our last climbing forays to various watch towers on the wall.

Some thoughts for others wanting to climb in this area:

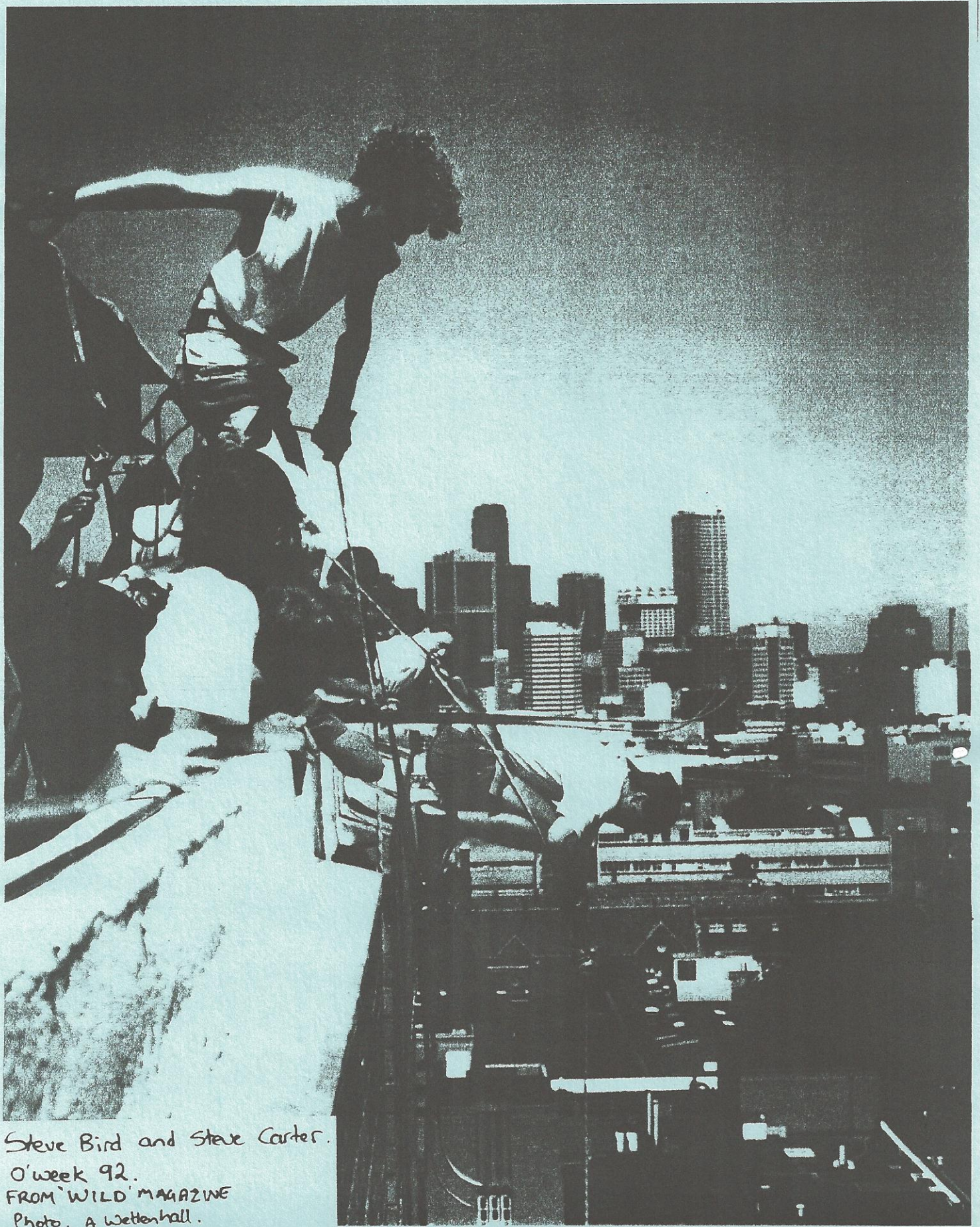
1. The negotiations with the Chinese Mountaineering Association took nearly two years, and required much tact and patience.

2. If one is not obsessed with Everest or other brand-name peaks, there are many other lower summits and passes to explore. It may be possible now to do these through the Tibetan Mountaineering Association, and via a trekking permit which is a lot less expensive, and easier to organise than a climbing permit.

3. We learned a lot about acclimatising on this trip. If possible it is best to get hold of yaks to prevent early burnout.

Party: Rob Brusse (Leader), Shelley Ballard, Roland Burton, Evelyn Feller, Peter Ford, Murray Hainer, Grant McCommack, Andrew McKinley, Ian Marsh, Barry Narod, Juri Peepre, Brian Schack and Ellen Wood.





Steve Bird and Steve Carter.
O'week 92.
FROM 'WILD' MAGAZINE
Photo. A Wettenhall.

SlushSlushSlushSlushSlushSlushSlushSlush

"I'm the highest person in Victoria", David Wilson, while standing upon the cairn on the summit of Mt. Bogon.

"Well, that depends on what Dave Burnett is doing at the moment", reply from Rohan Schaap. (Sept. 1994).

"Only about three people didn't do it on the night", Sam Rollings talking about what went on after the AGM finished. (Sept. 1994).

"They'll find his body in three months time." -reaction to the news that a Tassie walker was about to attempt a rather difficult walk.

"I hope he hasn't got any club gear then." -less than concerned reply. (Feb. 1989).

"I never use the bit with the hands." -Rohan Schaap, confirming that walking in Tasmania not only reduces intelligence but time telling ability as well. (Feb. 1989).

"Look at all those ants, that's what happens when you leave food around and the heater on all weekend." -Nigel Prior. (Sept. 1992).

"I don't know what I'm doing with this rope, but it's fun." -Eugene The Bastard. (Nov. 1992).

"Could someone please oil Anouk?", Phil Towler. (Sept.1994).

"The laundry..", recalls Steve Carter, after Amber directed a visitor to Debacles Mansion to the laundry rather than the toilet by mistake, "...I often go there to go to the toilet when the bathroom is occupied. I sometimes just go off the balcony, but with all the cars passing, it gets a bit hard unless you've perfected the casual no hands technique." (Sept. 1994).

"We'll have to buy some more beers to keep the food off the ice." -Dave Wilson. (Nov. 1992).

"A few pills, a few beers, and I'm anybody's." - Russell Smith. (Nov. 1992).

"I've travelled 1300km in order to paddle tomorrow, so could you please be quiet? I know you won your event, but it is after midnight." -Scone burning Queensland Troll at I.V. (Nov. 1992).

"It was in /out, in/out, in/out like a bloody pop-up toaster." -Dave Kjar talking about the VCR at Pie and Slide night. (Nov. 1992).

"It's OK guys....my face will break the fall!"-Nick Gust (Oct. 1991).

"You've worn a flat spot in your rear wheel bearings. Have you been carrying any big loads or driving on any bad roads lately?" -Mechanic's question to MUMC driver. (June 1988).

A Bushwalk Into NSW, Victoria, NSW, Victoria..... The Alpine Walking Track.

by Stephen Curtain, February 1992.

You know when you're on a real bushwalk when you meet up with two of the walk's group, already gently broken in by an odd 400km stroll through Victoria's alpine region. There we were like the proverbial chalk and cheese; us-being Nicki Munro, Brett Hodges and myself, all spick 'n' span in beautifully clean clothes, and them-Matthew Cairn, Keryn Paul and Anton Weller, mud splattered overpants, torn gaiters and a hint of perspiration. Matt, Anton, and Keryn had started the Alpine Walking Track (AWT) about four weeks previously on December 1 from Walhalla, Gippsland. The two groups met without any real problems on a drizzly day at Limestone Creek in far north-east Victoria, near Benambra, a stone's throw away from the border. Nearby, there were numerous limestone caves which may warrant further investigation. We only went a short distance in, but we found some spectacular limestone formations.

Having encountered just about every type of weather, including driving snow on Mt. Wills, Anton, Keryn, and Matt had been slowly soaked to the skin, not a great deal of warmth or sun to cheer about. Spirits and conversation picked up every now and then over the coming days as us 'new hands' slowly began to adjust to what had been daily life for the others for several weeks. The sun even came out, making for beaut views, in particular, the Cobberas Range (being the last high point in Victoria over 1800m), and Mt. Pilot, which provided the first glimpses of huge snowdrifts on the Main Range, several days walk away.

Throughout the first half of the walk, there were brumbies everywhere, not to mention the fresh patties. After crossing the Cobberas and a night's camp, we went onto Cowombat Flat and the infant Murray, known as the Indi, and had a relaxing lunch. The Indi provided a handful of surprises with some great waterfalls and rock pools and a grade 1-2 rapid. That night's camp was finally made back upstream close to the river's source in NSW. Here we found idyllic camping with the grass so well manicured by the brumbies, that it seemed as though someone had literally been through with a Victa. With fairly open vegetation underfoot, the going was relatively good the next day. Although not obvious at the time, we crossed back into Victoria, then back into NSW five minutes later and then back into Victoria two minutes further on. By mid morning, we stopped and posed at what we guessed was the Murray's beginnings-a mere moss soak. Pretty exciting stuff!

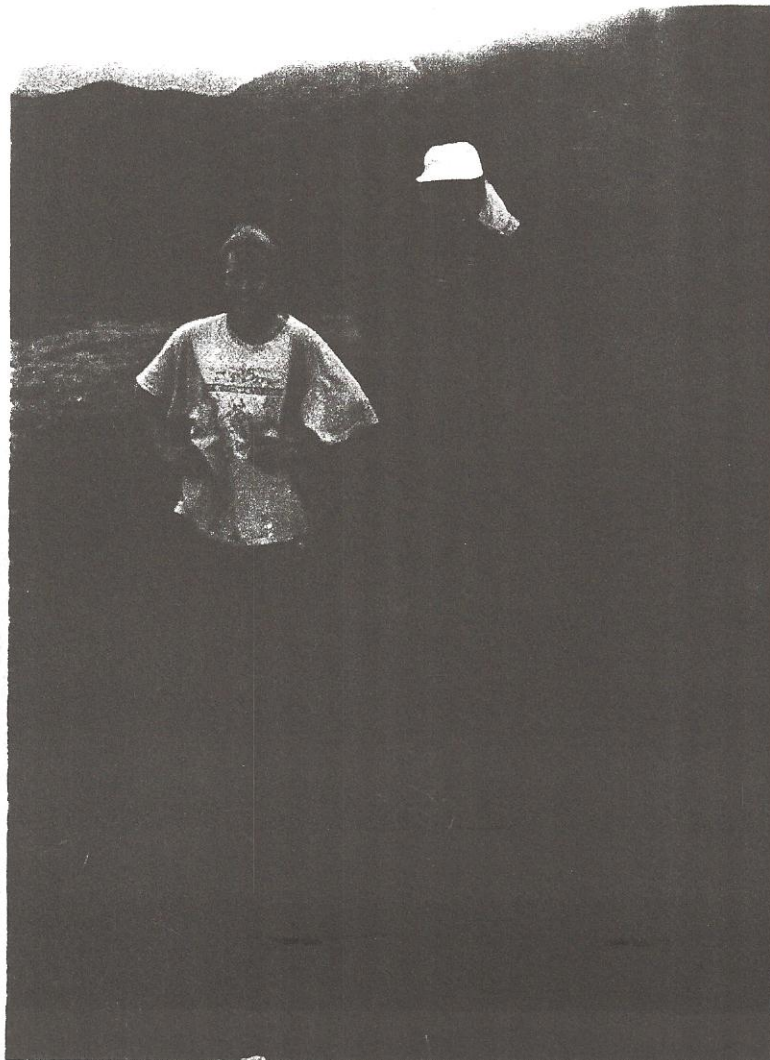
Although the rain of the last weeks may have created a bit of uncomfortable walking, one outcome was the good flow of water in normally dust dry creeks. With good progress towards Tin Mine the next day, the group would stretch out along the track, each going at their own pace. Amazing was Brett's performance. He came to a complete stop in mid-air on the Cascades Firetrack. He bolted about 3 feet in the air and let out a fine vocal accompaniment. A red-bellied black snake, about a metre long, had nearly merged with his calf.

Some time later we were back in snow gum country. Lunch was enjoyed at a great hut, Cascades, just outside Thredbo. Here we all met Ana, a seasonal

Kosciusko ranger who gave us warning of various gastro related problems with the water. Needless to say, Brett was further impressed after the recent drama, as well as the rest of us. Regular vomiting would be expected, if one of us was to be unfortunate, though not to worry.

It was arranged that Nicki and Brett, being close friends, would take a day or two's break in Thredbo while the rest of us would continue up the main range, hopefully meeting up somewhere, somehow, several days later. They were accompanied back to nearby Dead Horse Gap and carpark on the Alpine Way road with Ana. With the Main Range such a large area to camp and walk in, there was some uncertainty that we would ever meet up. So it was to everyone's surprise, three days later, when our group heard a yell, "Steve!", and there was Brett followed by Nicki. After taking a break in Thredbo, Nick and Brett had camped beside Muellers Peak, a mere 1500m from our own campsite on Townsend.

We finally left Anton, Keryn, and Matthew on Alice Rawson Peak, near Townsend. They were going to drop into the Lady Northcotes Canyon for a rest day. We decided to make for a final camp before heading down to Thredbo. On making our way across the Snowy River headwater to Seamans Hut, Brett thought he'd take an easy ride on his backside on the rather slippery alpine tussock grass, which, admittedly, gives a good ride. What he didn't count on, was one broken hand and a dislocated wrist, confirmed several hours later and \$200 dollars for his troubles at the medical centre in Jindabyne! Sliding down the snowgrass, Brett had caught his hand in a slight hollow clump of it. I heard the unnerving sound of a snap as his hand was yanked sideways. As luck would have it, we caught a lift with the NPWS ute that was doing its once in a blue moon visit to the hut. After a gradual recovery in a spa (no bubbles) and stuffing our faces with real food, we made a welcome departure for home.



HOW TO EFFECTIVELY RUN A COMPLETE DEBACLE

by Richard Kjar, December 1993.

Debacle (dabah'-) n. Sudden and overwhelming collapse, rush, stampede. [Fr., = 'break-up of ice in river'] *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*.

Debacle (dabah'-) n. Complete and utter mayhem, usually involving many people, fast water, mountains or hot wax. *OXO derivation*.

Debacles are, and have been, an effective and pleasurable way in which people have managed their time in MUMC for numerous years. Generally those that have organised effective debacles are usually very experienced and specialised in this field. Take for example a particular trip to the Howqua River:

Scene: Howqua River put in point.

Members Present: Two elderly members (official debaclers), one vaguely experienced first year, and three raw beginners (ie. have never paddled white water before).

Ambitions: To paddle the Howqua in flood.

Results: All three beginners swim within 50 metres. End result- three members have to carry boats up vertical cliff for 500 metres. Rest of weekend spent with beginners thanking other members for the great time "because we didn't drown".

Moral: Always take exceedingly inexperienced people on your trip, especially if a) it is an advanced trip and/or b) they have a car.

Speaking of cars, the following example is a classic debacle:

Scene: Mitchell River road.

Members Present: Numerable, ie. three cars.

Ambition: To get to the top of the Mitchell.

Results: Two cars go to the top and one car goes to Dargo, about another 40 kms along the road.

Moral: Never tell anyone where to stop and meet up, and then if told, don't bother to stop.



Stopping, interesting comment I must say:

Scene: Pulling out of the Thomson River.

Members present: lots, including one hapless first year who happens to drive an underwater modified ZZZ Gemini.

Ambition: To go on a trip and not use the spare tyre (because it was different to all the others).

Results: Get a flat tyre on a dirt track and drive for 10 km on this track with the flat. Proceed not to believe anyone that tells you that you have a flat when you arrive at the end. End result- have three flats on your car in the next week and two on your bike.

Moral: Never take your car on a trip, especially if a person with the initials RAK comes along.

The club member with the initials RAK can easily influence a debacle:

Scene: Midnight Ascent 1993.

Members Present: 36 of the most esteemed members in the club, and RAK.

Ambition: To have a huge time.

Results: RAK gets so drunk he has to be bound and gagged. People seriously consider throwing him out into the snow for the night. He generally destroys all semblance of a good time for anyone. End result, particular member vows never to drink again (lasts two nights), also RAK spends \$50 shouting drinks at Porepunkah to redeem himself. Also, to improve the weekend, a double debacle- one official debacler to get themselves lost for three hours on the way up the ridge, leaving his group no longer as the sunrise group, but the sunset group.

Moral: Never take RAK on trips where alcohol may be present. Also, beware of official debaclers.

And so, here I have tried to provide you with a few trips on how to run a debacle (and how to avoid your trip going beyond that). Remember that there are innumerable manners in which people can run debacles, group debacles are always popular- such as every car on the Midnight Ascent getting flashed by speed cameras ("Could we please get a group discount on those fines, Officer?").

Have a good time....



MIDNIGHT ASCENT TRIVIA QUIZ!

by Kate Bradshaw, September 1994.

1. Mad Mike wore which of the following items for the photo in 1991?
 - a) A grilled fish.
 - b) A roast chicken.
 - c) A string of fried dim sims.
 - d) A marinated wallaby.
2. Who led the Midnight Ascent in 1992?
 - a) Scott Edwards.
 - b) Steve Curtain.
 - c) Sir Edmund Hillary.
 - d) Tom Bevan.
3. In 1994, Andy Gaff was seen lounging around for most of the weekend in:
 - a) Hot pink thermals.
 - b) Silk paisley PJs.
 - c) A French dairy maid's outfit.
 - d) A straight jacket.
4. Who was tied to the ladder in 1993 for being a noisy, obnoxious drunk?
 - a) Kate.
 - b) Anton.
 - c) Richard.
 - d) Nicki.
5. Which of the following words best describes Steve Bird's version of 'cross-dressing' in 1994?
 - a) Elegant.
 - b) Utterly obscene.
 - c) Pretty.
 - d) Stylish.
6. Where is the old key to the cellar in the hut?
 - a) In a drawer.
 - b) In an envelope.
 - c) In the filing cabinet.
 - d) Don't know - See 7.
7. What heavy item did Richard carry up in his pack in 1994?
 - a) Boltcutters.
 - b) Medicine textbooks.
 - c) A RAK Designs billboard.
 - d) Anouk.
8. In 1993, the Midnight Ascent lacked which of the following items?
 - a) People.
 - b) Snow.
 - c) Russel's group.
 - d) Food.
9. The moral to the Anouk/ Lara/ Richard 1994 OXO cake is:
 - a) Too many cooks spoil the broth.
 - b) Don't count your chickens before they hatch.
 - c) Don't put all your eggs in one basket.
 - d) Blue, red and green cake looks great but tastes bad.

10. At the Midnight Ascent, Dave Burnett is generally renowned for:

- a) Playing groovy stuff on the guitar on Saturday night.
- b) His enormous eagerness to practice self-arresting on the summit, no matter what the weather.
- c) A minimalist approach to clothing on the walk down.

11. In 1994 it was unwise to spend too long in the loft due to the risk of:

- a) Carbon dioxide poisoning.
- b) Heat exhaustion.
- c) Aggravating the sloths.
- d) All of the above

ALL CORRECT ANSWERS MAY GO INTO A DRAW TO WIN A FREDDO FROG IF I'M FEELING GENEROUS.



Labertouche Caving.

by Fred Watson, May 1992.

Think of a cave. What is it like? Has it got stalagmites and stalactites? Maybe helectites and beautifully coloured minerals? No? How about huge resounding caverns? Bottomless pits? Crystal clear waters? Batmobiles?

The cave at Labertouche has got none of the above, country to a few of the expectations and hopes of our party of first time cavers led by Phil Towler and Jane. But, hey, who cares. We still got to climb, slide, squeeze, grovel, contort and calisthensize our way through the mud, grit, icy water, and size eight holes in the rock! Labertouche is a granite cave. It boils down to a four hundred long pile of round granite boulders each about two metres in diameter. Most of the gaps between these boulders are filled with dirt mud and rocks, but some are filled with air and water enabling game speleologists to get around. Apart from tiny wriggly blue specks known as glow worms, there is no natural light in the cave, hence it is very hard to have a sense of direction. It soon became clear to us that Jane and Phil had evolved some form of acute telepathic mental navigation system that enabled them to lead us through this labyrinthic three dimensional underground environment.

On first entering, the way was relatively trouble free. However, as one nears the middle cave, all the little channels and chambers turn into cracks and alcoves. The progression culminates in a bent bottleneck. One by one, we gleefully stuck our heads through the hole whilst kneeling in the stream. An arm followed. Then a shoulder, and another. Then all the boys were thankful they weren't girls as their chests barely slid through the course constriction. I'm not aware of how the girls managed, but somehow they did. After chests, waists easily followed only to be followed by hips. Luckily, the way ahead seemed more inviting than having your leg freeze off in the stream behind you. Somehow, all of our w eight problems were miraculously overcome as we were finally excreted from this orifice into the bowels of the cave. This new world looked uncannily identical to the one before-constricting, muddy, wet...

Roughly three hours after embarking on our bold subterranean journey, we encountered the ladder out. Strangely, we were having so much fun that we decided to continue past the exit down the aptly signposted 'Lover's Lane'. We leapt back into the stream, under a boulder, along a bit, under a really low boulder where you had to hold your breath and then into, yes, you guessed it, another tiny cavelet. Always willing to seize every opportunity for the ridiculous, we undertook the first (?) "cave cram" in MUMC history. For the record, I think it was six of us who formed that intimate group.

There are many adverse adjectives that may be used to describe the feelings one has whilst caving at Labertouche. But, we had brought high spirits with us, a secret weapon that served us to the end.

Reminiscences Of One And Forty Nine Years Of Club History.

By Steve Carter. July 1993.

Looking back through the club history, it would be possible in places to change a few dates and names and you would have a description of the club as it is today. Something's just haven't changed. For example, Niall Brennan, the club founder, recorded in the first annual report (1945) his disappointment concerning the lack of women on trips, and the lack of beginners on trips organised especially for them.

Some may think that the club membership has been particularly high over the past few years, however the membership of the club was 561 in 1965. The proportion of active members has always been substantially less. The number of active bushwalkers in 1968 was estimated at 216. In 1969 and 1970, the club did not accept membership fees at the O-week stand, but instead handed out a map showing where the clubrooms were. Those that found the club rooms were thought more likely to be active members.

While those involved in building and crane climbing probably felt they were breaking new ground in the early '90s, the original Wilson Hall was climbed on a Saturday night in 1951 by Bill Bewsher, Faye Kerr, and Bruce Graham. They left an enamel jerry pot on the spire. Around this time, an ascent of the Ormond clock tower was abandoned just below the summit, leaving a wooden ladder on the roof and a jerry pot (some sort of obsession) hanging from the spire. In 1966, Ringwood police were not impressed when club members climbed the Ringwood Clock Tower after a club dinner dance at "The Cuckoo".

There have always been club debacles. In 1962, an expedition to Ball's Pyramid off Lord Howe Island failed as the climbers became sea sick on the boat to the island and then heavy swells prevented landing. The climbers spent their time on Lord Howe snorkelling and socialising instead.

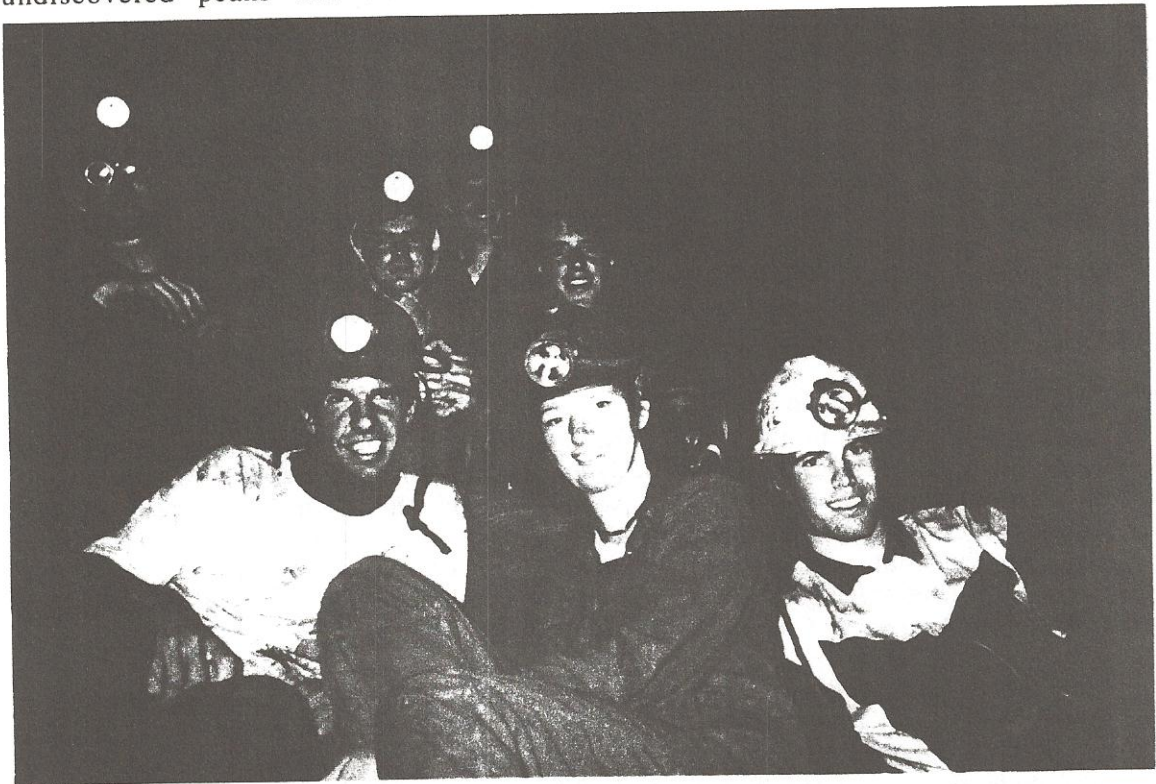
Club factions have come and gone. A climbing group threatened to split the club in 1963 and a paddling group threatened to leave in the late 1980's. Thankfully, nothing came of these altercations.

Something's definitely have changed. While Niall Brennan originally proposed that "the club does not propose to organise tours for large parties", the running of beginners trips soon became the a key to club activity. Trips to Wilsons Promontory ranged in size from 4 people in 1961 to 80 in 1965, and in 1972 almost the entire club went there (175 people).

In the 50's and 60's, club rockclimbers were amongst the leaders in their sport. However, with the enormous growth of climbing, it has become increasingly difficult to lead the field. Climbing has now become a full time occupation for those at the top. The commitments of study and work keep many club members resigned to being weekend enthusiasts.

Similarly, although the club was the driving force behind the creation of the Victorian Climbing Club, Search and Rescue, and the evolution of Rogaining/Orienteering, the growth of each of the above meant that the club has played an increasingly smaller part in their respective organisations.

The scope of club trips has been expanding ever since the clubs inception. Many of the first bushwalks were around Healesville, Hurstbridge, and the Cathedrals. Gradually, the Grampians, Wilsons Promontory and even the Flinders Ranges were explored. It became a challenge to find virgin walks and the club moved its focus to South West Tasmania. New Zealand was tackled soon after by rockclimbers /mountaineers and Antarctica has always been highly regarded. Today, club members go further afield to Nepal, India, and South East Asia, while New Zealand has been rediscovered by the paddlers. There is still plenty of exploring to do among India's and South America's undiscovered peaks and rivers.



Midnight Ascent 1991.

by Andrew Roberts, October 1991.

Tom Kneen showed great originality in 1969 by holding the first Mt. Feathertop Dinner with black tie, four course meal, and bottles of wine. He was also clever enough to think of a trip that demonstrated the spirit of MUMC. His trip had a bit of everything: a touch of adventure by walking up the NW spur of Mt. Feathertop at night; and the social nature of the club by having a special dinner. By making the occasion black tie, it also added the crazy element-an important part of adventure. Tom Kneen also demonstrated great hope for the club when he included the words 'first annual' on the invitation.

I was greatly honoured to lead this year's "Midnight Ascent", as it has now become known. I also saw it as the ultimate way to test a suggestion made to me by an MUMC member earlier this year. This person suggested that the club may be losing its all important club spirit. I felt I would be able to tell if his concerns were valid, judging by the success of this popular weekend.

His concerns were totally unnecessary. From the start, the 1991 Midnight Ascent was bound to be a success. Throughout the year, leaders had advertised extensively for the trip. I remember listening to Nick Gust say to every new member that he signed up for O-week, "If there's one trip you go on this year, it's Midnight Ascent". The result was outstanding. Seventy-eight names appeared on the trip sheet, all trying for a space on the trip with a limit of 36.

Thirty-seven people arrived at the Trout Farm on Friday 23rd of August. To the best of my knowledge, this is the largest group of people ever to undertake the Midnight Ascent in the 22 year history of the event. The people ranged from new members on their first club trip, to longstanding, highly committed members of the club. The majority of the Committee was present on the trip.

Not only was it one of the largest Midnight Ascents, but it must also have been one of the coldest as well. Some members of the Melbourne University Meteorology Department were concerned about us. An antarctic air mass lay over the ranges, producing snow down to 500m! Little did they know how warm one becomes when ascending the Tom Kneen Track. This was especially the case this year, with large snow drifts to be encountered just past the 'steep descent' sign, a third of the way up. It made for very tiring 'plugging' at 4am in the morning. The good thing was that no-one had to stop and rest until daylight, and everyone was in the hut by 7am.

On Saturday night, everyone went to a lot of trouble to make sure the party was a success. Nearly everyone dressed up properly in black tie. Others, namely Michael Bethune-alias "Mad Mike", just wore dead chickens around their necks. The obvious alternative!

The menu was exceptional. One of the more exotic of the entries was Richard Kempton's pork satay sticks. Main course saw an array of gourmet delights. Jane Frohlich and Tom Bevan's efforts were consolidated when the president of the club, Dave Kjar, ceremoniously cut their OXO-man cakes. Nick Gust's Gluhwein was the final addition to a perfect evening.

We may all rest assured that the club spirit is alive and kicking. We are indebted to Tom Kneen for his wonderful sense of fun 22 years ago. I wish to

thank all those who came, for making the weekend an undoubted success, and especially the leaders for taking care of their groups so well.



Feathertop Ski Trip 25-26 July.

By Steve Carter, September 1992.

Arriving at 1am on Saturday morning at the trout farm in Harrierville, it was generally agreed we should walk up to the MUMC hut via the NW spur that night. Most of us were too tired to judge the ramifications of this decision at the time!

As we walked past the trout farm, listening to the dogs barking and imagining salivating Doberman Pincers urged on by the farmer and his shotgun, Nick Gust was startled by one of the dogs nudging at his legs. Fortunately it wasn't after his flesh, and the border collie, smelling strongly of all sorts of farm smells, decided that we were obviously more fun than chasing sheep and refused to let us out of its sight. After two creek crossings, and by the time we reached the snowline, we realised that this mutt was serious about his weekend trips! It soon became obvious that the dog knew the way in the dark better than we did. The mutt would run ahead 20m then stop and wait for us, always on the track even when it became snow covered. The dog's excitement increased as we neared the hut. We were worried that it would die of hypothermia, or worse still, one of us might have to share a sleeping bag with it.

The fog, sleet, and heavy snow on Saturday afternoon did little to encourage moving from a warm sleeping bag, however, we eventually made it out and decided to try for the summit. The dog of course was not to be left out and our respect of the insulative properties of fur grew as he bounded through snow up to his neck. We traversed our way across the slope avoiding the ridge, and slowly zig-zagging our way to the top. Never having been to the summit, and with visibility limited to 20m, we had little idea how far from the top we were. Some of the group had little idea of how steep the slope we were climbing was either, which they admitted later was probably a good thing! As we reached the somewhere near the top, the soft snow turned slowly to ice, it began to sleet in Ernest, and with our turn around time approaching, we headed down, the summit unreachd.

Descent took the form at first of cautious traverses along our ascent tracks. Once it was realised that the soft snow cushioned most falls, a more sophisticated crash and burn technique was used. Skis were pointed downhill, turning was put aside as an unnecessary energy waste, and warp speeds were reached. The futility of turning was demonstrated by Dave Wilson who attempted a jump turn with the upper portion of his body but unfortunately left his legs behind. This resulted in some painful anatomical difficulties around the knee area. Cathy Sealy's efforts culminated in a spectacular slide over a rocky drop, much to the horror of the spectators. Not long after leaving the summit, the fog cleared and revealed to our annoyance that our tracks were less than 50m from the top!

A cloudless night on Saturday resulted in a freezing nights sleep for those who thought the hut would be warm and didn't bother to bring a decent sleeping bag. A special meeting was called around 11pm to discuss the temperature and it was generally agreed that it was Damned Cold!

The overnight temperature meant the snow on Sunday was rock hard. Skiing past the hut, I stumbled and was surprised to continue sliding on my stomach into a tree. The perfect sunshine was encouragement enough to make another summit attempt. The snow was too icy to attempt the traverse we had taken on Saturday, as the slopes below contained rocks and trees, so a route on the hut side of the ridge was taken. The open slope leading to the summit had a thin centimetre cover of wind blown snow on the ice which made the side stepping relatively easy. I followed these patches of snow until they ran out and stamping steps into the ice with skis was then necessary. Eventually the ice became too hard and corrugated for even this, and I was halted 20m from the top. Two people with ice axes and crampons walked above me on the ridge and were surprised to see me standing tentatively below. I was tempted to take my skis off and kick steps, but as they were the only thing that would stop me if I slipped, I decided not to. The dog, which had followed me, was not to be stopped by a few patches of ice and excited by the two mountaineers, headed on to the summit.

After launching into my first turn, I discovered that although I could control my speed, I couldn't stop. Further down however, the thin cover of windblown snow and smooth slope made for magic skiing. The creek at the bottom had turned into a perfect U-pipe and I felt like a skater going from one bank to the other.

The dog became lonely on the summit, and its usual silence was broken by some distressed whines. It was not until Nick shouted some encouragement that the dog was brave enough to head off the edge and slide/tumble its way down. What a mutt!

Cathy, Nick and Dave were keen to ski, so we found a gentle slope that was completely free of trees and rocks and ended in a smooth creek gully, in case anyone should fall. Dave set off first and one turn later, had completed most of the slope on his back. Cathy's confidence took a similar plummet. Both eventually made it into the creek gully where it was Cathy's turn to slide 100m down the creek. Dave was inspired by this, and not to be outdone, headed off to join her. A worried look must have crossed his face as his speed increased despite self arresting with both poles. Those in the creek watched his trajectory with worried self interest, but Dave's rapidly improving self arrest techniques won the day.

Confidences shattered, we made our way tentatively back to the main ridge having to kick steps over one traverse that had too many trees below to safely ski. By the time we reached the hut, it was agreed by all that a fantastic time had been had, slides and slips already being exaggerated in typical MUMC fashion. Wowsers, what a weekend!

SAFETY NOTE: Firm packed and icy snow can be deceptively dangerous. Falls can be difficult to stop, with disastrous consequences if rocks and trees are below. If you do start to slide, try to stop immediately by using the base of your pole, one hand near the basket and the other higher up. Always get your legs below you as a buffer zone in case you hit something.

Random OXO notes.

June, 1988.

- They're trying to take away our clubrooms! The Sports Union is planning to demolish the clubrooms to build boat storing facilities. The options available to us include: 1) Fight like hell to get the SU to abort the plan;
- 2) Fight to get the room under the board room as gear store and a meeting place for lunchtimes; and
- 3) Move the kayaks from under the oval scoreboards and into the new buildings where the clubrooms are now, and use that room as the new clubrooms.

The fight has just begun.

- Mel and Antony have accepted the East Gippsland Coalition's invitation to drinks with David Bellamy before the premier screening of the EGC's new film, 'Carolyn and the Frog', which MUMC was one of the guarantors for.

- That essential fashion accessory for the environmentally sound, young MUMC about town-trowels-are now available in the gear store and the boat shed. The trowels are made of metal so they can dig the requisite 15cm down into even the hardest surface. Every trip should have one!

- The latest fashion in the Tasmanian hut logbook graffiti is to change the numerous OXO signed entries into POXO...

- With a great surplus of food left over from the 24hr walk (as well as a \$500 debt), the club's organising a BBQ for the start of next term. Keep an eye out for details.

- The merging of Melbourne Uni and MCAE should see a boost in the number of MUMC members and hopefully a corresponding increase into Sports Union Funding.

- After intense deliberations, the activity codes for bushwalking, rockclimbing, kayaking and cross country skiing are more or less finished. The codes were requested by the Sports Union for each of the "dangerous" clubs after an Underwater Club diver died on a trip.

- The club has received yet another renewal of registration for the famous trailer that we don't own! The previous committee went as far as signing a statutory declaration to prove the non-existence of the trailer, but nothing seems to have got through to the Sports Union. To quote the minutes from the last committee meeting: Michael Lynn (the relevant SU person) has the mind of a duck!

- Amalgamation with Mulga Bill's Bike Club (with their one pathetic bike) has been universally rejected by the committee.

A Blue Mountains Easter.

By Dave Burnett, October 1991.

"I wanna know, have you ever seen the rain...?"

-Credence Clearwater Revival.

Why? Why? Why?

Why would anyone leave the fair fine fields of Victoria to wallow in the thundery misty mush north of the border to undertake such a weather-dependent sport such as rockclimbing, especially with petrol prices (and the road toll) approaching the astronomic? Dave Burnett, Megan Rush, Rohan Schaap, Mike Gidding, Maree Snell, and Mark Trupp were determined to find out, rain or no rain, money or no money. After all, Arapiles last Easter had proved just too heavenly-brilliant sunshine, friendly people, magnificent climbing. This year a new challenge was required, lest they fall into the lazy decadence of the Arapiles-born, too contented to crawl out of the hammock and stagger up yet another three star classic.

Mike, being a Sydney lad, and always on the lookout for a chance to stretch the legs of his bullet grey SAAB, tempted them with glowing reports of the Blueys; lovely orange sandstone, steep and exposed, just like Arapiles though perhaps needing a few million more years to prevent the occasional broken hold. The words 'easy access' and 'lots of bolts' also rang true in their weary brains. So off they went.

Leaving Thursday evening, two cars crawled their way up the Hume car park with much of the rest of the Melbourne motoring traffic. What a joy is Euroa, where the two lane freeway peters out into a single pock marked track, siphoning the travelling hoards, our heroes amongst them, past endless servos and snack bars, finally releasing them with a pop at the other side of town where the super road begins again. Michael discovered why travelling in convoy with anyone, especially Rohan, is a bad move as he fumed away at the Shell servo at the *far* end of an obscure town while Rohan and the other occupants of the Magna counted cars for an hour at the Shell servo at the *near* end (one every 2 seconds).

The bleary-eyed occupants of a SAAB and a Magna rolled into the mist shrouded Blue Mountains at about 10:00am the next morning, not at all fired up for a day's climbing. Never-the-less, Mike showed the way to the fabled Mt Piddington, where the access road was closed due to the threat of an overhanging block. It was decided that it would be safe to walk the 300m to the descent track. Miraculously, the block remained in place.

After settling in to the luxurious camping cave, and fighting over who got the modicum of privacy around the corner ("You won't need it Rohan"), our heroes trundled off down to the base of the spectacular Wirindi Cliffs. Mike, the only fully-compos one among them, set off up the two starred Curtain Call (18). While this was going on, Dave was coaxed into attempting Bumbly Bites Back (20), promptly falling at the tiny but technical roof at about two-thirds height. As Mike sowed up the thin seam on his route with no less than 10 runners, Rohan had a shot at BBB, racing up to the roof but also failing to reach the top section, despite his usual 17 attempts. Excuses were then exchanged between the pair, while Megan zotted off with Maree to attempt Abra Cadabra (14) before darkness fell. It did, but she didn't, but nor did she get up the route.

Now that it was dark, the return to the camping cave was going to prove exciting. Rohan impressed everyone with his awesome navigational skills, finding a cave he had been in for only 45 minutes, in an area he had never been to before, in total darkness, without falling off a cliff or into a creek (unlike Mike).

Next morning, surprise, surprise, it was raining. After hauling all their gear back to the cars, a decision had to be made. Sydney or the Bush. In the end, the younger members of the party (Rohan, Maree, Dave and Megan) stayed for some peak bagging, while a Mike and Mark went off to Mt. York.

Having found a description of the climb up one of the three sisters in the local climbing store, the fabulous four parked the Magna in the closest Bus Zone and racked up. Onlookers began to gather as the day glow pink rope came out of the rope-bag, and a belay was prepared by wrapping a couple of slings around the guard rail post. Boldly and boisterously shrugging off the grasps of the crowd and the flashing of camera bulbs, Dave ascended the super-exposed overhang in fine style. One old dear turned to her companion at this point and whispered tersely, "He ought to come down before he hurts himself!" Slamming the protection into the rock, Dave scorched up the corner to reach the top of the climb and got a round of applause from the crowd. It was like climbing at the MCG or the Penguin Parade. What a circus.

Megan was first to follow, milking the crowd for all it was worth with the occasional strenuous grunt, nervous "Take in!", or mournful cry. "You'll make it up no worries", Megan called down to a nervous Maree. The show went on. Silence fell as Maree took to the rock, shaking her way over the overhang. She tottered up the corner and received another round of applause and cheering as the rain began to dribble.

Finally, Rohan roped-up. Bounding up to the overhang, the crowd caught a mischievous gleam in his eye. What was in store for this closing act? Reaching for the jugs at the roof, Rohan showed them by letting fly with one arm and both legs and dangling into space with one hand. What a lair! The video cameras went wild. Zoom, zoom. Ridiculous. So Rohan too received his applause, leaving only one question unanswered; why had Dave received less than the others? Perhaps it had something to do with those lycra tights...

That night was spent in the Imperial Hotel at Mount Victoria. Rohan saw his first poker-machine and promptly got a look in his eye akin to that of a child on Christmas morning playing with his new Scalectrix set. After the money ran out, the waterlogged Victorians chose to engage in more leisurely pursuits such as dominos and darts, the latter with some trepidation given Rohan's reputation for causing serious injury whenever he attempted this dangerous combination of hand/eye coordination and alcohol abuse. Mark demonstrated what he learnt during his Geology Honours year by streaking to the front, only to be overhauled on the last throw by Mike, who proceeded to put on the finest display of gloating seen in many a year.

Sunday was a day of champagne rock climbing, dawning bright and warm with only a little high cloud. Mike roped up for an attempt of the oddly named Ablutions (19), finding no difficulty in surmounting the reach-problem crux. Rohan found the climb of his dreams, Resonance (18), with a low bouldery crux situated right next to a whopping great bolt. Megan, not to be outdone, gave it a shot herself, and although taking a little longer than Rohan, claimed her highest lead to date.

Suitably warmed up, Mike headed for one of the Blue Mountains greatest: the steep and strenuous Exhibition Wall (21). This mega-route provided a solid test of Mike's nerve and skill as it offered few rests and little climbing below grade 19. After a route finding problem with the start, and hence a fall or two, Mike powered up the remainder of the wall in fine style, impressing all concerned. Now the big test! Rohan seconded Mike and had falls at the start and at the end. If Dave could remove that final fall (a fall at the first crux was considered inevitable, and it was), then Rohan would concede that Dave was the better climber of the two. Well, with such a prize on the line, there was little Dave could do but throw himself madly at the rock in his glorious fight for supremacy. So determined was he to make the final move cleanly, that he fell twice in the wall instead. With their climbing appetites whetted, the Serious Six decided to make camp that night at Cosmic County, the hard persons cliff of the Blue Mountains. Hard too on the exhaust system. Rohan scraped his on the drive down the access track and Mike only avoided the same fate by making Mark and Megan get out and walk in the rain to reduce the weight of the ridiculously low-slung SAAB.

The next morning it was pissing down again, and the ugly subject of sightseeing in Sydney vs. granite came up again. The drivers won the day and the cars headed westwards, away from the glittering lights of Sin City that shone (if rather damply) in the sad eyes of Mark and Dave, toward the unknown terrors of one more windswept extrusion of crystallised hell.

Tarana: not unlike the You-Yangs. Very cold and damp. Dave told everyone he was going to stay in the car, but changed his mind when this appeared to increase, rather than dampen, the party's enthusiasm. After lunch, Maree and Rohan just 'sat' by the fire, a wise move given Dave's estimation of the temperature as a little more than Antarctic but not as warm as icy.

With the weather on Tuesday still disgusting, the three M's decided to accompany the others as far as Yass and then decide whether to accompany them to Melbourne or head to Canberra, climbing more granite. The route south of Tarana passed through Bathurst with inevitable results. Maree shut her eyes as Rohan, directed by Dave, thundered the overloaded family wagon around the Mt. Panorama racing circuit. The sunny weather further south prompted the M-Mobile (which had not participated in the childishness on the Mountain) to say its farewells and head for Booroomba in the A.C.T.

Thus ended the Blue Mountains Easter Epic. No-one died and Rohan didn't even get booked (although the speed-camera prints may well be in the mail). All credit to Mike for his inspired leadership, Rohan for his startling good-nature, Maree for her enthusiasm and humour, and Megan and Dave for not fighting all weekend.

Wet Dreams and Dry Reaches.

by Rodger Grayson, February 1989.

With the Nymboida behind us, Dave, Tony, Rob, Joc, Ali and I headed further north to Rockhampton for some sea kayaking through the Keppel Is. The drive north was punctuated by a gastronomical interlude of majestic proportions. Tony's sister had kindly offered to store the river boats and excess gear. As payment for the privilege, she felt compelled to put on a fabulous spread from which it was difficult to extricate ourselves. But extricate ourselves we did, and Ali, Tony and I decided to drive straight through leaving Rob and the others to grapple with a Basil Fawltly protege at a Toowoomba caravan park.

Organising a sea kayaking trip is no trivial task and this one was no exception. Boats for hire are difficult to come by and some knowledge of the local dangers, weather and sea conditions needs to be obtained. This was all done prior to leaving Melbourne, but a spare day in Rockhampton gave us a chance to suss out the local knowledge. The local dive shop operator took great delight in vividly describing the giant coral snakes that just lurve curling themselves around the legs of southern snorkelers, and of course about the stingers and the sharks. Sharks were no real problem, but the stingers were as a number of people had been stung during the summer. No problem to shameless MUMC members - pantyhose were the answer. Never a sexier sight did one see and Ali and Joc had to be restrained.

We'd organised with a local sea kayaker, John Hughes, to hire some proper sea kayaks for Rob, Joc, Tony and Dave (2K1's and a K2- the mean machine!). His help in organising the trip was fabulous and he, his son, and another local, Brian, joined us for the trip.

From Rocky, we collected our boats and headed to Emu Park on the coast where we had a few days to get gear organised and battle the plague of Green Tree Frogs. This also gave us a chance to begin our transition into Nth. Qld. mode. Essentially this consisted of eating, sleeping and moving very slowly. We decided that any one day could contain only one stint of physical activity, be it paddling, snorkelling, walking short distances or throwing a polo ball. Any more than this was likely to cause serious heart damage - we stuck to this rigorous regime religiously.

The trip we'd planned consisted of island hopping the Keppel group from south to north and back again, spending two nights at each of three islands and one night on a fourth prior to our return. This allowed us time to explore each of the areas and minimised the agony of watching Joc and Rob pack their boats! The main island group is 10 to 15 km offshore, and for our first crossing we decided to stop off at Pelican Island about 5km from the coast. This offered some protection and left 10km of more exposed water to the Keppel Is. proper. It was Rob and Joc's first sea outing and a memorable one it was! Butterflies in the stomach decided flight was in order and the sweet smell of chunder filled the air as we snuck out from behind the shelter of Pelican Island. We decided Joc would be better off in the K2 with Tony, while Rob decided to soldier on. The change over of Dave for Joc was carried out at sea by rafting up the boats. Joc's antics in joining the raft were somewhat akin to watching the QEII berth, with sea kayaks proving a little less nimble than the river boats. Dave and Tony pined for each other for a while as Joc had split up a truly beautiful relationship, but they soon recovered and we were off on the first of eight fantastic days.

The islands are generally small cliffs along the eastern coast and small beaches separated by rocky headlands on the west. Vegetation is mainly coastal scrub with some pandanus palms and she oaks behind the beaches. These made ideal camping areas with the sea breeze keeping down the worst of the sandflies and mozzies, but not so the possums, which were over friendly on one island in particular. Fresh water was scarce on most of the islands, although the rain prior to our trip had filled some of the higher rock pools to form great fresh water baths.

The snorkelling off the islands was terrific with coral and fish in abundance - even the odd sea snake to keep things interesting. John decided that a night dive was in order, so Rob and I joined John and Glen in our after five wear. Rob looked stunning in his pantyhose with matching cotton shirt topped off with fine imported (Taiwan) rubber boots, while I donned a particularly slinky lycra body suit! Diving at night was terrific fun and a little eerie with only a shaft of light from the torch to see by.

Days were spent exploring rock pools, avoiding sunburn, sleeping, watching crabs, eating, watching Joc impersonating crabs, sailing the sea kayaks (great fun, especially in the K2), and occasionally even paddling. Paddling between islands gave opportunity to see giant turtles (whose breeding ground is on one of the islands) and flying fish. Rob and Joc saw some dolphins and, allegedly, the shadowy figure of an eight foot shark. Nights were spent sleeping, watching satellites and shooting stars, eating and of course sleeping. Never have so many slept for so long! The locals showed us up by late nights and early mornings, with their extra time spent fishing. Given that no fish were caught, I preferred our option.

One day we decided to drop in on Great Keppel Resort - a truly jolting experience. This was probably the most dangerous paddling we did, with speed boats towing skiers, speed boats towing parachutes, speed boats towing inflatable bananas, yachts towing dinghies, low flying planes, helicopters, and ferries from the mainland making for somewhat cluttered paddling conditions - not to mention the swimmers and sun lovers slowly frying themselves. Needless to say, we didn't stay long, just long enough for Rob and Dave to don their reflective glasses and practice the time honoured art of perving.

Most mornings began late, and of course slowly, but on one occasion, yells from the water of "does your radio work" dragged us from the land of nod. We grabbed the portable CB and poked our heads out of the tent to see a trawler on the rocks 100m offshore with another motoring around a little further away. There is almost 4m of tidal difference around the Keppels, so running aground at high tide leaves you well and truly out of the water when the tide drops. Apparently the skipper had fallen asleep and run onto the rocks about 3am. We paddled out to poke fun at them and see if there was anything they wanted other than a large hole into which they could crawl. We took some pics for them, dropped an anchor and returned to shore to watch and eat. Luckily, there was no damage and by 10am the tide was high enough to refloat - all rather comical really.

John and Brian decided to head for home a day early, while Glen had already left a few days previously for a party in Rocky, so there was just six of us for the remainder of the trip. The weather had been superb with light winds and low swells but the locals must have known something! The weather report was for a weak southerly change with little change in the sea conditions. As it turned out, The afternoon brought a fantastic display of thunder and lightening in the western sky as a powerful front approached. The wall of rain racing across the sea from the mainland was an awesome sight but the fresh water was welcome. Sunset came in the aftermath of the rain and the glowing colours of the layered clouds were magnificent. While watching the sunset, we discussed what we should do. The weather was calm following the storm so a night crossing would have ensured easy paddling but visibility was not too good. The weather report for the next day was for winds increasing with a warning of 25-30 knot winds and 2-3m swells, but at least we'd be able to see each other and it gave us a chance to eat and get some sleep. We aimed to leave at sunrise, hoping to beat the worst of the weather, but it came earlier than expected and we ended up crossing when it was at its worst. Nevertheless, the crossing was great fun and a real roller coaster ride. Rob and Joc proved they'd gained their sea legs with not a sign of chopped carrots. There were plenty of whoops of delight as we shot up the face and down the back of the passing swell. We couldn't have hoped for a better way to end a fabulous trip.



Vietnam.

by Amber Mullens, July 1994.

In March and April, Rohan Schaap and I went walking in Cambodia and Vietnam. These are a few tips for anyone who thinks they might like to walk there in the future. Actually, writing an article of this nature is really just a cover-up of what a debacle our walking trip was.

1) Don't even think about walking in Cambodia. When we were there, it was O.K. as long as you stuck to well walked upon tracks. That is, of course, unless you were in Cambodia specifically to look for land mines, or you had some reason for wanting to separate your legs from the rest of your body. Now though, the Khmer Rouge has taken a liking to foreign tourists. This is a real shame because Cambodia is such a wonderful country. Great food, great beer (they have V.B. and the local brew is also made by Fosters), great people, and the ruins of Angkor are incredible.

2) Make sure you get a Vietnamese entry/exit card and customs declaration as you go through customs. Vietnam is a communist country and the Vietnamese love bureaucracy, but somehow Rohan and I managed to get in without any of these vital bits of paper, or even a stamp in our passport. We had a little bit of trouble leaving Vietnam, since we never officially arrived in the country to begin with.

3) Don't bother going to Dalat no matter how inviting the cooler climate may seem after Ho Chi Minh City. "Beautiful forests" they said. The Americans took care of them, and what they missed has been cut down to make room for domestic tourists. Dalat is a favourite Vietnamese honeymoon spot. "Wonderful waterfalls" they said. Well, I guess that depends if you like your waterfalls with little swan shaped pedalos, miniature sailboats, and Vietnamese dressed as cowboys. I'll have mine without thanks. "Great food" they said. Where was it? Thankfully the strawberries and the strawberry wine were good. Like good mountaineers, we wanted to walk up a mountain in the area and Mount Lang Biang (2500m) was our choice. "Too touristy" they said, "we'll take you to a beautiful non-touristy mountain nearly as high". What we walked up was a hill. A bald hill. We did talk to the bus load of Vietnamese students on the top though.

4) Following from point three, don't listen to any advice that the Vietnamese give you. If you know nothing at all, then you know infinitely more than them.

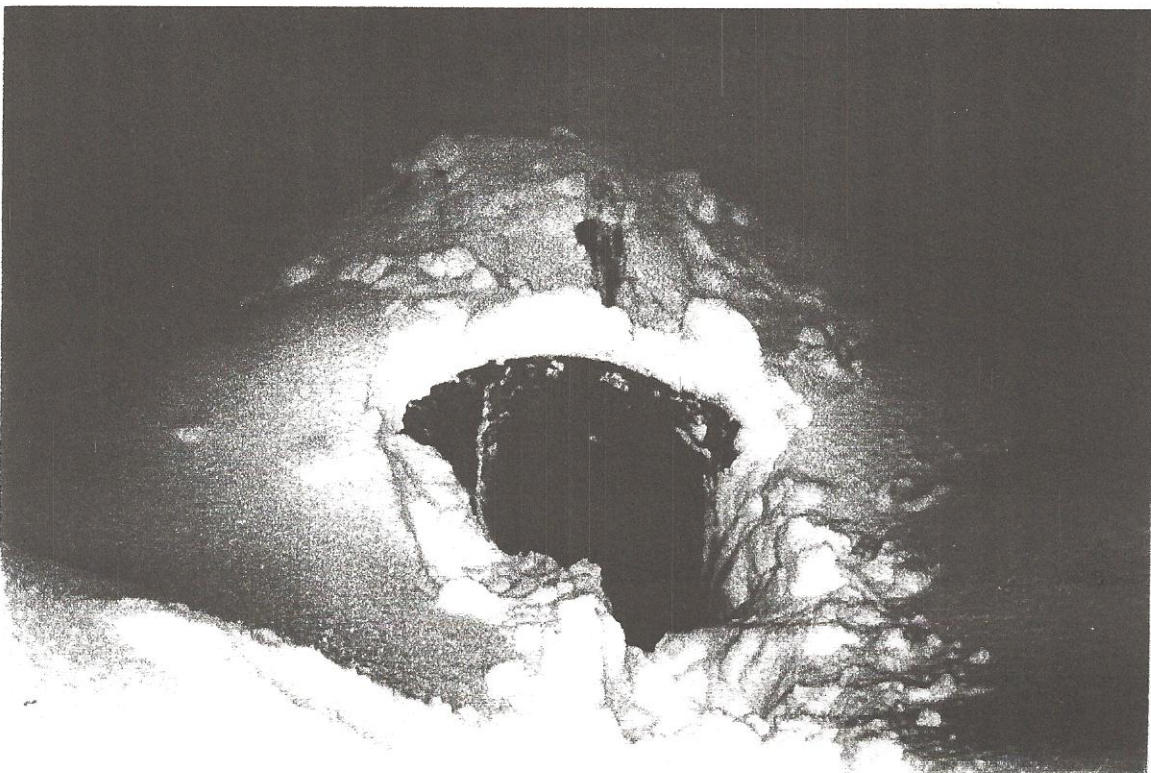
5) If you want to do some overnight walks, then head straight to the town of Sa Pa in the north near the Chinese border. Take with you everything that you might need, sleeping bag, tent, stove, and Australian food. There is no food at Sa Pa suitable for hiking, and this was our downfall. O.K., that and the stove. And the tent. And no map, but no-one has one of those. Remember that the birds ate Hansel and Gretel's crumbs so try something a bit longer lasting. The best walk would be to climb Vietnam's highest mountain, Mt. Phan Si Pan (4190m). We estimate that the trip to the summit and back would take 7 days in the warmer months. The mountain is only 30km away as the crow flies, but there's a lot of ups and downs and river crossings (watch out for those life-threatening bamboo bridges). We were told the walk takes between 2 and 14 days by different locals i.e. none of them have climbed it (see point 4). If you plan to be there in winter, then take your skis because it snows on Phan Si Pan.

For a lot of walks in the area, a tent is not needed because you will be able to sleep in Hmong Tribal villages although the local Vietnamese will tell you that you can't (see point 4). The Hmongs are what the Vietnamese call an ethnic minority. They also call them savages (see point 4 again), and treat them really badly. This group of people are absolutely gorgeous, so good that we were looking for a wife for Dr. Sex (club legend) amongst them. They all wear a wonderful navy blue embroidered costume and are friendly than even the Tibetans. The part that Rohan liked the most about them was that they are all only 5' 3" or less, so he felt like a giant. The Hmongs are very new to tourists and stare at you as much as you stare at them. Unfortunately they don't speak any other language except Hmong, so communicating with them is all in signals. If you manage to work out their hand signals for money values, then please let me know, I couldn't.

There are other ethnic minorities in the area besides the Hmongs but they are not as numerous. The most brightly coloured are the Daos with their big red hats. A day walk to one of their villages is worthwhile. We saw 4 other minority groups but never found out their names. It's best to be in Sa Pa for the weekend market to see them all.

6) If you want to see animals, Vietnam is not the place to go. Years of war, tonnes of defoliant, and the use of dried animal parts in traditional Chinese medicine, especially the bits that are supposed to give a longer erection (I guess that is in terms of space and time), have wiped out most of the animals. However, it seems that leeches are immune to agent orange, taste horrible, and do nasty things to the libido, because they are still around in large numbers. On our hike through Cat Ba National Park on Cat Ba Island, they were the only animals we saw. Most times we didn't even see them, but they sure tasted us.

So, go to Vietnam if you want to walk in the North with the Hmongs or you are a leechophile. It really was a great experience- we met some cool people and ate some yummy food, but watch that snake wine, it's lethal.



Conversation At Khankoban.

compiled by Dave Burnett, October 1991.

Pre-expedition quote:

Steve and Dave: "C'mon Phil, we're going to the Indi for a day trip."

Phil Towler: "I'm not coming. I am not insane."

6:35pm Saturday night. A petrol station.

Rafter: G'day.

Steve Carter: G'day.

Rafter: What've you been up to.

Steve: A bit of paddling.

Rafter: Yeah? Whereabouts?

Steve: The Indi.

Rafter: We've just been on the Indi (points over shoulder to a couple of full cars).

Steve: Yeah?

Rafter: We were rafting. It was enormous! We had to pull out 1km from the start.

It was just to huge. Really dangerous. Walked 10km to get out. What an

epic. I've never seen it so high. How'd you go?

Steve: Fine

Rafter: What were you in?

Steve: Kayaks.

Rafter: Fair dinkum? What type? High volume boats, I suppose.

Steve: No, plastic Reflexes.

Rafter: What!! At 1.6m! (Jaw hits the ground) So you paddled it yesterday?

Steve: No, this morning.

Rafter: So, where are the rest of you?

Steve: It's just the two of us (Dave Kjar)

Rafter: (Momentary shocked silence) How'd you car shuffle then?

Steve: We walked about 15km, then got a lift for the rest. It took about 5 hours.

Rafter: Wow. So, where are you off to now?

Steve: Melbourne. We're going to a party.

Rafter: Ahhh....Ummm...Really?

Steve: Yeah.

Rafter: Well...Ahh... Seeya.

Steve: See ya.



Feathertop-By Night!

It's Torture In the Mountains.

by Rob Sharrock, June

1988.

At 1pm on Friday night, four trekkers tired from a hard week's work and in need of a weekend in the fresh air and bush views, headed through the outskirts of Melbourne in a car loaded with supplies and packs. Our destination: Harrietville, 350km from Melbourne. We arrived and set up camp at 3am.

By 8:30am, Dave, Jim, Anthony and I were enjoying a hearty breakfast and packing up camp. It was fine weather with a little cloud and temperatures in the low 20s. It would be a warm day, although the top of Mt. Feathertop which was our goal, is renowned for quick weather changes. 10am saw us following the Stoney Creek Valley to the base of the North West Spur, which is a climb of two kilometres vertical over six kilometres. The trek up to MUMC memorial hut was very enjoyable, and as we made our way up, the views of the valley below and the neighbouring peaks and plateaus provided spectacular views.

On arriving at the hut at 3:15pm, we had a well earned cuppa and chatted to some of the other people there which included an original hut builder. The wind picked up considerably while Anthony and Dave completed the condition report on the hut for a maintenance weekend planned for late June. This caused some concern as our original plan was to camp on the summit. If it was blowing hard at the hut, it would be too strong to camp on top. This left us with three choices; (1) Stay the night at the hut, with a trip to the summit before dinner; (2) stay at the hut and walk out via the summit the next morning; or (3) take our packs now, leave them at the junction of the summit track, climb to the summit and back, than camp on the Razorback, which was part of our walk down Bugalow Spur.

After a quick selection of option 1 and a cry of "Let's do it!", we walked up the spur into increasing winds for 10 minutes before realising that this option meant we would have to walk this track three times and have to rise early the next morning to complete the walk down one of the spurs from the Razorback. In light of this, it was obvious that option 3 was the way to go. So again with the cry of "Let's do it!", we had a quick walk down the hut to collect our packs.

The evening sun bathed us in the most beautiful golden light as we arrived at the junction of the Razorback and summit tracks, where we dumped the packs and donned some protection from the wind, which was estimated to have reached gale force.

Our timing was excellent and we reached the summit after a 40min haul, just in time for sunset. It felt like an achievement reaching the summit in the wind that was buffeting us all the way up, so it was a group hug to say well done, a quick look at the view and then back down the track. Soon we were at our packs, sitting in a lee and watching the changing colours on Mt. Buffalo while munching on the snickers bars. So it was soon on with the packs and off to the next junction along the track to look for a campsite.

Bushdance; Come Veritable Bushwalk To Organs - Que?

November 1992

8.00pm- How much value can you pack into a Friday night? If you tried the bushdance, it was \$10. If you missed it, you wooed it.

8.30pm- Band starts playing fair dinkum, still only 4 people. With an expected crowd of 50, including OXO members, locals, club regs, and other "nice" people, a handful of people were wondering when the hell things were going to be turned up. Depression. *Sigh.*

8.45pm- Depression.

8.50pm- Depression.

9.00pm- Jane Frohlich says quite matter of factly "Oh, I've been here three years running and it always starts out like this". "Oh", replied the first year. Twiddle thumbs, flutter eyelids, wiggle ears. Then people arrive! Andy, Andy, Andy, Andy, Froberts, Waters, Gafster, Wettenhall, Dave, Dave, Dave and Dave.

10.30pm.- People are actually moving their bodies in rhythm to the band's music. Now things are alright. I do wish those two young ladies would have joined the main group - they were horse riders. Oh well, not to worry. Chips, dips, vegies, wedgies, beers, cheers, yahoo, aachoo (excuse me). I didn't know Bond's singlets were so popular these days. Now things were really rocking once people got up and boogied. Everyone surely lost a pint or two of sweat. Boy, warm work this dancing. No OXO members yet, which is a bit of a disappointment. Eugene the Bastard tells us that to shape a hat, put hot water on it and step on it, or better still, let the cows do it for you. Thanks for the advice.

With plate after plate of finger food served, Kate decided to kick up her heels like the poster said, and move those feet like there was no tomorrow. Nick G. turned up early, then left early. The room had a heating problem, one moment it would be nice and the next really warm, with the air conditioner on, off, on, off, on, off,- in fact the band were occasionally annoyed, but the gum leaves swayed in the current created. Just oh so natural. Despite the initial misgivings about how the night could have eventuated, all was now forgotten. Rob, EB, Janes, Andies, Daves, Rohan, Amber, Stu, Maddy, Tom, Pam, Lara, Kris, Tanya, Russell, the Edwards, Steves, Marina, Kates, Wilma, Tim, Sues, Cathy, John and a face or two you know but don't quite know their names. Apologies. Honestly, where else could you meet and talk to about 40 people in 7 minutes. Pretty good huh.

4.35am- Russell's place. After people had come and gone, wooed it, run out of booze because there were no bloody pubs and bars open, someone said, "Hey, let's go to the Organ Pipes". So we did. After breaking into the National Park (I've never heard of it done before), we sipped O.J. in the lovely mellowing sunshine on a rug, beside a gurgling stream, singing family classics and watching planes.

The Cardigan Walk.

Andrew Gaff, November 1992.

Notice of proposal:

Over the past few years, MUMC has been looking for solutions to the problems associated with growing student numbers and a lack of quiet areas where pedestrians can exist without being disturbed by motor vehicles and trams.

To this end (and others), MUMC has proposed the development of the Cardigan Walk OXO Memorial Theme park (CWOMTP, *silent 'p'*). No vehicles of any nature will be allowed in the designated area and this will include a UN enforced air exclusion zone. Since MUMC vehicles, by and large, are quite unnatural, they will be permitted. Four parallel parking lots will be retained in front of The Clubrooms between 1-2pm for lunchtime amusement.

The major features of this grand development will include:

*\$2.3b kayak slalom course.

- with crane for depositing kayaks at the start of the course.
- fully heated water for winter paddling.
- optional helmets with night-scope for night-time/ full eclipse paddling.
- a full range of settings beginning at novice and finishing with a course for those people who have just broken up with their partner and just do not want to go on.

*1500m high climbing wall.

- climbers can wear a belt with a magnetic field generator and tracking device fitted. If climbers fall, they will be tracked. If their trajectory is plotted as being life threatening, then an opposite magnetic field is activated and they will be levitated until they resume their pre-fall position. The generator can be used as a jump booster- dino like you've never dinoed before.

*2000km artificial cave system.

- complete reinforced concrete artificial geological phenomena built in.
- guiding beacons that may be activated at the caver's discretion simply by crying "help, I'm lost".

*3000m high artificial Mountain, Oxoberg.

- made of transparent materials to avoid shaping the shopping precinct.
- full range of skiing options available year round.
- 400 room resort.
- lifts in the centre for easy access.

MUMC committee believes this is an exciting initiative and are looking for tenders and investors.

Just around dark, we arrived at the crossroads, which was aptly named because it was a turning point on the trip. We were discussing camping at the crossroads, but shelter was sparse, so there were suggestions of camping at Federation Hut. On walking further along the Razorback, Dave said, "Let's go to the Harrietteville pub, we've got a couple of hours to do it". Two of us jokingly voiced our dissent, but then Anthony said a day tripper made it down in 25 minutes. The mood changed and it was almost an unspoken agreement so that we could hardly say, "Let's do it!", before we were off running down bungalow spur.

I still thought that we might have a change of mind as we came to Federation Hut, but it was less of a surprise to me, as to the Kew Bushwalking Club, to see four people run past the hut and off into the darkening bush, calling to each other to keep ourselves together and to point out obstacles on the track. As we pushed on with the twilight fading into dark and the bush closing in, the calling to each other became more intricate with each member numbering off in order and the calling out of logs or rocks across the track.

As we descended, the run (which was more like a Cliff Young shuffle) slowed to a fast walk and a couple of short breaks for munchies, water and clothing adjustments. About halfway down, the track became difficult to follow and a torch was brought out to confirm that we were on the track. Once we had used the torch, we had to keep using it because of the time it took our eyes to readjust to the natural light.

Some might think we were crazy, but the feeling of running down that spur in the dark, following a blur in front of me, where concentration and reactions had to be so quick one seemed to intuit where to step and move. It was incredibly exhilarating. I think we all wanted a challenge and to push ourselves. We didn't really anticipate a run down Bungalow Spur, but that was what presented itself. With warm clothes, food and tents, we could always bivvy for the night if we became too exhausted.

Eventually, with aching knees and ankles from the pounding of the downhill slog, we arrived at Harrietteville at 11pm. For me, a steady walk for the last kilometre was all I could manage, but Jim and Dave, with the taste of beer so close, managed a run. A pleasant chat over a beer or OJ was had before the 5km cool down walk (essential to stop legs from seizing) back to the car. When we made camp at the car, Dave cooked a stupendous meal of soup for starters, a main course of prawns, noodles, pineapple, cheese, and mushrooms, followed by cake and custard. Almost too much to eat, but we managed to get through it before crashing into our tents at 1am.



An Obsession.

by Dave Kjar, November 1992.

One thing that deeply distresses me when I hear the standard trip conversation about motor vehicles is the comment, *"As long as it gets from A to B"*. What could be more infuriating?

For a start, on most trips I have been on, it is generally considered a priority to get from A to B and then back to A again, occasionally via C. I'm sure knowledgeable people who know the types of trips I've been, will appreciate the importance of a timely veteran.

Aside from semantics, I genuinely believe that the driving fraternity of MUMC has gone to a great deal of trouble to create the proper impression for MUMC by the style of the car they drive. Too little thanks is given to this extraordinary achievement. I mean, really, who could forget the expression on Megan's face when she was made to walk two kilometres as her feet were too dirty to be placed inside a certain former club member's (he has been black listed) SAAB?

An astounding factor is the engineering competence and mechanical knowledge displayed by all members. No one I know would consider it amusing to carry around a 30cm wrench mere millimetres away from the fan belt for 6 months. Or for that matter, driving to Sydney with no oil or water in the engine and no air in the tyres.

I personally prefer cars that perform - a radical position versus the A to B philosophy. The important thing to remember though, and something I have always stuck by, is that if you can not afford a performance car, follow the twofold approach. (1) Buy some Pirellis for your shitbox.
(2) Drive other peoples fancy cars as fast as you can.



Winter Kayaking N.S.W. July 1991.

by Nick Gust, August 1991.

After a short break from the last kayaking trip, seven of us set out in search of BIG white water in N.S.W. Our plans included the Thredbo, Indi, Swampy Plains, Murrumbidgee and Goodradigbee Rivers, all in the vicinity of the Snowy Mountains and consequently very cold at this time of the year. Ultimately, each of these rivers were paddled except for the thredbo which didn't have enough water at the time.

The Indi (headwaters of the Murray) and the Swampy Plains were paddled first, providing technical paddling through gorge sections. Rounded granite boulders formed the majority of the rapids, with ferns down to the water's edge, towering gums on either side and snow on the main range. It was indeed spectacular, a reason in itself to be out there when the majority of people were sitting at home being winter couch potatoes. The water was crystal clear but icy cold, and numb fingers were the rule rather than the exception. The gorge walls were generally quite steep and rocky and any boat destruction or injury would require a difficult walk out through dense bush and over mountains.

After a day's rest while Dave Kjar got his clutch replaced in Corryong (following a tragic attempt to tow Nigel Prior's car up a hill), we headed off to Cooma and camped at a lookout. Dave woke us in the morning with tales of giant concrete mushrooms and gingerbread houses in the surrounding bush. He must have forgotten his medication that morning!

We paddled a short section of the Murrumbidgee next, and although it began with an extensive flat water paddle in, once the gorge was reached, the river character changed immediately into some considerable white water. A four metre waterfall was a definite portage, but prior to this was a two meter drop which looks impressive in the photos but was actually quite straight forward. Paddling waterfalls may seem a weird thing to do for some of you, and that's because it is. The heart pounds, the butterflies go ballistic and you point in the right direction and paddle.....SPLASH, you are at the bottom. What happened you wonder? Who knows, it was all over so fast!

That night after a few beers at the Cotter Pub, we slept under a picnic shelter in Cotter which, two days later, was under metres of flood water from the Murrumbidgee!

The last river we paddled was the Goodradigbee near Canberra, and it was by far the most difficult, being in flood conditions and previously unpaddled by anyone in our group. It is an alpine river with an extensive gorge and towering cliffs that we later climbed in order to avoid a monstrous grade 5 rapid. The river began with a series of grade 3 rapids and big waves and stoppers providing an exciting roller coaster ride. Then we reached the 6km long gorge and the solids really hit the fan!!! The water was continuous grade 4 with HUGE munchy stoppers, enormous waves and difficult lines to take between the boulders. At re-telling this part of the story, each of the paddlers concerned breaks into an incoherent frenzy of flailing arms and paddling language, but let it suffice to say that it was BIG, VERY BIG.

Walking In The Gammon Ranges.

by Stuart Dobbie, November 1992.

Morning. A crispy cold morning. I wriggle my sleeping bag towards the tent door and peer out. The sun is already high in the sky, and it will be yet another warm day soon. The others are already up, finishing breakfast and contemplating which nearby peak to climb before we leave. There is idle silly chatter about lazy bushwalkers who sleep in. Maddy Goldie wanders off in search of that perfect photograph. Predictably, nature calls, and I finally give in and crawl out of the tent. Yawn!

Packing. Why does it take so long to pack up? Why does it take me twice as long as everybody else to pack up? I must have twice as much gear. Maybe I should get up earlier tomorrow, so I get a head start? Tracey Mitchell tells me we're running out of dunny paper. Can we substitute chocolate powder? I've got kilograms of chocolate powder. Planning. Planning to bring the right gear in the right quantities. During all my tears of bushwalking, I have never, ever, got it right. Oh dear...it doesn't all fit. There is no room left. Well, maybe if I squish it up like this....There! Done. Packed. Tent? What tent? Oh, the tent we haven't pulled down yet.

Walking. Walking ahead at my own pace, enjoying the bush by myself. I have lost the rest of the group. I clamber up onto a rocky outcrop and search for them. Far in the distance, I can see them climbing the wrong mountain. I should have stayed with them, but it doesn't matter. They will find the right mountain in the end. Leadership. Thinking about the discussions we had in leadership weekend some months ago. I'm not the 'leader' of this group. I barely organised it. This group needs no leader. Out here, it's about letting go, letting them discover the wilderness for themselves. The others call out from the wrong mountain.

Rock hopping along the floodway. There is no water anywhere, just river rocks. I scramble up an embankment and out onto the stony plains. You can see far into the distance. I've lost the rest of the group again. They are somewhere back along the creek. Who cares....There is a hill ahead. I could walk around it. It stands alone, rising out of the plains like a statue, a tribute to this place. I have to climb it. No need for maps, you can walk anywhere out here, the scrub is sparse and open. Now I'm at the base, looking upwards. There is plenty of exposed rock and scree. Steady... It is slow progress across the scree. I stop for a rest half way up and notice that I'm being watched by a kangaroo not far away. It soon finds me uninteresting, and hops away down the slope, making my efforts to traverse the rock look pathetic.

Finally at the top. There is a cool breeze. This hill is the centre of a pound, and you can see peaks in every horizon. I can see Tracey below, she is starting to climb the hill as well. Julie Edwards and Maddy have scouted around the base. "I've found the track!", wails Maddy from below. I find it funny, considering up here I can see the track meander out across the yellow plains. All a matter of perspective, I guess.

An Icy Wilderness.

by Andrew Roberts, February 1993.

When Derek woke me, he already had the blow-torch like sound of the stove piercing the silence of the hut. The darkness played host to the beam of Derek's head torch. The time was 3:30am. I groaned as I lifted my back from the bunk. I should be used to alpine starts by now, I thought. The others in the Tasman Saddle Hut stirred in their sleep with the sound of Derek's whispering voice, "The freeze is good".

My head torch lit the worn floor boards of the hut as I made my way to the door, half dressed, to look outside. The sky was an array of stars. Surrounding peaks silhouetted the night sky in different shades of darkness. The head torches of four climbers could be seen wandering through the Tasman Glacier. They seemed to be approaching the hut. I returned inside and hurriedly finished dressing.

While finishing our breakfast, we heard the clank of ice tools and the crunch of crampons on frozen snow descending the final slope to the hut. The four climbers were Steve, Stuart, Alan and Dallich from Kelman Hut, about a kilometre away. They had left the hut at 1am to attempt three peaks at once; Mt. Green, Mt. Walter and Mt. Elie de Beaumont. They had decided to abort, somewhat shaken by a close shave with an avalanche. However, Steve wanted to return to attempt Green. The others didn't, so he joined us on a rope of three.

Soon, Derek, Steve and I were traversing the Tasman Glacier to the base of the ridge leading to Divers Col. The snow pack was frozen solid and only our crampons penetrated the surface layer. Zig-zagging our way through the crevasses, we soon reached the position where the Kelman Hut party had retreated. The first light of dawn played upon the iceblocks of debris that lay close by from the avalanche. This was not the place for a picnic. Above the debris, a cocktail of rock and ice cliffs stretched to the sky.

The three of us stood there for a moment, under the massive blueness of the Southern Alps, surrounded by snow and ice. A cool, gentle breeze touched our faces, a feeling of the frozen wilderness. We agreed on a route through the slots that would also pass the avalanche cones as safely as possible, in order to gain the South East Ridge to Divers Col. Having crossed many solid bridges and negotiated the shrund, we began to ascend the ridge. About a quarter of the way up, we stopped to unrope. Soloing seemed better. We made good time up the ridge. On the way, we were witness to a spectacular sunrise, lighting the surrounding peaks with a cold radiating orange. This one moment was worth all the danger in the world.

The final steep arete to the summit ridge was icy and hard. As we climbed higher, the slope turned to glass-ice. Only the front points of my crampons penetrated the ice. Wonderful climbing. The intensity of the activity was tremendous. If I fell..... Between my legs, I could see crevasses and rock cliffs disappearing off the side of the East Face and the South East Ridge to the Tasman Glacier, nearly 1000m below.

As we sat on the summit of Mt. Green, we also sat on the Great Divide. For the first time, I saw the west coast of New Zealand and the Tasman Sea, 40km away. Steve pulled out an orange. There we sat, eating an orange at 2838m at 7:30 on a beautiful morning. Tiny specs on an icy wilderness.

Humping The Camel At Mount Macedon.

by Spider, May 1992.

Whether or not the trip to the Camel's Hump was a success is a matter of whom one asks, and upon their mental attitude. For me it was a disaster. All manner of things went wrong. But then, I set out that day looking for one.

The MUMC precision driving team lead by the reckless Spider (Mad Mike being absent), made short work of the journey to the Camel. After sliding the sleek Datsun 120y between two Toorak taxis in the crowded car park, we proceeded to unload the gear while the resourceful Dave Burnett checked to see if there were any unlocked cars in the car park.

Like a faithful pack mule, I followed the mob op the path to a fork where they waited like lost sheep for me to take the lead (It's a lonely business being leader it turns out). As is normal for leaders, my position was short lived. The infamous reactionary, Dave "I love Trotsky" Burnett led a split, and took the lead on up to the lookout while I blindly led no-one to the Omega Block.

By this stage, I realised the folly in having all the hardware in my backpack, it weighing no less than 50kg. Luckily for me, I was not alone by the time I arrived at the block. By now, the cheerful comments from the rest of the group had already began to grate, the weather being disgustingly nice, and as I have already said, yours truly seeking only the worst.

Finally we set about climbing together. What could be more disturbing than the gear I began to find lying around deserted by its owners. At first I found two long slings tied in at the top of one climb, and a short time later I found four carabiners, a quickdraw, and a sewn sling at the top of another. Clearly my day was off to a bad start.

While Andre was leading a grovelly 15, we installed a top rope on a 7 and a 17. All the time I expected to fall off and kill someone while making myself a quadriplegic. Instead, I dropped a hex on Jane below, my clip gate opened on me while I was sitting, unloading a set of nuts and a friend (who needs friends anyway?) on to the rock under my bum. Luckily I retrieved them before they went the same way as the hex.

Finally the day drew to a close, and the precision driving team left the mountain for Melbourne and the comfort of the Dan O'Connell hotel, where one can look back at the world from the inside of a beer. After many pints, the fuzzy blanket of intoxication pulled in around our little team creating yet again a false sense of hope.

Late afternoon. The rocks of the Gammons turn deep red. We have been walking for a long time, and rest by a waterhole. We are surprised to find water, and so much in one place. So lush and green. We stand and listen to the wind in the trees, and the buzz of the insects around the reeds. A single bird circles up above. Tracey thinks it is an owl. A kangaroo suddenly springs into sight, and bounds away up a slope. You can hear the water trickle. Peaceful. This region, usually so harsh and brazen, full of jagged, broken rocks and scree, dry, dusty soil, rugged cliffs and peaks, porcupine grass and prickly bushes. Then this. A secluded spot in an unnamed gorge. A week ago, we walked past not far from here, without exploring the gorge. It was saved, hidden, until now. As if we are now ready. We walked for a week, across dry land, scrambled over rocks and stumbled through pockets of prickly bushes. Now we are caked with a dry, yellow dust, our hair greasy and unkept, eyes weary from the intense sun, skin burnt and dry, muscles taunt from all the walking up steep slopes. And now we are allowed to see a place such as this waterhole. Initiated. We like this waterfall so much, we decide to change itinerary and camp here for the night. Everyone is philosophical around the campfire. It's the last night.

Morning again. Someone is complaining about running out of dunny paper. I unzip the tent door, and the cold rushes in. It's too cold to get up. Sunlight. There is a stench from the nearby waterhole, probably caused by the algae and other unidentifiable bright green sludge. Have to get up. Have to leave. There are things to do in the city.



M.U.M.C. International Debacles Incorporated. New Zealand Kayaking 1992.

by Nick Gust, February 1993.

Eight members of MUMC have just returned from an epic kayaking trip to the South Island of New Zealand. The high rainfall and mountainous topography results in big white water, and guarantees excellent paddling for experienced kayakers.

The Landsborough River was a true epic. It runs flows away from Mt. Cook and is surrounded by pristine wilderness. No roads or walking trails come anywhere near the river and so the only access is by helicopter. The chopper flight in was mind-blowing; the river snaked its way through open plains and into tight gorges. Beech forests dominated the lower hill slopes and above all else were snow and ice capped peaks. Between the ridges were numerous glaciers stretching down to water level. It was an awe inspiring 360 degree panorama. The chopper held only four people and was thrown around violently by the howling gale. "Is it always this bumpy?", asked a slightly fazed Nigel Prior as the chopper dropped 100 feet toward the trees and the air speed indicator hovered around stall. The pilot just muttered something about "bit windy".

That afternoon was spent in brilliant sunshine checking out the rapids of the upper gorge before the paddling started on the following day. The lines were tight, the water was big and the paddling technical but paddleable. Then it rained overnight.....

It rained some more.....

In fact it poured.....

Holy shit! The river had risen well over a metre overnight, and what would have been extremely challenging rapids took on a new more sinister appearance. The gorge had turned into a roaring, raging, seething torrent of white water (brown actually because of the rock dust from the glaciers). Some of us chose to paddle sections of the gorge-the consequences of a capsized and swim were horrendous. Rescue boats were out of the question in most places, and a swimmer in this water would be washed out of sight in seconds, not to mention the other hazards of a gorge like this in flood.

We were forced to carry our boats up and around the gorge in some places, through forests and around cliffs. It poured and was freezing cold. We walked over a glacier dragging our boats and could actually see the river rising just by sitting in one place for a few minutes. The whole trip was supposed to take 2 days and was about 45km long, but by the end of the first day, despite seven hours of paddling and dragging boats, we had gone only four kilometres. An American paddler who had tagged along with us, had paddled off late in the afternoon without telling us what his plans were. We assumed that either (a) he had tried to paddle all the way out; (b) he had camped further down stream; or (c) he had drowned.

Overnight the rain ceased and thankfully the river began to drop almost as fast as it had risen. We pulled on the sodden paddling gear and were on the river early. After only a couple of kilometres and a swim by Jocelyn Allen, a helicopter turned up looking for us!! The yank had paddled out and asked the

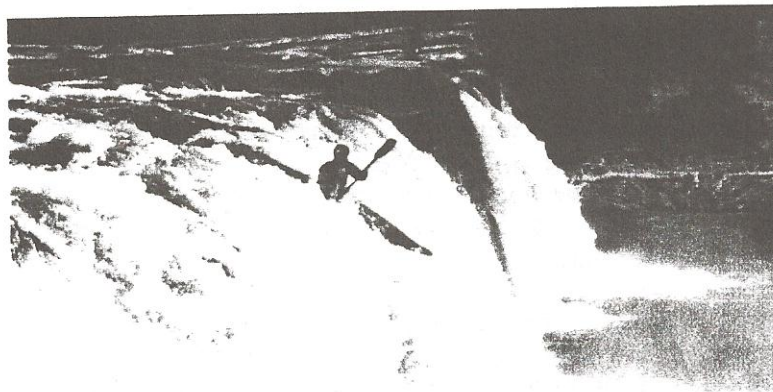
ODDS AND ENDS 1994.

An old wooden MUMC ice-axe has been donated to Edmund Hillary's trust for helping the people of Nepal. The ice-axe was auctioned off at Scotch College a few weekends ago after Edmund Hillary signed it. The organisers of the auction were desperate for a wooden ice-axe and the club was the only place in Melbourne where they could locate one. The auction organisers offered to purchase a new ice-axe as a replacement, but MUMC did not feel this was necessary. The price the ice-axe achieved was an astounding \$4000. The buyer donated the ice-axe to Scotch.

It has been agreed that the membership fees will rise by one dollar to \$15 from next year. This is because of all the problems with giving change, and of course, it means more money for the club which is good for active members.

Damien wants to warn everyone not to frequent the Yarck Pub on the way back from Stirling. This follows after an unfortunate incident involving 10 (big) guys voluntarily testing the demisting properties of urine on his window screen. Amber testifies that Kjar was in Melbourne that night.

After the massive loss from the Bush Dance caused by the lovely bouncer couple which the club had to have, the Bushdance will need to go ahead in an altered form next year. This may take the form of a combined dance with the Horseriding Club.



A Tale Of A Long Weekend.

The Razor/Viking/Speculation/Terrible Hollow.

By Anton Weller. September 1994.

This trip was most interesting!

Jenny and myself cruised up to Lake Cobbler on Friday 10 June. This is a great spot from which to launch expeditions into the Crosscut Saw and upper Wonangatta area. Arriving around midnight, we decided to start walking right away, because, hey, the sky was clear, the air was crisp, and it felt great to be in the bush again.

It was very cold. Little rivulets running across the track had frozen and formed beautiful ice patterns on the ground. Somehow the endless up seemed to pass quickly, probably due to conversation and the fact that we had entered that dreamlike state familiar to 24-hour rogainers. Anyway, at 3am we ascended Mt.Koonika with the most brilliant clear skies - the arms of our galaxy soared overhead, pure and clear, and the two Magellanic Clouds seemed to hover just out of reach! Superb! We could see the whole district, even swathed as it was in darkness. The Bluff and the Razor/Viking loomed as black silhouettes against a star-speckled sky; bright stars near the horizon danced and flickered in the gently moving air.

We found a split-level campsite for our tent under a gnarly old snow gum - I slept about 15cm higher than Jenny on a little platform.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Uhhhh, 6:30am already. Yes, we got up to watch the sunrise. I will leave it to you, the reader, to describe it. To do this think of as many similes to the word "awesome" as you can, and write them down following the next sentence. The sunrise was awesome, ...

and really nice too! From the summit we watched the peaks around us slowly emerge from the night, and then ... wow, Buffalo became a reddy gold colour as the first rays of light struck it. Thirty seconds later and the sun emerged from the labyrinthine network of valleys to the northeast. The only thing disturbing the serenity of the moment was the manic clicking of my camera.

After a late start we ambled through the delightful "alpine garden" between Koonika and Speculation. A most curious phenomenon greeted us in this area - with the low temperatures, water just below the surface of the ground froze overnight, pushing up dirt and sand on little columns of ice about an inch long. It was very pretty and very unusual, and continued to occur until just past Speccy. Lunch was had near Mt.Despair, where we found a great little perch on it's northeast side. Jenny's legs were rather cut up and looked a bloody mess : a lot of scrub overhung the track, but iron-willed Jen has no truck with gaiters and other such wimpy devices.

Our lunch perch was warm and sunny, with a great view encompassing Mt.Koonika, Cobbler, Wabonga Plateau, Buffalo, and the High Plains. And best of all, we witnessed the beginning of the end of the perfect weather we had been having. It was an awesome, many-houred spectacle. Before lunch, there was just a tiny fluff of white cloud above the Wabonga Plateau. An hour later

local pilot to come and look for us. Jocelyn, Louise Aufflick and Russell Smith and Nigel opted for the whirly-bird and were very relieved to be air lifted out, and to survive into the new year. Four of us decided to keep paddling, just to keep the MUMC epics saga going.

Steve Carter got a nasty trashing in a big stopper at the end of a series of huge waves. The river was still in flood and greyhound-bus-eating-stoppers were all over the place. For non-paddlers, a stopper is a section of recirculating water on the downstream side of the obstruction. This water surges upstream, and if the stopper is big, it can hold and pulverise a paddler. Small to medium stoppers can be played in without significant risk to a paddler, but the greyhound bus variety are a definite no-no and are to be avoided like the plague, AIDS, or Dave Kjar after a bad day at the office.

After negotiating the second major gorge, we were all caught unaware by a hidden stopper on 'sunrise' rapid. Dave Kjar led the way into (and out of) the stopper followed by Steve the Wunderkind who got another thrashing. The problem was the river was so big that you sometimes lost sight of paddlers in front and had to follow blindly, warily looking out for nasties and seeking eddies to rest in. I came next, also straight into the 'surprise' stopper but managed to get spat out downstream. Dave Wilson followed and got trashed, losing both a wet suit bootie and a paddle mitt as the torrent tore them free.

With jangling nerves, the rapids then began to subside in size and difficulty. In essence, we all survived to paddle another day and have a serious New Year's Eve party at the Buller River with about 250 other paddlers. For those of you lounge lizards at home, sitting there thinking "Hmmm, sounds good, wish I could have been there", don't worry. It's caught on video and is soon to be released in a MUMC theatre near you.



And then came a great big surprise - a fifty metre high cliff in our way. Cliffs are rare in Victoria, and must be savoured. It was great fun (for me at least) trying to find a way up them. Eventually a sneaky path was traced up a steep gully, a sloping diagonal shelf, and an arete. In the process a large hundred kilo boulder was accidentally dislodged (I was half standing on the damn thing when it decided to stop gathering moss) and went trundling down into the steep wooded slopes below.

The spur above the cliff was sharp and rocky, but relented after a while and provided an excellent campsite just below Speccy. Next day the summit was gained and put on a great show - almost-views combined with magnificent heavy frost on moss and grass, rock and stone, twig and tree. Little animal tracks in the snow complemented a brooding grey sky. Then back to Koonika and the now seemingly endless 4wd tracks back to the lake. The track was a horrible muddy mess now, after a probable umpteen four-wheel-drives having used it.

We encountered the thickest mist of the whole walk back at the car. Jenny was delighted.



this had built into a wide-brimmed hat, and one or two high specks could be seen above Buffalo. I thought nothing of it at the time.

Continuing on, we came to the start of the Razor. This section of the walk was even more interesting than usual due to all the seepage water having turned into a centimetre thick film of hard ice. This was placed in a most beautiful if inconvenient way across the sloping rock faces that are called the 'track'. By this stage the weather was becoming dramatic. It looked as if a storm was brewing over in the west : mountain after mountain was being gobbled up by a ravenous, inexorable advance of clouds. Cobbler now had a hat, and Speculation was wreathed in mist. A wide cloud-sombrero turned Buffalo into a dark, dozing giant. As we approached the turn off for Viking Saddle, cloud started surfing over our own heads and over the Crosscut Saw. And the sun was getting low to the northwest. It lit up the cliffs of the Razor orangely and made the whole spectacle thoroughly dramatic. Buffalo was gone by this stage, and the sun began setting behind the dramatic cloudy form of Cobbler as we scrambled up to the summit of the Razor. And then we were engulfed by mist as well. On the way back it lowered and lowered, along with the sun, so that we walked in a moody twilit landscape of deep shadows and swaying trees. For a wind had blown up and was rushing over the crest of the Razor above us.

As both our torches had a only a small amount light left, we tried walking as far as we could in the twilight. This led to many losses of verticality, toes stubbed, curses issued, and a mapcase lost. Please tell Jenny or me if you find it! Now, strangely enough, the sky above the Viking became clear at this time. As we ascended it became apparent that the Razor, Speccy and the Saw were still all engulfed in cloud, yet the Terrible Hollow and all the lands to the east were clear. Odd.

We pitched camp on the summit, and were rewarded by a light dusting of snow that night. In the morning we had a companion : mist and drizzle. This made the whole place thoroughly beautiful and added an air of mystery to it. Jenny, who dislikes good weather because she gets too much of it, was very pleased.

For this day I had a rather ambitious plan - to head cross-country back to Speccy via The Terrible Hollow! (insert dramatic chord). In fact it was paradisaical walking. The scenery happened thus : first, the alpine garden of the Viking, wreathed in mist and snow. Then, greenery and mossiness unsurpassed in a delightful gully off the west side, with a circular waterfall tinkling in the foggy air and great smooth-barked gums vanishing above us into the mist. A traverse onto drier ground brought a spur - wonderful open snow gum forest on the Paws (my name) - a miniature Viking, with marvellously colourful snow gums. A steep descent gully lead us rapidly into dry sclerophyll forest, filled with the brown shaggy trunks of woollybutts and capped by their intensely green canopy. Descent through the vegetation zones into wet sclerophyll rainforest brings grungy wet scrub and slow going. Then : free! A tall tree fern, guard and saviour (insert self-parodying chord), signals an end to the grunge and the arrival at an unnamed creek.

Lunch was held some time later beside the Wonnangatta River. After this we sloshed up-river to our spur. After 'Grundge' Creek, it provided a nice surprise : generally open forest with few patches of thickness, along with some well formed animal tracks. These seem to be the result of deer. Certainly I noticed some large split hoof prints, and there were also a couple of "meeting areas" with much trampled moss and grass surrounding soaks of water. Later on we came to a perfect jousting spot for the bucks - a long and narrow strip of dirt where some serious head banging could perhaps take place.

The weather was superb, and the next morning we headed off bright and early, around 10.00am. We had three maps that all agreed on the names of the various tracks and lake beds. It was just the relative positions of these things they disputed. It didn't matter which one we used, they were all equally inaccurate. Who needs to know where they are all the time anyway. I wasn't disappointed about the contour lines, there weren't any, just dunes covered with tussock and hammock grasses, mulga trees acacias and small weedy succulent things. The four wheel drive tracks meant there wasn't much bush bashing either, but it was great to be outside for a change. Apart from the tracks, there were two obvious signs of human activity; a huge S.E.C. power line that stretched diagonally across the park, and an electric kangaroo fence. We were not sure whether the fence was to keep the animals in or out. They didn't seem to know either as we saw them on both sides. There was great dispute on this matter and the three engineering students argued heatedly about the aerodynamics of a kangaroo's lift off.

We reached the Murray River in the early afternoon. If you imagine the Murray as a clear, lively river lined with eucalypts and typically Australian in character, you would have been as disappointed as we were when we saw it. You couldn't see the water for the frothy scum on the top. Not wishing to be dissolved by whatever was in the water, we decided unanimously not to go for a swim and set up camp nearby instead.

I won't bore you with a day by day account from here on. The literal high point of the trip was 67 metres, the spot height of Mt. Hattah which we climbed on the last day. After this arduous ascent, many of us felt it was necessary to actually climb the trig point to get an extra couple of metres. The view was surprisingly good, it was the highest point for miles around.

It was a great walk, and despite the maps, tom managed not to get us geographically embarrassed. A good time was had by all. We cooked dinner at Hattah station on Friday night and then caught the red eye express again to return well rested (ha ha) in Melbourne on Saturday morning. It was raining of course!



The Hattah Lakes. Sunshine in Winter.

by Jane Frohlich, August, 1991.

Bushwalking in Victoria during the middle of winter may seem at first glance to be a pretty stupid idea, and at a second glance, and at a third....but surprisingly, if you go far enough north, it is possible to find sunshine, even in July.

The Hattah-Kulkyne National Park is about 450km north west of Melbourne, up toward Mildura. There was a six day bushwalk there in the last week of the mid-year break. The walk was basically from the 'town' of Hattah (a train station and a milk bar) to the Murray River and back again via the scenic Hattah lakes. The main attraction as far as I was concerned, was the complete absence of anything resembling a mountain. What bliss, I thought, four days of walking without a single battle with gravity over whether my pack was coming with me.

The eight hour train journey left Spencer Street at 9.45pm on Sunday night. There were seven of us at the station: Tom, our illustrious leader, Kevin, Paul, Henry, Zac, Csilla (that's pronounced "Chilla", we finally got that right about 6 hours into the train journey) and myself. The eighth member of the party, Michael, drove up from Melbourne and met us at the first campsite the following evening.

The train journey was uneventful, apart from the inevitable card games, and after a couple of hours of that deep and restful sleep that is only possible in the confines of a train seat, we arrived bright eyed and bushy tailed....well, most of us had our eyes open anyway,.....at Hattah station at 6.30am. We cooked a hot breakfast happy in the knowledge that we were far away from civilisation and people, apart from the 40 high school students who got off the same train. Fortunately, they drove off, and apart from a distant sighting of their tents, we didn't meet up again.

After breakfast, we walked to the first campsite at Lake Hattah. These salt lakes are enclosed drainage basins with no outlet. They fill periodically and over the years, evaporation concentrates the dissolved mineral salts that are washed into them, similar to Lake Eyre in South Australia. The upshot is that you can't drink from them. The idea of carrying 4 days supply of water on our backs didn't appeal to anyone, and this is where Michael and his car came to the rescue.

With astounding foresight, Michael and Tom arranged large water containers and filled them at the Ranger's station. After breaking into Michael's car with the frame of Tom's pack (it is not the intention of promoting car theft among bushwalkers, but as hikers are unlikely to be carrying a coat hanger with them, this is not useless information. Of course, hikers don't usually carry cars with their keys locked in them either....but you never know). Anyway, they drove off and deposited water at strategic positions along the track.

The first morning of paddling was spent warming up on a section of water just above base camp. Fears of brown, polluted water were soon put to rest. The river was a beautiful greenish-blue with swirling flakes of mica from glacial melt. None of us became sick from the water, despite vile predictions. The sight of a human body being picked at by vultures was a bit unnerving, but this and a floating cow were all we saw on the entire trip.

Despite descriptions of grade 3-4 water, all we came across initially were gravel races. Had I endured 15 hours in a non-reclining airline seat to paddle the Goulburn!? The situation was soon rectified when we paddled 'Three Blind Mice'. "River left has nice line between holes," said John the rafting guide. My last view down the river as I slipped backwards into one of those enormously deep holes, was of Dave grinning crazily at my demise. Thankfully, the forgiving curves of my Dancer made surfing out of such difficulties relatively easy.

We had heard stories of the horror of driving in this part of the world, but nothing could prepare us for the nightmare trip from base camp to Tehri, where we put in on the Bhagirathi. As the road climbed into the mountains, its crumbling edges soon dropped away straight into the river, a kilometre below. There was barely room for a car and a bus to pass and we were soon forced to reverse back down the mountain track to a wider section to allow the overloaded, overdecorated, Indian 'Tata' trucks to go by. Judging by the outrageous driving behaviour of our 'Matador' minivan driver, and the shrine to Shiva on the dashboard, it seemed our driver had a much stronger belief in the afterworld than I did. For once the window seat was the most undesirable one in the vehicle, and the talk of helicopters on our next trip was rife, although Dave was disappointed that they wouldn't let him ride on the roof.

Paddling large volume grade 3-4 water the next day seemed safe and relaxing by comparison. We were treated to long sections of large waves, often requiring some deft manoeuvring to avoid two metre deep holes. We had been concerned that Indian grade 3-4 would be far harder than Australian grade 3-4, but when we discovered that we could cope with the extra volume, the butterflies went and the pure enjoyment set in. The standard was slightly higher than paddling the Indi at 1.5m plus (taken at Biggara).

After this day's long paddle, we camped on a sandy beach in tents. The next morning, Amber was delighted to see panther footprints around all our tents, although she was a bit perturbed that in some places, her footprints from a midnight pit stop overlapped the panther's, while in other places the panther had stepped on her's. We then paddled a slightly easier section to the holy town of Devprayag, where the Bhagarathi meets the Alakandanda to become the Ganges proper. Everyone in this remote village watched from the riverside and rickety suspension bridge as we paddled the last grade 3 rapid before the confluence. At our pull-out point, a yogi came out of his cave to look at us and our kayaks. Cathy and Amber were a sight in their wet-suits. We hurriedly kicked off our shoes when we remembered that as we were now in the Ganges, one must leave the holy river barefoot.

We endured another frightening drive back to base camp in the Matador. We were informed that if the van drove over the edge and into the Ganges, to die in this holiest of all rivers meant eternal salvation for our soles. We were very reassured then. Back at base camp with our adrenalin running, we wanted to paddle something that would really scare the wits out of us. Our guides recommended the Upper Alakananda from Nandprayag to Rudraprayag, a section that had only been paddled four times previously. We were a bit concerned when we heard that two Czechoslovakian paddlers had drowned on

Kayaking The Holy Waters.

by Steve Carter and Dave Burnett, February 1993.

"Strange place, India," the guy in the Melbourne canoe shop said. I looked up from my credit card computations.

"What?" I said.

"India...strange place," he said again. He looked at me for a moment and then asked, "How are you travelling?"

"Mainly by bus," I replied.

Then he laughed.

Our original plan for India had been to run the Indus and the Zaskar Rivers in the north of India, but we abandoned this scheme when we discovered that those rivers would be almost frozen over during our anticipated trip dates. Instead, we pre-arranged with an Indian rafting company to run the Bhagirathi River, which joins with the Alakandanda to become the holy Ganges. Three of our team were to be in kayaks (Steve Carter, Phil Towler and Dave Kjar), while Cathy Sealy, Amber Mullens, Rohan Schaap and 'Mad' Mike Bethune were in the rafts with the guides.

Planning an expedition to India is easy. The trick is to begin packing the night before and buy the extra equipment, such as kayaks and packs, the morning of departure. This does away with months of un-necessary stress during the planning stages. A Visa card acts as a magic wand for any financial difficulties. Two points to remember though : a) don't lose all your travel documents and money within minutes of entering Melbourne airport, and b) shepherd all boats, skis and paddle bags all the way onto the plane. The baggage handlers are otherwise likely to see the awkward packages and hide them somewhere until they become somebody else's problem. Probably yours.

Figuring that the best treatment for culture shock is total immersion, we tackled the worst of our fears on the first day; a mini-bus ride, with boats and skis, from New Delhi to Rishikesh (where the Beatles studied transcendental meditation), 235km north of the capital. In Australia, this distance would be trivial. Paddlers regularly undertake 800+km round trips for a few hours paddling. In India it took all day and was a nightmare of overturned lorries, crowded villages and an endless stream of humans lining the entire length of the road. So many people!

It was quite a relief when we arrived at the rafting base camp, just beyond Rishikesh. Indeed, the contrast was ludicrous. Within a few minutes we were sipping Australian beer while sitting in wicker cane chairs, reclining under enormous tents on a secluded beach on the Ganges. Images of the British Raj welled up in our minds as the memory of that other India faded away.

Western Arthurs.

by Paul O'Byrne, February 1991.

Day 1.

Chris Pivic, "Buck" Rogers, Phil Sewell and I were standing at a cold, windy Scotts Pk. dam, having just completed a rather forgettable bus ride from Hobart. We had come to do a full traverse of the Western Arthurs. Unfortunately, things didn't start too well....

As we drove in, the bus had to be stopped 3 or 4 times so Buck and Phil could throw up beside the road. Although it was New Year's Day, and we had enjoyed partying in Hobart the previous evening, there was more to this than Cascade Lager! Buck especially, looked rather green, and spent most of the drive horizontal. As the bus jolted along, Chris and I discussed our predicament. Chris (along with Buck) was still recovering from a torrid trip to Mt. Anne. I felt reasonably well, though not looking forward to carrying 12 days food, since I had carried a pack for only 2 days of the past 11 months. We decided to walk across the plains to Junction Creek (\approx 2hrs) and see how Phil and Buck felt in the morning. We dubbed ourselves the "MUMC Dynamo Team" in the intentions book, though at present, we were anything but.

Day 2.

In the morning, Phil was feeling well enough to push on, but Buck felt very weak. Eventually, he made the difficult decision to turn back. Phil, our trip medico, suspected viral pneumonia. By 11am, we had revised the food and gear, taking two Olympus tents, one stove and fairly light rations including lunch Vita Wheat allotments of 10 for Phil, 8 for myself and 6 for Chris.

We set off with our impressive packs under high level cloud. Our route was started by climbing a ridge at the western end of the range. Three hours and a 750m climb later, we reached the top. Phil had gastro and was moving rather slowly, however, the first views of the range did much to cheer us up. The views were even better from Mt. Hesperus. We had come expecting spectacular scenery, and even at this early stage we were not disappointed.

We followed the track along the open ridge top, passing the beautiful lakes Fortuna, Pluto, Neptune and Triton. With the sun sinking, we dropped 50m off the ridge, down to our first campsite at Lake Cygnus. Tents were pitched, Chilli Con Carne was cooked, and after a bit of bouldering practice on a huge rock beside the lake, it was time to hit the sack.

Day 3.

We woke at 2am to the sound of rain hitting the tent. Phil, by this time quite ill with gastro, made another trip outside the tent and tightened all the guys. Morning saw the storm continue and we agreed to stay put for the day. Dinner was freeze dried beef casserole which precipitated more trips out of the tent for the hapless Phil. We had an early night as the storm came again...

the river recently. However, we decided 'Why not?', it couldn't be any worse than the bus trip.

In the morning we experimented with a different approach to travel, by paddling to Rishikesh and then hiring a taxi. The driver tackled the boats with great gusto, enthusiastically tightening the tie on ropes until one of the roof racks snapped with a loud 'twang', sending the razor sharp ends spearing through the roof into the rear seat. Despite this, and a worsening stomach bug, we set off and arrived safely in Nandprayag later that day.

The paddling was fairly consistent grade 3-4 water, with a grade 5-6 waterfall that we had to portage, although it would have been paddleable at a higher level. Paddling these continuous high quality rapids for only the fifth time in history provided a great contrast to our usual start-and-stop trips to familiar rivers in Australia. These rapids didn't stop for 60km! and provided fabulous entertainment. We missed the rapid our guide had recommended we inspect, but the grade 5 gorge at the end of the paddle was obvious when it came. At this point the whole river ran onto a savage undercut. With choice breakouts and a good ferryglide, the rapid was eminently do-able, but the consequence of a mistake was likely death so we portaged the last rapid of our trip.

I hadn't eaten for three days and Dave and Phil had only had a banana each, but due to logistical difficulties too complicated to mention, we three starving kayakers were not able to eat at Rudraprayag, and so we became three deathly-weak travellers yet again. As a man tried to sell Dave carpets for six hours, and I tried to keep from being accosted with a chicken, we began planning our next expedition. Consensus had it that India had plenty of potential. The Indus and the Zaskar were waiting for the thaw, and adventures were to be had on the Beas, near Manali, and the Brahmaputra. We would certainly return, although as the bus swayed around the mountain passes one nagging doubt remained....

...how much *would* it cost to charter a helicopter in India?



The day's route provided steep walking. First, the Beggary Bumps (we soon learnt to go around the pinnacles after mistakenly climbing over the first one), then the moss and fern filled "Tilted Chasm". From here we followed the ridge down past "lover's Leap" to a saddle. More rough walking brought us to Mt. Taurus and then down to Haven Lake for lunch. This marked the end of the committing part of the WA traverse. Over lunch we discussed the plans for the rest of the walk. Phil and I were keen to have a go at Mt. Federation, but Chris, who had already climbed it, was more interested in relaxing on the remainder of the WAs. In the end we agreed to split up the next morning. Phil and I would meet up with Chris at Craycroft Crossing in four days. We moved off to the ridge top. The track traversed spectacularly above Lake Mars. We camped near Lake Sirona and had an excellent dinner of fried rice before dividing food and gear.

Day 7.

Phil and I started off at 7:30am. We hoped to reach Pass Creek that night, a distance as far as we had gone in the last four days. The walking was considerably easier now. We followed the ridge past Mt. Scorpio as a mist rolled in. The track then dropped down to pass Lakes Vesta, Juno and Promontory, where we donned rain coats, and also obtained a copy of a 1:25,000 map of the Easter Arthurs from a party as we passed. Navigating by compass, we reached Mt. Phoenix and started along the Centaurus ridge. What followed was some of the most enjoyable walking so far. Ridge walking with continual views, sunshine with a cooling breeze, a soft bouncy track through alpine grass and rock outcrops. We picked up the pace and romped up to West Portal, the highest and last peak on the WAs. We climbed both pinnacles, enjoying the excellent rock scrambling. From the top, we could look back over the entire range and pick out the various peaks all the way back to the start of our walk. Looking out across a vast valley, the Eastern Arthurs beckoned. We could clearly see our goal, the famous pinnacle of Mt. Federation at the far end. We could also see the obstacles that stood in the way; the 1000m drop down to Pass Ck., the 750m climb up Luckmans Lead to reach the ridge top near the East Portal, the 'Boiler Plates', the 'Needles', and finally the 'Four Peaks'. After half an hour on top, we scrambled back down to the packs and began our descent off the Western Arthurs.

To reach Pass Creek, our route followed the Crag of Andromeda and then the aptly named Lucifer Ridge. With legs tiring, water low and the scroggin finished, we started out down Lucifer Ridge and were soon bush bashing through dense scoparia. After an eternity, we emerged from the scrub near Lake Rosanne. Here the main WA track turned off to Craycroft Crossing, leaving more a route than a track for us to follow. Eventually Pass Creek was reached where we washed and refreshed ourselves. After 12 hours walking, we were utterly zonked, but happy, knowing we were on target for Fed.

Day 8.

Sleeping in until after 7, we awoke to a blue-skied day. Our 'sortie' on the Eastern Arthurs was to be an in and out affair, so we sorted the gear and left the excess in a garbage bag for our return. We quickly climbed onto the amazing Luckmans Lead, which hits the main ridge of the EAs. We finally reached the open grassy alpine moors at the top and the cool breeze that came with them. Phil was back to full strength after his illness and was walking fast, while I found my efficiency dropping and found myself falling behind as we climbed.

Day 4.

Once again we awoke to rain, although the wind had died down. I discovered that my Olympus was not completely water tight, when water began to seep through the stitching in the corner of the floor. By lunch the rain had eased to the occasional drizzly squall, and we decided to reach lake Oberon that afternoon. After lunch and the finger numbing task of rolling up the wet tents, we moved on.

Climbing out of Lake Cygnus brought us back to the ridge top and into swirling mist. We followed the muddy track, traversing below eerie crags on the look-out for Mt. Hayes which we knew was nearby. Upon stopping to check the map, the mist cleared to reveal the summit directly above us. We climbed up, but by the time we got there, the mist was back, obscuring any view. The track continued along the ridge crest, and we got our first taste of how steep walking in the WAs can get as we dropped off Mt. Hayes down to Square Lake. This amazing lake had sheer cliffs rising 200m from 2 of its edges. We then began the steep climb to the saddle between Mts. Orion and Sirius. The Hobart Walking Club named the main peaks after stellar constellations and the main lakes were named after the moons and planets of the solar system. I went for a scramble up Mts. Sirius and Orion while Phil took photos of the view. We then descended onto the swampy plain beside Lake Oberon at 7pm.

The wind picked up again as the tents were pitched. Phil, in an effort to claim the gourmet cook title of the walk, prepared a veritable feast; fettuccine, tomato, pine nuts, sardines, and parmesan cheese. As we ate, we talked about what lay ahead. The next two days of walking were the crux of the traverse, and needed good weather to be passable with any degree of safety.

Day 5.

After what seemed like a very short time, I awoke to silence outside. Excitedly, I unzipped the tent to dead calm and clear sky. For the next hour we absorbed the dawn and early morning tranquillity over Lake Oberon. So it was with renewed energy that we set off, picking our way up the rocky flanks of Mt. Pegasus. At one point, we could only go on by squeezing through a hole in a wall of boulders, passing our packs through afterwards. A steep down climb and very rough traverse brought us onto Mt. Capricorn. More views and morning tea followed. After Phil received some antacid pills, we literally dropped off the back of Mt. Capricorn. Steep gullies led to a rocky arete, and then the most amazingly steep and exposed heath-covered earth slope. We reached the saddle with feelings of relief, and we looked back in disbelief at where we had descended. More open ground led to Mt. Columba, and High Moor.

On reaching High Moor, a lively discussion was held on whether to press on to the next campsite at Haven Lake, or to camp where we were. Eventually, we decided to camp at High Moor. It was early afternoon, so after lunch and organising the tents, we all set out to relax in the warm sunny conditions.

Day 6.

In keeping with the relaxed pace of the previous afternoon, we slept in, had pancakes for breakfast, and were ready to move at 11am. We discussed heading into the Eastern Arthurs to climb Mt. Federation.

Days 10-12.

The walk out took three days, during which, the notable events were:

-The remains of the evil lentil-bortolli bean mix were buried two feet underground on our return to Thwaites Plateau.

-The reunion with Chris, who had spent a very relaxing 3 days on the end of the WAS, went according to schedule at Craycroft Crossing.

-Chris and Phil became paranoid about tiger snakes as the temperatures soared into the 30's.

-The Arthur Plains were very dry compared to usual, but still a pain to walk.

-Our food cache at Junction Creek was still intact, and a good feed was had by all. This was soon to be surpassed at our first stop back in civilisation, the Maydena milk bar!!



The next stage until the Four Peaks was relatively easy going. We enjoyed the walking which was similar to that on the WAs. As we neared the Four Peaks late in the afternoon, we had difficulty in following the route notes. As a result we ended up down climbing the 1 metre wide slot (called a formidable obstacle in our notes) by mistake. The most rugged walking of the day ensued till we staggered onto the welcome Thwaites Plateau after 9 hours walking. The location was stunning. Across a deep valley, one and a half kilometres away, stood our goal, Federation Peak with sheer cliffs flanking it on all sides.

It was a clear balmy evening and we decided to camp on the edge of Thwaites Plateau. Dinner was an absolute disaster! Phil, looking to fortify his grip on the trip 'gourmet' title blew it all in one night. Even now, three months later, I still get a queasy stomach when I think of it. Suffice to say, never buy Borlotti beans, and don't even think of placing them with lentils in a satay sauce.

During the evening, we read up on the route up Fed. and ran through climbing calls, knots and belaying techniques. We also unveiled the "rack". It was an awesome array of hardware and modern climbing technology. It consisted of;
One 1/2" tubular sling,
One 20m length of 7mm static 'rope' (sounds better than cord),
Two carabiners,
One steel screwgate carabiner. This one was a complete surprise. I discovered it behind the lumbar support of my pack when I got to Thwaites Plateau. I must have been carrying it for well over a year!?!

Day 9.

"The day of all days- Today is the day!" (Quote from Phil's diary.)

We both awoke for the dawn. I gazed spellbound for a couple of minutes, saw that the day couldn't have been better, and noting that my stomach was considerably improved from the previous night, dozed contently off to sleep again. Eventually at 8:30, we meandered off in idyllic conditions with minimal gear (the "rack", camera and two mars bars), toward Mt. Federation which was only 1-2 hours away. We had heard many stories about the climb from Chris and other people. Most of them were about scary ascents in bad weather on wet rock. We fired each other up, ate a mars bar, and started off...

What followed was a bit of a boilover. In fine weather and on dry rock, the climb was exposed (600m cliffs down to Lake Geeves), but technically quite easy. Phil and I scrambled up without difficulty. After about 50m, we were surprised when the summit came into view only a few feet above.

Wow!! We had made it!! Excited, Phil and I congratulated ourselves with a "manly" hug and began to look around. We spent more than an hour on top, exploring the wide summit area and enjoying the 360° views. We read the log book and added our own entries, mentioning the unfortunate absence of Chris and Buck. After a photo session, we grew hungry for lunch and reluctantly headed off to the camp.

