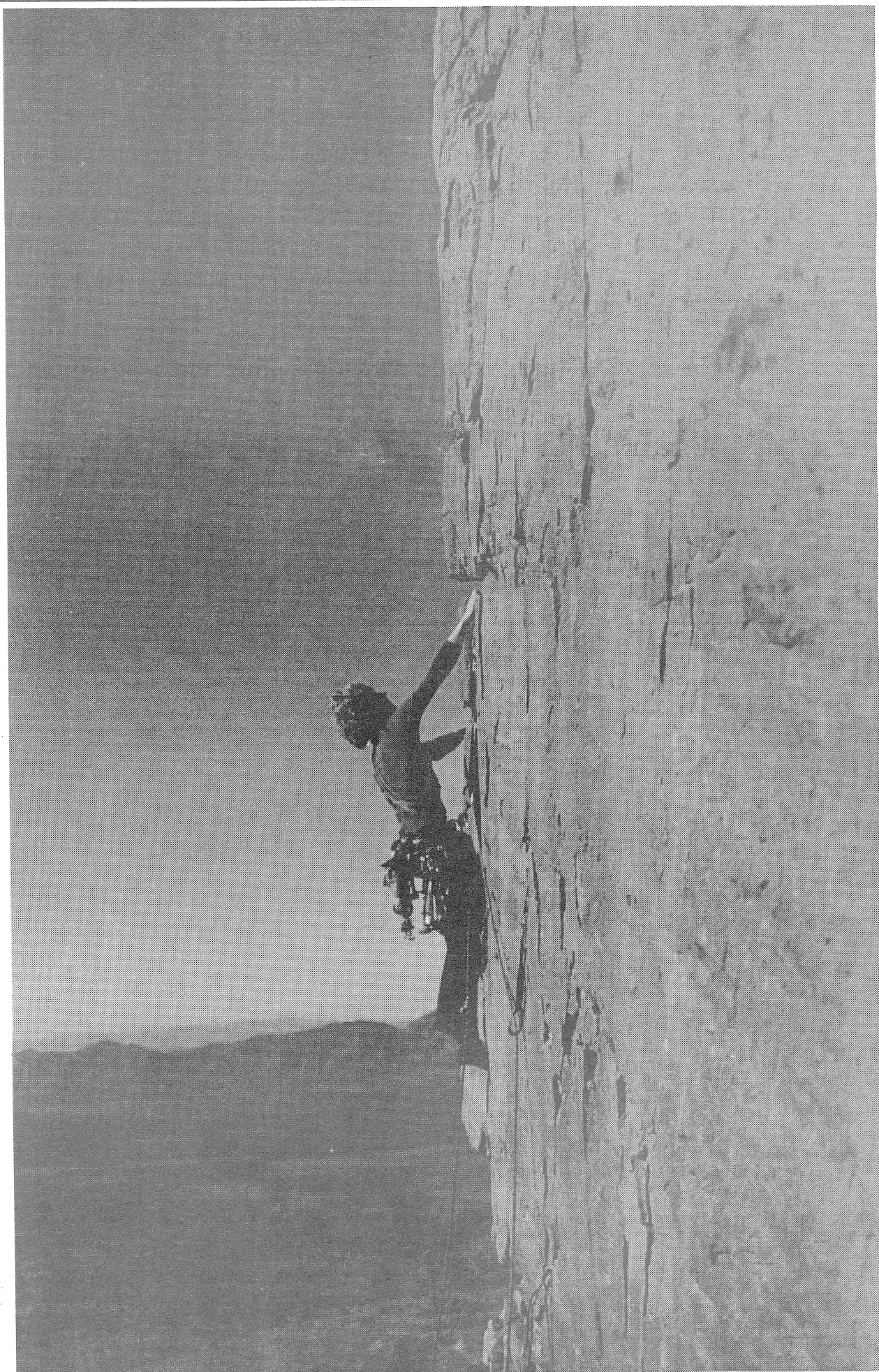


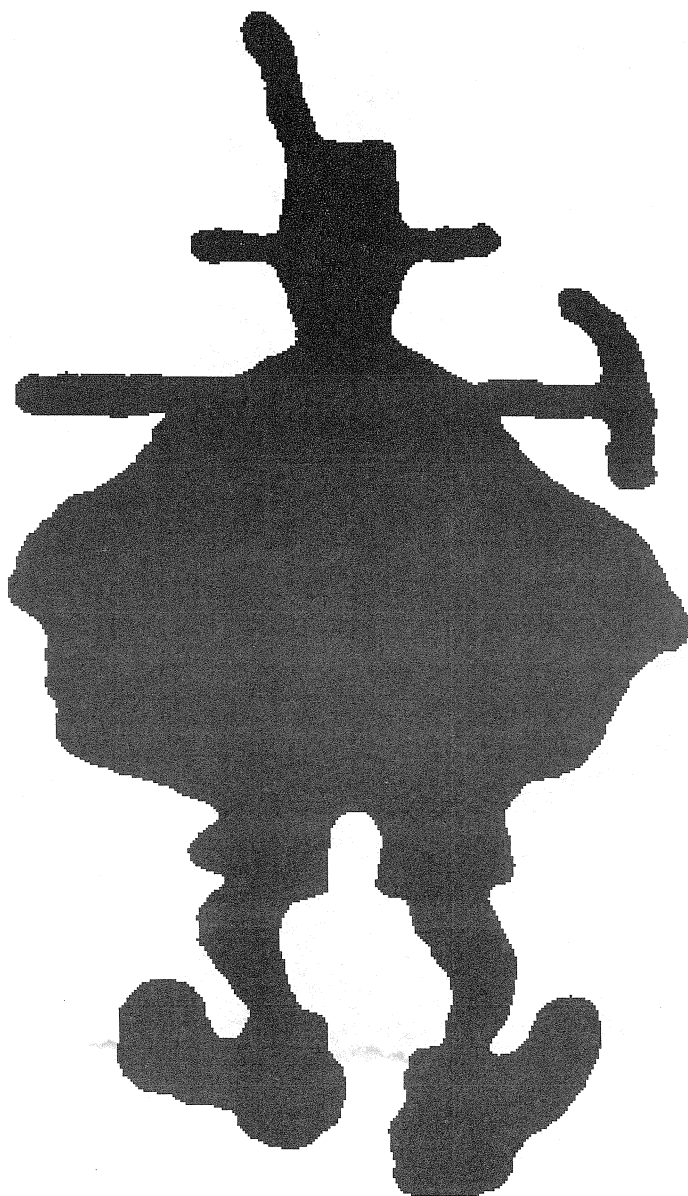
MOUNTAIN EER



Magazine of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club
August 2000

Thanks heaps to those of you who have submitted articles and photographs this year. A huge thanks to those who have helped over the past year, particularly to Marcelle, without whom the O'Week issue would not have been possible. And to everyone, whether you consider yourself a writer, poet, photographer or cartoonist: don't forget to keep submitting your articles, bits and pieces to Tennessee, your new publications officer for the next issue of *Mountaineer*.

PLEASE: Get out there, do awesome stuff and write about it!



MOUNTAINEER

**Magazine of the Melbourne University
Mountaineering Club**

Send Out Issue - August 2000

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President's Report

As this is the send out edition of the Mountaineer, I guess this is my last President's Report. For those of you that I know, a great big **G'day!** For those of you who I haven't met yet, I hope I'll see you on some mountain, or be able to stuff snow down your jacket sooner rather than later.

Throughout this year, the direction of MUMC has been questioned. Do we want to be a club for beginners which gives people a limited understanding of the outdoors or should we focus on producing 'elite athletes', which the sports union would happily champion. What is our happy balance?

One thing that MUMC as a club needs to consider is that our play encompasses areas that are steadily becoming more commercialised. Therefore to continue in the same fashion as we have traditionally worked we need to become more accountable. The recent incident with Newcastle University in the Blue Mountains has pushed the need to lower the possibility of risk. One of our responses has been to re-establish the OXO Club. This is a club for past MUMC members, who tend to be highly experienced, but don't wish to spend their weekends with beginners and first years, who may be more than ten years younger than them. The technicalities of linking this club to the MUMC are still being discussed, however it has been suggested that willing OXO members may be able willing to impart their skills on MUMC's leaders by running training courses to give the MUMC leaders a higher level of experience and expertise in their sport.

That really is a question for each new committee. As most convenors will know, beginners are high maintenance, and very few continue to come on trips. Elitism will financially demand items such as expensive portaledge that only a few club members will ever be experienced enough to use. However, can we justify having a club for the elite or will it simply end up excluding those who haven't had the opportunity or the finances to experience these activities at school? As a club, I hope we can continue to be accessible to everyone.

This year has included many great events for MUMC. These have happened solely because people have put in the effort. Whether this is running a trip, going for coffee or organising a bush dance, it all helps to make the club what it is. It's also great to see so many new faces this year, I hope you all stick around.

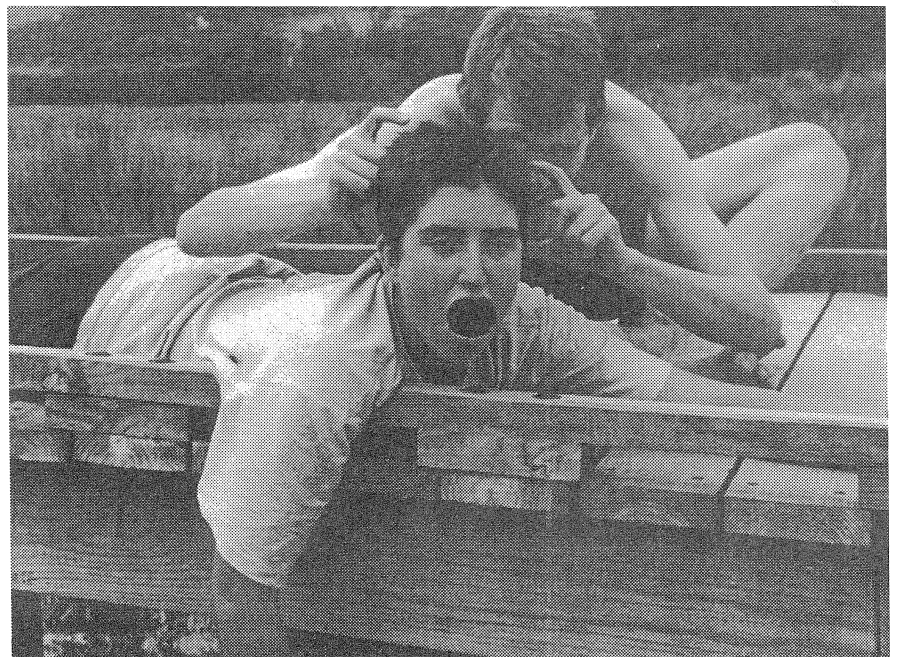
A great big **THANKYOU** to everyone for all your help this year. All committee members did great things and it is all much appreciated. Special thanks to those who helped out in O'Week, your hard work has paid off because our membership is the largest it has been in quite a few years! Thanks also for help with the administrative nightmare that is the Prom Trip. Thanks also to Alan, Matt, Andrea, Marcelle, and all those who helped with the Rogaine that MUMC was able to run. It was a huge success, and wasn't the food great!

President Kath pretending to be a camera

Brad and Alan organised the major social event of the year, the Bushdance. Yet again it went off. So much so that Monash Bushwalking Club has asked us to run their Thermal Ball so that they can run a bush dance!

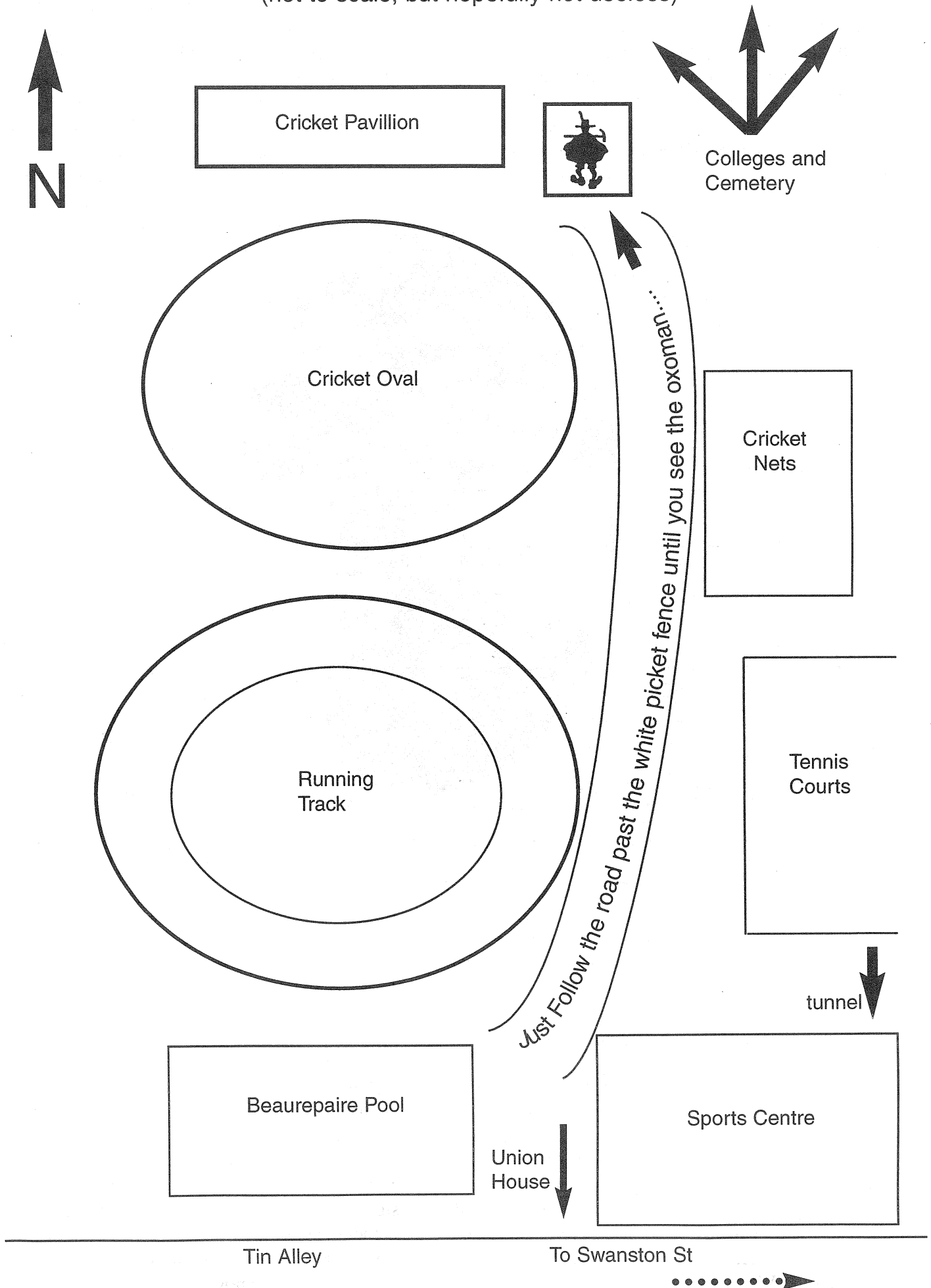
So I guess this is the last you'll hear from me on this page. What life is there after being a page two girl? I guess I can't bribe my way out of slush anymore. So thanks to everyone who has supported MUMC this year. At least now I get to be active in any way that suits me rather than fulfilling a designated role. But hasn't it been great.

Catch ya,
Kath Hammond



How to Find the Clubrooms

(not to scale, but hopefully not useless)



An Easter Adventure: Twins-Snowy Bluff

Easter for oxos generally means driving five hours to Mt Arapiles, pretending to do some climbing, pretending not to feel nauseously hung over and pretending that those two over there haven't really got together -(Alan, your grammar is appalling!) they're just sore from the pretend climbing and needed a close massage. However, for many bushwalkers across the nation, Easter is a four day break in which to do a special walk just at the cusp of the snow season. This year, due to the enormous sacrifice of well-intentioned and often unfortunately poorly commanded Australians so many years ago, we were granted a special five day break and an extraordinary walk was called for.

As a keen cross-country skier, the Twins have always been a special place for me. It is possible to park just outside the gates to the Alpine Resort road and ski up to a wild mountain with wicked south-facing slopes. Snowy Bluff, too, has long held a special allure for me, most particularly because I keep meaning to go without ever actually getting there. Having dismissed a Viking-Snowy Bluff trip as too long and full of roads, I looked north to find the Twins waiting, although it could be quite challenging due to the unknown difficulty of the off-track walking required. MUMC trips are not famed for early departures, long days and really strenuous walking.

Friday morning, and six of us squeezed into David Gordon's Commodore for the long drive up to Hotham. We left only 20 minutes behind schedule, and having slept most of the way up, we magically arrived in Bright almost an hour in front. Coffee, map-covering and bakery visit completed, we raced up the mountain to the Dargo Rd Junction. We were walking just after 11, a little behind time, but nothing strong walking couldn't solve.

Despite a little cloud, and a brisk breeze, the view from the Twins was quite satisfying, even if a little intimidating; we could see most of our walk laid out in front of us, and Snowy Bluff, if we had identified it correctly, was a long way away. After Markus Voegel put his camera away, we continued along the Alpine Walking Track for a little more than a kilometre before heading off-track down the obviously southerly spur. We took lunch in the first saddle:

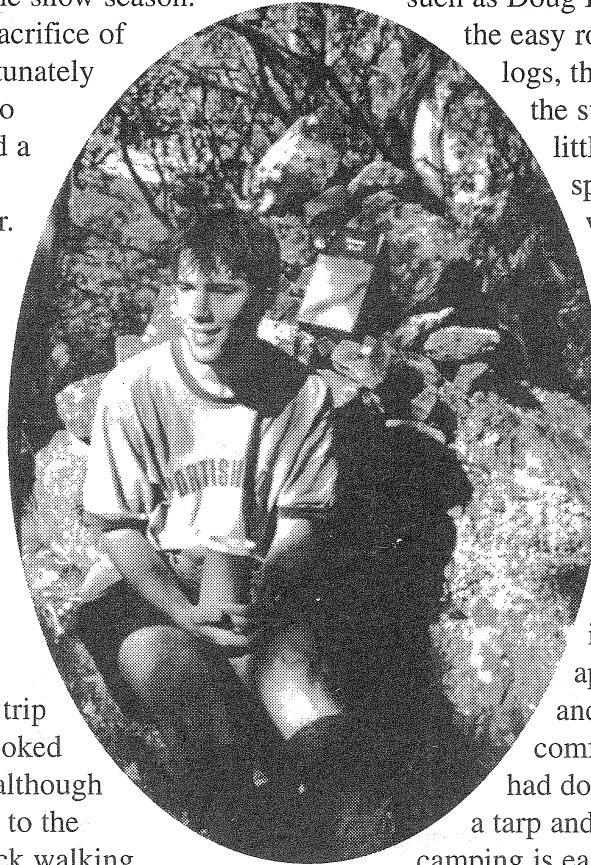
psychologically it was important to have taken the first meaningful steps towards an off-track adventure (Martin Hames' first!) although we found a distinct pad most of the way down the spur. Of course, when the going got tough, or the route required any serious navigation, this 'track' would disappear. Just at .1414, the route requires a small 'chicane' in order to continue south. The scrub was easiest sticking to the right of the spur, but to spy the destination spur, human bulldozers

such as Doug Bambrick come in handy. We took the easy road, while Doug scrambled over logs, through blackberries and so on to find the steep spur to the south. After very little descent, the scrub became quite sparse, and we returned to open woodland. Eventually, the occasional path became rockier and the rumble of a river could be heard over the intermittent pitter patter of gentle rain. It was almost five o'clock and we needed to find camp.

We had planned to camp at 'G' camp, so named for the second 'g' of 'Wongungarra' which covers the knoll on the map. Being a self-invented walk, we were a little apprehensive of what we would find and indeed there was only just comfortable room for two tents after we had done intensive clearance work. (Oh for a tarp and rope). I have since learned that camping is easier on the other side of the river below the 'RR' of Wongungarra. The recent declaration of the Wongungarra Wilderness Area was another reason to visit this area, although to be honest, I don't know the actual boundary, and we failed to see a frog.

A feature of the walk was the cooking. The green curry on the first night was not, I regret to say, such a highlight. One packet of curry paste between six is fine, two is pushing the limit. It was cold and I admit to retreating to bed prior to dessert's arrival.

A late Easter means earlier sunsets and thus earlier bedtimes, thus earlier rising. Up at 6:30, we had breakfast, including tea, and were at the river's edge by 8am. My torn boots felt the full rush of the cool water, and after a scramble onto the spur, a good pace was set up the pad. David, with trekking poles was soon out of sight, and we found a heavy frost up higher. In fact, without having endured much cold or torrential rain, we stumbled onto a stunningly beautiful Blue Rag Range with fresh snow highlighting the tree tops in



dazzling sunshine. I do not know whether the pad goes higher than 1300m because by then we were following a line of green along the white blanket. It was to a fresh, crisp view of the Dargo High Plains that we emerged from the snow gums, and David boiling the billy for another cup of tea.

There followed a road bash. The 4WD'ers remarked that it was a bit 'cold' to be wearing shorts. We reply: 'It's a fresh, clean day to be going for an energetic walk'. Other 4WD'ers took a wrong turn down to the Wongungarra (instead of going over to Mt Selwyn) and advised that there was 'nothing' down there. We found a serene river and a secluded, peaceful campsite with plenty of room for Marty and David's tent.

Easter Sunday was a rest day in walking effort required in comparison to the other days. Starting up the westerly spur we came upon our first seriously difficult scrub. Naturally, this was on a marked 4WD track where the regrowth was young, stringy and thick. Tea was heartily appreciated at the end of all that!

We came across a couple enjoying a tranquil Easter at the unspectacular Guy's Hut before ascending Mt Sarah for lunch. The conversation never quite descended to quoting Monty Python sketches during the long road bash, and turned to our concern about whether we would find water on the ridge. Fortunately, where the map marked some CFA water tanks on the Mackenzie Trail, there was also a southerly sheltered stream with sparkling water. This was quite a find, given the extended period of high ENSO-index causing dry conditions for the past five years. David's walking pole did not prove such an advantage along the track, and we were all glad to have finished road-walking for the next couple of days when we arrived at Mt Hart for sunset. here we waved to the other oxos at Mt Howitt, but they didn't seem to notice, being 40km away. Similarly difficult to find was the trig point on the summit. Hidden by 15-20 year old snow gums, we were at a loss to explain what possible use it could serve now, except to provide a fortunate, flat glade in which to camp and have our only fire for the trip. This attracted many Easter bunnies, including the magical bunny with the creamed Irish whisky. David's risotto, Markus's apple crumble - with four fresh apples- the chocolate and a fire made for a memorable, relaxing evening.

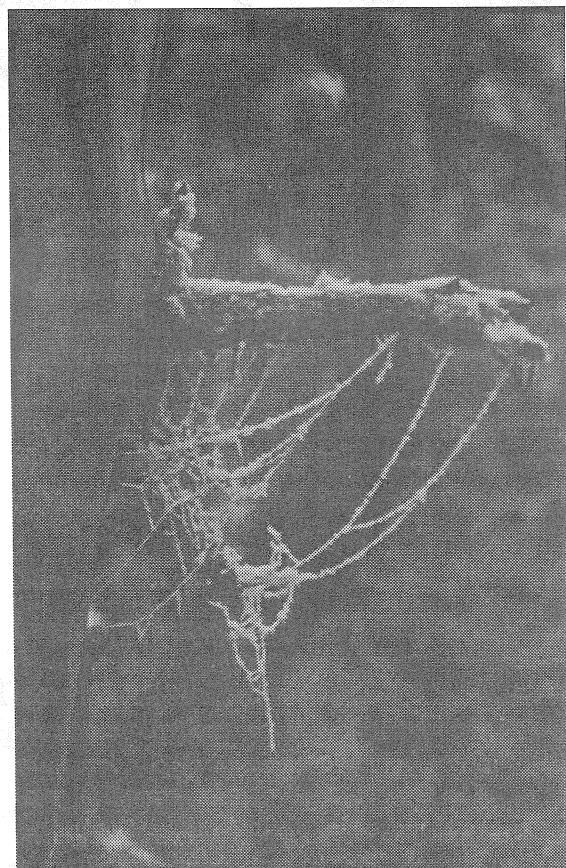
Monday's descent from Mt Hart found another pad to Cynthia Range, and following a brief road interlude, a quite defined pad/track down from Mt von Guerard through the Darling-Snowy Bluff Wilderness Area to Mts Larrit and McAdam. Much of this area is very open Australian eucalypt forest and even in late autumn, was tinder dry. A rest on Mt McAdam afforded a picturesque view of the Wonangatta & Moroka valleys and the confluence of the two rivers

where we had originally intended to cross. Having also viewed our intended route up Snowy Bluff, we decided to proceed further east along the Wonangatta in order to avoid a dodgy traverse across the face of the bluff.

As we approached the river, we came upon a man in camouflage, sporting yellowing teeth, thick accent, blundstones, a great pot belly and a rifle. A little perturbed by this visage, which we had not sighted until almost upon it, we discovered that the man was legally hunting feral deer. Whilst a laudable intention, we couldn't see him running after a tortoise in any great hurry, let alone fleet-footed gazelles. Doug proposed that the man wished to catch the deer, dress up in red and become Santa Claus. Robyn wasn't sure where the gun fitted into this plan. (*I thought this was Easter? - Ed.*) Magically, even though I had left behind all three vital ingredients (banana chips, macadamias and red wine) the 'banana' curry was edible, and followed perfectly by a chocolate mousse, with extra chocolate chips from Markus' endless pack-cum-larder.

Anzac Day was an early start, leaving just after 7 and reaching the top of Snowy Bluff just after 10am. Instead of following the recommended route that falls into the marked gully through the north of the cliff-line, we ascended over the nose of the spur, finding individual passes through each section of cliffs. This avoided the scrub in the gully and meant we retained our view to the south of the foginthevalley, and of the dominating Neilson crag as we gained more height.

The log book at the summit made for very interesting reading; it is even older than I am, but



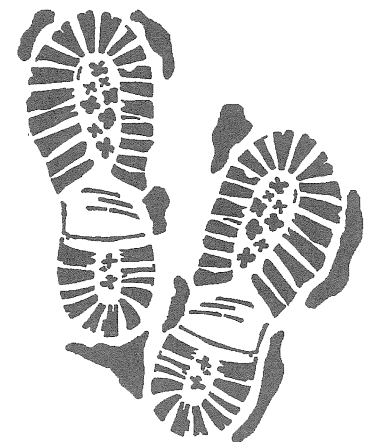
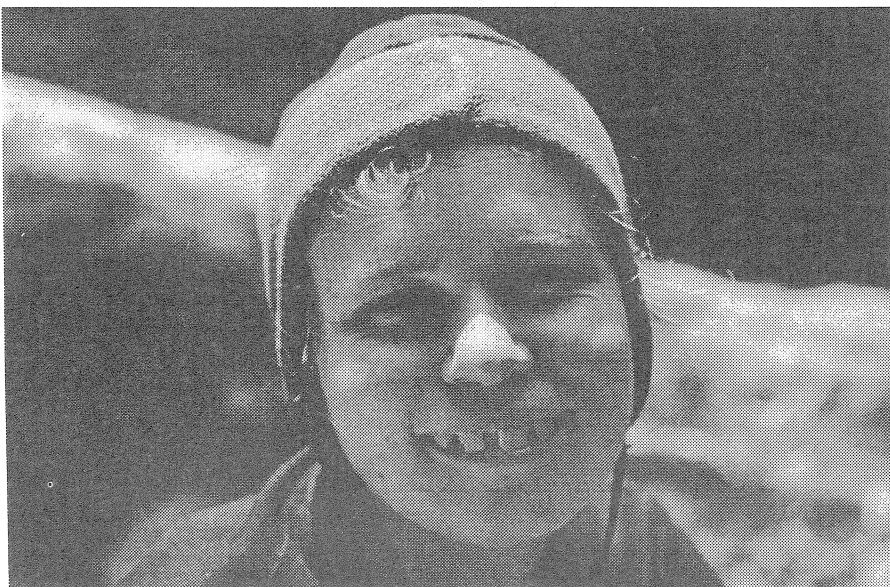
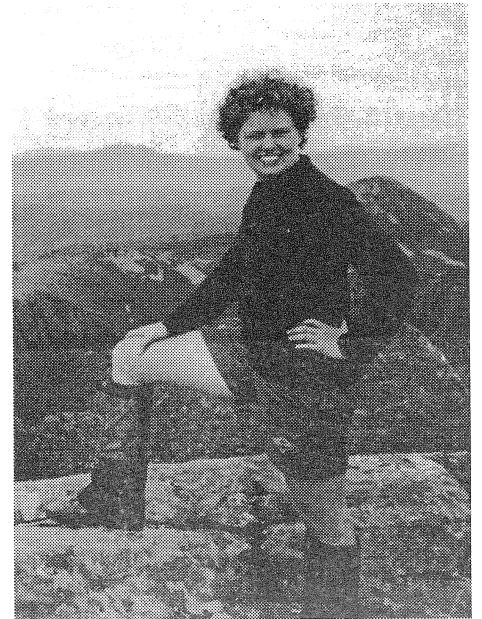
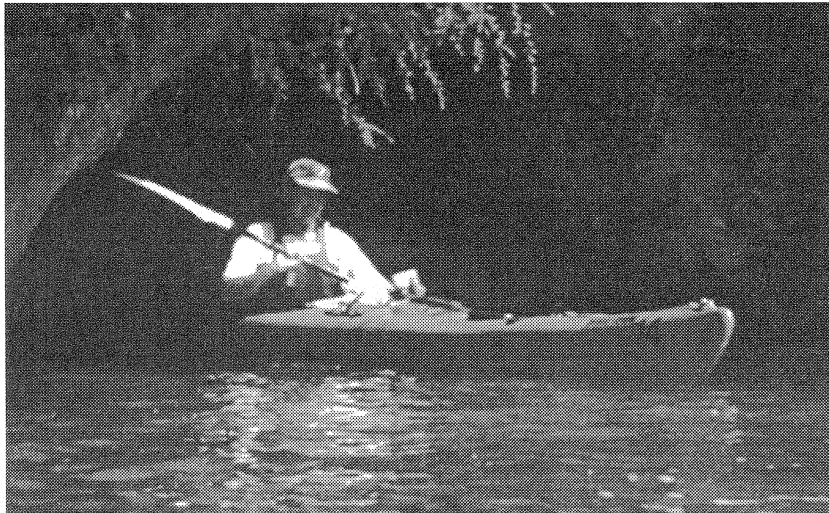
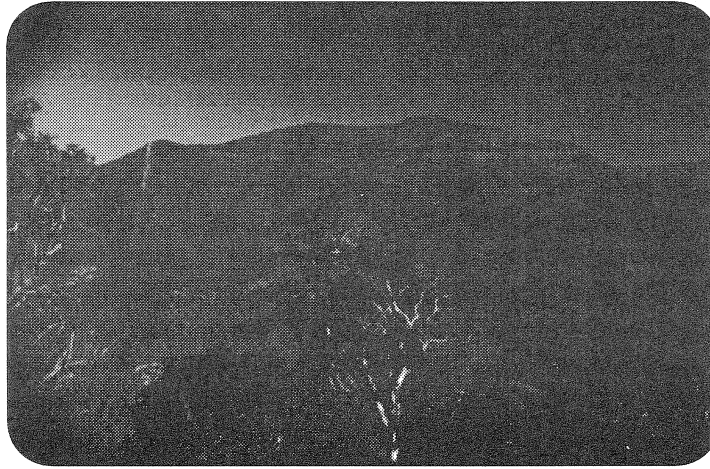
unfortunately soon to be full and removed. Anton Weller's Great Alpine Track walk, Steve Curtain's epic Victorian wilderness trek and many other MUMC feats were there. Strangely, although we had seen evidence of pads for the whole length of our walk, no-one seemed to have completed our through-route.

Our ten finished, we headed to the falls on Snowy Bluff Creek. These were, sadly, dry, but we had lunch here with a brazen lizard chewing on various pieces of food it stole. The evidence of the fire two years ago was very stark - burnt tree trunks, a parched earth and abundant wallabies. A few of us took the opportunity for a refreshing dip in the Moroka

River on that glorious autumn day before the slippery, sandy trudge up the steep 4WD track to Rocky Knob where Matt Thomas was waiting with two cars to take us back to Melbourne. The group extends

enormous gratitude to Matt for his effort to pick us up: he drove back to Melbourne with his group, then up to Rocky Knob and back to Melbourne again in 24 hours because he had made the commitment to do so in order to facilitate our trip. Thanks. I would personally like to thank the group: Doug, David, Marty, Robyn and Markus for their effort to make an ambitious trip possible by remaining positive, keeping up a

sense of urgency when needed and still being themselves to make the trip enjoyable, personable and an achievement.



OXO's Annual Bush Dance

Ingredients:

- 120 assorted people (the perfect mix of friends and strangers)*
- 1 awesome bush band*
- 2 dozen challenging bouldering problems*
- A generous supply of alcohol*
- 3 delicious, home made salads (large quantities)*
- 1 dead cow (barbecued)*
- 100 vegetable burgers (carefully rolled and barbecued uphill of the cow)*
- 50 flannelette shirts (I find these particularly sexy, but apparently blue is in fashion)*

Cooking Utensil:

The Mill Indoor Rockclimbing Gym, 78 Oxford St Collingwood

Method:

Throw all ingredients into the cooking utensil. Ensure they are well mixed. (Don't worry if some people can dance better than others, the clumsy ones seem to have more fun anyway!)

Stir vigourously for four hours or until the band has to go home, the drinks are all gone and the people are staggering around, happy and exhausted.

Thanks to Brad for being chief organiser and to everyone else who helped. It was an ace night – hope to see you all there again next year!



Peter Lockett
showing us
how it's done

My Supreme Adventure

by Victoria Farmer

The hiss of an MSR gently awakens me. I suint with one eye toward the hut window. It's pitch black outside ad windy. My mind slowly registers: I'm in Colin Todd Hut, New Zealand, it's 2:30 am and there was a freeze....IT'S A GO!! I lie in bed as long as possible, wishing adventure could be had from the comfort of my sleeping bag. But the threat of regret overrides lethargy. I don Thermals, Goretex, Boots, Petzel and wander outside to the loo. I sit in the outhouse, repetitively reading the waste disposal information on the back of the door. I make the most of the visit considering the long day ahead, and then it dawns on me. There was a freeze: I'm attempting to climb Mt Aspiring today.....Ha! And as I get up, I scare myself with the reflection of my headtorch in the dunny window.

To continue the account of my three week mountaineering holiday in such detail would be to risk everyone's attention but my own. So here is an outline of my trip who don't know much about mountaineering - and perhaps a chance to reminisce for those who do.

Enmoore, Joel, Matt and I spent seven days learning technical mountaineering skills in Mt Cook National Park, NZ during last summer. Our guide, John Entwistle from Peak Experience, is a 65 year old man from Yorkshire, with 30 years mountaineering experience and the fitness of a 20 year old. We elected to fly our gear, six boxes of food and ourselves into Tasman Glacier (2400m above sea level) by glacier plane. The twenty-minute flight projected us into mountaineering land; introducing us to the Southern Alps, sparkling snow, blue ice and crumbling rock. We made day trips from Kelman Hut with John, learning skills such as:

- * Jumping in a hole and trying to get out - Crevasse Rescue
- * Roping up and bum sliding - Glacier Travel and Negotiating Crevasses
- * Defy Gravity - Self Arrest or 'Stick-em-up'
- * Psychological Safety - Ice Climbing, snow anchors and rock routes
- * Crap times in a crap out - Navigation and New Zealand Weather

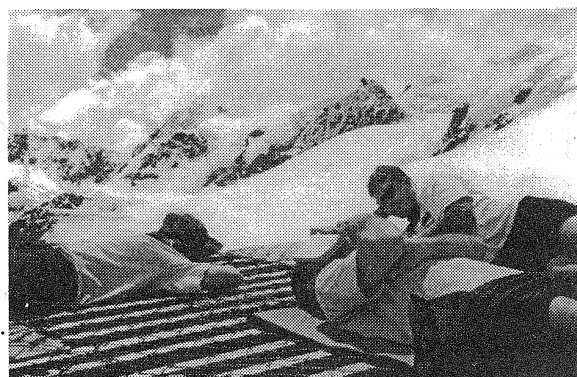
Hut etiquette was not part of the course.

Once we had learnt these things we were able to mountain climb. This involves Alpine starts (getting up around 3am and climbing until around mid morning). Time is of the essence when the sun comes out starts to melt the ice around you. Boulders come loose, snow slopes slide and seracs collapse. You want to be drinking a cup of hot jelly in the hut/tent/snow cave at times like these. For the same reason, people mostly wait for a good freeze before attempting a summit. For this, you need a hot day so the snow melts the day before followed by a cloudless night so that it freezes rock hard again. It is time and energy consuming to climb without a freeze, having to 'plug' steps shin deep in slushy snow. It is also dangerous because the risk of avalanches is increased.

We learnt to pace ourselves for an average of 10 hours each day, only needing to stop to rope up or take crampons on and off. Oh and for sunscreen and water if you're real soft! We pitched steep slopes using ropes, ice stakes, screws picks and hammers. This meant that we could be caught on the rope if we were to fall, assuming the anchors held. When mountaineering, these safety techniques are mostly psychological and some people discard them in exchange for speed.

When the course was over, we went off to try some things without John. It often turned out to be more than we had bargained for. Experience, it seems, is something you gain when you don't get what you want! At times, we found ourselves on a sliding slope, watching our tracks disappearing behind us, with the sound of pouring wet cement. Another time, Enmoore rolled unroped down a slope and managed to self-arrest just two metres shy of a deep crevasse. Then there was the time I was lowered too fast and fell on a few metres of slack, my axes and crampons flailing about until I landed in between two of my team mates below.

New Zealand weather patterns, or lack thereof, are notoriously unpredictable. The weather may be fine one minute and then 'crap out' twenty minutes later for three or more days. So after ten days of great weather, our party of four wa bloody grateful and pretty tired. With six mountains conquered we needed a rest. On the 11th day, it blew so hard our grey water hit the dunny when we through it out the hut door. Hutbound meant that, finally, Bill Bryson's adventures and a few meals (thanks Enmoore) could be enjoyed from the comfort of my sleeping bag. For other indoor entertainment, we played charades: making up road kill, toothbrush, stunned reindeer and other wacky impressions. We played magnetic scrabble, bouldered and raided hut food supplies for raro and tinned tomatoes, muahahahaha!! We argued for the sake of conversation over whether broccoli goes with burrito mix and if we were to starve to death, which one of us would



Relaxing on the Helipad at Kelman Hut

provide the most sustenance. All eyes were on my as I had already eaten my scroggin. We soon learned to avoid three topics of conversation: MUMC Politics, Walking pace and Broccoli. I also learned that Psycho Uno makes you psycho.

On day 16, after climbing eight mountains, we decided to walk out due to more impending bad weather. The next morning, we woke up in Ball shelter to a beautiful sunny day and cursed the decision to walk out when we could still be climbing. Had we made the right decision? We walked 5km to the road then hitched a ride to Cook Village. We were lucky to get a lift, because after 17 days, we had reached the limit on the 'smell-o-meter'. Our reek certainly offended the general public. The following day, in POURING RAIN, we smugly skipped town on a bus to Wanaka - this was it: Mt Aspiring or bust! The difference between this mountain and the others we had climbed is that it stands on its own - a three faced prism rising out of the undulating plains of the Bonar glacier. It is the "Matterhorn of the South" and staggeringly beautiful. We attempted to climb from sea level, climbing to 1490m on the first day up to French Ridge Hut. I didn't see anything French about it though. The next day we climbed Mt French (now I get it) which is a small pimple of a mountain, at 2356m high. We crossed the Bonar glacier to Colin Todd Hut, which is at the base of Mt Aspiring's North West spur.

We left the next morning, on the 22nd of December at 3:30 in the morning under the brightest moon in 150 years. The view was ethereal and as the sun rose you could see a black triangular shadow of Aspiring cast on the wall of the West Matukituki valley below us.

Our climb was the most technical we had done - involving nine pitches of climbing up the 'ramp' which ranges from 45-65 degrees. It is a slope that appears benign but has become a common place of death for that very reason as people misjudge the slope and plummet to their death. We travelled quickly along the base of the mountain. We slowed as we climbed the ramp. From the top of the ramp to the summit we travelled unroped. It involved a walk along the ridge that became icy and nerve rackingly steep in parts. When the wind picked up, I feared that it would knock me off the edge. I hoped that, despite my inexperience, I would be able to sense when to turn back if the weather became threatening. We reached the summit around 10 o'clock and anchored in. There was a window of open space with clouds blanketing the valleys below and smothering the sky above. Our climb was only half over. Shortly afterward, we descended cautiously to the top of the ramp. It was then, on our first pitch, that Pack let loose. I had been digging a T-Slot for an anchor in the very soft, early afternoon snow when I bumped Pack. I had forgotten to reattach it to my sling after I had anchored on the summit. Pack slid 200 m down the ramp and plummeted 50m off an ice cliff. I was so angry and embarrassed, that it was the fastest T-Slot that I have ever dug. Being short of my own gear slowed us considerably.

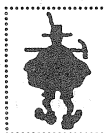
Once off the mountain, Joel decided that he valued my safety marginally more than his bed and we began walking further from home to search for Pack. I feared that Pack may have already succumbed to a crevasse burial. Luckily, we found Pack had conveniently stopped twenty metres below a rock face - not stuck half way up or torn to shreds, but intact with everything still in it. My ice hammer was sitting upright in the snow ten metres away.

Back at the hut, after a 15 hour day, I managed to convince my amazing comrades, who had not yet slept or eaten, to get up at 4am the next day to escort me back over the glacier to French Ridge hut. I wanted to be in Dunedin by the 24th to spend Christmas day with my close friend Felicity Speight and my relations. Guided by a vision of roast turkey and gravy, I summoned the energy to continue another five and a half hours down to Raspberry flat where we had begun our journey three days before, in time to catch the 3:30 bus to Wanaka. Before I knew it, I was eating Roast turkey for lunch with my Grandmother and Roast turkey for dinner with the Speights.

My first season Mountaineering sure was amazing. Continually great weather and successful summit attempts made for a totally fantastic adventure. I began the trip fraught with nerves; feelings of incompetence and fear of the unexpected. But these three weeks taught me so much about myself. A state of euphoria enveloped me for weeks afterward. Life was simple. Nothing could annoy me. I'd wait an hour for a bus without even noticing. I even farted in elevators. I felt great! Unfortunately, my euphoria has worn off now. I am back in the world as I make it. My aspirations for future endeavours will always be fun, adventure, challenge and beauty. Though now, I'll be especially looking forward to a dose of my euphoria again - the type that makes you really appreciate stale bread and cosy sleeping bags.



The team plus a few: Vic, Joel, Chris, Jac, Matt, Iain and Enmoore at Kelman Hut



Snake Wrestling, Storms and One Long Day: Rescue in the Blueys

by Stuart Holloway

It was my idea. One of the ideas which horrifies those around me. They call them crazy, ridiculous, appalling.

I think of them as the vision. In the effort to test physical, mental and technical resources the conception of the possible is the crucial starting point. Usually, more worried about missing out than the thought of the suffering involved, my friends choose to come.

It is a disturbing paradox that, having organised the most decadently comfortable trip possible for my holidays, I was driven more than ever to push. To link two big, long canyons feeding into the same river system in one day seemed a perfect opportunity. We wouldn't have to repeat the substantial approach hike for the second canyon, which was supposed to be essentially dry, thus mitigating the prospects of hypothermia and the impact of the thunderstorm expected that evening, on some future day and we could always just forget about the second canyon and head for their common exit downstream on the Wollangambe. Most importantly, we would be pushing.

At 5a.m. it didn't seem like such a great idea, but I managed to overcome my weakness and started getting dressed. The rest of the team assembled in the kitchen, where it seemed lethargy overwhelmed excitement. It was not a terribly dynamic breakfast but we were still moving forward. After a lightening stop at the fabulous Blackheath Bakery, home of the much vaunted pies, it all seemed like a great idea again, and we drove off with enthusiasm out of the early morning light into mist which occasionally thickened to drizzle as we wound up through the forest and out past Mt. Wilson.

In the cold grey of the campground, stripping down for the walk, stuffing wetsuits, lunches and gear into our few packs, we delayed making a call on the weather until we had to commit to the canyon, hoping we would get a clear picture as the mist burnt off. In the cold, and mindful of the magnitude of our goals, we hammered the walk into and across the Wollangambe, steeply up the other side of the valley and out along the ridge. Sweating in the chill morning, we picked up a faint trail and later a creek dropping down to the right and flew down to the canyon rim. It was overcast but I was confident the weather would hold as forecast. I believed that the storm front would not come until early evening and the others agreed.

It was an elaborate gearing up process. We had already been working hard, so there was food and drink, and I needed to

have the piss of fear. The five of us struggled to pull wetsuits over thermals as protection against the long swims we anticipated.

The initially scruffy canyon suddenly steepened with a hand-over-hand between clean red walls and an abseil down a waterfall into a roofed over section. From here canyon formation was excellent and sustained. We rushed from one wonder to the next, torn between momentum and awe. Most stunning was a series of tight, darkened swims and duckunders, more akin to caving than anything else. Pushing or towing packs we swam through sections of frigid, night-dark water, alternately through tunnels or pressed between towering walls of water smoothed rock. Adjectives flowed, teeth chattered and we gasped not only from the cold in the inadequate effort to encapsulate the sense of being surrounded by and part of something special.

At the end of one brief, sandy section the canyon became a square cut chasm drilled through the rock. A giant boulder was wedged against the bottom at this end, obscuring the view. I climbed onto its shoulder and crouched next to Tommy who stood on top.

"What's there?" called Baby Stu, clambering out of the darkness on the far side of the sand.

"Only the best water jump in the world!" cried Tommy, but I saw the shadow in the water.

On the right side of the pool of water stretched out before us, two yards by twenty long between walls which met high overhead, the deep clear sandy bottom was a beautiful sight. It had caught Tommy's eyes immediately. To the left was a dark line. It could have been the shadow cast by the canyon walls, pressing over our shoulders. It probably wasn't a shark. It could have been rock. I opened my mouth but my concerns were swamped by Tommy's bacchic cry and an eruption of water.

When he surfaced it was with some surprise that he gasped, "I've stuffed it Slim. There's rock. Stay right."

"Are you ok?"

The others had joined me on the boulder and pressed around the chasm's entrance.

"Yeah, it's fine," Tommy replied as he started to breaststroke down the pool.

The Volley sandshoe, white and livid like a dying fish, trailed limply, with a sickening sense of disconnectedness, in the water behind him.

On the right side of the pool of water stretched out before us, the deep clear sandy bottom was a beautiful sight. To the left was a dark line. It could have been a shadow cast by the canyon walls..it probably wasn't a shark. It could have been a rock.....

"C'mon, stay right," I hissed, furious at his foolishness, and dropped myself into the water to swim after him.

As I caught up to him in the water, Tommy continued to protest that his leg was alright, until he reached shallow water. Trying to stand a pale look shot across his face. I rushed to support him as the realisation hit home.

"Shit Slim, I've fucked it."

Baby Stu pulled alongside and we carried Tommy, his foot dangling at a sickening angle, to a small beach. While I sorted the necessary clothing, first aid gear and food out for them, Kylie and Baby Stu began an evaluation of the patient and injury. Richard was dispatched to search out some suitable splinting material and, leaving them with all our relevant resources at hand, I started planning our escape and rescue options.

We had just reached a section of the canyon which was broader and more broken. Further on it narrowed down into tight, steep travelling again, and as we were probably little more than halfway down it would be a long and torturous process to move Tommy out to the bottom of the

canyon. In the broken section there were

some high ledges. The thick vegetation suggested that they were generally above the flood level, a lucky break. I returned to the others with this good news.

His left foot was hideously dislocated. Pointing at 8 o'clock relative to his leg and pulled up level with the base of the tibia/fibula, we could assume it had also suffered significant ligament and tendon damage but there seemed to be little else wrong. Thanks to a combination of the cold, shock, prompt treatment, his relatively calm disposition and the liberal application of spare insulation and pain suppressing pharmaceuticals Tommy reported being comfortable and exhibited no signs of nerve damage, other fractures or bleeding.

I briefly outlined our situation and options as they appeared. My offer to reduce the dislocation was greeted with interested ambivalence by Tommy, who wanted at all costs to avoid a helicopter rescue, and revulsion by the others. Baby Stu re-emphasised the need to establish the safest possible position before an attempt to initiate an outside response could be made. Tommy continued to look like he could travel and was determined to try, so while Richard and Kylie repacked, Baby Stu and I went back to scope out the ledges.

The thickly vegetated ledges formed a giant staircase rising up from the canyon floor. Each rectangular ledge was

bounded on two sides by cliff falling dropping to the canyon floor, on a third side by a rock band separating it from the next ledge and finally by the main wall sweeping up to the rim. The highest ledge was ten vertical metres from the rim, as we could see it. There appeared to be a steep corner running up to easy ground at the back of it. We could definitely get him up onto the ledges, which would probably be safe, and if I could climb the steep corner we could haul him out. That way we could be sure none of us would die.

Loaded with ropes and spare 'biners I climbed to the first ledge. While I set up the haul, Baby Stu and Richard helped Tommy to the base of the cliff. Winched to the top,

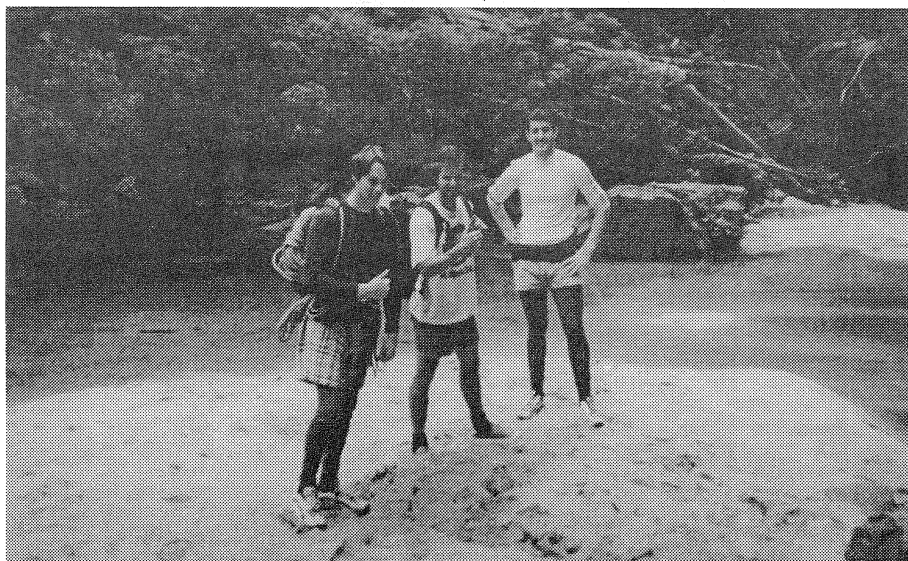
Tommy pushed himself around the lip and supported himself until the others arrived to begin the incredibly strenuous task of hopping him up the sloping vegetation to the base of the next corner, from where I hoped we could haul him directly up the vertical wall to the canyon rim.

I fixed our shortest rope as a handline for the others on the next step. With the fifty metre 8mm rope tied to my back I committed myself

to the final, steep corner. Initially it was almost a chimney, offering solid bridging, but that didn't last and the climbing became harder and less secure with height. It seemed to take quite a long time before, having climbed about a grade 15 crux and stayed in a strenuous stance at the lip until I had pulled more than a foot of leaf litter and other debris down on myself, I was able to find a hold to pull over onto easy, though sliding ground. A little more scrambling and I was greatly relieved to be clearly above the rim of the canyon.

The scrub was thick and, though I was able to get relatively high anchors in stout gums, they were well back from the edge. I pulled up our second, shorter, rope and fixed it. Fortunately it just reached the last ledge so Tommy's friend Richard, who had little experience but big, strong looking muscles, was able to prussic up to help with the hauling.

We were now in blazing sunshine working in a desk sized clear patch walled in by scrub and boulder on the canyon rim. We stripped off the wetsuits and started hauling. We pulled with mechanical advantages of between 6-1 and 9-1. Even pounded smooth with a rock, the square-cut edge of the canyon rim was unavoidable and the friction was tremendous. Tommy tied himself into the fixed prussic line as a backup to the 8mm cutting. There was much grunting and sweating.



Early morning: Baby Stu, Tommy and Richard about to cross the Wallangambe River

Eventually Tommy pushed his way around the lip of the canyon and crawled, his splinted leg held to the side, to the back of our small clearing. Kylie started prussicking and I hauled the backs up from Baby Stu. It seemed that we were essentially safe and that it was now just a matter of grinding it out to get him to the hospital.

"Is that a snake?"

I thought he was delirious. Turning from the cliff edge initially I saw only twigs lying on the rock. Then movement focussed my vision on a slender, 50cm brownish snake with faint olive bands on its body. The head was held angrily high in the air as its body swished agitatedly over the rock by a freshly disturbed cobble. It was less than a metre distant from both myself and Tommy.

"Shit Tommy. If we get bitten by a snake I'm definitely getting a helicopter."

"Uh, I'm feeling pretty exposed here," said Tommy, flat on his back and unable to move with a seriously upset though quite small, snake only striking distance away.

"Remember, it's more scared of us than we are of it," volunteered Richard helpfully.

"Then it would have to be pissing itself."

We stamped heavily to make large, scary snake shooing vibrations but the snake showed no sign of backing off.

"I don't think this one has read the books. Just what we need, a stupid snake."

By this time Richard had armed himself with a suitable looking stick and I was clutching a good, mashing sized rock. Tommy, defenceless, had his eyes locked on the snake in some kind of wild staring contest. Presumably he won, because the snake backed off a couple of metres. There was considerable relief and more intimidating stamping, but it was short lived because the snake, apparently determined not to be stared out of town, came back, looking angrier than before.

"Should we try to just flick it off the edge?" I asked.

"Low percentage,"

"Should we mash its head?"

"High percentage."

I checked that Kylie and Stu were secure, out of the way and had their helmets on.

"Ok, Richard, on 3."

No one wanted what was going to happen, but the snake wasn't going to back down. The explosion of activity was sudden and furious. The snake's head darted, the stick swung in a rapid, clubbing arc and the impact of the rock sounded through the trees. For a moment, in the dust and blur, the outcome couldn't be seen, but none of us were screaming. Then we could see the snake, enraged but crippled, attempting to raise itself to strike, but each time toppling backwards and to the left with a broken spine.

Again it tried and suddenly dropped from view over the

canyon rim. I leant out to look and saw that it had landed on a narrow ledge only two feet below, where it largely gained control of itself and began cruising backward and forward. The ledge ran to where Kylie and Baby Stu would get off the fixed rope and start scrambling. The injured snake started heading across. It was ugly, but it couldn't be.

Again, I checked that Kylie and Stu were out of the way.

"Rock!" With the third rock the snake looped out into space and disappeared into the shadows of the canyon. Wetsuits and harnesses back in the packs and some more pharmaceuticals in Tommy, we started traversing and climbing, picking a line through broken rock outcrops and undergrowth, heading for the ridge and hopefully somewhere a chopper could land. Rotating between supporting Tommy, who rapidly mastered a range of cross country hopping techniques, and finding, if necessary making, a path through the scrub we made good, though tiring progress up to the ridge. A short way along the broad ridge we found two perfect sandstone clearings, one for a camp and, hopefully,

one for a chopper.

Leaving the others to make camp Kylie and I picked our way back along the spur to the main ridge line and the track we had followed in the morning. It was terribly ill defined and we took particular care with the navigation to be able to find our way back. At the track we built a marker for the starting point. Away to the west we could see the storm front coming, adding to the sense of urgency.

I changed plans. Kylie returned to the camp with my compass, after I gave her a final synopsis of the likely scenarios then started running. It took 65 minutes. I was eating the celebratory cake we had bought that morning when I got on the phone at 3:40.

Handing over control, such as it is, of a situation is not something I like to do. To do the best by Tommy, however, we needed resources and so it had to be done. I managed to



Tommy being hauled up the second cliff

not be frustrated by the dispatch officer at 000, explaining to her I was in Mt. Wilson, the victim was not, that indeed the victim and I were in different places because there were no phones where the victim was and there was a phone in Mt. Wilson where I now was having left the victim where he still was. Further I managed to not be frustrated when I explained that even though she didn't know what a map reference was I did and hopefully the police who deal with the incident would and that it was important but I couldn't explain fully to her just now how they worked. I did manage to get the local direct number, which I had lost, from her, which was a positive achievement. Then I phoned Carys and Kath at home, to let them know what had happened.

"No, there is no viable transport to Mt. Wilson. No, the police, who typically don't let anybody do anything once they take over, won't pick them up. No, there is nothing you can do."

These were not the answers that they wanted to hear, an attribute that I didn't fully appreciate at the time.

The Katoomba police told that it would have to be a stretcher carry. The meeting point would be the fire station at Mt. Wilson. They couldn't get a chopper ahead of the storm.

I parked at the fire station and waited. The storm arrived from ugly skies shortly before 5p.m. and, with few breaks, hammered the Blue Mountains with sheets of rain for the following two days. The first sign of response at the fire station was an elderly, weatherbeaten guy who arrived, looked scornfully at me, barked a series of guttural sounds at me, which I eventually figured out was his way of making sure I was going to stay put, and let himself into the station. Faced with a choice between this, the back of the car and the rain, I decided to chance the fire station.

What, where, how many? I gave up on grid references, put a dot on the map on the wall and started answering with dot points. A tall bearded figure arrived. The brigade captain. I ran through the complete incident, with details of the evacuation route. His father, apparently a former brigade captain, seemed to decide I was not an entirely irresponsible and dangerous hooligan and began to look at me with a less fearsome aspect. It became apparent that the local brigades would be supplying the manpower under police direction. The captain let me back on the phone to Carys with a list of gear to bring. She and Kath already had it packed, waiting. They were picked up at the Blackeath fire station by the Katoomba crew who had already passed through but doubled back to get them.

"No cowboys," growled the ex-captain, pointing his finger to emphasise his disapproval.

More and more people arrived, responding immediately to a

callout which drew them away from the dramatic final minutes of the NRL grandfinal. I answered question after question from new arrivals until I smartly retreated with a coffee and a biscuit to await the police who would oversee the rescue. It had been a long hard day and I would need to



Tent shelter. (Tommy hiding inside Bivvy Bag)

go back in again. The police arrived. Carys and Kath arrived with a terrific supply of extra gear. Paramedics. More crews arrived. We waited. We kept waiting and my impotence bred frustration. The response plan being implemented was inefficient and unwise given the cold, wet conditions. Eventually we moved. Fire trucks took us to the trail head where we reassembled and started walking. It was slow going, a great crocodile winding down the path. Half an hour down the path the two police running the operation realised that forty was too great a number to be effective in the scrub and so left nearly half the group on the trail above a cliff band as a relief crew. They would stand in the hammering rain for nearly six hours until our return. Carys and Kath spotted and talked the remaining fire crews down the steep sections of the path as we picked our way down to the river.

I managed not to be frustrated when I explained that even though she did not know what a map reference was, I did and that it was important, but I couldn't fully explain to her just now how they worked.

It was a hard climb up steep and slippery mud to gain the ridge. Richard, Kylie and Baby Stu, on their parallel ridge, could see our lights and the fire crews could see theirs. It took some convincing to make some of them realise that by walking away from the light we were going in the right direction. We reached the take off point on the ridge and, navigating by

compass, scared silly at thought of stuffing it up, I managed to pick up the lower ridge running out to the camp. I had taken my coat off in a break in the rain as we slogged up the hill and, focussed on reaching Tommy, I stupidly kept going without putting it back on when the rain returned.

There was much milling about when we reached them. They had taken shifts rotating between being under a tarp by a

boulder with Tommy and a bridging position in a small cave, essentially staying dry as the rain pounded down around them. Boredom had not set in, but the cold was beginning to by the time we arrived. The paramedic evaluated Tommy, and adjusted his morphine dosage on hearing how lavishly we had overdosed him during the day. Carys and Kath immediately took care of our team, supplying food, drink and new clothes, while I tried to start packing but was mostly useless in the background until they delivered me food, a dry top and my coat.

For the return, as with the journey out, my role was to find the way. With many strong and willing backs handling the stretcher it was all we could do to find and clear a path ahead of them. This continued for ages, up to the main ridge, along it, and down towards the steep ground. Routefinding was often difficult, especially where the trail crossed sandstone slabs linking ledge systems. The stretcher frequently had to be passed hand to hand over steep sections and down steps. Tommy seemed quite fine except for the few occasions that overzealous handlers grabbed his foot instead of the stretcher frame, triggering, rather than a string of fine expletives, a rather strangled cry: "My foot. Watch my foot!"

I was spent. Slumped at the base of a rockface in thick, waist deep scrub, the rain thundering dully on my hood, I didn't move. The stretcher was at a standstill, awaiting direction. We had lost the trail. Scouts had fanned out to find it. It certainly wasn't over here, I had established that, but I couldn't bring myself to circle through the thick undergrowth to keep searching. Others could find it.

A shout. The path was found and I could push on. The steep descent was incredibly treacherous, slick mud. The police and I leapfrogged ropes to keep the stretcher moving lower after lower down the slope. People, without the benefit of this belay, made their way down as best they could and many slides were taken before we finally reached the river.

The steep scramble through the rock band was the only real obstacle on the long climb up from the river. Here the limitations of the police rescue skills became fully apparent. Having stopped me from rigging the haul, they clearly wanted to implement the system I had had in mind, but were uncertain as to how to rig it. Eventually they declared that they would run a direct pull with lots of man power which, I later discovered, they backed up with a jumar clipped to a tree. The rope was tied directly to the head of the stretcher. The relief crew hauled and, fortunately, when Tommy hung from the pulley in the tree above us like some lynching victim, we were able to support just enough of his weight to enable Kylie to feed rope through the jumar and lower him to the ground. The relief crew, after their nightlong vigil, carried Tommy away while we fixed a handline and talked the rest of the original stretcher team up the steep, slippery corner to the exposed jug-handle tree roots and onto the ledge.

Passing the stretcher I stopped to help pass it over a rock step, and to tell Tommy we were going ahead. As soon as it was out of my hands Carys grabbed me and pushed me towards home again.

"There are fresh people to carry. The others are gone."

I now think she lied as I'm sure she and Kath had to double back to get Richard and Baby Stu. Incapable of anything but movement, I pushed for the top, desperate to get there before I stopped.

There was a Toyota ute in the middle of the wilderness. It had been reversed over impossible terrain to pick him up. Another crew of six passed me on their way in. They had arrived after 2a.m. from somewhere. At the trailhead I entered a sudden circle of light surrounded by all manner of trucks. I walked slowly to the roaring bonfire. By the time I had crossed fifteen yards I was wrapped in a blanket and drinking coffee, hot, strong and bitter. All of our team was soon up after about fifteen minutes we were crammed in a truck heading back to the station. The lights were on, the heating was up, the table piled with food and a constant stream of hot drinks and snacks flowed from the makeshift kitchen manned by two volunteers from the Red Cross or Salvation Army or something.

Tommy was in the ambulance soon after 4a.m. In dry clothes, Kath riding with Richard to keep him awake, Baby Stu and Kylie out cold on the back seat, we left the fire station behind the ambulance half an hour later. It would probably be past dawn before the Mt. Wilson brigade were finished. The rain continued relentlessly as I drove, almost blind from looking into the darkness for so long. I had to stop twice before pulling over a final time at the pink pub. Carys could take us home. I couldn't drive anymore and I didn't need to push.



"Carys, I need to get out of here."

"There are fresh people now. Go."

"Where are the others?"

"They've gone ahead."

More than just a place for Midnight Ascent

It was a dark and stormy night, many years ago, when I first met Frank. Together with his friends, some of which I knew, and some that I didn't, we huddled together around a single naked candlelight. A rough bottle of red was passed around, which successfully warded off the cold frosty air of the MUMC hut that we were spending the night in. Frank is a past president of MUMC, and I was one of the "new recruits". The bottle of red had loosened tongues, and I was taking Frank to task about his career as an industrial chemist, and the conflict that lay between that and his enthusiasm for the outdoors. Calmly he argued that he *was* an environmentalist, and he believed that in order to clean up "the mess", you needed to be a part of it. Frank had planted a seed in my mind that would later grow and change forever my thoughts about many such things.

High on the north-west spur of Mt. Feathertop is the MUMC Memorial Hut. The structure is quite unique, with a distinctive igloo shape that charms many visiting bushwalkers. The story of the construction of the hut back in the late 60's is the now the stuff of legends, with tales of every single beam, panel and bolt carried in on the backs of club members. The chaotic nature of the design and construction effort is in contrast to its remarkable rigidity and ability to survive in the harsh climate of the Australian alps.

The idea of a club hut was originally conceived after the deaths of several club members on a mountaineering trip to New Zealand. The hut was planned as a base in winter from which alpine skills could be learned and practised, before club members headed off to the bigger mountains overseas. (The annual Alpine Instruction weekend held at the hut in August is the continuation of that tradition.) The hut was also a memorial to those three who died in New Zealand, and sadly more plaques have been added in later years with further deaths of club members in the mountains.

Today the hut is held in ire by many conservationists and bushwalkers, whose concept of a wilderness exclude such man-made intrusions. It is interesting to think that only thirty years ago thoughts on conservation and wilderness were so much different, such that a university club could arrange to build their own dwelling in such prime wilderness real estate. But perspectives were different back then, and concepts such as "wilderness" were evolving. And they still are today.

Many candle-lit evenings spent in the hut

have provided a prime atmosphere to debate such issues. On one hand the hut allows people to access the wild, harsh alpine environment in the middle of winter. However, those willing can achieve the same with suitable camping equipment and skills. (Few visitors to the hut are probably aware of the official park management policy towards huts in the high country - that they are only for visiting briefly and for staying overnight only in emergency.) But the aging hut is also approaching historical significance.

Despite much effort in the past few months, the hut is still in disrepair. The roof leaks were fixed just in time for winter, but the floor will need varnishing as soon as possible after snow thaws. There are still rotten beams to be replaced and the front steps are crumbling due to constant freezing and thawing. Although hut maintenance can't really happen during winter, there will be a lot of work to be done over summer. The hut is currently maintained by volunteers from MUMC (and the OXO Club made up of past MUMC members) together with the help of the parks service and monetary support from the Sports Association¹. I hope you will join in and help with hut maintenance during the next year, because we need all the help we can get to preserve this special and unique structure.

**Go to the clubrooms for more
information!**

Nic helping to repair the floor



Paddling the Goulburn Rapids

By Mel Howlett

Bright and early 7:30 am start

Enthusiasm was not at a peak at 7:30 on a Sunday morning. Hock, our only leader had a big Saturday night of 3 lone beers because he couldn't find the party he was meant to go to. He was sleeping them off in his car while kayaks were being attached.

Alan, another potential leader, and his much needed car were still not accounted for at 8:15 am, even after messages were left on his phone that we were leaving in five minutes, with or without him.

Not so early 9am

We left the boat sheds.

There were 16 of us paddlers, all at various stages of ability. It was hard to decipher who was actually a *good* paddler (until they were in the water) because nearly everyone claimed NEVER to have paddled before. Further probing revealed that they had played canoe polo for years and just hadn't been

in a river yet. Gear and leaders were both limiting factors so we paddled in two groups, one group watching, rescuing and supposedly learning from the others.

bridge running down the centre of a river.

My tactics for going down the huge rapids was to scream loudly, shut my eyes and nearly drop my paddle. Meanwhile, everyone in the eddy below is yelling at me to KEEP PADDLING. It seems intuitively wrong to keep paddling, when the river is running so fast beneath you and huge waves are coming towards you. Instinctively, you want to *stop* paddling, slow down and bail out into calmer waters. Apparently, the theory is that you need to go *faster* than the current. I'm not exactly sure why but it works.

Tipping Over

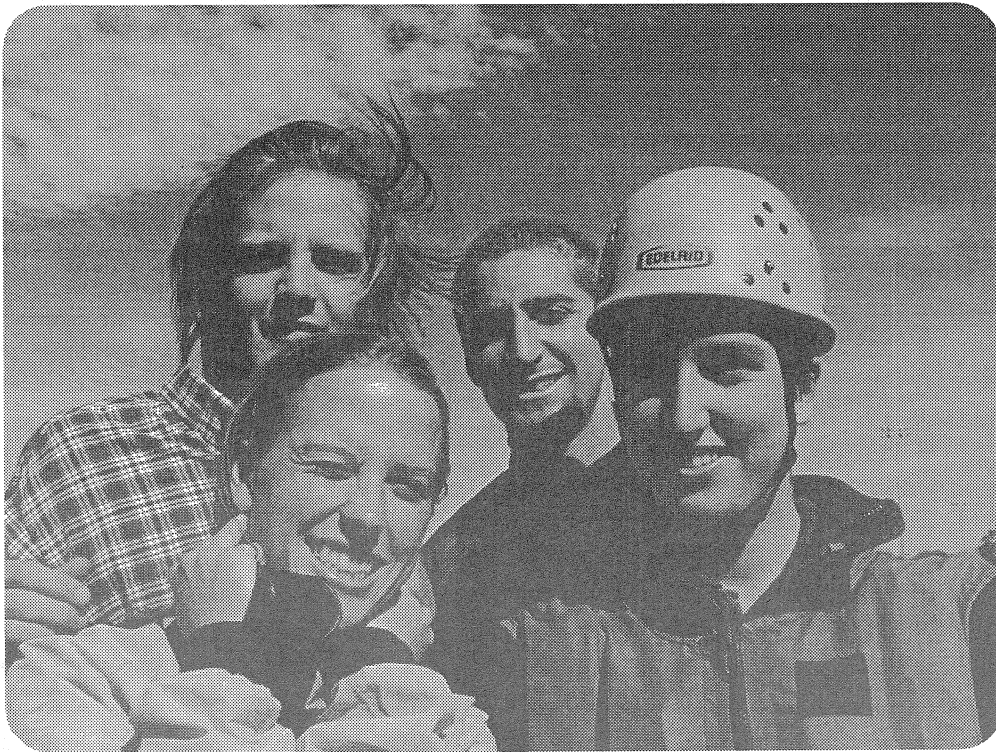
Being upside down in a kayak, going down a rapid isn't the most secure feeling in the world. Understandably, most of us panicked the first time we tipped. The natural reaction is to try to get air, and get your head to the surface as quickly as possible. This position makes it impossible to get out of the boat. Many near drownings occurred in this manner. If the theory that the more you tip the more you learn is true, then Jacob was on

the sharpest learning curve.

Most convincing drowning attempt was Doug, who went under, tried to put his head up, didn't succeed, and went under again.

Rescue Rope

The rope thrower is supposed to watch the river, see someone in trouble, stand on one end of the rope and throw the rope bag to the other person in need. The promise that when we tipped over, there would be someone to rescue us, was comforting. That was, until Kath tipped. JP threw both the rope bag and his end of the rope in the water to save her. The general feeling was (as usual) that Kath was about to die, but she'd be alright. After all, she is the president. So JP



Some of the gang: JP, Mel, Kath, Jacob

The Rapids

The rapids inspired fear in some, and rugged determination in others. When I signed up for this trip, I did so without any knowledge that there even were rapids on the Goulburn. I was thinking more along the lines of a calm Yarra river look alike. At first I thought that the concrete pylons in the river were just a handy addition which created rapids due to an old bridge. Then someone told me that it was a man made slalom course, and I realised that it would have been an odd looking

gallantly jumped in to save her boat and paddle; and left her swimming after the rope bag.

Luke was equally brave when he tried to rescue an up-side down Jacob with the throw rope and was pulled into the water himself. Revenge was close at hand as five minutes later, Jacob fell in trying to rescue Luke. Meanwhile Barb, Cath, and Claire put their helmets and life jackets on and fearlessly jumped in to conquer the rapids without their kayaks.

The Way Home

Descending on Healesville only fast food outlet, a pizza shop, sent the chef over to the nearby Coles to buy a 20kg bag of

flour to cope with our demands. Hock, Alan, Claire and I became a family for the purposes of the meal, ie to buy the largest pizza possible. JP's endless appetite was displayed when he asked some strangers for their leftover pizza. The question of whether people would share a Chupa Chup with another person, dominated the conversation. We decided that it really depends on what flavour.

Sunday "was the bomb" as Nic would say. I stopped to think once during that day about what an awesome day I was having and what an awesome and crazy bunch of people we were. And then I fell out of my boat.



Re-enactments of the drama as JP throws a (climbing?) rope to Kath

For more information on club activities or to get (more) involved, **come to the clubrooms!!**

We are open **lunchtimes everyday** (from 1pm til 2pm) and **Tuesday nights from 7pm til 8pm**. From 8pm Tuesday nights, you'll find us at The Clyde. So come along and join us!!



The East-West Traverse: NZ's Raukumara Range

"So, why are we doing this?"

"We" consisted of

Kath, Marty, Laurence, Enmoore and Austen, our lone Kiwi representative. And "this" was the East-West traverse of the Raukumara Range, a remote and trackless wilderness area on the North Island of NZ. By calling it a traverse, I imagined that it would be a 5 day tramp along sparsely vegetated mountain ridges, knoll-hopping from one side of the East Cape to the other. Wrong!! A more thorough inspection of the old Maori route showed that we would not only be travelling west to east, but also spending virtually all our time walking in rivers and gullies. No views, bashes through dense vegetation and wet feet for a week. Hmmm, little wonder that we didn't know why we were going to do this walk.

All that the traverse seemed to have going for it was a Lonely Planet rave:

"If you asked an experienced Kiwi trumper what his or her favourite tramp was, it would be something like this." Armed with this scintillating piece of advice, we set off for Opotiki, the town (our favourite in NZ - they sell 60c icecreams there) closest to the western end of the Raukumaras, to find out more. Info gathering was not for the faint-hearted the more we found out about the traverse, the

more scared we became. Nearly everybody we spoke to tried to talk us out of it. "It's suicide. You'll be in there for 20 days.": Klaus (not his real name, but we all thought it was) who runs the backpackers in Opotiki. In Rotorua, the guy in the map shop kept swamping us with bushcraft, river crossing and hypothermia brochures. He didn't know why anybody would go into the Raukumaras either. We eventually found out why the route followed rivers - the land is steep, rugged, covered with impenetrable bush and too difficult to travel through. The Department of Conservation notes suggested taking 10 days of food for the 5 day tramp. Knowing that we would be stuck if the rivers went up, we decided to carry a mountain radio (damn pain stringing out the 30m aerials!) and to take enough food for 11 days. The biggest scare came from Crocodile Dundee himself (aka Geoff), a hunter who had worked the region for 25 years culling goats, deer, wild pigs, cattle and possums. Weatherbeaten and wearing a leather jacket that we were sure he killed, skinned and made himself, Geoff rocked up at our backpackers to tell us about the traverse.

Of the terrain, he said:

"The Big Unknown - Fiordland on land"

"The Motu (river) will look impassable - cliffs on either side, swirling water from one edge to the other."

Of the wildlife:

"Sows may fake a charge."

"Wild cattle - stay well clear. They will clump, then wheel. (You should) backpedal, flap and scream.

They (cattle) will watch and follow."

Of the tramp itself:

"About one group a year do it"

"Turn down ferns, light fires each night, leave traces of yourselves so that if anything happens, you will be easier to find."

None of us had much experience crossing rivers (do we actually have flowing rivers in Australia?) or dealing with dangerous, feral animals. The evening before our scheduled start, trees were floating down the rather swollen river in the centre of town. Scared shitless, we practised our backing off (from cattle, rivers - anything!) technique along the main street. That involved a synchronous halt, 180 degree spin and bolt, while Laurence yelled "1, 2, 3 run!"

Geoff had promised that we would have an adventure and

that was exactly what we got. The first river that we had to walk down, the Mangamate, started off tamely enough with knee deep water - no problems. That was before the gorge sections of course, where our wide and benign stream narrowed and squeezed between sheer cliff faces. That was also where our learning curve began to steepen. We perfected our logjam climbing techniques, learnt to swim with our packs on (the best method when there were no logs or rapids coming up was actually to buckle and tighten every

single strap, thus using the pack as a float) and had our share of thrills jumping into deep pools of water. As Kath would say, it was like "canyoning without ropes". We heard the roar of the mighty Motu before we set eyes on it. Yep, it was deep, wide and fast-flowing. We all wished we had kayaks, rafts or even an inner tube. Geoff's advice was to "go down river, following shingle beds - use a big pole" and to "dogtrot down all the rivers". Yeah, right! We were swept off our feet (some earlier than others) once the water was waist deep. That would either be followed by a leisurely float or if rapids were approaching, a desperate paddle to one of the banks. That wasn't the only time we had trouble following Geoff's suggestions.

His solid 7-9 hour day between the Mangakirikiri and Te Kahika turned into a 21 hour slog over 2 days. Then there was the: "You can run down the big slip at the saddle between the Big Unknown and Te Kahika." We found the landslip and no, we couldn't run down it. Instead, we nearly tumbled off the precipitously steep rubble heap and were each rewarded with a plethora of scrapes and bruises. We began to dread the slow bush bashes between the watersheds. Not only were there landslips to negotiate, but in the forests, we were forced to develop very close relationships with the NZ flora. Not much choice really, since we were constantly choked and strangled by Supplejack, tangled by Lawyer vines and stung by Onga nettles. The weather did cooperate, the rivers didn't flood, we didn't get attacked by any feral animals and we crossed the Raukumaras in 7 days. A good thing too as I don't think any of us actually had 11 days of food.

'Tramp down the Motu, crossing it a dozen or so times, until it plunges into the first of the gorges. Immediately before the gorge, a stream comes in from the south. It is a small stream choked in tiptoe and flax; leave the river and travel up this stream for about an hour. If the weather permits, you will see a small dip ahead, an obvious saddle heading east. Climb over this to the other side; in front of you is an enormous, eroded slip' - from Lonely Planet's Tramping in N.Z.

Conservation Report

Conservation is a chance for members to actively "pursue the outdoors" in a whole different dimension. This year MUMC has taken both a political and hands on approach.

Practically, MUMC was involved in a tree planting turned weeding expedition to Herring Island Environmental Sculpture Park on the Yarra (See <http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/>). Originally a basalt quarry, it is currently being transformed into a native and wild indigenous Victorian garden. It looked to us like there were enough trees on the island already, so we weeded. It was a successful outing; everyone felt warm and fuzzy for having done a useful community service (or was it the sun?). Thank you to those that participated! As a result of the trip more "hardcore" events are in the pipeline, such as Species Surveying for the Australian Conservation Foundation. With added potential for getting lost and tired, I'm sure this will appeal to members' sense of misadventure. With more interest it would be great to see this sort of practical work become a frequent MUMC activity.

Politically MUMC has, by the way of letter writing, supported a number of environmental protests this year. We have requested further investigation into the negligent management of Victorian water authorities, which caused a decrease in environmental flow for two Victorian Rivers.

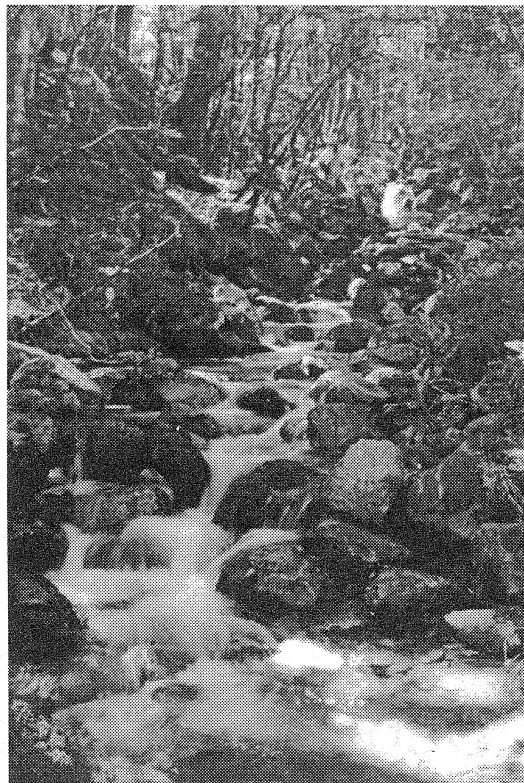
We objected to the wood chipping of the Otways old growth forest and the passing of the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) which licenses wood chipping of the area for the next 20 years. Unfortunately the RFA agreement was signed by John Howard and Steve Bracks on March 31, 2000. But more can and will be done by MUMC to push for amendments to the RFA and protection of our water catchments and native forest. (See <http://www.oren.org.au>)

We opposed the addition of three helicopter/floatplane landing sites to the number already permitted within Tasmania's Wilderness. By so doing we helped protect five of Tasmania's most isolated areas. Of the 651 public comments received,

639 were opposed to the plan. I do not know the conclusion at this time.

Finally and most importantly the MUMC continued its fight for Mt McKay and WON! In 1997, 285 hectares of Mt McKay was excised from the Alpine National Park for development of the Falls Creek Ski Resort. Preservation of Mt McKay was essential for the protection of nationally endangered species, and plant communities including the Mountain Pygmy Possum. Due to strong public opposition a

National Parks (Amendment) Bill was passed in June 2000 that returned Mt McKay to the park along with, 19,000 hectares of the Wongungarra Wilderness. MUMC sent many letters and emails on this issue and was thanked personally by the National Parks Campaign Manager from the Victorian National Parks Association, Peter Barker..



Peter Barker wrote, "I have been meaning to touch base with you guys and thank you for your support. The MUMC participation in this campaign has been incredibly successful. Some of the letters that came from your members were so good one of them was read in parliament by the Opposition spokesperson on

Environment and Conservation, Victor Pertin, as an example of the extent of support for the legislation. I am really impressed with your clubs commitment to the politics of conservation and I look forward to working with you again in future. Yours in Solidarity, Peter Barker."

We all should be very proud of our teamwork in making this a successful campaign. This email is proof that YOU DO make a difference, and I hope that it will inspire you all to keep writing and campaigning towards conserving our environment.

Thank you,

Vic Farmer

MUMC Conservation Convenor

A Solution To Our Funding Problems

By the Morals Convenor

The Sports Association, in their ongoing quest for "corporatisation" of the sporting clubs, is threatening to reduce our funding. We will be required to raise gear hire fees, charge for participation on club trips, and seek sponsorship from evil capitalist corporations.

Haunted we are by visions of McDonald's arches emblazoned on our club T-shirts, Nike slashes on our Gore-Tex rainjackets and Diet Coke logos on our tents. But wait! I have a plan that will not only deliver us from our impending financial crisis, but also simultaneously address the most pressing problem of the shameful decline of morals and standards that has befit our club today. I propose the introduction of...



Debauchery Tax!

a quick snog	\$10
a quick snog (while sober)	\$50
a snog on Midnight Ascent	\$70
a snog on Wilson's Prom trip	\$80
one night stand	\$100
weekend trip naughtiness	\$200
mid-semester trip romance	\$250
summer-break in Tasmania/NZ coupling	\$300
year-long coupling/shared accounts/pet dog	\$400
inter-club marriage	\$1000
club offspring	\$5000

There will also be fines imposed for suspicious trips involving only two club members, improper use of ropes and harnesses on a climbing or caving trip, the excessive consumption of alcohol or use of illicit substances, and any activities involving wax and Dan Colborne.



Slush



Brad: 'It's getting harder everytime I do it'

Kath: 'Ooh! Can I play? I want to see if I can get pregnant!'

Kath: 'I'll give you a hand, but you might have to pull me'

JP (to Vic): 'You're a wimp. Take off your pants'

Andy: 'F*#@ me! Could you get a bigger one? Ooh, its got a crusty bit on the bottom'

Jac: 'That's not fair. You only have to get up for chocolate. I have to go down'

Shirley McInnes: 'Boys are much more active in their pants'

Alison: 'We need a crane to lift Jac'

Iain: 'I'll carry you around the dance floor'

Jac: 'What, like a blow-up doll?'

Anon: 'I think all men should be made to lie flat on their backs'

Andrea: 'He just flashes in peoples' faces'

Shirley McInnes: 'You open the shirt and it's all there'

Dale: 'No amount of sex can make up for having to do needlework'

Andy: 'I'm bored, play with me'

Dave: (after 2 hours of a 14 hour drive): 'So, do you like morphine?'

Shirley McInnes: 'Once a person is unconscious, they are deemed to have given consent'

